

DIARY 2021/22

October 31st – Sunday

What a treat it was having that extra hour in bed, despite having woken at my normal time, relatively speaking. For some reason I had it in my head that it would be darker when I got up under the new regime but, of course, it was quite the reverse. I was not alone in my confusion as the bleddy hound was in a lather about getting up an hour later, too.

The howling of the wind in the eaves made for a psychological drop in temperature, although I am sure it was not really that cold. The occasional eddy sent a sharp draught through the flat, although the wind was still in the south at that time and the full force was on the south coast. This quite rapidly changed after the bleddy hound and I had returned from the Harbour beach where we narrowly avoided a heavy sharp shower just before we headed out.

The wind had lost some of its sixty miles per hour potency by the time it was fully in the west. It was however bang straight into the bay, whipping up the sea into little white caps all across. For reasons I will never understand, the rough sea encourages the appearance of gannets and they were here in abundance diving on some unfortunate fish in the middle of the bay.

That rough sea really enjoyed itself later in the tide, charging in, all white around the shoulders, gleaming in the sunlight. It might have been a bit superfluous to red flag the beach as it was completely blown out, although that did not stop one smart Alec from paddling out in it. I also expect that it was not that comfortable on the beach either. When I shut the shop briefly to take the bleddy hound around the block in the middle of the day we were pushed back faster than we were going forward and my legs were being constantly sandblasted. It did not surprise me in the least that the bleddy hound did not want to go further than the corner of the Lifeboat station before heading back again.

It was not one of our busiest days, it has to be said. I was expecting a bit more out of it – obviously, since I had another fifteen pasties to get through at the end of the day. It may have been the blustery weather with the occasional heavy shower blowing through that put the punters off but it was spectacular to look at, which usually drives the numbers no matter what the weather. In one respect, it was welcome as it justified our decision to close today. It also gave me the perfect opportunity to gaze out on the bay for hours on end and I could have done that for a few hours more. It was incredibly alluring.

The reverse side of it being bright in the morning is that it goes dark an hour before we close. No one really wants to come shopping in the dark and it was even more deathly than it was for most of the afternoon. To make matters worse there are a

myriad reflections, especially off the screen on the counter, and I kept thinking someone was coming in.

I had prepared all the paperwork for the magazines that would not normally go back today – the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company make no provision for this so I have to manufacture the paperwork myself. I had also counted most of the newspaper vouchers at the start of the week and filled out the return form. I just needed to add the twenty or so vouchers collected from the week.

I have tried to do the vouchers every five weeks since The Telegraph newspaper got nasty and put a time limit on their return. In the last five weeks we have amassed around £500 worth of vouchers and since we have already paid the costs, we will have that back into the account in a few weeks – the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company are none too sprightly when it comes to paying out – which will be nice in the long winter evenings. I kept detailed figures of what exactly we make from newspaper sales this week. Given the amount of space devoted to them in the shop, the product is the lowest earner per square metre we have by some margin. Sadly, they will not be part of the offering at Christmas and my seasonal good will only extends so far.

Again, apologies for letting the side down, and many thanks for supporting us through the year. I know, it hardly seems fair; you do all the supporting and I let you down at the end. That is grumpy shopkeepers for you.

And yes, dear reader, you will need to get used to the new time of Diary publication, which is even later if you still have not put back your timepieces. Mother complained last night that her satellite television station was still showing BST – Mother complained last night that her satellite television station was still showing BST - that is what you get when you put Captain Kirk back in space at the age of 90. Perhaps that is what they mean by space-time continuum.

October 30th – Saturday

The bleddy hound and I had a good soaking when we had our last walk before bedtime. It was ending down with the promise of more and worse to come. This is why I probably found it so strange lying in bed gazing up at Canis Major through the skylight at early o'clock in the morning before the alarm went off.

It was still looking pretty good when I went down to prepare the shop for the day. Out to the west, though, was a geet lump of dark and threatening cloud but it was difficult to tell if it was only black because the sun had not got to it yet. The bleddy hound and I made it to the Harbour beach and back unscathed anyway, having cast caution to the winds and gone down there without any rain protection. It did rain a very short shower while we were upstairs but after that the morning brightened considerably.

There were a few showers passing through but this did not seem to put off quite a crowd of visitors, most leaving and some arriving. Last year I felt a little nervous that it looked like the week following on might be quite busy and that we might be closing at the wrong time. This year it does look a little like it might be busy the following week but, frankly my dear, I am too weary to care – or words similar to that. We are aware that some of the half terms go on for a second week, so, sorry about that, and of course we regret the inconvenience to the few locals who shop regularly with us when they can. I am sure we will be forgiven in time.

By three o'clock the death knell sounded and the street deserted. There was a bit of action now and again, but largely everyone had beggared off. The beach and the swimming area that had been full nearly all week was pretty thin today. There was not much surf action either, although the white water had nearly all gone, there was not much in the way of swell when I looked out long into the afternoon. I think that this may be temporary.

By the time I retired for the evening the breeze was picking up from the southwest. We do not much notice big winds from the southwest as they tend to be heard and not felt here. There was a bit of chill in the air, though, as I headed up the stairs on our penultimate show closing of the season. It feels a little odd and quite momentous this year for some reason. I am sure I will get over it.

October 29th – Friday

The rain lashing against the windows in the flat rather suggested a full metal jacket morning including the taking in the milk part of it. I think that I had avoided having to wear full metal jacket waterproofs for the early bit the entire year, so that was not too bad going. It was my heavy jacket, too, as it was particularly heavy rain and it felt like I was walking in one of those old fashioned diving suits with lead boots and brass helmet. The worst of it was that it had stopped raining by the time I opened the door.

I kept the gear on for talking the bleddy hound out a little later because it takes about as much time as removing a diving suit. The heavy rain was still blowing through in short showers and we got one while we were down there. She was still wary about going down the slope for fear of seals but I think she was heartened by the fact that there were already a couple of people down there with a dog – although she was also wary of the other dog, of course. Life is just one big obstacle course for bleddy hounds.

The day brightened almost immediately after it became light. The boisterous sea was a delight to look at with its deep blues and blinding whites standing out like a Californian model's teeth. The waves were dancing over Cowloe on its way to high water and crashing up the cliffs opposite. If it were not for the fact that our visitors have, at last, decided to get out of bed before ten o'clock – probably because they were being evicted at that time, I could have watched it for hours.

We started the day with a bit of an over-supply of pasties, which is just as well as we ended up having an over-abundance of orders for them. Normally, pasty business is pretty slow until two o'clock and after that, things go a bit mad. Today, just for a change there was pasty selling all the way up from mid morning. It made our last pasty order of the day even more tricky as I had no idea if the normal post two o'clock pasty rush would still happen and thus would we have some pasties left over from today or not. I consoled myself that it was the last time this season such trickiness would present itself – apart from the milk order.

The brightness of the morning did not last all that long. During the afternoon, clouds rolled back in and sat over us looking dark and brooding. They delivered the occasional shower of sparse but heavy drops of rain, which was a little odd, I mean how does it do that? Surely you have rain in different levels of intensity, but heavy rain drops a few inches apart? What?

There were not quite so many people patrolling the beach today, although there were just as many in the swimming area. The tide jumped last night and low water is now firmly towards the back end of the afternoon so there was not quite so much beach available for walking. Surfing conditions were again not ideal but some seemed to be having some success in the small break at the southern end of the beach.

Between showers we had brightness again, but the last heavy lot dispersed the crowds and sent them off seeking more permanent shelter. Consequently, things got a bit slow from three o'clock, answering my question about pasty numbers just about an hour too late to affect my ordering. Of course, the absence of people could also be much to do with quite a few having gone home in the afternoon. It is unlikely, this time, that they would be replaced by a wealth of incomers – or at least we hope so as that would put a cog in the spokes of our masterplan to close at the end of the week when it would turn quieter.

As if the first heavy shower had not done sufficiently good a job of losing our customers, another belt of it closing in on five o'clock finished the whole thing off. It never actually arrived, passing closely to the north of us but the mere gloominess of it was enough to put off stalwart souls. I suspected I was right in thinking that it was time for beer.

October 28th – Thursday

It seems we have some seals back visiting the Harbour beach again. The bleddy hound would not go more than a few steps down the slipway and stopped there barking. We escaped into the car park but she could not wait to get back again. Then, she would not go up the steps to the flat, preferring instead to stop at the bottom and glare in the direction of the slipway. Whether that was fear they might come and get her or just plain indignation, I will never know.

At least it was dry. Shortly after I opened the shop the rain moved in and stayed until the middle of the afternoon when it stayed for a bit more. It made for a very sedate day and had me relying on starting to do things to ensure we had at least some customers through the day. As we all know, as soon as I start to do things, customers arrive.

One of the things I was trying to do was move my new chair upstairs. It had arrived a day late so evaded a test run of a quick zizz after a late breakfast this morning. It has a fair few buttons and levers on it so that it can be arranged to suit most shapes and sizes of person so I expect that it will need a bit of messing with before I get it right. That was certainly not going to happen today as although I did eventually get it up the stairs, I had no time up there to play with it today. For a chair that was made for the purpose of promoting good posture and supporting the back, it was bleddy heavy.

The day may have been wet and dingey but it made absolutely no difference to our beach users. The big beach looked exactly as it had done yesterday and the day before with many people patrolling and just as many having a swim or trying to make a purse out of a sow's ear with a bit of surfing. The majority of the shoreline out to about 200 metres was blown out with a mass of formless white water. Definitely not surfing's finest hour.

There is only so much excitement in a day that a grumpy shopkeeper can endure, so I took myself over to the Lifeboat station in the evening for some entertainment. There was no launch organised due to the bouncing sea conditions, so some shore based training was in order. Most of the organised training available on shore is for the Boat Crew. The very excellent Shore Crew are fewer in number and very much on top of their game. Our training, such as it is, is all shore based anyway and thus we have a natural advantage, being able to train while waiting for the boat to return, oftentimes. Much of that training for the lower ratings is based around kettle operations and dropping teabags into mugs or used to be until the dreaded lurgi took a grasp.

Tonight, however, with only two other very excellent Shore Crew in attendance we sat in the crew room and learned all about the subtle differences apparent on the newly provided Boat Crew lifejackets. Lifejackets are replaced and serviced at regular intervals and the ones we had this time around were Mark II jackets. Whatever the Mark, it was good to get a refresher on how the units work and where everything is on them, such as the flare and Personal Locator Beacon. While it is unlikely that we, on the shore will ever need one, it is not impossible and good information to learn.

Exhausted from my evening learning, I returned home for succour and to play with my new chair and also work out how we shall get rid of the old one. Crikey, can life ever be simple?

October 27th – Wednesday

Well, that gave me a bit of a start. There I was, merrily putting away milk and pricing dairy produce, when the door opened and a pasty man was standing there, This was a good hour and a half earlier than the earliest pasty man had ever been and rather caught me out. There is nothing wrong with having our pasties that early, in fact, it is enormously helpful, but this particular driver is the only one in the team that likes to get up super early.

Having the pasties out of the way early meant that I did not have to be concerned with them turning up while I was trying to do the newspapers, which is so much of a rush now. I had to bite the bullet this morning and take the bleddy hound out in the dark. Fortunately, there is a flood light at the top of the Harbour, which is most useful, and I carried my head torch with me as well. It did not work out too badly, which is just as well since I will need to do it again for the remaining days of shop opening. The last day, of course, will be proper dark because the clocks go back the night before.

Once again, it was very slow going through the morning, so I have concluded this contingent of holiday makers is not for turning. I could yet be surprised, of course, but I very much doubt they will want an early start until the morning they head for home. Things had dramatically changed, however, when I returned from the gymnasium as the street was thronging rather more than it had thronged all week at that time. It remained thronging throughout the afternoon. The small gods of shopkeepers must have been pleased as they sent brightness and sunshine towards the middle of the afternoon, which was most unexpected. It was some pretty for a day that was penned in as poor.

