

DIARY 2021/22

August 31<sup>st</sup> – Tuesday

We have gone grey again and the cloud had rolled in on a semi-permanent basis for the day. We had several people commenting that it was a good bit more chilly than it had been of late, although I cannot say that I noticed down on the Harbour beach with the bleddy hound this morning.

I was certainly not chilly a little later when the main grocery delivery arrived with our super-efficient driver. He was on his own today and between us we rattled off the contents of his van in very short order. It was probably the last of the very big deliveries this season and was only big to fill the spaces left behind after the previous week, which was stupidly busy. I managed to put out the bread that arrived and tuck away the twenty cases of beer in their rightful place all before we opened. I was quite warm at the end of that.

We are definitely at the end of the season. The morning was the most sedate that we have had in a couple of months. Perhaps our holiday makers are weary of holidaymaking, too.

One piece of news that I forgot to report yesterday, probably because the trauma that the information induced wiped it from my memory, came to me by a resident of a nearby hotel. I should make it clear that this was not the OS but one a little further on. The lady posed the question of where she and her husband might eat that evening. I told her that because of having to book at most eateries and queue at others for lengthy periods they would probably be better off dining at the hotel. This, she told me, was the problem as the hotel closed its restaurant on Monday due to staff shortages.

The revelation took me aback and left me struggling to process how quite a posh hotel could cut adrift its guests in such a manner. The shortage of staff I understand, many places are suffering similarly and are forced to close one or two days a week. A hotel, though, is rather a different proposition altogether. Surely, you would want your guests catered for, else you are no more than a bed and breakfast and in a completely different pricing scale entirely. I am sure it would have not beyond the wit of someone to organise delivery of a takeaway, or the preparation of a cold buffet earlier in the day to be made available to residents on a help yourself basis.

I suggested that perhaps they could eat at the F&L, but she told me that she tried there and that is closed for meals as well on a Monday. Obviously, the hotel may have very good reason for not providing an alternative or choosing a day when the next nearest eatery was also closed or may even have provided a handsome discount to compensate for the inconvenience of it all. That being the case, I am sure all is well with the world and that the lady I spoke to always sounds that irritated and despairing.

Our day brightened into the afternoon when a few more people turned up. Not only did they turn up, but they started shopping as well. The perceived chill also sold us at least eight hooded sweatshirts through the day leaving us with the prospect of placing another order only days after the last delivery came in. It also took into the afternoon for our pasties to start moving but we made a better dent in them today than yesterday when we hardly needed any at all. This will be our up and down world for the next two months.

It takes a day or two and very possibly longer to slow down from our manic life of the last six or eight weeks. Ordering of bread and pasties, at least, was simply a case of getting lots in every day. Now, each order has to be considered and often split across several days if the volume was too high for one. It is inconsistent and, frankly, a pain in the rear end trying to get it right. There are also the long quiet patches to come that have to be filled with something that does not include eating. I shall have to get some more books.

In the last few weeks, because our leisure time has been seriously curtailed, I have found it curiously relaxing to read a book in the half hour or so between tea and bedtime. I ran out of the books lent to me on recommendation and went in search of more on the Internet as our bookshelf has mainly only romantic fiction left. It would not look right for a grumpy shopkeeper to be caught reading romantic fiction, now would it? I found a website that sells second hand books – a miserly grumpy shopkeeper, too – at very reasonable rates and selected a couple from there. Just for interest I searched to see if they had any books on The Cove. They had one. It is called The Cove Diary's Almost Serious Guide to Sennen Cove and was on sale for much more than the original cover price. The cheeky beggars. I almost cancelled my order. As those books are all signed and mostly dedicated I also almost ordered it to see who had so inconsiderately dumped it.

There were so few spaces in the drinks fridges that I was able to abandon the shop soon after doing the next day orders. This left me even more time to cut into the invoices during the evening. There have been 500 and counting but I am nearly at the end – apart from the new ones that arrive every day.

August 30<sup>th</sup> – Monday

Well, that was that then. It was our first non-day since I cannot remember when by which I mean that it was hardly likely to set the world alight with its busyness or its sparkling good looks. It was not, however, a particularly quiet day, indeed, there was a good showing of customers passing through the shop, particularly in the morning. It was just that there was no life to it, hanging there like a damp rag.

The early morning brightness cleared off by the middle of the morning to be replaced by low hanging cloud. The sharp breeze that was present first thing also cleared off taking with it the potential for a few more windbreak sales. Since clearing off seemed

to be soupe du jour, I did some clearing off myself down to the gymnasium for a short but blistering session. I will hope that soon I can restart the Wednesday visit as well and slowly build back up to my extended routine.

One major event of the day was a launch of the Lifeboat. It was to join with the Penlee boat for an anniversary memorial of the Penlee Lifeboat disaster 40 years ago in December. The Cove boat launched as well that night but was unable to get around the corner, the weather was so bad. Some of the crew from that night went onboard for the trip. Since we had plenty of volunteer launchers, I stayed put in the shop.

The afternoon turned particularly dull both outside and in. I cannot say it was people pinned to the beach causing it and besides, we were seeing quite frequent bouts of action in the shop, but nothing like the onslaught of the previous several weeks. The beach itself was very sparsely populated and not what we are used to at all, even on a cloudy day. If I were a betting grumpy shopkeeper, I would wager that we are at the beginning of the end, which is as expected for our August bank holiday in The Cove. It is either that or they all beggared off to St Ives for the day.

The boat returned just shy of six o'clock, our new closing time. There were sufficient willing hands available to welcome it back. The boat was brought up the long slip in what was likely to be a textbook recovery – I could not see it as I closed the shop – and tucked away until the next time. We are, after all, a very consistent, very excellent Shore Crew.

It is quite astounding the difference that closing one hour early makes. There was no difference, however, in the number of beers and soft drinks that had been swiped. Fewer they might have been, but they were a thirsty bunch and I still managed to be sitting down for my tea a good thirty minutes earlier than normal. This gave me much more time to input the invoices and I still have not finished. Whoopi, for early closing.

August 29<sup>th</sup> – Sunday

Did I say it looked like there were not quite so many people arriving this week? What tosh. A very keen bunch had their noses pressed against the glass this morning long before we opened. Alright, there were one or two long before we opened then a big bunch when we did open.

Toothbrushes, darn it! We have always kept an abundance of toothbrushes as there is always one in a contingent of holidaymakers who forgets theirs. We have always kept an abundance of toothbrushes that is until now when they became just one of those spinning plates that fell to the ground and smashed into a million pieces. Yes, since we became aware that we had run out we could have become toothbrush tycoons. The world and his third cousin twice removed, her family and both dogs have descended upon the shop asking for toothbrushes. Actually, I suspect collusion and people are coming in on purpose to ask to see how long it is before I crack.

It was a glorious day despite a bit of northerly breeze that kept the temperature down. The smart money was on sun lotion and windbreaks of which we sold a fair few. I have primed the aftersun lotion shelf for tomorrow for the not so smart money.

The sunshine attracted many people to the beach and left us with a big hole in the middle of the afternoon. The Missus stayed around and played refill the shelf with me. She also did a sterling job of marking up all the newly delivered hoodies. When I placed the order, we had an abundance of the colour jade in stock. As we waited for the delivery, the sales of all the remaining colours took their toll until the last colour standing was the jade. By the time the delivery arrived all the jade ones had gone too. They remain gone because they did not form part of the order. That is quite frustrating as is the company being unable to source some of the sizes in some of the colours, so we have gaps across the range.

There are fleeting moments that I think that I may have entered a surreal world or just perhaps the fabric of my mental being is a bit frayed on its way to unravelling altogether.

*Keen Mother.*: “Should I get this size 6-7 wetsuit for my child or will the size 8-9 be better?”

*Grumpy Shopkeeper.*: “Where is your child so that I can see what size is best?”

*Keen Mother.*: “Down on the beach.”

*Grumpy Shopkeeper.*: “!”

Teenage Girl.: “Can I get a steak pasty, please?”

Grumpy Shopkeeper.: “Very sorry, we sold out. We have cheese and vegetable pasties left, though.”

Teenage Girl.: “Will my dad like the cheese pasty?”

Grumpy Shopkeeper.: [FX: Manic screaming, fading into distance.]