The Missus tends to pick up pictures donated by adoring children whom she had bribed with sweets and kindness. It was therefore enormously momentous that I was left a present by a kind-hearted youth whom I had somehow impressed – I do not do giving away sweets or anything else for that matter. Perhaps he was grateful that he had escaped a (virtual, obviously) clip around the ear but whatever the case, while I was gymming and breakfasting, the Missus took possession of a paperweight. I will have to amass a prodigious quantity of paperwork as the paperweight is a flat basalt rock the size of Gibraltar, alright, an small exaggeration, the size of a dinner plate, perhaps. The young man had coloured a representation of the Lifeboat launching on one side and like any good artist, has signed it on the reverse. We rarely do names in the Diary, mainly to protect the guilty, but if you think of Morse books you will have it.

Again today, the beach was mobbed by hundreds of people perambulating here and there, some walking dogs and some just for the sake of it. Others were making their way to and from the water, some for surfing as there was a little of that today and most for swimming in the white water left by the early breaking waves thundering in.

Some people, however, were more content on longer and more traditional walks. We have seen quite a few Coast Path walkers this week, though if I had the time to do that I might have chosen a week that was not packed with parents and school-age children. We see all sorts and all ages of people attempting the whole of the path, chipping at it a week or so at a time. One such couple of more senior ladies arrived at the shop today for energy bars. Around their walking poles, wrapped around a short length of pipe insulation foam, was a script of some sort. I just had to ask.

They were learning poetry. The script around each pole was a chosen poem for that length of journey and once they had learnt a poem, would progress to another. It concerned me slightly that they found the journey so tedious that they had to find some pastime to alleviate the boredom of it and also that they might avert their eye from the path at a crucial moment and take a tumble. I kept my counsel and we discussed our favourite poets. The lady I asked told me that she was learning Gerard Manley Hopkins' *Binsley Poplars*, which she said was about the environment, so it was most suitable for the occasion. I had not read it but told her that it was suitably short and that she should avoid Keats' *Hyperion* as she would need very much longer poles.

It was the oddest thing but the discussion and the whole idea of learning poetry while you walked lifted my spirits. My spirits were already at a dizzying height and I wondered if you could bank such a thing for a time when they were not. I told the ladies how it had instantly brightened by already bright day in the hope that by association, it might brighten theirs too.

It seems most fitting to post it here that you may be enlightened, dear reader, and hopefully enjoy it, too.

Binsley Poplars

felled 1879

*My aspens dear, whose airy cages quelled,
Quelled or quenched in leaves the leaping sun,
All felled, felled, are all felled;
Of a fresh and following folded rank
Not spared, not one
That dandled a sandalled
Shadow that swam or sank
On meadow & river & wind-wandering weed-winding bank.*

*O if we but knew what we do
When we delve or hew —
Hack and rack the growing green!
Since country is so tender
To touch, her being só slender,
That, like this sleek and seeing ball*

*But a prick will make no eye at all,
Where we, even where we mean
 To mend her we end her,
When we hew or delve:
After-comers cannot guess the beauty been.
Ten or twelve, only ten or twelve
Strokes of havoc unselfe
 The sweet especial scene,
Rural scene, a rural scene,
Sweet especial rural scene.*

October 26th – Tuesday

We finally were able to get a foot onto the sand in the Harbour this morning. I do not think that the bleddy hound would have tolerated another run around the block. The waves were a little less robust than they were yesterday as we head towards another neap tide, not quite so far reaching. It gave me some extra precious minutes but I was still pretty pressed when I came back to the shop. Fortunately, our guests are still choosing to languish in bed than come and visit the shop early and who can blame them; they are on holiday.

While their sleeping habits may not be of concern, their eating habits are raising a few eyebrows – I have two. I am having far too many requests for ketchup and brown sauce to go with our Cornish pasties. I remind people that the pasty that they are about to consume comes from the company that came in the top three places of the World Pasty Championship four years running. Would they ask for ketchup on their Rougie foie gras or brown sauce with a few slices of wagyu beef, I wonder.

The coup de grace, however, was a lady coming in today telling me that her sister – yes, asking for a friend, of course – had expressly requested a steak and stilton pasty. I shuddered at the thought. I suggested that if she really wanted an English pasty perhaps she should try in St Ives. She told me that she had seen such things in Padstow, which I readily believed.

If people asking for ketchup on their pasties was not dark enough, we had a particularly grey day covered by a blanket of cloud from early on. We were promised some breaking up of the cloud in the afternoon, but it never materialised. It did not, however, stop the crowds from thronging into The Cove and, once again, we were up against it in the middle of the afternoon for a few hours. As it petered out towards the later afternoon, I took a quick peek down in the direction of the beach. It was quite astounding just how many people were down there, mainly walking about in small groups all the way across the sand to North Rocks. There was probably an equal number in the swimming area of the beach in the white water of still quite strong waves even just after low water had passed. I reflected that it was probable that one of those television illusionists had convinced those on the beach that it was high summer and for them the sun was beating down. Yup, must have been that.

Perhaps they were not so deluded, after all it was incredibly mild for the time of year and it was not raining or particularly breezy in The Cove. The wind, such as it was, headed in from the south west all day but had not achieved the sort of ferocity that the forecasters were warning about later in the evening. In short, it was a perfectly reasonable day for promenading on the beach and even swimming provided you did not mind the absence of sunshine.

Whatever the case, these people were not the only ones with vision. A young lady dropped by the shop in the afternoon. She had been in the day before as I recall with some family, and she stopped to say that she had read the Diary in the intervening time. I commiserated with her, and she asked how I managed to write quite so much drivel in such a short space of time, especially when it was busy. I think she put it more kindly, but I knew what she meant.

After a short conversation about that and The Cove she told me that it would be a hugely good idea if The Cove had some sort of annual festival with the streets lined with stalls and kiosks and a big wet fish area in the Harbour car park. The Cove would be closed to traffic – a very good plan – and some sort of transport laid on from the car park at the top.

I could see the spectacle in my mind's eye, and I agreed with her that it would be a day or even a weekend of huge fun and delight. There are practical issues to overcome, of course, not least who might be the monumental character with sufficient free time to pull it all together. I know that the Newlyn Fish Festival required an entire committee, active for the whole year to make it happen and a festival in The Cove would not be that much smaller. One day, perhaps and it would be good to see.

It would have to wait for the here and now however, as the evening ordering is getting more and more tricky by the day and the last milk order, hopefully on Friday, the most difficult of all. Oh, but we do like a challenge.

October 25th – Monday

The street was wet this morning as I checked for the weather by the light of the streetlamp. It could have been a bit of damp from overnight or it could have been rain, so I wore a rain jacket just in case and discovered that it was the former.

I was still wearing it when I took the bleddy hound out a little later after attending to the milk order and topping up some soft drinks. I often wonder if she checks what I am wearing to know what weather she can expect. I am not sure that is the case, else she would hide if she saw me wearing my full metal jacket waterproofs. She does, however, pause at the top of the steps before launching herself down. That may be looking at the weather or sniffing or danger or, these days, building up the mettle to take the first step down as I suspect it hurts a bit on her arthritic leg.

She was all for diving down to the Harbour beach and we had a bit of a battle of wills as I was not letting her. If the sea had been calm, there was enough sand down there for a bit of a run, but the sea was stirred up and pounding in. One minute the sand was there and the next it was under a ton of water. Those lumping waves were also bringing in a big rolled up mountain of oar weed, which will stay there if we do not have some more bigger waves later to take it all out again.

I am still finding that I am short of time in the mornings, but it is something that I can do little about. I cannot reasonably take the bleddy hound out before there is a modicum of light to guide our way and that deadline is getting later and later. Clearly, that means I have less and less time after our return to complete the finite set of tasks that I cannot do before we go out. I am pressed but thankfully our guests are all late starters.

It is a shame that I cannot say the same about the drivers from our pasty company. They are less pressed than they were and are now early starters. The driver we had this morning is an especially early starter and even when they were pressed, he managed to get here before we open. He also has a great sense of humour and I manage to delay him with some mutually appreciated banter. He has had a bit of a heart problem but is much recovered. He was expecting some results from recent tests before the next time I saw him at the end of the week. I told him that I was looking forward to hearing some good results from him then but that if he did not turn up, it was good knowing him.

It blossomed into yet another glorious day, albeit with rather more big, white fluffy clouds around than yesterday. Large waves were rolling in through the bay, breaking a good way out from the shore and making a white, foaming mess on the run in. There were only a couple of surfers willing to make the effort to get out the back of them and having done so, were not greatly rewarded for it.

Most of the seabirds, and presumably the shoals, had moved out but there was still a sizable flock sitting just to the back of the breaking waves in the middle of the bay. There were doing an admirable impression of a Mexican wave with each big rolling wave that passed below them. You had to wonder if that was deliberate.

As ever, it was our time between two and four o'clock that we were at our busiest. Quite what people are doing up to that point is open to imagination. This contingent are certainly not early risers so far, although we notice that this often changes as the week progresses. I might understand it if the afternoon purchases were all about tea or playing cards or bottles of beer for evening use. What we were selling in the afternoon today was kites, cricket sets, nets and balls, all gear you might expect to be used during the middle of the day, not the end of it. I clearly live in an age of wonder and have not yet become accustomed to it.

The later afternoon turned a little grey and cloudy. It introduced a gloom into The Cove and triggered an exodus from the beach. This was probably just as well

because the grey turned a bit wet a little later. Any trade that there might have been in the five minutes to closing rush became for emergency beer only. Except the very last one, which was a couple who had dropped in for a pint of milk. They made the mistake of admiring our gin collection and after I had finished with them, they left with a tin of Dr Squid and a cider brandy. Ay thang yaw – kerching.

October 24th – Sunday

We were hoping for better today, so a steady heavy mizzle when I opened the door to head to the shop first thing was a brae bit disappointing. It is entirely possible that the bleddy hound thought so too. Not only was it still being mizzly when I took her out, but the Harbour beach was completely swallowed up with angry waves. I did not make her walk all the way around the block, just a turn around the car park and back. I was in a hurry, too.

When we are quiet, I can take some liberties with time but when we are busy, timing becomes a little more critical. I had imagined that we would have visitors ready and waiting when we opened the shop but as it happened, it was quiet. I put this down to the early rain, which was clearing away nicely to some bluer skies.

In fact, the day turned into a bit of a bloomer. I am pretty sure that this was not forecast for the weekend but we were very grateful for it, nevertheless. Into the afternoon and the crowds assembled. They put a good dent in our weekend pasty stock, which was very good of them given that we had missed an entire pasty day. Small children were also about in abundance and did their best to empty our shelves of buckets, spades, crabbing gear and sweets. They did not have to try overly hard as the shelves were looking a bit thin before we started.

The bay was a sparkling scene of summerness. The wide open space of the beach was pretty busy for most of the afternoon with the traffic of sea users going to and forth and little camps of windbreaks and tents up by the rocks backing onto the dunes. There was, for once, some half decent surf that I could just about see over the nose to tail parked cars opposite. Out towards North Rocks, the big boys played, and the novices settled for the break near the southern end of the beach that has been there all year on and off.

Out there also, towards Aire Point, was a massive shoal of something – possibly pilchards - and it had been there for most of the afternoon. It was flagged by hundreds of seabirds all agitated, landing, taking off, circling over and over. They attracted others, less concentrated, nearer in, sitting on the waves in small groups and taking in in turns to wheel about overhead. Some blabber mouth tipped off the gannets. They took a while but arrived in task force strength, peeling off in synchronised steep dives into the waters at strategic points. Looking at the numbers out there I would say that somewhere else was missing an awful lot of seabirds.

I did have some spare time in the morning and I used it to grasp a particularly prickly nettle. I had agonised for the best part of a fortnight over the choice of an office chair to replace the creaking one that I sit on while inputting invoices into the system for hours in end – amongst other things. I had previously determined a short list of two chairs with mesh backs, which were apparently just the thing for good back support. The Missus had deemed them ugly, 'but there again I do not have to sit on it'. I roughly translated this as should I ever pass a slightly less than positive comment about such a chair that I purchased, I could expect no quarter when it came to sympathy. I therefore went back to the beginning and chose from a longlist of more traditional fabric chairs with good lumbar support. Once again, it took several days to bring the long list down to a short list and a few days more to assess, compare and reorder, add a few more and assess, compare and reorder some more.

This morning I bit the bullet and ordered one – after adding a further two options and discounting them after assessing, comparing and reordering, of course. Naturally, I should still be wary about passing less than complimentary comment on the item once I have it. Sympathy can be hard won around these parts.

The Missus returned from The Farm with the news that we are the proud adoptive parents of kittens. It was a bit of a surprise given that we do not have a cat but we were aware from our security camera that a cat had frequented the farm buildings for some while choosing the seat on the tractor that I refuse to call Poppy for a spot of comfort. Whether he brought a girl up here unbeknown to us or her was in fact a she but someone surely would have noticed that their cat had put on weight. The greenhouse was the makeshift maternity ward, the darned things being able to squeeze under my door that does not quite make it to the concrete floor.

Fortunately, the bleddy hound is not yet aware of her new neighbours up there else there would be hell up. There will have to be an eviction at some point since we have not seen a penny in rent and a decision thereafter about whether there is any worth in semi-feral cats or if we need to find a well.

Back at the shop we had a very sedate close to the day and enough business to say that all the effort in getting here was worthwhile. There are many familiar faces around this week, so it all has a bit of a part atmosphere. We do love it when a plan comes together.

PS. No, of course we will not be seeking a well for the poor unfortunate kittens. We have perfectly serviceable water butts.

October 23rd – Saturday

It started with a strange morning and the strange morning extended to become a strange afternoon as well.

The very start of the day was about the only normal bit. The milk had arrived and I took the bleddy hound down to a sliver of sand that the tide had given back. At least the weather behaved for us, although it was not spectacular with all cloud and greyness.

I smelled a rat when I went into the newspaper box outside and discovered that only the magazine inserts for the weekend newspapers had been delivered. This sort of indicated that the newspapers themselves were running late and so it proved to be. I decided that this was best ignored and that I would prepare what I could from what had been delivered.

Sitting having my cup of tea before I dropped down to start the day in earnest, I noticed a van turn up which I took to be the papers. Hurrying down to get cracking on them I swiftly discovered that it was our pasty lady being very early. Given that the papers were late this was a huge advantage. It meant that the pasties would not arrive in the middle of me trying to prepare the late newspapers while fending off customers keen for their particular paper. We were already open by the time the papers did turn up, which was not too bad because there was hardly a soul around until a good hour into the day.

I was rather pleased with myself that a major disaster had been averted but the bakery order was a big one and required some pricing and putting out. During this one grocery order turned up that also needed pricing and putting out and while I was doing that another turned up. This kept me busy for a good hour, which was not quite what I had anticipated.

What I had anticipated was it being quiet enough in the first hour that I could make the dividers for the cash drawer. This would give me a huge amount of satisfaction having worked for hours measuring and planning for the plastics company in Penryn that was no longer needed. It was the culmination of a bit of a project, really. It would have to wait and, as it turned out, would not have to wait terribly long.

The Missus came down mid-morning to give me a break so that I could go and have some breakfast. While I probably have the opportunity to do this in the shop, it is just not very convenient having to keep putting my mask on and off. As timings go it could have been worse. I had finished another cup tea, which was nice and shortly after that, at around twenty to one o'clock, the power went off.

I called the power distribution company straight away. The company is very efficient with its communications and already had a recorded message stating that it was a major outage and the company was aiming to have supplies reinstated by half past two o'clock. I discovered later that nearly 800 properties were affected, which is most of Sennen and the surrounding area. When I called again at quarter to three o'clock they were still having problems and gave another estimate.

This put an industrial sized spanner in our carefully planned works. There was a mountain of pasties in the shop that we could not sell and that was not the worst of it. Because we had no idea how long the outage was going on for, it was important to keep the freezers and fridges closed and this meant closing the shop. Not the most auspicious start to a busy week, that is for sure.

We twiddled our fingers for a bit longer and, as the next deadline came and went and another estimated fix time was given, we determined that we would probably be closed for the rest of the day. We did wonder how the company were able to give estimated when they had not discovered what the problem was yet but concluded, from a relationship point of view, that giving a time however arbitrary was better than giving none at all. At a guess, I would say that some very expensive consultant told them that.

In the end, after having a cold tea in near darkness, the power came back on at around eight o'clock. There, a strange day almost right to the end.

October 22nd – Friday

It was pretty darn chilly yesterday with that bit of a breeze from somewhere in the north. Thankfully, it seems that it was for one day only because there was a marked increase in the temperature today or perhaps it was just because the wind had gone around to the west.

Things in general seemed much calmer today. The Lifeguards had seen fit to red flag the beach yesterday for the whole day but today, certainly at lower water, there was far less going on in the bay including surfable waves. It was not exactly the sort of day for hanging about on the beach but there was plenty of beach there if you really wanted to.

Being a grey day a trip to the gymnasium was just the ticket to put some energy into my step. The intention was that a little later we would meet some representatives of the much maligned council who were here to discuss the turning on the double yellow lines to permanent. They were coming to atone for their grievous error of not making it so for this year, which would have been most useful. However, despite a bit of a rush to be ready after my blistering session at the gymnasium, one of the party was poorly and so the meeting was postponed.

It was not the most dynamic day of business The Cove has ever seen, I would go as far as saying that it was probably one of the quietest. The change in pace allowed the Missus and I to load the bench tops that has sat in the shop for the last couple of days into the back of the truck. The Missus whisked them away up to The Farm for storage until we can get the benches put together. I really would not be at all surprised if Mother and the Missus had not got that done by the time I get up there after we shut.

When she came back, the Missus parked outside so that Mother could decamp without much of a walk. This enabled me to put the remainder of the bench parts into the back truck by and by through the afternoon. With still time on my hands, I broke out the T-Cut to attach the beginnings of rust at the top of the truck doors. Franky, in Cornwall, T-Cut should do much bigger bottles. The process of lashing on the polish is merely a delaying tactic as in the Duchy where even stainless steel, aluminium and copper all rust, preventing it entirely is like trying to hold back the tide. Never mind, the truck doors will look good for a while especially if we do not look too closely.

It would have been really handy if the cash drawer dividers had turned up earlier in the day; I had plenty of time to fit them. As it was, they arrived very late on and while I was serving a customer. The driver must have been in a bit of a rush, or he was just finishing a really bad day or both because in the middle of keying numbers into the till he thrust the box under my nose. I thanked him for ensure that there was absolutely not doubt that I had received the parcel. I might have some time in the morning to fit the dividers, which will involved measuring and cutting them to size, but after that the plan is that we would be far too busy.

At the end of a somewhat dire day I had half expected the early arrivers to burst through the first electric sliding door in The Cove at two minutes to closing but they did not. I have ordered in an abundance of groceries, bread and pasties. I do rather hope we need them.

October 21st – Thursday

The wind was still howling in the eaves and the sea thumping onto the shore when the alarm awoke me from my slumber. It was pretty wild when I went down to take in the milk and ready the shop for opening and when I opened the first electric sliding door in The Cave to go upstairs, it had started to rain as well. This I was not expecting, which is probably why it got me. I had been lucky in avoiding it all week but now it was time for full metal jacket waterproofs.

The bleddy hound was having none of it. We did get as far as the Harbour beach, what little of it there was, and paw touched sand. With a big crashing sea and a wind slapping us around the face she turned around and went straight back up the slipway again. I could hardly blame her.

The weather improved as the day went on. The rain was a fleeting thing and the wind slowly dropped away during the rest of the day. The sun came out in the middle of the morning and the whole day smartened itself up and became quite presentable.

For the first time in quite a while, I escaped the gravitational pull of The Cove and took the truck in for an upgrade. The Missus has complained about the poor quality of the standard reversing light on the vehicle and with good reason. On a big truck like that a feeble couple of watts is no use to man nor beast in the dark of some of

the corners we find ourselves reversing into. It was time to have some proper lights at the back end and that is exactly what we got. We now have two LED arrays that will make us wonder if we have the truck facing the right way when they are on as they are brighter than the headlights.

A regular visitor dropping in for pasties today struck up a conversation about all the usual things, had we been busy, did the sun shine and had we had a Lifeboat shout recently. In the theatre, I understand that it is taboo to mention a particular of Shakespeare's plays. Instead, they call it the Scottish play. In the shop it is taboo to mention Lifeboat call-outs because ...

Our garage man had called and told us the truck was ready for collection. I had got half way there when my Lifeboat pager went off. I was sufficiently distant from the station to make going back pointless as I would arrive after the launch, so I continued my journey having stopped to respond to the call with a negative response.

A Coastpath walker had somehow managed to slip off the path at Nanjizal and had found themselves in a particularly difficult to access spot. The Cliff Team was already there and the helicopter on its way. By the time the boat got there it was clear that an approach from the sea was impossible due to the high seas that were thumping twelve feet up the cliff. The boat stood by until the casualty was recovered and the Cliff Team had pulled themselves back up to the top of the cliff.

By the time that the Lifeboat was released from its duties I had arrived back in The Cove and joined the team to assist in bring back the boat. The sea state was less than ideal with a big lump at the bottom of the short slip. It was the kind of conditions that favoured a long slip recovery at low water but sometimes we do not get to choose.

The game plan with a lot of movement in the water is to keep the recovery cable as short as possible so that when it is connected to the boat there is as little delay as possible in snatching it from the waves. This was put into play today, assisted by a perfect approach by the Coxswain of the day and a pretty much accurate estimate of cable length by the Head Launcher of the day, which was not me on this occasion; I was warm and cosy in the winch room. From this vantage point it was pretty obvious that this was a textbook short slip recovery that could quite easily be used as an exemplar of the procedure. We are, after all, a very accurate, very excellent Shore Crew.

As someone mentioned later, the whole recovery process was perfect from end to end. With the Boat Crew and Shore Crew at the pinnacle of their game we were served a lesson in the vagaries of life when we switched on the hose to wash down the boat and a trickle squirted out of the end. Take two from the top, Mr DeMille.

October 20th – Wednesday

I was told several times during the early part of the morning that it had indeed rained cats and dogs for periods of the night. It was laced with thunder and lightning and was, by all accounts, very, very frightening. I missed the lot and slept the sleep of the innocent. I could not help but think that there was some poor innocent begger out there who had an awful night of it.

I was momentarily confused. Let me try that again. I was momentarily more confused by the appearance of a yellow light to my left, out towards the Round House. I thought it was the light from a lamppost until I remembered that there was not a lamppost there. I stepped out into the road to see what it was and what it was was a gigantic red, nearly full moon, sitting just above the gap between the wharf buildings and the car park. With all the right kit, it would have made some photograph. Unfortunately, I did not have all the right kit.

It is likely that we will be chased off the beach in a day or two. The tide had receded just enough for a bit of a gambol down on the sand first thing. There was just enough light to be getting on with and that was with clearish skies helping us along. We have another week of later sunrises to cope with before clocks changing but after that we will not care too much anyway.

The profile of buying things seems a little off this week It is a pseudo half term, if you like, but the buying pattern is nowhere close to what we sell on family holidays. There is much spending on soft drinks, pasties and snacks but very little on groceries. I cannot fathom the ordering for bread. We sell two or three sliced loaves one day then nothing for a couple of days. I am losing count of the loaves I have thrown out for being out of date. We must hope for an easier ride next week.

I had already mentioned that we had started to plan things to do with The Farm to be enacted when the shop closes. One of the first things we had decided upon was that the Missus needs raised beds for the baby leaf lettuce and rocket. It takes her hours on her knees to pick each leaf individually and knees are not what they used to be, she tells me, especially hers. I had agonised over how we might construct waist height raised beds that still allowed the bed below to be used for cultivation. The Missus had shown me a photograph from the Internet but I worried about loading, timber and how to stop the sides falling off.