As expected, our customer flow returned towards the end of the afternoon and once again our groceries took a beating. I am very pleased that we are able to service most needs from across our range and even happier that some people express their surprise at being able to get everything they need. The range has evolved over the years by weight of request mainly, but some things like the expanded vegetarian foods are there through being a bit more market aware. We are still tripped up by the occasional request for frozen berries, vegan ice cream and sliced larks’ tongues.

Most of all, our beer was depleted again. I have tried topping up during the later part of the day but as expected this just leads to the fridge being torn apart by the customer looking for the one that is a tenth of a degree colder than the rest at the back. However much a bigger beer fridge is a good idea, we simply do not have the room for it.

We do, however, have plenty of room on the spirits shelf and all the smart gins and rums are down to one or two bottles each. I have had to order them all together and they are not exactly cheap. There is going to be a confluence of big scary bills to look forward to at the end of September.

Despite a renewed five minutes to closing rush, I managed to close the door on time, the last late one of the year. It was such a good idea to lop one hour off the hours this year as we really would have been on our knees else. Tomorrow will be a struggle to close on time as everyone will ignore the big notices I put around the shop and still expect us to be closing later. I shall be squeezing them out of the door at six o'clock and have a proper feet up session for the first time in seven weeks. Yippee!

August 28<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

One of my pet irritations is people who decide that they need to shop at hours outside our official opening hours. My morning schedule is tight, and I am often pressed for time. The slightest deviation can put me out and make me late for opening for those who do want to shop when we are open. It is especially galling when I have to have a fight about it. We are open for ten and a half hours a day. I find it hard to understand why that is insufficient for some people. The need for extra curricular shopping could easily be avoided with a little forward planning.

The worst of it is that at that time in the morning I still haven't done my make up.

Gosh, that is the second grumpy shopkeeper gripe in a week. It must be close to the end of the season.

Never mind, the weather seemed to be holding good. The morning was bright but the easterly is back, albeit barely wafting through. It kept the temperature down and I wore a jacket to the beach with the bleddy hound. The breeze was strong enough to force me to thump the sand out of our welcome mat downwind of a visitor using the benches across the road for an early morning smoke. The task has been outstanding for some time but since I could no longer see what colour the mat was, I guessed that it was probably time I did something about it.

Once again, we hit the ground running. As soon as the doors were open, we were met by a flood of eager shoppers – have you got any pasties left? Our pasties were, if fact, as late as any of the recent days, which is odd since there really were not many to cart around. Around a third had already been sold as the smart money ordered in the day before. In truth, the people ordering had no idea that there were supply issues. I nearly did not take the orders on the basis it was unfair but, frankly, they had to be sold to someone.

I did not have too long to dwell on the pasty situation because our pagers went off again at ten o'clock. Again, I had to eject customers from the shop in a rapid manner,

including one gentleman who initially thought it was a joke until he saw that I was in earnest. The boat was called to an inflatable boat with a failed outboard motor. The occupant was properly equipped with VHF radio and fish finder from which he was able to accurately report his position. Even then, by the time the boat found him he had drifted with the wind and tide considerably south from the Longships area where the boat was sent.

Having swiftly established what the shout was for we assessed that the boat would not be gone very long; no long tow to Newlyn for this recovery. High water had not long passed but the tide was sufficient low to allow a long slip recovery. With enough willing hands to help we set to at a relaxed pace to set up the slipway and wait for the boat's return. It was reasonably slow progress and the boat returned at some indeterminate time later – apologies, time is fluid for grumpy shopkeepers in The Cove at this time of year. They cut loose the inflatable and the owner was able to paddle to the beach. The boat then proceeded to the slipway where eager hand executed what was obviously a textbook recovery up the long slip and into the boathouse for the next call.

Much of the rest of the day, though bright, was marred by cloud obscuring the cloud in the south. The day followed the usual profile of a change-over day, busy in parts but with quiet spots in between. The Missus headed off to The Farm, as soon as I had returned from the shout and had a bit of crout, to do something agricultural, I am sure. I cannot say that the beach was all that busy through it all and there was certainly no surfing given that the sea was as flat as a well-ironed sheet.

The day gave us no clue at all about just how many visitors were heading in for this week; we will have to wait until tomorrow for that, I think. Despite the apparent lack of hordes of people, those that were here appeared to have very subtly cleared many of our grocery shelves into bags that they largely brought with them. What an all round good bunch we seem to have, even if we cannot see them.

What also could not be seen was whatever was making some noise in a cave down the other side of Nanjizal at Pendower. The Coastguard cliff team has asked for a Lifeboat as they could not see into the cave from the cliff. Our pagers went off while I was in the middle of the washing up at around twenty minutes to nine o'clock to launch the big boat. For once I did not have to eject anybody from anywhere and headed to the station to launch the big boat followed very soon after by the Inshore boat. It was very picturesque watching the Lifeboat charge off into the soft glow of the recently set sun. I am sure someone must have a photograph of it.

Again, it was unlikely to be a long wait for the boats to return and we hung about on the slipway listening out for progress. It was not long after high water that the boats came back having found nothing of note by which time we had accumulated a full team. The sea as smooth as glass and gently lapping at the slipway, we brought the boat back in what was clearly the second textbook recovery of the day. We are, after all, a very repetitive, very excellent Shore Crew.

August 27<sup>th</sup> – Friday

What an atmospheric morning we enjoyed. There were a few strings of mist clings to the cliffs and draped across the valleys and when the sun rose in the notch of the Valley. It was pretty as a picture, so I took one or two.

There was no time for dwelling on it as the bleddy hound had woken up early so I had adjusted my schedule accordingly. There had been plenty of sand on the beach to amble about on – our cavorting days, I fear, are over – as the tide was a few hours off now. I took her back and let her watch me go about my early morning duties. In fact, she gazed out of the window while I put the milk away.

It was a day of deliveries and dealing with deliveries that had arrived a while ago and we had not yet dealt with. One of those was a geet pile of tea towels that we had ordered in the middle of July and had only just turned up. I was a bit taken aback that one of the designs was listed as 'out of stock', which after six weeks I would rather think is more 'discontinued'.

The putting out of gift stock can be, and generally is, much more than opening the shipping box and throwing it on a shelf – the goods, not the shipping box, you understand. All the hooded sweatshirts that incidentally arrived today, will need labelling so we can easily find them in the store room. The tea towels all need to be individually packed in plastic bags. This is clearly not very 'green' but if we left them unbagged the tea towels would be, or at least brown in very short order.

I also went a bit over the top ordering beer from our local cash and carry and from the local brewery. I am not even too sure that we will need it as despite the forecast for a good weekend, the August bank holiday is not generally the busiest time for us. In an ordinary year the final August week contingent slip away home and are not replaced with anything like the numbers leaving. This, of course, is no ordinary year, so we have no idea about what is heading our way. At least the beer will not go off even if we have nowhere to keep it for a while.

At present we are one of the last places open where beer is available. The OS closes its door frequently and randomly, the Sennen Cove Café next door shuts at four o'clock and the chip shop currently has a queue a mile long for food. In the afternoon we had a visit from one of the staff at the celebrity chef's place at the end that went from fine dining to frozen pizza in a couple of seasons. She told me that they were very quiet today. The bar does not seem to keep regular hours so I suggested that might confuse a person and they were closed last weekend, one of the busiest. She told me that they were short staffed, so I asked if they could not get any tall ones instead. The maid, being of diminutive stature, told me I was a very cheeky man but thankfully smiled. It is not the first time that I have been very grateful that we have a screen on the counter.

We definitely have a few that turned up for the new week as they descended on the shop late on. For the first time in a while we had a proper, traditional five minutes to closing rush at five minutes to closing. It is heartening to know that the good old values have not gone away.

August 26<sup>th</sup> – Thursday

Today was looking the part first thing as we headed for the beach, like a small child with its Sunday best on. The breeze had completely dropped out – windbreaks in stock, of course it has – and no jacket was required as we patrolled the slim sliver of beach allowed us by the tide.

Our trip contained some of the last moments of calm and serenity before the fight started and customers started pouring into The Cove and asking if we had any pasties left when the first electric sliding door in The Cove had only just opened. I really must get a magic instantaneous pasty heater, when we have pasties that is.

Today we were allotted a paltry 29 when we were burning through 70 just a few days previous. I know that this week suddenly made the rest of the August holiday look like the attendance of an under tens football match in the rain but I cannot understand why suddenly we are facing restrictions. Very little information has been forthcoming from the bakery, so I am not sure whether all its customers suddenly decided to double their orders or if there is a production problem.