One morning I awoke with a eureka moment, or it might have been in the middle of the night, with the very clever idea that we could have a number of trestle tables and place plastic trays full of earth on the top of them. Job done. I put it before the Missus – not at three o'clock in the morning, you understand – with the hope that she would also embrace such a genius design. She did.

Last week, I discovered on the Internet, from a company with the unlikely name of Big Dug, the very tables we needed with a 400 kilograms load capacity, more than sufficient for the growbag type sacks that the Missus had already employed for

potato growth. She had decided that these would be a better and far greener solution to plastic trays on the table tops. So, we purchased six of them.

The tables were due to be delivered tomorrow, which would have been almost ideal because first, it was not supposed to be raining tomorrow and secondly, the Missus would be there to lend a hand. I could guarantee that the Missus would be there because the truck is going in for some work tomorrow, which is why the delivery tomorrow was almost ideal. It would have to wait until we had the truck back to move it up to The Farm.

Our delivery, therefore, arrived during the worst of the heavy rain. Thanks to the much maligned council, cars were also parked the length of the street opposite the shop so the 30 ton pallet truck that turned up had to block the road for ten minutes while the driver unloaded. I have to comment that the driver was a top man, completely unperturbed by the increasing numbers of cars queuing fore and aft. He delivered the pallet to the pavement just outside the shop where I left it until the rain eased a little later. Crickey, those parts of the tables were very heavy but are now safely inside the shop.

The reason that the Missus was absent during all this was that she had gone off to the cash and carry. We knew that we would need a top up before half term and that it would not be sufficient for a delivery. She arrived with the truck brimming with goodies, which we both hefted into the shop. Putting away will wait until tomorrow as by the time we had finished hefting, it was closing time.

Out in the bay things had started to get very noisy. Clearly taking their lead from the storm last night, the waves thundered into the shore and over the Harbour wall. The noise was joined by an increasing wind and the cacophony continued into the night. I fully expect another innocent to give up their sleep for me tonight. After all, they can have one any time whereas I have to get through a stormy night and run the truck to the garage in the morning.

October 19th – Tuesday

There was no need to get all excited about the rain today because the forecasters told us that it was not arriving until the later morning or into the afternoon. After that we may as well pack up and go home because not even a dog – especially a bleddy hound – would come out in the weather we were going to get.

The bleddy hound and I were able to get down to the beach this morning, after we found it in the thick fog. We were the first down there after the first of the bigger spring tides. It was comfortable warm, too, and Radio Pasty said later that it was warmer during the night than the average daytime temperature for the time of season. We have been spoiled but we are warned that the party is almost over.

A poor forecast is just as bad for business as bad weather itself. Today's activities were buried in glue with business moving at a snail's pace. I reasoned that we would have some movement in the morning but people would want to be somewhere sheltered by late morning when the rain was scheduled to move in. People moved to somewhere sheltered all right, but the promised weather never arrived. Sure, it was a little mizzly but heavy continuous rain, this was not.

I had not bothered to mess with the pasty order for the day but had reduced tomorrow's order on the basis I would have plenty left from today. This proved exactly the wrong thing to do because as soon as our visitors noticed it was not raining, they were out in numbers for pasties.

In the intervening quiet time, I verified all the calculations I had calculated yesterday when trying to specify what I needed from the Penryn Plastics company. I gathered together all my diagrams and the spreadsheet containing the measurements and prepared to send it off. Just before I did so I thought that I would include the photograph from the Internet showing an example of the interconnecting toothcomb principle, just for the avoidance of doubt. After I sent the package off with an explanatory note or two I continued to browse the Internet at the place where I grabbed the example photograph from. I had browsed here before to check if what I required could be purchased off the peg but had drawn a blank. On this occasion, however, right on the very last page was something very close to what I required for an agreeably sensible price.

Clearly this item was never going to be revealed before I made a complete plumb of myself with the Penryn Plastics company. I had to go cap in hand and tell them that I had made a terrible mistake but would be back to them in a shot, should matters not work out as I thought.

On the subject of humiliation and embarrassment, I discovered today that the paper £20 notes have yet another year to run. There was an announcement by the Bank of England and it had been reported locally that both the £20 and £50 notes expired 30th September. No one particularly pointed out that it was September 2022 not this year and I have been refusing them for a few weeks now. It came to a bit of a head when two customers in a row came in with them and I thought that probably that was too coincidental for them both to be wrong, especially as one of the customers had several. I had a quick geek at the Bank of England website and discovered the error of my ways. Oops. Sorry. In my defence, though, we have already had two years to clear them through and being given a third is downright just being soft.

The Missus had made a swift exit after my breakfast, heading for The Farm. She collected Mother and together they spent a day in the barn and the stock shed. I do not know exactly what the Missus was doing but Mother flattened an entire barn full of cardboard boxes, piling them up in the corner for disposal and tossing wooden pallets out of the way. I think that is what they used to call a redoubtable woman.

No wonder after that she needed a warming broth to renew her energies. The Missus had been talking with some members of a neighbour's family who are down for a few days. They mentioned they were making some dish with ramen noodles, which is a type which the Missus rather likes. The people she spoke with said that they would bring her down some spare broth that had taken more than a day to prepare, so we were destined to have ramen tonight whatever. It is a dish that you can put many things towards, tonight for example we had ramen pork, but equally we could have had chicken. In Vietnam and such places, it might well be ramen cats and dogs.

This reminds me, we eventually got the heavy downpours that the forecasters had spoken about. Naturally, they arrived just as I was shutting the shop. Luckily, the worst of it arrived after I had retired upstairs but the Missus said that it was particularly bad having taken Mother home in it. It would be good to think that it might have dried up for tomorrow morning. I just wonder how much longer my luck will last.

October 18th – Monday

Oh, what a lucky boy am I? It had stopped raining for a short time when I headed downstairs to put away the latest delivery of milk. I had a quick peek at the rain radar after I had finished and if all things were just, it would be raining while I was down on the beach with the bleddy hound. In fact, it should have been raining at that moment, too but I reckon that we might just get away with it.

I did not particularly race around with the bleddy hound. It is not possible to race around with the bleddy hound now, even with her little strappy boot we put on her leg that helps ever so much. Racing is just no longer in it. However, we wandered about in the gloom and as we made our way up the slipway on our way home, a few spots of rain fell here and there. As I said, how lucky were we?

It was not exactly ending down when I made my way to the gymnasium later, either, although it had been having a good go at it between when I came down for the newspapers and shop opening and when I left. It was trying a bit harder as I made my way back after one blistering session but by then I do not care too much as I would be very quickly getting out of clothes that might possibly have become wet.

We obviously have a very peculiar bunch down here this week. Once the rain had cleared out, we were enclosed in thick, wet fog for much of the rest of the morning and into the early afternoon. This seemed to be a major draw for our visitors who gathered in numbers in the street and took advantage of coffees from next door and a good number of our pasties. I quickly ramped up the numbers going through the oven so that I was ready when we ran out of what was in the warmer.

The fog lifted to a degree soon after and it dried out a good deal. I was all set with full pasty warmer and reserves coming on in the oven when everyone suddenly disappeared. At just gone two o'clock I stepped out to the street and looked up and

down and there was not a soul to be seen. I do hope that it was not something that I said.

My powers of persuasion must be on the wane all over. I could not get the Penryn Plastic company to agree to making the parts for the divisions in the cash drawer, either. Their expertise with acrylic does not extend to making the 3mm x 3mm battens that I need to create slots for the cross sections to slot into. They suggested that it would be better to cut a groove at the appropriate place but my expertise with a hacksaw or some such tool does not extend to trying to cut a 1.5mm groove in 3mm acrylic by eye. I will have to think again.

I thought again after spotting sort of just the thing on the Internet. The dividers joined together by opposing slots such as you might find on a not too fine comb, one up one down, which was the ideal for the acrylic sheets, I thought. I discussed it with a very pleasant gentleman at the Penryn Plastics company and he said if they had precise measurements they could probably use their smart – and expensive – laser cutter to do the job. So, I spent the rest of the rather quiet afternoon putting together some very precise measurements and checking and rechecking them to ensure I got them right. I then drew up a scale plan of the dividers, which was not all that precise given I had only a transparent ruler and some of the measurements went down to half a millimetre but it was good enough to check my calculations.

I shall check my calculation again in the morning with fresh eyes and brain before transferring them to a spreadsheet and sending them off with the drawings.

What a diverse life we lead.

October 17th – Sunday

I have not been particularly following the weather forecast but word on the street was that we were to expect the end to the fine weather with some bad stuff coming real soon now. I had been hearing this for a few days so I half expected there to be weather Armageddon today, but it turned out to be the complete opposite.

I had arrived at the notion that some schools must be on holiday this week because there were children about today that I know come from up country. It was pretty busy too, right from the off and I immediately recognised that we would swiftly run out of pasties. Since I caught on very early to this state of affairs, I delved into our frozen pasty stock and baked them to supplement our dwindling supply. It worked out to be the right thing to do, which rather means my fortunes are changing. Ordinarily, the pasty market would have collapsed the second I took them out of the oven to teach me for trying to be smart.

It is the week for all sorts of forward planning, the most immediate of which is to ensure we have enough grocery stock for the last two weeks, including the main half

term week at the end of it. I was quite surprised how little we needed to bolster our existing stock and it mainly involved those staples of life, beer and toilet paper.

It took a while to notice but the beach today looked as crowded as I had since it these last weeks. Fair play, it was nudging high water and crowded is not the expression I would have used at the height of summer but given the time of year etcetera, it was crowded. Despite the lack of surf there were bodies in the water doing stuff. Quite what they were doing I was not too sure because it was not surfing, more lounging about on boards looking disappointed.

Our busy day continued into the afternoon with the street thronging, the benches across the road full and a fairly regular customer flow into the shop. Our regular visitors must have been keeping their heads down because it was all new faces that I saw today. My suspicion that it was some people's half term was confirmed when I mentioned it to a lady in passing who commented that it was busy. A lady also in the shop at the time told me the Leicestershire is always a week ahead of everyone else. No wonder I did not recognise anyone.

Our glorious day stayed glorious right to the very end. We watched it fade away while sitting at the dinner table for our tea. Well, someone has to do it.

While I have your ear, I thought that I might mention the St Buryan Christmas lights auction on next Saturday in the St Buryan Inn. They have a Face Page all set up telling you what there is to bid for and they will accept bid sent to them from afar. The page has a list of all the goodies that are lots, which include holidays and things that you can do when you are next down here, like sightseeing on a boat. Our link to the event is that Mother lives there and the star at the top of the tree was donated by her. It is worth a geek, at least.

October 16th – Saturday

The fog was thick as a bag when I went downstairs first thing. It did not stop one of the fishing boats from going out – I assume it did not stop him coming back either – but our morning bathers were noticeable by their absence.

It did not take long for the fog to clear and we started to see the makings of a half decent day again. Unfortunately, the makings were interrupted by an influx of cloud in the middle of the morning that threatened to block out the sun. Happily, the sun called in reinforcements and mounted a rear guard action, breaking through in all its splendour towards the end of the afternoon. There was a bit of a breeze, however, gathering pace from somewhere in the south from which we were mainly sheltered.

There was little in the way of waves again. However, half way through the flood there were enough decent waves over by North Rocks to make it worthwhile for a few of the early birds but after that it was paddleboard city, albeit populated by just the one exponent cruising in the early afternoon.

It was definitely a day for cruising. While we had some busyness in fits and starts the afternoon, particularly, dropped into a soporific stupor of serenity. Having already established several times during the week that climbing the walls does not help very much, I revived my plan to build divisions in the reserve change drawer. I had drawn up some reasonably accurate plans about this time last year and had sent them off to the plastics firm in Penryn. I had asked that they make up the sections and glue on battens so that the sections would slide into one another, rather than have to attempt it myself. I heard no more from them.

This time I thought that I would specify exactly what I wanted including addressing the changes to the measurements to allow for the thickness of the sheets. Some of these now require accuracy to one millimetre, so I hope they can provide that. I will talk to the company on Monday to see what they can do. Unfortunately, the whole operation of remeasuring and writing the definitive list of requirements only took half an hour, so I had to look for something else to do.

I had already spent the morning putting together the cctv camera components and attaching them to the brackets. I rather rashly sent a text to the Highly Professional Craftsman and only after which I thought to check the installation site to make sure the back boxes would fit there. They do not. The width of the planks on the shop frontage is not enough to accommodate the full length of the box. As the frontage is stepped, I will need a batten to go under the bottom half of the back box. We probably have timber of the right thickness up at The Farm, but it will need to be painted and I do not even have the paint. I had to hurriedly step down the Highly Professional Craftsperson else he would have been at my door with ladder and toolbox in hand before I knew it.

There were signs of the new influx during the afternoon and many were familiar faces. We picked up some orders for things we do not regularly stock, which is always pleasant as it gives me something to do – and tests my memory. It is a disappointment, though, that we cannot do orders for fish as we are unlikely to make up a minimum order at this time of year. Other ordering will have to be carefully considered as we only have two weeks now until our closing day. Golly, that did go quickly.

October 15th – Friday

Those weather forecasters keep telling us that it is going to get cloudy and cold but it seems that the weather has other ideas. It must be quite frustrating to put all that effort into predicting cloud and misery for the sun to keep popping out and ruining it all.

Our dipping friends were in the Harbour again this morning. Unlike yesterday, the air temperature was positively tropical and made me regret that I had worn a fleece again. The bleddy hound had little choice. The couple's dog that was once again a

little unhappy about going in to join them did make a couple of forays into the water about hock deep – if dogs have hocks. Anyway, it was very pleasant down there in the early light and just right for a swim in the placid waters.

Placid waters was not great news for the surfing fraternity and as placid waters go, they were positively peaceable. According to the flags on the channel markers there was hardly any breeze either and that there was came up from the south west where we are sheltered from it. In all, it was a perfect day for mooching about, having ice creams and sitting on benches enjoying the warmth of the sun. Not at all surprisingly, that is what many people were doing, at least those not heading for home.

Between this and that and the coming and going of customers I managed to complete the second coat of painting on all the camera equipment. Really, some of it would be better off with a third coat but I did not want to chance my arm about sealed joins and so on. The moment of truth will come tomorrow when all the paint is properly dry and I discover that I cannot find all the little screws I very carefully put aside so I would know where they are. I have utter confidence – sort of.

I completely forgot. While I was enjoying a just rest after a blistering session at the gymnasium on Wednesday, I had a telephone call from one of the directors of the holiday company I was berating for recommending that their guests shop at home before they get here. She was most apologetic that I had been upset by her company's literature. The wording was not meant to deter its customers from shopping locally – although saying precisely that – but was intended to assist in not being disappointed that they might find shelves empty. Frankly, the excuses were somewhat thin, but I had my apology and an assurance that the wording would be changed forthwith. She said that they were trying to find an appropriate form of words, so I suggested 'shop local' for starters and something along the lines that the local shops probably have more stock than Tesmorburys. I have not yet checked, but she sounded sincere.

We have a very cosmopolitan selection of visitors each year, many of which are easily identifiable as to race, country of origin or, sometimes, religion. A small group walking through today completely flummoxed me. At first there were three men in robes who I took to be monks, albeit wearing stout walking boots instead of sandals. A little way behind, which is why I thought them to be separate at first, were two women whom I assumed were Muslim, wearing dark robes and head coverings. I thought no more about it until the ladies came into the shop. Both were Caucasian and the clothes were more nun-like than muslim, so I was intrigued, particularly as they appeared to be a group with the 'monks', which seemed highly unlikely.

I could not remain intrigued so I asked that they forgive my impertinence but did they belong to a religious order. They laughed and said that it would indeed be strange for monks and nuns to be walking out together, so they could see my confusion. They told me that they were Muslim, so I asked about the men's dress because most of the Muslim men I had seen here were generally dressed in suits or similar. It seems

that strictly, men should be wearing clothes that hide the physical shape of the body, hence the robes (there is no doubt a proper word – thobe, I just looked it up) the men were wearing. I thanked the ladies for their time and patience explaining to me and they left me slightly better educated than I was before they came in.

The last half an hour in the shop today made me wonder if there is a superlative beyond 'quietest' because it was the probably the quietest yesterday and today was much quieter than that. I was also wondering the same about boredom. The only thing that kept me going was the idea of a nice bit of fish pie for tea. The Missus had lamb stew; the Missus hates fish as much as I hate it being quiet.

October 14th – Thursday

It was only a little later on that I discovered that we were very lucky bunnies today. Everywhere else, according to Radio Pasty, was swallowed up by thick fog and subject to a yellow weather warning whereas we, lucky, lucky people, has clear skies right from the very off. When I spoke to our man in Redruth later on, he said he saw no fog either, so perhaps the only fog to be seen was at Radio Pasty headquarters.

Sure, it was misty in the Valley but it was not exactly a pea-souper, more like someone had drawn a very thin net curtain along it. The rest of the bay was clear, but you can be sure that St Just had its head in a cloud.

There were a couple actually in the Harbour when the bleddy hound and I ventured down there. Their very discerning dog was clearly having none of that sort of thing and patrolled the foreshore without the slightest indication that it was considering joining them. I felt that it probably was not the best morning for a dip as it was definitely colder this morning than any we had since summer time. It was not uncomfortable out, but I was very glad of my fleece and so was the bleddy hound of hers.

The Missus was determined to make an early start at The Farm today having avoided it for the last few days. I did not see any smoke up there when I looked, so I presume she was put off once again from lighting her fire again. She told me that the cucumbers are going mad up there and brought some more down. I do not know if cucumbers can be told to grow a bit earlier in the season but we have not exactly had a big queue of customers at our door buying for them. The Missus also brought down some spinach, which stands a much better chance of finding its way to a customer table.

Her absence left me to my own devices for most of the day and I was just as determined to get ahead of the posse on painting the CCTV cameras and their associated fittings. It took all day, but I managed to get a first coat on everything having worked out how to dismantle the units into component parts so that I could get to every nook and cranny. The trick will be remembering how to put it all together

again and hoping that the thickness of two layers of paint does not begger up the clearances.

The painting was only achievable because business was a good bit lighter than it was yesterday, especially in the afternoon. It was not like it was a disastrous day; what we lost out on with numbers we made up with going home presents. It was after half past four o'clock again that visitors appeared to melt away, leaving The Cove in stillness and silence.

There was much less silence later on when we were called to the first Lifeboat meeting in a while. We are informed that the powers that be have given us free reign to start regular training sessions again and more Lifeboat training launches to boot. Clearly precautions will be taken and any changes to schedules and procedures due to resurgence of dreaded lurgi can be managed locally. Well, we will jolly well look forward to that, then.

October 13th – Wednesday

The pre-dawn had all the hallmarks of a rather rip gibbling sort of day. Out to the east, above the cliff, the sky was just beginning to colour. To the south, just above the cliff was a bright star. I thought, "you cannot be Sirius" but it was.

It was the sort of day to rouse one dozing bleddy hound and drag her down to the beach for a quick run about. I had already seen two other dog walkers out before me, so I did not feel too bad about being out before proper light had arrived. There was a bit of chill in the air, which was not surprising given clear skies that had probably been cloudless for most of the night. It was not uncomfortable and there was little by way of breeze. All the weed has now dispersed ahead of the jump in tide, which would have left it scattered on the beach.

The fishing boats are now getting out on a regular basis fishing for whatever is available at present. There is a fair bit of mackerel now but the squid is still being elusive. Given the number of bass fishermen on the big beach last night, there is bass around to be had if you have sufficient quota as a commercial fisherman.

Early on in the morning, I was chatting with our bakery delivery man when some splashing caught my eye in the bay. It looked like a large bird splashing about but usually this will only last a few seconds before it flies off. I had a geek through the binoculars and it was a swimmer in a wetsuit. At first it did not look like they were making much progress but I concluded that they were swimming away from me, so I could not tell. I intended to keep an eye out since the Lifeguards had not yet started duty but was distracted by a few customers and lost track of the person.

I was not immediately concerned because this looked like a competent and strong swimmer. It became even more apparent that they had some stamina when I caught sight of them returning from wherever they had been – Aire Point? – and heading

towards the Harbour. Again, I was pulled away and the last I saw of them was heading down Tribbens and out of sight behind the Lifeboat station. Given the rate he was going he probably made it to the Isles of Scilly by dinner time and back here in time for tea.

We were a good bit busier today than we have been for most of the week. That all mainly happened in the afternoon leaving us the morning to wonder where everyone was. I was not wondering too much while I undertook a blistering session at the gymnasium, which sets me up nicely for the rest of the day and it was just as well.

Yesterday, I had been climbing the walls trying to find something to do with myself in the quiet of the afternoon. Our outside cctv cameras arrived yesterday and I tested them in the evening. I decided that since it was quiet I would give them a coat of paint. I had just started when the long succession of customers that would last until near closing came through the door. Not only that but our bait man arrived with some mackerel for us and a fairly large delivery from our stationery and household goods supplier came.

The instructions on the paint said that I should try a small tester patch on whatever I was painting first. I was not going to bother but that is exactly what the first camera got as it was all I had time for. Properly, I should wait until I can sit down somewhere and concentrate on the job but I will have other jobs after we close at the end of the month and I rather hoped to get the cameras installed by then. I will try again tomorrow morning after the pasties have been delivered.

Once again, the street was completely deserted at closing time. Nearly all our trade was concentrated in the period between half past two o'clock and half past five o'clock. Perhaps I should adjust our trading hours to suit.

October 12th – Tuesday

I was a bit pressed for time this morning and I have no idea why. Everything went according to plan and even the newspapers were ultra early. If they turn up any earlier, the news in them will not have happened yet. Possibly the fly in the ointment was a very leaky litre of milk. It had left a puddle in the bottom of our delivery box outside and laid a trail of milk drops down the aisle as I transported it in its packaging to the fridge. It was only then that I could identify the culprit. Put in a plastic bag and put back in the delivery box for collection on the next milk delivery it even leaked again and had to be double bagged. That must have set me back several minutes.

Even if I had opened a little late no one would have noticed. The first customer ambled in some while after we were open, and I had taken in the pasties by then. We discovered late yesterday that the chip shop had decided to close for a few weeks, which is probably why we were seeing an uplift in pasty business. It was too late to order extra pasties for today, but I will rectify the matter for tomorrow.

I obviously had a bit more time to gaze out of the window today because I noticed a bigger than usual splash on the opposite side of the bay. It was gone in a flash but it was definitely not a small breaking wave of which there were a few across the bay. I kept an eye out and fetched my binoculars out of their case. Unfortunately, there was a long interval between splashes and I could not quite get to the binoculars fast enough. Dolphins have a habit of frolicking in a line and will perform rolling jumps one after the other, so I surmised that this was tuna making a scene.

Noticing one of the fishing boats not far off I sent a text message to ask if my guess was correct, especially as there were now a few visitors curious about what I was scanning the bay for. He replied soon afterwards to confirm that it was indeed tuna, so I asked if he could hook one for me. He said he would crop it in later. I do not know which of us would have been more surprised, him having caught one on his bassing gear or me having a 450 pound tuna dropped on the shop floor.

The Missus slid off on a shopping mission late in the morning and did not reappear into late into the afternoon. With the cctv cameras set to arrive I asked her to purchase the anti-rust paint and some conduit. She arrived back home with the conduit, round tubing, when I had square in mind that I could attach to the living room wall under the windows to carry the data cables from the cameras. I was smartly reminded that what I actually required was trunking and, just to rub some salt into the wounds, a young lady in the shop at the time also confirmed that it was trunking. She knew this because her husband was an electrician. I thanked her sincerely for her contribution to my complete humiliation.