Once again we were mobbed by customers from early on in the morning and they just kept coming for the rest of the day. This makes filling gaps on shelves, placing orders or resolving problems that might crop up, almost impossible. It was only when the Missus came down to give me a breakfast break at midday that I was able to place our pasty order and sort out a few other supply issues and orders. It was straight back into the thick of it when I returned a little while later.

Into the afternoon, the day slowed pace a little. I was able to put out some surf jewellery stock and fill a couple of other shelves and displays. We had a fish order from a customer, so I decided to add a freezer stock to the list and call it in from our excellent supplier in Penzance. The best thing about them is that the cuts do not come neatly trimmed for restaurant plates but a bit larger rough cuts suitable for use at home. Amazingly, I had sufficient time between customers to vacuum pack and price all of it, but it took until the end of the day.

It was even more amazing when you consider that at six minutes past three my Lifeboat pager went off calling us to an emergency launch. Fortunately, there were only two sets of people in the shop, and I managed to get a lady and her two small children out without fuss. Unfortunately, the other was deaf as a post, a little old lady who kept asking – when I had got close and loud enough for her to hear me – if it was an emergency, which I confirmed, and then whether she could just buy the

fudge she was holding. I explained as kindly as I could it was the sort of emergency that required my immediate attendance and fudge, sadly, was not in the plan.

The boat was launched to a sailing vessel north of Pendeen. It was taking on water, but the lone sailor subsequently discovered that turning off the engine stopped the problem but left him unable to navigate. He was picked up and towed round to Newlyn.

I had long since returned to my post behind the counter and bagging my fish when we started thinking about recovery. The Missus had slipped off to The Farm earlier and did not return until gone six o'clock to top up the soft drinks. I had already decided that it would probably be beyond me to attend the recovery but by that time there were more than sufficient willing hands to help do the job.

Not that I saw, because I was too busy topping up the beer fridge and preparing the orders for the next day, but the boat was brought in on the short slip in what was most certainly a textbook recovery. We are, after all, a very interchangeable, very excellent Shore Crew.

August 25<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday

Radio Pasty announced this morning that Cornwall has the notoriety of having the highest dreaded lurgi rate in the country. Frankly, I am not surprised. It has got to the stage that the majority of customers now feel it quite acceptable not to wear a mask in the shop. Many of these apologise – left the mask in the car, left it on the beach, the dog ate it – before striding in regardless. You cannot pass it on if you apologise first, apparently. It is also sometimes our fault they do not wear a mask. “Have you got any masks for sale?” No? Well, I obviously would have worn a mask if you had sold me one.

I had a very fleeting moment after hearing the announcement when I thought that perhaps we should make mask wearing in the shop mandatory again. I then remembered policing it previously and, quite honestly, I would rather catch the dreaded lurgi than go through that again, which is a scary thought to think.

On a slightly lighter note, the world is being suffocated with plastic, we are told – and we see every day on the beach and in the street. That is why the powers that be thought it a jolly good idea to charge people requiring a single use plastic bag, ten pence. I can tell you now, that no one gives a stuff.

I always thought that charges on bags for a shop such as ours would probably not work as a deterrent. Many people come upon us by accident and are not armed with a bag. A few of the smart ones always seem to have a compressed bag about their person but they are in the minority. Since the charges were introduced in May, I have been more aware of people's habits. Even those making regular appearances during a holiday and have clearly planned to come to us to buy, do not bring a bag with

them. Some of those who I have furnished with quite robust bags on previous days, fail to bring them back on the return trip and then require another and another. I stress that this is the majority from which I conclude, no one gives a stuff.

Of course, it is we handing out those naughty bags, so perhaps it is our fault. We have looked at paper bags like the ones you see all Americans using in the movies. They are very expensive, not terribly waterproof and, I understand, not a whole lot better for the environment either. The solution, without doubt, is for everyone to buy one of our new Old Boathouse cloth bags, which are readily available in the shop and now even on the online shop (although I have not quite got around to updating the photograph), you know, dear reader, the one you somehow manage to skirt around on your way to the Diary page. These are much more voluminous than the last one, just as robust with a slightly darker blue logo image on the front and back.

Here endeth today's gripe and grumpiness (and advertisement feature), although I reserve the right to add more later if it should become necessary.

The morning started with even more brightness than we had yesterday but also came accompanied by quite a sharp easterly that forced me into wearing a jacket down to the Harbour beach. The bleddy hound insisted on going down there even though there was no more than a postage stamp of sand to patrol. She might have problems tomorrow as the tide will be fully in.

We were not quite as pressed as we were yesterday, which was something of a relief. Nevertheless, we were not light on traffic and there were times that queues stretched down the aisles. I did wonder if word had got around that we no longer had an abundance of anything in the shop that people did not bother to come and look. The Missus headed off to The Farm early to gather as much of the dwindled stock as was left. There is no pretence now and everything we have needs to be thrown into the breach.

Those small gods of grumpy shopkeepers have a wickedness about them and not only did a pile of windbreaks turn up just as the chill easterly breeze died out but we had a call from our wetsuit supplier to tell us more full wetsuits would be arriving next week, just after everyone went home. I sought out and read some of the latest analysis on the supply chain issues and it seems we are set to see container prices remain high into 2023. There will also be further disruption because all the various economies are recovering at different rates and there are still port lockdowns and restrictions globally. Interestingly, the article also reported that the ocean freight companies had also learnt how to better manage volumes – and therefore prices. In short, the cost of your body boards, wetsuits and buckets and spades that all went up this year are not going to be coming back down again.

The Diary is just packed with good news today. If you were considering turning to drink after all that, think again. The drinks industry is also going to take time to recover too and although prices have not yet gone up, supply is short. In the shop

we were once again in the position where we had to top up the beer fridge twice in the day. This is likely to extend through the weekend if the forecast is to be believed. I have been making some contacts locally with a few home brewers. It will be 'bring a bottle to the shop and have it filled' by Monday. We cannot obviously say filled with what, but it will be something in some manner or strength alcoholic and Mum's definitely the word, alright.

August 24<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday

We hit the ground running this morning. When I opened the shop door I was nearly bowled over in the rush, along with the delivery of pasties and bread that came with it. It was fortunate that I had already warmed up by helping to ship in another huge delivery from our grocery supplier which felt that substituting disposable barbeques for bags of charcoal would be satisfactory. First, you would need to break apart the grill to get at the charcoal and then find there is some disparity in the amount of charcoal available.

With all these additional people in the Duchy, even local supply is starting to strain at the seams. This morning, a few threads broke loose in the form of a lack of butter arriving from our milkman. Our rather fabulous dairy in the south hiccupped last week with the semi-skimmed milk and now it has run out of its, arguably, best butter you will ever taste. We will be reduced to selling a cheap inferior butter until at least the end of the first week in September.

I have begun to expect delays and shortages from suppliers who source goods or components from abroad but our butter is wholly a Cornish product, although I concede that the wrapping may be from elsewhere. It came as a bit of a shock but I consoled myself that we were still able to get pasties in abundance because for the last three days they have been flying out.

Today was no different other than the previous pasty days, other than the fact it was very possibly busier. The flow of customers had been relentless from an early start and the very first customer of the day asked for a pasty. The notion of how pasties are made to be hot seems to elude some people. This lady was not the first. She was present when the pasties were delivered and in fact she had to wait while I piled them into the fridge. When she asked I confirmed that she wanted it cold but she was most affronted and told me that she wanted it hot. I reminded her that she had just seen them arrive, cold, and that heating them was not an instant process, it took twenty minutes. She was definitely not best pleased.

Given that it was delivery day, the Missus was labouring in the store room all day. This was just as well because tomorrow's pasties would not have got ordered. I could not have got a postage stamp between the leaving customers and those following on behind. The Missus took care of the queue while I called in the order. It was at this point in the day that life as we know it came to a grinding halt, the Earth stopped revolving and, I strongly suspect, certain areas of the Underworld froze over.

We were knocked back from our usual order because demand was so high they could not keep up the pasty production. The restrictions will remain in place until after the holiday weekend. Crikey.

We have reached a crisis point, the last of a long line of final straws, it seems. We almost certainly had the busiest day we have ever had with the numbers passing through the shop. The frustration is that we have been unable to capitalise on it as we are missing buckets, spades, bodyboards, windbreaks and wetsuits all of which are the mainstay of our summer business. It is a problem reflected across the Duchy, in the hospitality trade that is unable to service the sheer volume through restrictions and lack of staff.

Quite how we managed to get this far down the season reasonably successfully is quite remarkable. Quite how we managed to get to the end of the day still standing was a bit of a feat, too. I had a beer at the end of it, I can assure you.

August 23<sup>rd</sup> – Monday

We had an absolutely glorious morning, bright as a button with the sun just clearing the top of The Valley when I took the bleddy hound down to the beach first thing. The warm light of the sun lit up the Harbour wall as the tide lapped closer in, suggesting our swell had well and truly gone from the bay.

Usually, I will wake up white and screaming in the middle of the night if I have forgotten to place the milk order. I was therefore most put out to wake in the morning, long after I could have done something about it, with the nagging doubt that I had omitted it from my closing procedures last night. Checking our telephone logs confirmed it. Fortunately, we were not in dire need of anything except clotted cream and a few cream teas would have to wait for another day. It was, nevertheless, irritating having remembered to place orders all summer long to that point.

I concluded that the best thing for it was to undertake a blistering session at the gymnasium, so I did, and it set me up for the day.

It was a day that needed setting up for but once again it took a little while to get going. It is fair to say that it did not need quite as much time as yesterday but our good visitors – and even some of the bad ones – did not start appearing until later in the morning. By the middle of the afternoon the beach was very crazy busy, much as it had been at the height of our miniature heatwave early in the summer. The camps were thick on the ground from under the beach car park all the way to the entrance of The Valley that was completely choked with tents and windbreaks. That was definitely the place to be when the tide pushed all the rest off the beach at five o'clock.

The cloud rolled in later in the afternoon that cooled things down quite a bit. It coincided with the tide chasing people off the beach and for an hour or so we were

very busy. We went through an astounding number of pasties, so it was just as well we had an astounding number to sell. I think if we had the facilities to offer a wider range of hot food, we would do very well with it. The sheer number of people who cannot get into pubs and restaurants for a meal is legion and as many have said, there are only so many fish and chip meals you can take.

The last few days have also been big on fish sales from our freezer. Strangely we have had no orders for fresh fish until today. Given that the freezer stock is being rapidly whittled away, I will be placing a large order with our Penzance man for decent portions of hake, haddock and the like.

The Missus returned from The Farm with armfuls of chard, rocket and spinach again. I think we may have to adjust the balance of production up there. There was also a small pot of cherry tomatoes the size of which vary widely. You would never see them on a Tesmorburys's shelf but they will be adorning a Boathouse Stores shelf real soon now.

August 22<sup>nd</sup> – Sunday

Well, that is so much better – proper sunshine and just a little high level cloud. Now, we would not want full on sunshine all at once, would we? It prompted a rush on sun lotion purchases, which I thought were now dead in the water and I even had to top up the shelf. The beach was even filling up before ten o'clock in the morning, which I took to be an omen on the same scale as an eagle flying to the left – or was it the right? I will have to consult my Homer – the Greek not the Simpson.

There was, at least, some surf remaining from yesterday's swell, which I am sure was a relief to many. The schools commandeered the sandbar in the near quarter and the proper surfers were out the back at North Rocks on the low tide. It was probably not the ideal time but the swell dropped out quite a bit by the end of the day.

The new contingent took their time but by the middle of the day they were becoming more animated. This animation escalated somewhat in a very short space of time and we ended up flying for the rest of the afternoon. The Missus stuck around to sort out the stock she had brought down from The Farm late yesterday and to prepare for the last – possibly – of the big grocery orders. It is from this point that we need to be careful not to over order or, conversely, to short order when there is still some potential for busyness. That is why I let the Missus do it.

The delivery of short wetsuits on Friday came just in the nick of time. We sold at least half a dozen of them during the afternoon. We started with all manner of beach wares and as the afternoon wore on, this turned to beer, snacks and eventually groceries for tea. It was fairly relentless all the way until teatime when it slowed a little but came back later to bite for a lengthy five minutes to closing dash.

Our beach dwellers had no choice about leaving the beach at high water. We are entering spring tides and the sea comes right up to the rocks under the dunes. I did not really notice until they were all gone by which time we already had them pass through.

As the Missus had topped up all the soft drinks during the last part of the day with all the rest of the shelves there was no need to hang around much after closing. I am still ploughing through the invoices, this time the second geet pile that had accumulated in the shop while I was doing the first. Last year I managed to stuff them all into the same file but this year there is not a chance and quarter two will have to have a second binder. I cannot wait to see the accountant's bill at the end of it.

Nearly there.

August 21<sup>st</sup> – Saturday

The saga of supply issues this year continues apace. With its roots in the Chinese shutdown and the consequent knock on effect, world transport, supply and everything in between has been disrupted. I had not expected British crabs to get in on the act, but we have been unable to get full orders of crab meat throughout the summer. That was bad enough but, crikey, now the cows are at it too.

I ordered a small top up of milk for this morning, just so we have a full dairy fridge for the start of the weekend. I also asked for more Cornish Blue cheese, some sausages and some of the large pots of natural yoghurt that continue to surprise me how well they sell. When I looked in the box outside first thing, however, only the cheese, yoghurt and sausages were present. Our milkman had left a note that told me that one of the supplier dairies had production troubles and the other had to prioritise production to other products, in short a volume issue. That last bit surprised me. Not because demand was so high that some sort of prioritisation had to take place, but that milk was not superior in the list of priorities. I am intrigued to find out what could be more worthy than a pint of milk in the grand order of dairy things.

It was just the weather for a myriad of cups of tea, too. The bleddy hound and I dodged the showers that were still about after a night of heavy rain, not that I heard any of it. It then appeared to clear up as the street came slowly alive. We were just getting through a collection of leavers when a line of showers came through the bay. It was particularly slow moving and lasted a good half an hour or so. It seemed to have gone, which gratified me because I told someone that it would, when one last little lump, trailing behind the main string, drenched us some more.

All the rain cleared through by the middle of the day and the skies brightened. They brightened so much that they turned blue in places and our few arrived visitors were able to bask in the sunshine. It had been warm and humid throughout the morning.

At one point I had considered going upstairs and fighting the bleddy hound for the fan, but I struggled on manfully instead.

What with deliveries and other things going on in the shop, the Missus has not been able to get up to The Farm, so we trust all is well up there and the cucumbers and courgettes have not grown to ridiculous lengths. Our farming strategy may well change forever, anyway, after a gift we received today from one of our visitor friends. They were here earlier in the summer and promised some cuttings from their own business venture. He turned up today bearing some commercial vine plants.

The Farm is on a south facing slope and the Cornish climate very suitable, which I believe is useful, but I have no idea about soil types. Given that Polgoon Vineyard is just down the road I would imagine we are not too far off the right type of soil. All we need now is to know what to do with them. We have been given some basic instructions and we have already learnt that our plants are European but grafted onto American root stock as there is some sort of disease that affects the European roots and we would not want that. It will be three years before we find out whether we have a Chardonnay or a Pinot Noir, as our friend could not quite remember.

I have no idea how long it takes vines to grow. The Aged Parents had one along the wall of the garden at home when I was growing up, left behind by the nurseries that were there before the house. It was more than 100 years old and only bore a decent fruit once as far as I recall, in 1976. The Aged Parent made some half decent wine from it. The Missus has high expectations and has started washing her feet already. Had I only known I would have bought a vine years ago.

A bit of a breeze kicked in during the afternoon that stirred up the erstwhile flat as a dish sea a little bit. There was even a hint of swell organised by a bit of low pressure out in the Atlantic. Unfortunately, it arrived around the time of high water and made it completely useless for any surfing. There may be a little around tomorrow morning for a while before it all goes flat again as high pressure establishes over the country and the paddleboards come out again.

Never mind, there was plenty of throwing yourself off the Harbour wall going on at high water, instead. The wall was lined with black-suited youths competing for who could make the biggest splash. I am not entirely sure that I would have been paddling my board right underneath them as there did not seem to be much caution being exercised. From a distance it could well have been an Attenborough programme on the life and death of lemmings.

It has all been a bit disappointing this week and relatively slow. We are hoping for better in the last week of the holidays, starting tomorrow.