Fortunately, it happened near the end of the day else I would have had far too long to brood upon it. It was cloudy today and with a northerly breeze holding down temperatures, we were not overly busy. Nevertheless, it was dry and not a bad day to be out on a stank and many were judging from the number of walking poles being brandished about The Cove. It is a shame that walking stick badges seem to have gone out of fashion else I might have had a field day.

I mention walking stick badges because an elderly gentleman dropped in and purchased a couple. He told me that as a boy he had lived in Trevescan and had worked in what is now Apple Tree Café. At the time it was a piggery and the café area was where he mixed the pig food. It has been a large dairy farm but subsidies introduced after the war to increase bacon production had persuaded his father to switch to pigs instead. And who said that reading the Diary was not educational – yes, alright, but on this occasion then.

The clock ground around the last half an hour before closing and I was most grateful when it reached the top of the hour. If I had closed half an hour early I do not think there was anyone in The Cove that would have noticed - except had I closed half an hour earlier the front of the shop would have been beset by an army of frustrated shoppers.

October 11th – Monday

We have always known it, but it is good to have it confirmed independently by experts. I have frequently commented to our customers that the Trewithen butter we stock is probably the best tin the world. It knocks spots of the imported stuff and the insipid brands found in Tesmorburys. I am surprised that any of our customers can stomach butter at all when they go home from here. Made from Cornish cream and Cornish Sea Salt, it is hardly surprising. Now, the Great Taste Awards have bestowed it with two stars, 'outstanding' they classed it. The Great Taste Awards is the largest food awards body in the world, which is surprising because it is solely British. It awards on food products available in the UK regardless of their country of origin. Makes you proud, dunnit.

The good weather we were left with last night reappeared this morning, first thing. Perhaps it had been lurking there all night. Who knows? The skies were nearly completely clear when I took the bleddy hound down to the slightly more beach than there was yesterday. As a consequence, the air was quite crisp, although with a lack of wind from anywhere it just felt fresh and clean.

We had some milk to shelve this morning and the newspapers arrived before I had gone upstairs to get the bleddy hound, so I polished them off too before I went. I only had to open the shop when I came down, so I left it as late as possible only to find our pasty man waiting when I eventually did arrive. At least we had what we ordered today, which is just as well because we went through them in fairly short order before the middle of the afternoon. I resisted the urge to order twice as many for the next day as we all know what happens when I do something rash like that.

My purchasing of a couple of cctv cameras was hardly rash at all. I had carried out extensive research and asked all the right people. I had eventually found a supplier on the Internet, although I had to get the camera model one up from the one that would have been sufficient for our needs. I will paint them as suggested by one of the local experts. It will invalidate the warranty but will help the unit survive the hostile coastal environment and not crumble to rust inside twelve months. All I will need now is a Highly Professional Craftsperson to shin up a ladder to attach them to the front of the shop. I shall have to see if I can find one.

There were some notable moments of busyness through the early part of the afternoon but as the day wore on the crowds thinned out. It had been another of the most glorious of mid-autumnal days with the tide providing a wide open beach as the backdrop for most of the middle of the day. The breeze kept itself to a few light airs wafting about, which was very good of it as it drifted to the north by then end of the day. Such things oft times drive men to reach for their grown up trousers, so I am braced for some resistance should it prove required.

I even remembered to put out the bins from the houses behind, which given their near emptiness is a bit of a weak success. Our own commercial bin man came today

when he should have arrived last Wednesday. Luckily, we do not have a mountain of waste at this time of year, but I must remember to cancel this week's collection. With all this remembering to do I thought it wise to write down the recent customer advance orders for pasties. I just need to remember to look in the order book.

October 10th – Sunday

There was very little to do before we opened the shop this morning. There was no milk delivery and the newspapers did not turn up until after we were open. I could have spent longer in bed.

In fact, I could have spent much longer in bed as my first customer did not appear until a good half an hour after we had opened. I need not have fretted – I did not fret much anyway – about the lateness of the newspapers that was due to the England football team having a game of football somewhere. Quite why the rest of us needed to be inconvenienced by it when the results would have been all over other forms of media, I have no idea.

Even by the middle of the day there was not much doing and standing around in the shop with little to do became exceedingly tedious. There is no topping up of shelves or fridges as they are not being emptied, or at least not very quickly and although I did have to make a small grocery order from our alternative supplier, there was not a great deal to order so it took very little time. It did take longer than it might have done because we have to check how many boxes of what we might get through before the end of the month and what the risk of over-buying is by checking the best before and use by dates.

We started to see a bit more action into the first part of the afternoon, but it still seems quiet. We have been telling ourselves that it is busier than it would normally be at this time of year but, having checked, it is about the same as a normal year. We are very much quieter than we were at this time last year but that is understandable given the late start plus the fact that we also had some stock then. Since there are only three weeks left of our season perhaps it is about time to stop analysing and just take it as it comes.

The weather was quite kind to us today. There were sunny spells through most of it and a bit of offshore breeze. By the end of the day it was quite glorious. The waves were altogether pretty moderate for the surfers who numbered about fifteen. They were out towards the only waves in the bay, at North Rocks, but it was the wing surfers who stole the show. There was just enough breeze to drive two and sometimes three of them across the bay, but I suspect that they could have paddled faster at times. Motoring with the wind behind them, their progress looked effortless and almost unaffected by the waves they cut through on their mono hydrofoil.

Also making it look effortless were the front runners of the sixteenth annual Atlantic Challenge. Once again, I had forgotten that this was the time of year it is run and the

runners today started off in St Ives on the last leg of their three day event. The lead runners came through in the middle of the afternoon looking like they had just ambled down the hill. Then, later on, came the ones who looked like they had arrived late for the first day and had run all the way from Padstow to catch up.

They were still coming past when we sat down to have our tea. It must be quite soul destroying to be the last one in when all the flags and crowds are gone and there is just some bloke in overalls and a flat cap sweeping up the polystyrene cups and water bottles. "Marshalls? Knaw, my 'ansum, long gone, they. 'Ere, hold this bag open, a minute."

October 9th – Saturday

The sea had clearly exhausted itself over the last couple of days and was just about managing to throw a few feeble waves over the near end of the Harbour wall in the morning. The dawn, however, excelled in casting a distinct rosy glow over everything in The Cove. It all looked rather warm and welcoming.

It was not the look I gave our pasty delivery driver as he enquired as to whether we had really ordered 50 vegetable pasties instead of steak for the weekend. He asked if we would like to send them back. I did hesitate because it would be just my luck to send back the pasties and afterwards discover that the League of Vegan Advocates were gathering in The Cove for their annual convention this weekend. I decided to send them back as we did have a couple of lettuces in the fridge if needs be.

I suspect that the company probably would not have done it for everyone but in response to my call for assistance they were baking off some pasties to bring down to us later on. Somehow, they had convinced a driver to extend his Saturday shift to come the 56 miles return trip to us. I gave him a tip when he arrived for action above and beyond the call of duty and we were, indeed, very grateful.

We certainly did not need many pasties in the morning; there was hardly a soul about. A few people had gathered for a bit of coffee and a bap on the café benches next door and we had a sporadic drift of newspaper buyers but that was it. I therefore applied myself to contacting the holiday company who would prefer people not to shop locally. I had already sent two electronic mails which elicited no response or acknowledgement, so I thought to try a different aspect of communication. A neighbour pointed me at the Government website that had company information and postal addresses for directors. I picked the top two and manufactured letters from my earlier electronic attempt and will send them tracked and signed for in the post. We will get them in the end.

After a very promising start, our whole world went a bit grey and dull. I could not say we were busy but there were a few people milling about and the pasties started to shift a bit. Had I not indulged last night I might have been tempted to one myself because they arrived from the bakery still hot out of the oven. They smelled

delicious. I had thought that we would be cleared out at one point when a convoy of motorbikes rolled into The Cove and settled down for a spot of croust. One, then another and another biker came in for a pasty and I thought that the rest might follow suit. Fortunately, the flow stopped shortly after the first four or five.

The bay descended into complete calm a few hours down from high water. There was a little knot of surfers out the back off North Rocks waiting on the occasional surfable wave. Gone were the conditions of the last few days that one website (and I must thank my friend, an aspiring surfing dude - when they start introducing surfboards with hand rails - for passing it to me) heralded as some of the best conditions in years. It lauded the ability of one expert surfer who “arched and scooped pretty much the entire rail, setting up for a cavern that was closing at lightning pace”, and another who “got out the back and had a steaming double overhead left hander”. Rather uncannily, it is almost like the author was reading my mind when he wrote that and I could not have put it better myself.

There was some movement on the water, as it could be seen in the swaying mast of one of our regular visiting yachts anchored up in the middle of the bay. I also noted that the temporary channel marker survived the onslaught, which was quite remarkable since it is only held on the sea bed by a bunch of shackles. It cannot have been very much later that I looked again and found that the yacht had completely disappeared and had been replaced by suffers as some of the waves came back for them to play with.

The day brightened into the afternoon but overall, it was still pretty sedate. It seemed that the still of the bay was in some way infectious and led to a very peaceful day. At one point in the morning I had to check my false ears to make sure they were still working, it was so quiet. It allowed me to have a good catch up with the Highly Professional Craftsperson who turned up on his motorbike half way through the afternoon. It started to get a little busy after that so I went back to work and he slipped away.

Slipped is not naturally the adjective you might use to describe a motorbike leaving. Roared is often more appropriate. The Highly Professional Craftsperson has the quietest 500cc motorbike imaginable and for the last couple of times he has been down I did not hear him leave at all.

It was the same with our little rush of customers. They all very quietly disappeared and when I came to close the shop and gave a cursory glance up and down the street, it was completely empty. It was all about baffles - the motorbike exhaust has them and the other left me baffled.

October 8th – Friday

I am certain that this morning was showing all the signs of a cracking good day, if we could only see it through the mist. What I could see in the half light was a very angry

sea, boiling away in the Harbour and lumping over the wall at frequent intervals. It was making an awful racket to match its visible fury and it was all I could do to drag my eyes away from the spectacle.

For once the bleddy hound admitted defeat about heading down to the Harbour beach and we headed around the block. Despite the mist and damping air, it was quite comfortable in just a light jacket as the warm air is still with us. We have a leg strap for the bleddy hound to combat the arthritis. The Missus has used it for the evening walks and, since I knew we would be going around the long way this morning, I fitted it on her. The difference is quite marked and she was fair cantering along Coastguard Row. It still took some encouragement to drag he across the car park in the opposite direction.

I did not manage a complete blistering session at the gymnasium later in the morning as the Missus had an appointment to attend. It served its purpose anyway and I followed up with another power breakfast and ruined the effect by putting mayonnaise on it. Sometimes it just needs to be done.

I have been planning to put a couple of cctv cameras on the front of the shop for a while. I was going to wait until the anticipated building work happened but that looks likely to be some way off now, so I decided to do it now. There is no really urgent need for the cameras, other than to deter fly tippers thinking it acceptable to leave rubbish alongside our locked bins, but the one we have currently is quite useful from time to time. A more professional set up would be better, however.

When I started looking it soon became clear that it was not going to be that easy to decide which camera to put up. It made sense to stick with the manufacturer of the cameras we are using inside, and the company has a huge range to choose from. As ever we need to be mindful of rust but all of the outside cameras, even from other companies, were metal. The latest advice from an installer was to paint them in Hammerite, which will invalidate any warranty but will help them last a bit longer.

Over the years I have learnt patience, which is obtuse because as time passes, we generally have less of it at our disposal. That philosophical thought aside, I am becoming slightly vexed by the number of suppliers who never call back after initial conversations. Our new builder, several roofers last year and the flooring company who came to measure up last week all have failed to reply. This has now infected the cctv world.

It seems that to acquire a professional cctv camera we are forced to buy it from an installer. There is a closed shop arrangement around supply that I cannot break through. I was recommended to a local – St Austell – firm, had one conversation with the man and have heard begger all since. Are these people so flush with funds and weighed down with offers of work they can afford to be rude? I issued a reminder but still heard nothing back so I have kicked these characters into touch.