August 20<sup>th</sup> – Friday

There are some strange notions in the heads of people from other cultures. In this instance I refer to the culture of city or town dwelling and I am sure that they feel the same about us. Much of this centres around the immediacy of things in the fast paced life up country.

We had a visit soon after we had opened at half past eight o'clock. The lady told me that she had lost her mobile telephone at Land's End yesterday and had driven for six hours back here to try and recover it. Land's End does not open until ten o'clock, so they were stymied for an hour or two. She said that she had not appreciated that nothing opens early and that her two children were starving, the dear of them. Did I know of anywhere open for food?

I explained that by the time they had driven anywhere that I knew to be open, the café here would be open by then. I suggested that we had bread rolls, and various things that could be used to fill them as well as alternative snacks that might provide succour to starving youngsters. She looked around the shop but I suspect that as we had no food that was immediately ready for eating, the poor children would have to starve some more until someone was available to provide a meal that required no effort in preparing. The fact that this was just twenty minutes before the Sennen Cove Café opened was clearly irrelevant as that would have been far too long to wait.

It was a nothing doing morning once again and our business did not get going until nearly into the afternoon. There was a bit of a flurry at the very outset of the day and then after that, pretty much nothing. It allowed me to trundle in our pasties including a bigger lump of weekend ones after last week's fiasco of finishing them off on the day they came. Naturally, we did not burn through them like last week, so I reduced the weekend estimate a bit to compensate.

The afternoon perked up a bit but not greatly. The high tide beach looked pretty full but it would do anyway with everyone crowded into the sliver of sand available. Again, there was not much going on in the water or on it. I suspect there is only so much paddleboarding on placid waters you can do before it becomes a little tedious.

One pastime that appears timeless is jumping off the Harbour wall at high water, or thereabouts. It is a rite of passage for many youngsters, quite small youngsters at that, claiming it an essential milestone to adulthood, even if they are only six. The practice was quite evident this morning from the million salty footprints leading away from the Harbour slip – unless the Inshore crew took their boots off early.

We actually had a delivery of wetsuits in the afternoon. It was not our full back order but the supplier made a judgement about spreading the numbers it had across all its customers in the same position. It is a little late in the season but better than coming in October and we had them out on the rail inside an hour of their arrival. We now have shortie wetsuits across all the sizes for the last week we need them.

The small packets of sweets that fly off the hooks to children of all ages arrived at the same time as the wetsuits. It was only a couple of weeks we put out the last order and in that time more than 600 bags have gone. Unfortunately, they arrived a day too late else our house guest would have relished the challenge of putting them out faster than they could be sold with the shop open. House guests left us this morning about five hours before the sweets arrived and got home four hours afterwards. I understand it is a brae bit busy on the roads this year.

With seafood left over from the feast last night, the Missus did the most honourable thing and dumped them all in a curry for my tea. The Missus had the remaining moules mariniere; the Missus hates curry – she hates fish too, but oddly will eat seafood.

August 19<sup>th</sup> – Thursday

The weather this week has not been the best. In fact, it has been utter pants for a holiday week, which has resulted in a pants few days of business. A rest is very welcome, but I was rather expecting to have it sometime during September, not in the middle of the high season.

This morning we had mist sitting like a duvet atop us and thick as a bag at the top of the hill I was told. I consoled myself that at least it was dry until it started getting wet half way through the morning. Radio Pasty talked about it clearing and getting brighter in the afternoon, but the afternoon is six hours long and it was just short of half way through that we saw any hint of brightness. We were delivered another slow day, hardly worth getting out of bed for – alright, it was, but it sounded better that way.

The imperfect weather did not stop a collection of beachgoers from gathering on the big beach. At high water they were pushed up against the dunes and looked respectable in quantity. The sea, however, was not an attractive article if you had designs on surfing or bodyboarding or anything at all to do with waves, as there were none. Cue an army of paddleboarders invading the water.

We keep hearing that we are seeing the end of cash. Indeed, our cash takings as a percentage of total, have reduce again this year. The current situation has exacerbated the decline; one lady told me she does not touch cash because of the dreaded lurgi, while standing in a busy shop without a mask on. I am told that it is so much faster with electronic payments, which is probably true if the payment is by card that works in a contactless way. Very often it does not.

Just before we exited the EU, regulations on security of payments changed. It was called PSD2 or Strong Customer Authentication (SCA) and required more regular interruption of contactless payments to request a PIN. In the time it takes to carry out a chip and PIN transaction I could easily process two cash transactions. I sometimes tell customers that it almost never asks me for a pin when I am paying with cash.

We have seen an increase, too, in mobile telephone payments. Watches that can do payments are also on the increase. When these operate well they are as quick to process as a working card payment on the contactless system. They also have the advantage of not having a £45 limit but are prone to a whole host of other issues. On more than one occasion the user's battery has expired just before the payment. There are also delays because the machine requires face recognition or a pin number to be entered or the machine has not been set correctly. Customers can spend minutes frantically keying commands into their mobile telephones while the queue behind them grows increasing restless. Sometimes I like to gently rib such customers by telling them that I hardly ever get asked if my face is the right one when paying with cash. Cash also never asks if I am set up correctly and almost never runs out of battery. It does, however, on occasion just run out but when it does I do not go into a shop and try and buy something.

As if one Lifeboat launch in a week were not enough, the boys and girls gathered for a Lifeboat training launch in the evening. I demurred again as I was still working in the shop at the appointed time of quarter past seven o'clock. With the sea calm as a meditating Buddhist monk, it was the first time in weeks that the training session was able to carry on as scheduled. Both boats were launching into the dimming light of evening and disappeared around the corner for a bit. When they came back even the Y-boat had been launched from the ALB, which was a bit confusing when two RIBs appeared in the bay.

The Missus had prepared a farewell tea for our house guests with a cornucopia of exotic seafood dishes including lobster from the bay, squid, oysters, anchovies, mussels, langoustine and scallops. I think some scrambled eggs might have been appropriate too, but we had some of those in the shop earlier. We ate our sumptuous supper while we watched the Lifeboat being recovered up the long slip in what looked reasonably like a textbook recovery. In a very virtual way, I was with them. We are, after all, a very team-orientated, very excellent Shore Crew.

August 18<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday

It was a damp and mizzle drenched morning and some of the afternoon, too, for that matter. It initiated a flood of complaints and comments and what have you done to the weathers for the entire period. The afternoon brightened but only to the extent that the mizzle cleared and left us with a big grey blanket over us.

The bleddy hound was a tad more sprightly in the morning but still refused to climb the stairs on the way home. She came down them without fuss. The beach was rather peaceful, assisted by a relatively smooth sea clacking away against the shore. I had worn a light rain jacket against the damp but it was mainly just in the air and hardly troublesome at all. It did play havoc with business during the day, though.

The Coastguard must have fixed their helicopter or found a spare one. It did a couple of very low passes of the bay in the middle of the afternoon. Knowing that it had only yesterday near enough dropped out of the sky with engine failure, low I could understand but I think I would have been a little more comfortable if it had made the pass a little further out.

The later afternoon was remarkably quiet, so much so that I thought that we had been transported into October unawares. It was just the sort of time to do a bit of shelf filling and completing those little jobs that had not been done because we have been too busy to do them. It was also a cracking opportunity to sit on my behind and do begger all, so I did that instead. In my defence, I had been productive in the morning, clearing the delivery of bone china mugs that turned up late yesterday. At least a couple of each are on display in the shop and the rest are neatly tucked away in the store room.

We did not fare much better in the five minutes to closing period. The tide was not being helpful either and was not chasing people off the beach at the appointed time. When I looked down there at the appointed time, it had emptied anyway but there clearly had not come past our door. Instead, house guests appeared and filled all the shelves in the shop and the drinks fridge, which was most helpful and sets us up for, hopefully, a busier day tomorrow.

I near enough finished the geet pile of invoices that I had brought up a couple of weeks ago. There just remains a few petrol and post office receipts that are a menace because they are so small. Oh, and then there is the second geet pile that has accumulated in the shop and on the printer while I was keying in the geet pile I had brought up two weeks ago. I think the French call that *déjà bleddy vu*.

August 17<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday

I slept the sleep of the very sleepy last night and woke up even sleepier. How does that work? It must have happened to the bleddy hound as well because I had to drag her out kicking and screaming for her dash to the beach this morning. She was struggling a bit going down the slipway until her best pal came bounding up to meet her at which point she put a little effort into it. I am hoping that it is still just the aftereffects of chasing the squirrel, else I will have to do a lot more carrying and she is going to have to do a lot more losing weight.

Our super-efficient grocery delivery driver arrived early with another super-efficient chum this time and between us we emptied the entire van in just over ten minutes. Had I been watching, I might have thought that players from the Bolshoi had

undertaken the task, it being so precisely choreographed. It makes so much difference to the day to get such onerous work done quickly and without fuss.

Our house guest arrived downstairs early to make a start on the delivery which very quickly turned into four deliveries. The Missus came down a little while later and between them and me on the till the job was done by the middle of the day. Last week we were still floundering late into the afternoon.

Obviously, with such a time saving win under our belts there was enough room for a Lifeboat shout in the afternoon. At half past three o'clock, after the house party had beggared off to the beach and the Missus had gone up to The Farm. My pager went off. There were a few people in the shop and one family laden down with valuable goodies. It fair near brought a tear to my eye to eject them without serving them first.

Very often during the peak season, those having to attend shouts from the top of the hill have immense difficulty with the traffic. The Lifeboat crews have no priority and no rights to go ahead of anyone else. Also, with lights on and visor Lifeboat notice not all that clear to drivers in front, they are mistaken for aggressive or pushy motorists just in a hurry, which can excite adverse response, such as blocking and driving more slowly to aggravate. It is almost certainly for this reason that the Lifeboat launch was delayed as the boat waited on additional crew attending.

The shout on this occasion was to a Mayday call made by a dis-masted yacht ten miles south west of Land's End. The craft was attended by a massive container ship that was standing by while the Lifeboat steamed toward them at top speed. It resulted, in short order, in a tow to Newlyn.

On the way back from Newlyn, with a team of very excellent Shore Crew waiting in eager anticipation, the boat was diverted to serious incidents at Porth Chapel and Pednvounder. The Inshore boat was launched to assist and both boats from Penlee were sent after. There was a head injury at Pednvounder and a spinal injury at Porth Chapel and casualties had to be moved to be accessible for transport out. The complicate matters further the Coastguard helicopter suffered a mechanical failure during the episode and the head injury had to be taken out by the Inshore to be transferred to Penlee's All Weather Boat and on to the heliport at Penzance.

Even before this extension to operations, I had passed over the baton to two worthy colleagues to manage recovery. Having a weary grumpy shopkeeper at the bottoms of slipways is not a clever idea when there are more able hands to help. I was in a land far, far away when the boat came back but I have assurances that it was a textbook recovery up the long slip at gone ten o'clock. After all, we are a very easily replaced, very excellent Shore Crew.

August 16<sup>th</sup> – Monday

The bleddy hound decided that I needed to change my morning routine to save me from falling into too much of a rut. I will normally collect her after I have put out the shop display and put away the milk. This morning she decided to get up with me, so I took her before the shop work. She stayed with me in the shop until I had finished the milk, which I have to say all worked out rather well. I will try it again tomorrow and she will have nothing to do with it, no doubt.

It was another grey day but at least it was bright and dry. Unfortunately, the breeze has switched to the north in general and comes with a bit of a chill. I took the precaution of wearing a jacket when I took the bleddy hound out first thing and needed it.

It took a while for the world to start turning for our visitors; I was quiet and all alone for the first hour or so of the morning. It was not until I came back from the gymnasium that everyone had poured out of their doors and flaps – if they had been camping – and had headed out. There was a fair amount of coat wearing going on and we sold some of what is left of our hooded sweatshirt stock. There is much wearing of those big dry-robies going on, too. They are a bit like a voluminous trenchcoat and are designed for changing under and keeping you warm after surfing. Most I have seen are worn as a bit of a fashion statement.

Many of the intrepid guests headed to the beach regardless of the weather and the coolness. The early birds formed a bridgehead and toughed out high water but by the time afternoon and a bit more beach was available, there were hundreds of the beggars. It was not what you might call classic surfing out in the bay but there were enough waves of a sort to give the schools something to do. The swimming area was pretty busy and so too was the proper surf area, although there was not much doing there. It looked like there might have been some action over on Gwenver but without binoculars, it was hard to tell for sure.

The Missus headed up to The Farm in the early afternoon on a mission to pick blackberries. She spotted these on The Farm hedge and is not too proud to market them as Boathouse Farm produce, after all, they are on Farm land. They are prime product too, as dozens of eager hands will not have been there before, picking out the best ones. She has done that for you.

She was back reasonably early to punnet her collection and prepare for an evening out. She was looking for an excuse to go to the arcades and our guests liked the idea too. They all piled off to Penzance before six o'clock with pennies in their pockets to play on the shove a penny and grab machines down on the front. I doubt very much if the games are played for a penny anymore as they were – or not much more – the last time I went into an arcade. I was tucked up in bed and fast asleep by the time the dirty stopouts came back so I shall wait until tomorrow to see if they broken the bank or not – or perhaps you only do that at a casino.

August 15<sup>th</sup> – Sunday

Clearly, the Aged Parents first expectation of me was that I should begger off as soon as possible and stop costing them bed and board. Other than that, it might be reasonable to assume that they expected me to progress through life and whatever career I had landed in an upwardly mobile sort of way. To be fair, it is probably what I expected too. It would be helpful, therefore, if someone could please explain why, at half past ten this morning after a long and quite varied career, I found myself with my head down a toilet trying to fix the seat.

It was a grey start, middle and end to the day with a breakthrough of some blue sky into the afternoon. There was a bit of drizzle mid morning, which became quite heavy at one point blowing through ahead of a sharp westerly, which became north westerly later. It also came back for a swansong just ahead of the blue sky for good measure. The little low pressure system out to the west also stirred the sea back into a lumpy mass, throwing white water up the cliff opposite.

I had to have words with the bleddy hound in the morning. She hobbled out of the bedroom, first thing and creaked her way down to the beach as usual. She trailed behind me coming back up the slipway and ambled back along the road. I spotted it first: a squirrel. A squirrel! There is not a tree for miles. Anyway, the bleddy hound spotted it next and was after it like a young gazelle. She was a little slower than she used to be and gave up after it dashed into the houses behind the bus turning area.

She ambled back towards me with a 'nothing to see here' expression on her face and stopped at the bottom of our steps. She tries this on every time she comes home and, indeed, many times she does need a lift up there now. In the mornings, though, and after having been rested at The Farm, we try and persuade her to run up by herself. She waited with her front paws on the first step and looked back at me expectantly. It was at this point that I reminded her of her little episode of squirrel chasing and if she thought that I was going to carry her up after that she had another think coming. The cheek of her.

The weather supressed much business during the morning and disrupted it for the rest of the day. I contented myself during the quieter moments with topping up fridge magnets and finding some mugs I did not know I had on the top shelf in the store room. I was looking for some USB chargers that used to be in a box in the same place for a couple of years – I knew exactly where they were until someone shifted it. Worse still, there were far too many out on display so I moved them back into the store room but now cannot remember where I put them. I will find them dreckly.

The Missus went off to The Farm later in the afternoon and guest one threw herself into topping up the grocery shelves ahead of the big ordering at the end of the day. I presided over the pasty operation. We had called in 160 for the weekend, the largest single order for steak pasties we have ever made. We did not quite finish them off but there were not that many left. Had today behaved on the weather front I have no doubt that we would have had an empty fridge by day's end.

Having failed to find a suitable segue during the progression of the day to explain why I had my head down a toilet in the morning, I will just have to bluff it out here. We have a neighbour and friend of advancing years. She brings us flowers for the shop (I like to think she brings them for me, really) and we do the occasional favour in return. She presides over one of the newer holiday lets to the back of us and found that the toilet seat was broken. Her usual recourse for help in that regard were busy, so she asked if we could help, which of course we are pleased to do – the flowers are of exceptional quality and a managed service of changing them comes free. So, I headed up there after the guests had departed. It was a very simple job of tightening a nut but the seat is also missing a rubber pad and will need replacing anyway at some point.