As luck would have it, I accidentally discovered that the company who maintains our alarm system is a supplier and installer of the camera equipment I most favoured. I contacted a very pleasant man in the company who provided some sound advice. He was of the opinion that the camera could be purchased on the Internet by anyone but when I looked for the camera that he had recommended, there was only one company willing to sell them, which looked a bit monopolistic to me. I may have to take the plunge since I appear to have no choice. The saga continues.

What I have been able to get a hold of, and in abundance, is fish. It is probably our last fish order of the season and was designed to bolster our freezer stock and hopefully we will have some left over to see us through the winter season. Hake, haddock and very disappointingly small whiting arrived late in the afternoon. Fortunately, we were not very busy and I was just about able to vacuum pack and price the lot in time for closing.

After a very grey but warm and dry day the sun decided to break through at the last knockings. It was, I am sure, in agreement with the sea to make its revived boisterousness look good to the various watchers around the bay. Having been distracted with one thing or another during the day I had not paid much attention to whether it was busy outside or not. It certainly was not in the shop. I will settle for that.

October 7th – Thursday

The bleddy hound had me out of bed before the alarm this morning, discomfited by some minor ailment or other. I still made her wait while I ran downstairs to address the milk delivery and to top up the soft drinks that I did not have time for yesterday. There is no point in taking her out in the dark unless absolutely necessary.

Our Cornish Sirocco is back, it seems, and it was entirely temperate, if a little damp, out for our walk. I was minded to think of Bing Crosby's song about it that went, 'Little Sirocco, how do you do, hello, (hello), hello, (hello)'. I seem to remember that my sister had a vinyl record of it that she used to play on her junior battery operated record player she had one Christmas long ago. Anyway, it blew away the mist that was still lingering from yesterday – the wind, that is, not the song, which simply wafted away the mists of time.

The sea had been thundering in during the morning's high water period, I could hear it distinctly in the dark. If I looked hard I could also see the white water in the Harbour from it having launched over the wall. It prevented us from a run down to the beach on the basis there was none and we ended up going around the block in the half light before the sun had broken over Carn Olva. The bleddy hound was not impressed.

Our day gradually brightened as the overcasting cloud pushed away from the south making it just right for a Lifeboat launch on training exercise, so we had one. The inspectors were at the station taking various crew members through various aspects

of engineering, plant operation and workings in general. Part of the overseeing and passing out happens at sea, hence the launch.

We were called to arms for an eleven o'clock launch that happened at half past eleven. The inspectors are no respecters of the clock, it seems. We would normally have set the launch for the evening but the sea state was still expected to be boisterous later on and not conducive to happy landings back at the station. Today, everything was set around low water when the swell would be almost unnoticeable down at the bottom of the slipway. Recovery was set for around one o'clock, just about half an hour after dead low water.

The tides this week are as big as they were small last week. Although not an especially low tide no one told the water that and we had to walk fifteen yards past the end of the long slip walkway. Most of the rocks had dried out sufficiently to allow safe passage but here and there were small bits of weed and wet limpets that demanded cautious footwork. Two of us settled down while the Y-boat was sent forth to install a temporary channel marker in place of the one that floated away a few days ago. By the time they had completed that task we had to retreat a few feet as the flood was making itself known.

As it was, the cables were exactly the right length for where the Lifeboat landed and we executed what was quite obviously, even to the casual observer, a textbook recovery for very low water up the long slipway. We clambered back over the rocks and onto the slip walkway as the boat drew up alongside us. A quick wash down, rehouse and refuel and all was done. We are, after all, a very all-encompassing, very excellent Shore Crew.

I returned to the shop where the Missus was champing at the bit waiting to get away to The Farm. She had her mind on another bonfire, having failed the last time she was up there. Conditions were somewhat more favourable today and she took with her about five years' worth of accounts to start the blaze rolling. I should note that the accounts are not current. Anything older than seven years is deemed fair game for bonfires and the Missus had extracted these from storage in the loft while cleaning out ahead of our new builder having a geek up there. Perhaps we should have a clean out a little more often than every five years.

The day concluded on a high note – if we discount the southerly breeze at The Farm that prevented the Missus lighting her bonfire again. Glorious sunshine bathed the cliffs all the way to Cape Cornwall. The surfers had a pretty good time of it, too, and judging by the numbers as the bay moved toward high water, they were still having a good time of it into the evening. The swell had moderated from the morning but it was still bouncing up around the footing of Creagle and to a lesser degree, Aire Point.

Then, just half an hour before high water, everything suddenly changed. The sea state shifted from a benign ground sea to angry beast, lumping over the wall and

dancing all over Colwoe. I do not rate the chances of the temporary channel marker that will be the shortest-lived channel marker in the history of channel marking. Out to the east, the mist that had been hanging in the background, came to the fore and crept over the tops of the cliffs and swirling through the valleys. So frail the gentle day torn from us by an angry night.

October 6th – Wednesday

Well, my first late morning went swimmingly, thank you for asking. There was only a small milk delivery to take care of on my opening trip downstairs and by the time I had finished that there was sufficient light to whizz the bleddy hound down to the Harbour beach for a run around.

It had all the makings of a rather fine day if you wished to ignore the red sky in the morning adage. It was not too much later that we discovered that you ignore old adages at your peril. It was not exactly bad weather but the promising start did not materialise into any sort of special day. The overcast gloom seemed to match the mood of the general populous and although there were quite a few people mooching about, there was not much in the way of enthusiasm for anything very much – other than eating; I understand that the chip shop was rather busy later.

It was the sort of day to launch yourself into a bit of a gymnasium session, so I did and what a blistering session it was, too. I followed it, when I came home, with a power breakfast of all the right things including some smoked salmon that the Missus had acquired at some stage of her outing to Travaskis Farm. Since it was such a healthy power breakfast, I felt completely justified to indulge in a bit of dripping on toast courtesy of the massive rib of beef the Missus took all day to cook on Sunday.

So wrapped up was I in the anticipated consumption of such comestible delights that it took me a moment or two to understand that I was not alone in the living room. Not satisfied with incursions into our work life, Rob, has decided that he is much more suited to the comfort of our living room.

I had left the front door open, as we are both want to do on days that are not too chilly or breezy from the north. It lets the air (and robins, clearly) circulate rather more than opening a window or two and includes a labour saving of not having to open it to go out. Our resident robin clearly thought this an open invitation to invade our home, why else would we leave a door open if it were not just for him. I had to rather rapidly – in a slow and fluid movement so as not to alarm our friend – head down the corridor and shut all the other doors to bedrooms, bathroom and, particularly, kitchen. On reflection, I might have left the bathroom door open where the robin may have inadvertently fallen into the toilet bowl, accidentally pressing the flush on the way. “Oh dear, what a tragic accident”, we would all say. Also, “Who will rid me of this irritating robin” suddenly came to mind for some reason.

Rob did take a venture down the corridor but finding all avenues blocked to him returned quite smartly to the living room. I placed some crumbs from my dripping laden toast on the doorstep in an effort to lure him outside, which of course failed miserably. He left of his own volition having experimented with several perches on the way. We may have to invest in a net curtain for the door or install a plate glass door, which will at least have some cartoonesque comic value.

Oh, go on. We had better do it, now it is in my head.

Who killed Cock Robin?

*I, said the Sparrow,
with my bow and arrow,
I killed Cock Robin.*

Who saw him die?

*I, said the Fly,
with my little eye,
I saw him die.*

Who caught his blood?

*I, said the Fish,
with my little dish,
I caught his blood.*

Who'll make the shroud?

*I, said the Beetle,
with my thread and needle,
I'll make the shroud.*

Who'll dig his grave?

*I, said the Owl,
with my little trowel,
I'll dig his grave.*

Who'll be the parson?

*I, said the Rook,
with my little book,
I'll be the parson.*

Who'll be the clerk?

*I, said the Lark,
if it's not in the dark,
I'll be the clerk.*

Who'll carry the link?

*I, said the Linnet,
I'll fetch it in a minute,
I'll carry the link.*

Who'll be chief mourner?

*I, said the Dove,
I mourn for my love,
I'll be chief mourner.*

Who'll carry the coffin?

*I, said the Kite,
if it's not through the night,
I'll carry the coffin.
Who'll bear the pall?
We, said the Wren,
both the cock and the hen,
We'll bear the pall.
Who'll sing a psalm?
I, said the Thrush,
as she sat on a bush,
I'll sing a psalm.
Who'll toll the bell?
I said the Bull,
because I can pull,
I'll toll the bell.
All the birds of the air
fell a-sighing and a-sobbing,
when they heard the bell toll
for poor Cock Robin.*

I have a vivid memory from childhood of the page on which that was written with a picture of the owl with its claw on the handle of a spade. I think that I should have felt quite sad being read the poem at the time. Today, quite ambivalent.

Our day was rounded off quite nicely by the accumulating mist that shrouded the bay. By the time we were approaching closing time, it was thickening quite nicely and it was getting damp. We had a bit of a five minutes to closing rush, including Rob who decided to come back at last knockings. He was most insistent on staying this time and I had to invoke DEFCON 1 by recruiting the Missus to help evict him. Poor Cock Robin, my a

October 5th – Tuesday

No frumps today, I promise. So there should not be, as today was the last day I have to get up at silly o'clock and can, from hence forth – for the time being –, get up at half past silly o'clock. It is still dark at half past silly o'clock but at least there is half an hour less time to wait until it gets light, although that will change a bit.

I did not do too badly this morning. I could not wait until it had become light to take the bleddy hound out because I was under the clock. The sea had been lumping in quite heavily yesterday, so I was not altogether surprised that most of the weed, including those two big piles, had gone. There was easily more than a ton in one of the piles alone, so that is some shifting the sea did during the two high waters.

It was not only sea water making itself felt but there must have been some heavy stuff falling from the sky last night. There was flooding under the alcohol shelves

when I opened up the shop first thing, at least I hope it was rain water. It was in the store room, too, and under the beer store door at the spot under the flat roof that I have been meaning to seal for the last several years. There was not much evidence of it outside, although water does not hang around much in The Cove. I imagine there were big puddles on the roads further up.

Our last of the season main delivered grocery order arrived, as it has done throughout the summer, early in the morning before we opened. Our delivery man has been, if not worth his weight in gold, worth the early Christmas box that I gave him after we had finished unloading the van. I was going to give him a bottle of something, which tends to me more acceptable than cash most times, but discovered that he did not drink very much. Anyway, he seems the type who will spend his £2.50 very wisely.

While we had a fair bit of water in the shop we were not exactly flooded out with customers. I used the time to dip into the store room every now and then to extract another box to price and put away. It did startle me a little to lift one box up only to discover that Rob, our friendly redbreast – my imagination has no beginning - was sitting on the box behind it. I had not seen him come in and one day he will be locked in the shop without me noticing.

There is no point in trying to evict him anymore; he finds his own way out of the store room just as easily as he finds his way in. I am getting to know his body language a little, too. At one point I was filling some plastic bags with a newly arrived delivery of fridge magnets. He hopped onto a box nearby and then on the trolley that was even nearer. I suspected that he was trying to make his way out of the store room, so I withdrew and stood behind the counter. Sure enough, a moment later he popped out of the store room and slowly, via the card stands and various other waypoints, made his way to the door. It would be most useful if I could talk with it. If I could talk to the animals, just imagine it, if I could grunt and squeak and squawk with the animals. Oh gosh! I feel a song coming on.

Our blustery day, worthy of Pooh himself, continued unabated all day. I lost count of the times I was informed that 'it is windy out there'. Oddly, no one mentioned that the sky was blue or that the sea was wet and yet they singled out the wind for special mention. What is even more galling is that we did not sell one windbreak the whole day. The fickleness of the general public astounds me.