Footnote: I was very surprised to see a grey squirrel in The Cove, not least because we have no trees but it was not that long ago an attempt was made to rid the area of them and bring in the reds. A similar attempt was made in Lizard, which I believe was more successful due to the geography and big signs at Helston saying, 'NO GREY SQUIRRELS BEYOND THIS POINT'. In the Far West there is no natural barrier and possibly no great will to achieve the goal. I also think that the budget ran out when it came to signs as they would need a few more than Lizard. It is conceivable that red squirrels, probably because of all the fuss made after them, do feel a bit superior and considered the area a bit down-market for them. Just so many imponderables in the housing business.

August 14<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

Oddly, it did not seem that busy today, but it took me until five o'clock before I was able to put out the fruit from the morning's delivery. Some time, quite a lot of time it transpired, was used up labelling some wetsuits that we had found up at The Farm. Doing the labelling is time consuming and requires looking up chest sizes and prices and getting them transferred to the label. I have one template for adult and one for child wetsuits and have to change each for size and price. I had thought about having a bespoke label for each suit but would end up with a large number, which would probably use up just as much time finding the right one as changing the template. Thankfully, our residents unwrapped them all and placed them on hangers, which save quite a bit of time.

Again, our forecast was somewhat askew. I listened to the forecaster on Radio Pasty who used 'we think' quite a lot, which I felt was a little vague for a forecast. It was accurate until about mid morning when the occasional drizzle went away and the brightness won the day. There was a fair bit of high level cloud about but plenty of sunshine too, and it was warm signalling another day at the beach for those spanning the weeks or just too idle to go home yet.

I have completely lost touch with who was here and had left and those newly arrived. I am talking mainly about those that I recognise. In conversation I have to hedge a

little as it is no good ask if a person had a good drive down if they are just leaving – or vice versa. Apologies if you are one of them.

More than anything, though, it is a time for children and we have sufficient in The Cove now to number a generation. It is the ideal environment for the little ones to explore their confidence and come shopping by themselves, some of them mere tots with an older brother or sister. Many of them are sent to do the morning bread, newspaper and milk run and handle the money, change and a grumpy shopkeeper by themselves.

This is mainly a morning activity, although many of the older ones come for sweets and treats during the day, too. It is also during the day that we see some of the more unruly and, oddly, they are often with parents as well – are the parents a bad influence, I wonder. One feature that I do not understand at all is the parent that lets the errant offspring run riot in the shop while there are off with the fairies looking at what to have for tea or presents to take home, oblivious to their children's behaviour it would seem. It is only when the child comes back to the parent and wakes them from their reverie with a stolen toy – sometimes broken – in hand that the child will get roundly scolded. I always thought prevention preferable to a telling off and escorting them around the shop until they learn how to behave a far better proposition.

We were treated to a big rush towards closing time as is often the case. It was just as the Missus returned from The Farm with some more Boathouse Farm produce. Today we had rocket and spinach in abundance and I believe there is some baby leaf spinach to come next. Another project for the winter is the production of raised beds for the polytunnel so the Missus does not have to spend quite some much time on her knees picking – it is either that or the employment of some cheap small children to do the work for her. I think we could claim a tax rebate if we paid in sweets.

The guests were away deep for the evening with friends and not back until late. This not only occasioned having to top up the drinks fridges by myself but slumming it with an ordinary toasted sandwich tea. Gad, the ignominy of it.

August 13<sup>th</sup> – Friday

We have not had a Friday 13<sup>th</sup> for a while, or at least not one I noticed. Perhaps it was this impending date that set off an incident locally where a person was cut off by the tide. The report on Radio Pasty first thing tickled me and quite possibly the rescued person at the time, too. The Coastguard Team were sent to assist a chap stuck at Pednvounder Beach near Porthcurno late yesterday. He had been cut off by the tide and found himself half way up a cliff, hanging on and dangling too, perhaps. Unfortunately, Pednvounder being a popular naturist beach, he also found his clothes stranded on another part of the cliff. This led to a rather delicate operation performed by the team, not least I suspect the attaching of the harness, as they were

unable to recover the clothes. I just hope that it was not too much to bare for the Team.

The sea was possibly even more agitated in the morning than it was last night. There was a bit more beach, however, for the bleddy hound and me to run around on. It did feel a little threatening as the waves were pushing quickly up the beach and coming over the wall at the near end as well as the middle. At least I was wearing clothes, which I felt to be a bit of a bonus, just in case.

I noted that the flap at the top of the public bin at the head of the slipway has been broken. This surprised me greatly, as many of our visitors seem to be unable to spot it, let alone use and break it. Once again, it appeared that some think it acceptable, since our bins are locked, to leave piles of rubbish alongside them that I then have to clean up. Oddly, I do not find it too much of an exertion at all to walk the twenty yards to the public bin to drop it into that, even if it is out of my way.

I recall that it had been very warm at some point during the night when it woke me up. The morning did not look up to much and was grey again but even with a fairly robust wind it was still comfortable in a t-shirt when I took the bleddy hound down to the beach. The day had been advertised as being a grey one but by fairly early in the morning the cloud cover broke and the day blossomed. It was a little hazy but that could be forgiven on yet another blazing beach day.

That sea was still being a bit naughty at low water. After my blistering session at the gymnasium and I had returned home, we – visitors and I – watched a lone surfer at the end of a long rip running out from the southern end of the beach. He was thrashing around for a while, heading in all directions apart from the right one until a Lifeguard paddled out to get him.

Along with the August rule of our house guests earning their passage, we also expect a certain level of behaviour commensurate with the culture of the place. Failure to maintain such standards is treated the same as failure to do work, expulsion! Therefore, I was somewhat taken aback to notice that scones were about to be consumed and in the preparation thereof clotted cream was being applied directly to the scone. Not wishing to jump immediately to a conclusion, I asked whether a cream tea was in progress. I am still considering the implications of the answer and think that I may have to defer to the Cornish Gorsedh for a ruling: you can hardly have jam first when you do not have jam with your scone and cream but technically it is still cream first – and last.

Like last Friday we were busy again in the shop. Do these people not know it is a change-over day? Once again I had ordered in additional pasties to even the load at the weekend. By the end of the day we had used all these up and now have to order in an unprecedented volume for tomorrow, which will please our grumpy and puffing delivery driver no end if he is on. The Missus took our guests up to The Farm in the

afternoon so they could rip apart the store there. They returned with a truck full of goodies for the shop and between them installed most of them on the shelves.

With closing came a big rush of fridge topping up while one of our party went and prepared our tea. The Missus cooked a seafood chowder last night thus introducing or gourmet week and consequently our esteemed guest threw himself into production of a rather superior mushroom risotto. I have no idea where this oneupmanship will lead but Beluga caviar and d'Alba Madonna white truffles are only an Internet click away.

August 12<sup>th</sup> – Thursday

Ah, the glorious 12<sup>th</sup> and it certainly was today. From a very grey start the ugly duckling of a day turned into a beautiful butterfly. That sort of thing goes on here a lot. We also have sightings of mythical creatures like unicorns and choughs.

It was a slow start and the whole morning did not seem to get out of second gear. It was a precursor to a big and tremendous afternoon, we discovered, after the afternoon happened. Actually, I think we had an inkling about it as the afternoon happened, which was an odd occurrence because on days such as this everyone heads for the beach and stays there. This was against nature and very unexpected and just not on. It caught us completely by surprise.

There was a good eating of pasties going on and buckets and spades flew out - those that are left - all afternoon. It is buying of going home presents day for many, too, and amongst the beachwares, gifts piled up on the counter. It was an acceptable apology for deserting us yesterday and we forgave everyone involved in that particular insurrection.

The beach was mobbed throughout the day and the sea was full of various revellers. The tide is out for the most part of the day at the moment but high water pushed people off the beach towards our closing time, We are therefore rammed from about half past five o'clock for an hour or so. This was particularly marked today and I was head down at the counter while the world turned about me, oblivious to all apart from the flow of goods being put in front of me.

Family visitors to our humble abode arrived today. Visitors here during the peak season do not get a free ride and put themselves to work not long after they arrived. We find that one volunteer is worth the time save by threatening family members with removal of food and accommodation during their stay. Even then, we were topping up shelves after closing as no matter how many assistants and helpers we have, it is still nigh on impossible to stock the shop while it is open.

Again, I was asked about Lifeboat launchings and once again I had to disappoint. It was not apparent why to start with but as the evening progressed the sea became more and more boisterous. It is at least the second week we have cancelled due to

sea conditions and I expect people are beginning to wonder why it is called an All Weather Lifeboat. It is simply that although we could launch the boat, even the very excellent Shore Crew would struggle to recover it in such conditions. We also find that the general public can get a bit unreasonably sentimental about watching expendable Shore Crew bobbing off into the Atlantic having been washed off the slipway.