Rob returned again towards the end of the day to entertain our late shoppers. He was flitting about amongst them completely unconcerned. At some point while I was serving he made his own way out again, clearly now cognisant of our closing time. There was quite a little rush for our five minutes to closing time including our regular bus man who stops for snacks on his route. I asked him which of the buses has been dropped due to staff shortage and even he did not know, although he thought that it was one mid morning. I have now asked central helpdesk, which is up country and did not have a clue and one of the bus men that actually drives the route. If neither of

them know which buses are running and which are not then the poor potential bus traveller does not stand a chance.

It was quite a relief to close up after all that trauma. Not only is there now very little to do in the mornings, allowing my later starts, but also not so much to do in the evenings. Daily orders are now more sporadic and there is so precious little bottling up to do it can be done during the day. I think we will give it a few weeks and if it does not improve, close for the season, maybe at the end of the month.

October 4th – Monday

Not that I wish to reawaken mask wars but it is getting near the end of season so, blow it, I will say it anyway. There are some issues about the whole thing that really irk. It is no longer mandatory and after six months when someone walks in without a mask, I no longer take very much notice. Most are unapologetic and almost certainly do not feel the need to be anything else, so that is that.

Where we have some issue is with those who turn up with a bucket full of excuses, 'left it in the car', 'it was in my other trousers', 'the dog ate it', but then still come in anyway. Even worse when it comes with, 'is it alright if I come in?', still advancing. Sorry, but I am not going to say it is alright and absolve you from your sins. Feel guilty by all means but be honest about it. Another cracker and the worst, 'it's alright because I am double jabbed'.

Then there is, 'do you need to wear a mask in here?'. Since the Missus and I are both wearing masks and it being unlikely we are doing so for its aesthetic qualities, we would have thought the question somewhat redundant. We are wearing them to protect you, the customer. If you wish to reciprocate it is much appreciated.

If you do not want to wear a mask, do not wear one. Just walk in. If you feel guilty about it, fine, feel guilty but there is no need to share that with us.

Go on, say it, if the whole mask wearing issue irks you, fine, be irked but do not share it with your reader. Fair comment but too late and it filled some column inches, so I do not have to tell you about the weather.

It was still very breezy first thing and, I suspect, for the rest of the day. I was not out in it, so I was blissfully unaware. For some reason I had a mountain of spare time on my hands and had dawdled coming downstairs. I think it mainly surrounds waiting for a bit of light to take out the bleddy hound. Anyway, the milk had not arrived when I first came down, which rather threw me, as I had little else to do. I was about to give up, having some something else to do and done it, when the milkman arrived. I was therefore later than I expected to take the bleddy hound down to the beach. Fortunately, Monday is a light duties morning, so I was not pressed as I will be tomorrow.

Having stopped around to deal with the late milk delivery it was now raining quite heavily. Happily, by the time I procrastinated a bit more, put the kettle on and found her lead, the rain was just finishing. We both managed a sigh of relief as we headed for the Harbour beach. This has changed again from yesterday. The oar weed had been nicely bundled up into two large, round piles such as you might find in a hay field. There was still some strewn about further down the beach but no more than a thin layer. Nature's haystack.

Those weed stacks will probably not last too long. The tides are getting bigger and the waves were piling into the bay again today. Again, not a great deal of use to surfers but lines of waves were racing in toward the sea wall on the south side and breaking into boiling white water over Cowloe. There was less white water up the cliffs opposite today because of the wave direction. We do like a bit of white water up the cliffs.

I scurried around a good half hour before closing to bring the bins down from the houses at the back and to tuck away our outside display. Radio Pasty had warned of big rain coming in the afternoon and after looking at the rain radar I determined it would be with us way before we closed. And so it was. One nil to the grumpy shopkeeper.

In a startling piece of news, the Missus informed me that FacePage was not working. I thought of the millions of users who, having just scratched their bottoms, would be unable to let their besties know. Then I thought of the millions of besties who would be sitting in a state of frustrated anticipation wondering if their bestie had scratched their bottom or not. We are probably witnessing the beginning of the destruction of the world, the first bit to go being the breakdown in society and not knowing if your bestie had scratched their bottom or not is just the beginning of the end.

I tried hard not to think about it and resorted to Twitter to tell all my followers that I was trying not to think about it. I am just waiting for the inpouring of sympathy and admiration of my stoicism.

October 3rd – Sunday

Those forceful winds that we did not get the last few days arrived today. They must have got lost and arrived late. The bleddy hound and I were fair near bowled over as we went around the corner of the Lifeboat station. At least it was dry wind and not the wet stuff we have been getting on and off over the last few days and made the jaunt down to the beach a bit more enjoyable, especially for the bleddy hound. The oar weed down there is slowly being pushed up the beach by the advancing tides and is lying around in geet lumps and seems to be added to each day. We have seen it deeper, so no need to panic just yet.

It was not an entirely dry day. Showers kept beating through, many of them passing just to the north of the bay, although we did get a dowsing by one or two of them.

They took a rest in the middle of the day for a while and returned to do much the same as they did in the morning later in the day and especially into the evening.

The sea was looking quite bouncy as it threw itself up against the cliff opposite. There were waves but with the force of onshore wind behind it there were very few takers of the surfing community willing to get wet for it. There were, however, an army of dog walkers parading up and down the beach now that they are allowed at any time of the day.

Naturally, we did not see a huge increase in business, though there were a good many more people around than yesterday. There was no real interest in shopping until later in the morning so in the quietness ahead of that I started our main cash and carry order. We decided that it was very likely that this would be the last one of the year and ordered accordingly, We will review our position in the week before half term but I suspect that if we need anything at all it can be easily resolved by a trip out to Hayle; our deliveries come with a substantial minimum order price.

The notion that we are starting to do things for the last time really brings into focus the end of season for us. We have plans for the closed period, probably more than we have time for. It also means that we are just a few weeks away from that work and if we are to hit the ground running, we will have to pull our fingers out to take the plans from paper to action.

Conversely, it was the first time we had a Lifeboat shout in a while, except this was a rather more relaxed 'crew assemble' rather than an urgent call to arms. We duly assembled as requested with no real clue as to while we should have been pulled from our beds at midnight o'clock to hang around in the cold. Eventually it emerged that the police were searching for a missing person who they had good reason to believe was heading for Land's End and could we search the shore line between Land's End and Nanjizil just in case he had fallen off the end. The local management were unsure of the advisability of launching into a gale of wind and a lively sea just on an off-chance and waited for some more solid evidence. It was a good choice as the Coastguard team, who arrived at Land's End first, found our man and his vehicle.

With all that in the bag we were allowed to go back to our beds again. It was, of course, impossible to sleep as I battled with the judgement of whether this was a Sunday Diary entry or a Monday Diary entry. If you are faced with a blank page for Monday, you will know that I got it wrong.

October 2nd – Saturday

The clatter of the rain against the skylight in the bathroom said it all this morning. Oddly, I could not hear it in the bedroom so I assumed there was a bit of a punch behind it from the west. When I got outside it was raining, sure enough, but there was not much in the way of wind. Looking later, I do not think there was much in the

way of wind at all during the previous day and night such as the weather forecasters were warning about. It seems that was just so much hot air.

The breeze that was there in the morning was indeed quite warm. It helped take the edge off the rain that persisted all the way through the morning and into the afternoon. The bleddy hound was not terribly happy about heading to the beach and hung about just about as long as was necessary and headed off back up the slope while I was looking the other way. She was just as uninterested the second time and it was not raining by then. Perhaps she was just having a grumpy day.

I was not grumpy at all until the Missus announced she was going over to the meat counter at Travaskis Farm. Her purse was bulging when she left and was about to undergo some dramatic weight loss. I spent the next hour considering which freezer I should try and empty to accommodate the cow, lamb and pig she was very likely to come home with. I do not think that we will be going vegetarian any day soon.

As gloomy days go, this one was pretty gloomy both in terms of the look of the weather and the amount of customer business we picked up. Thankfully, I am a bit more used to it now and I have managed to cure myself of the urge to start climbing the walls out of boredom. For the first time in a long while I picked up the *Western Morning News* to read (did I ever tell you I once had a review in the *Western Morning News*). I read it from cover to cover and remembered just why I stopped reading newspapers eighteen months ago. Today we were delighted to learn that no one will have any meat by Christmas due to the lack of meat packers and butchers in abattoirs, Plymouth's buses will grind to a halt because the drivers are embroiled in a pay dispute and that there are lots of houses for sale if you so happen to have half a million pounds tucked down the back of the sofa. On the bright side there were loads of mouth watering recipes showing all the many ways that you could cook meat that you will not be able to get hold of. I do not think I will resort to newspaper reading again very soon.

After the much maligned council messed up implementing the all year round use of the double yellow lines down Cove Road, it is now open season. Anyone now can part like a complete eejit anywhere they like including across people's driveways, on the pavement and on 'keep clear' signs with impunity because we will not see a traffic control officer until at least March. The Missus told me that a white van had parked on the white 'keep clear' line opposite the bus stop yesterday while she was on her way out. With a bus, waiting at the bus stop for its time to leave, traffic was blocked in both directions. This would have seriously have impacted the launch time of the Lifeboat had there been a shout.

In Porthcurno during the summer some enterprising soul took photographs of offending vehicles and published them on social media. There might have been a tiny bit of infringing General Data Protection Regulations going on but it seemed to be quite effective. Perhaps we could have a little 'eejit of the week' competition where the winner gets towed away.

It was almost at our last knockings that the sun broke through. It had not rained since the middle of the afternoon and the clouds had been breaking up all the while. The temperature had dropped, however, and the wind had stepped up the pace a bit to become quite blustery. I guessed that we were not going to get away with just a bit of sunshine and that there had to be strings attached. There was quite a bit of late perambulation going on but not much walking into shops to do a bit of shopping. We may well see some of them for breakfast if the weather holds, which will be most welcome.

October 1st – Friday

That robin is a persistent begger. A few hours into the morning it was hanging around the shop entrance, casing the joint. We had a little game where he would try his luck and I would chase him off and as soon as my back was turned, he would be there again. I thought to turn on the first electric sliding door in The Cove so that he might get the idea that he was not welcome, but he very quickly worked out that hopping about in front of the door opened it. The bird is clearly possessed.

He managed to make three incursions into the shop while I was called away from my guard duty. He made special efforts to remain in the shop but I managed to get him out all three times and eventually chased him off around the corner. When I returned from breakfast in the middle of the day, he was back and had made himself comfortable further back in the shop. I think I made have made my mark because he made his own way out shortly after I arrived.

We had some rain in the morning that our robin was keen to avoid, I think. Rather conveniently, it fell outside the times I was required to be outside. One of which was our ritual trip to the Harbour beach. It was not so long ago that we were being chased off the beach by the high tide but how times change. Today I was struck by just how far down the beach the most recent high tide had reached. It is a particularly small tide, one of the smallest of the year, and it was accentuated by the barrage of weed and shingle lined up on the tide line as if it were holding back the waves.

After the initial dowsing we had from a swiftly passing weather front, the day brightened considerably. We were left with a robust breeze heading in from somewhere near the northwest, which gave us very little shelter. For once, I could feel it in the shop that sent me scurrying for a fleece shortly after we opened.

Never mind the wind and a little bit of a drop in temperature, the sunshine brought out the crowds that brought a bit of a bustle to our end of The Cove. There was a good bit of wrapping up against the wind but in the main it did not seem to matter very much as long as they were sitting out in the sunshine.

Business became quite animated in the middle to late afternoon. We sold most of our pasties in that time, although we had a couple of decent take home orders in the

morning to help things along. There was a good bit of going home present buying, but I note that the cat carers, hedge trimmers, plant waterers and general looker afterers are less well rewarded at this time of the year. It is clearly an outrage of modern times that these hard working neighbours be treated with such distain and discrimination due to the season of the year. Yes, dear reader, things did get a bit quiet towards the end of the afternoon.

I shall eventually get used to our lazy days, probably just in time for things to get busy again for the half term week. After that, well, The Farm awaits.