We were lulled to sleep – not that it was necessary – by the roar of waves in the bay as the sea upped its game into the night.

August 11<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday

Ah, we have gone all grey again. Such a disappointment after all the sunshine and frolics of yesterday and just to add a little bit of interest, it mizzled here and there too.

It was not all bad when I took the bleddy hound down to the Harbour in the morning. She chose to go around the block yesterday as the tide was all the way in. It was not that different today but she went down anyway. It must have been because I was not so much in a hurry in the morning as I was yesterday.

The weather gave us a day off the manic rush of serving customers, although it was still fairly steady all day but still resulted in the quietest day since the middle of July. The difference down on the beach was very marked. I heard from one neighbour that the queues for the beach kiosk and café were beyond reason yesterday, snaking out along the beach and tempers were flaring in the car park. I was told that it was great entertainment. All the world a stage, indeed.

If only we had some deliveries today we could have knocked them out in short order. As it was, I topped up the sunglasses, the surf jewellery stand, the fridge magnets and the fudge boxes all before nine o'clock. Inflating some balls and reorganising the bread on the shelves was really begging to grasp at straws for something to do, so I gave up after that.

The enforced pace allowed me time to recall some customer events of the last few days that eluded me at the time to share with you, dear reader. As you might imagine we have a huge number of children pass through the shop. Some, in fact most, are polite and well behaved. Then there are the misbehaving, which can be categorised perhaps into the plain downright errant with little hope of redemption and others more playful or somewhat wayward.

In the latter category was a very small child in a pushchair. Mother wheeled her in and proceeded around the store on the mission of shopping for some groceries. She came back to the till a few minutes later and asked if she could leave the pushchair and its contents at the end of the counter because her daughter kept pulling things off the shelves as they went around. I was busy at the time and did not pay much attention.

I continued to serve customers while I heard a giggle, a scrape and a crash as one line of tinned sweets fell to the floor. There are four lines of sweets and there were four giggles, four scrapes and four crashes as she worked her way through the sweet tins. I found this strangely amusing to the point that I was in kinks during the carnage. The mother, afraid of her daughter dragging things off shelves had parked her next to a set of shelves. No harm or lasting damage was done and the little girl was blissfully unaware of her misdemeanour. I was very glad mother did not park her next to the gin shelf.

We do have a jolly jape with our customers from time to time, whether they are ready for it or not. I do not know of many places where I would get away with telling customers who ask for onions that they are in the onion fridge or that the mushrooms are in the mushroom fridge (same fridge) or that unreachable things on a high shelf are only for tall people. They get their own back, whether consciously or not, when being asked if they would like a bag by responding 'only if you have one'! One day I will reply that we do not and see if they query why I asked in the first place.

The weather closed in a good deal toward the end of the afternoon. This made a sedate day very sedate indeed before becoming very dull. I am sure that there were things that I should have been doing but for the life of me I could not think what they might have been, Instead, I ordered more ice creams. It seems like the right thing to do.

The mizzle thickened into low cloud that finished being wet but started to lift towards closing time. It slowly made a lateral climb up the cliffs opposite, clearing below as it went and out to the west it started to brighten. I am sure I have mentioned before that we have started to welcome rather than fear these respites from the sheer busyness of the season. I do hope that this is a Zen attainment rather than some mellowing that suggests old age. That would be quite insufferable.

August 10<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday

Did I say the last few days were a bit sedate, not what we expected at all and that our visitors had forgotten how to shop? Well, it seems that they remembered all of a sudden and on the same day. It also transpires that every delivery driver from miles around decided that today would be the exact right day to deliver any order that we had contemplated making. Add to all that every supplier or cold caller who felt the need, decided today was the day to call on the telephone. It made for a very interesting day.

It was the first properly decent day that we have had in a little while. Though not quite rip gribbler standard, it was none too shoddy, nevertheless. The day seemed to get better as it went on and the crowds seemed to get bigger. It is almost certain that the crowds did get bigger as opposed to just looking like they did, it just sounded better in the last paragraph.

Those big crowds starting descending on us in the early morning and just kept coming through the rest of the day. I had taken the bleddy hound around the block just before seven o'clock and that was the last time I saw daylight – metaphorically speaking – until the Missus came down at gone one o'clock. The onslaught was constant and varied and I was back on the case and just gone two o'clock to place the bakery order for the next day. We were both hard at it, the Missus in the store room and me behind the counter, for the rest of the day and into the evening.

Since the Missus had commandeered the store room and the freezer top where I vacuum pack fish orders, I waited until after we closed and packed them on the counter. I had managed to get the customer orders out in plain bags but everything we did today was just fit for purpose and just in time. Having started earlier than the Missus, I left her to finish off shelving the last of the mammoth orders we took in today. We would not want too many days like that and certainly not consecutively. The busyness in the shop is what we are geared up for but to handle the incoming deliveries en masse at the same time was something of a challenge.

Then, suddenly, it was time for bed.

August 9<sup>th</sup> – Monday

It was another day of mixed weather fortunes, starting out grey and getting brighter at one point before heading back into the grey again. The main point was that it was dry, in the main, and rather warm and allowed another opportunity to head to the beach and stay there. It must have been all the pasties they ate because we were eaten out of house and home again.

This left us sitting in the doldrums again in the middle of the day and, this time, without shelves to stock or orders to place. A delivery turned up during the afternoon that gave me some work but most of it will go into the back of the truck and up to The Farm.

The doldrums reminded me that I watched the first, or possibly the last, of the Fastnet racers go through to the north west. I could not really miss the sail, even on the horizon it was big. I saw them through the window of the gymnasium as I was completing my blistering session but I forgot to check on them when I came back.

Part of the reason for my lapse of memory was that I was accosted by Prof on my return. She is here on a visit, which included a tour of the more salubrious emporium in The Cove and one recently finely toned grumpy shopkeeper. Prof recently shared an auto-biography book with me that surprised me with a tenuous link to the Aged Parent. When I asked him, he told me that he had met the author once during their work careers. Hopefully we shall see a bit more of Prof and her book recommendations during the coming couple of weeks.

It was pre-ordained that we would get busy after five o'clock. The spring tides do not leave much room at the top of the beach and most of our beach goers were shoved off their perch. It was not a long-lived rush but enough to make the day look respectable for a school holiday in high season.

The Missus turned up late from The Farm with a truck full of our dwindling stock. We are near the bottom of the barrel with another three weeks to go. There will be slim pickings indeed for the back end holiday makers unless I can pull some rabbits out of some hats. It looks bleak, but I have not given up trying.

I hit the invoices again on my retirement upstairs. It is indeed a mighty pile that I am tackling and although I seem to do a decent handful each evening, the pile does not seem to be going down at all. I must try harder as all my teachers gave up saying.

August 8<sup>th</sup> – Sunday

The boys at the Meteorological Office played an absolute blinder with their latest jolly jape. They must have been rolling around on the floor laughing at all the drenched souls about during the morning. Yesterday, they had us believe we would have a sunny spells sort of morning. We could gallivant about in the certain knowledge that a light pair of trows and t-shirt were just the dress for a cool sort of morning.

Aha and surprise! The first heavy shower came and went and lulled us into a false sense of security that a rogue cloud had interfered where it should not. It was come and gone before most people were up and about. There was a pause, enough to lure out the breakfasters, the early beach goers and walkers before a big heavy line of showers marched through The Cove. What delightful fun.

We had to wait a while for our sunny spells but the rain we were promised for the afternoon was relegated to the evening. It did not dissuade an army of visitors from descending on the beach and setting up camp or from invading the waves in arrowhead formation or standing on the edge and watching people invade the waves. As the sun came out into the early afternoon, the numbers increased but noting like the volume we were seeing last week.

In the shop we had the most sedate Sunday that we have had in a while. It is possible that our new influx have forgotten how to do shopping, so we might have to undertake a programme of education. It was not exactly a beach day, but I had the feeling that that is where many of our potential customers were all day. The quietness enabled us both to undertake some much needed shelf filling, which took most of the afternoon. It also meant that the majority of the drinks topping up was done then and we had the entire evening off.

With our evening off we placed the grocery orders and, after some tea, I did another pile of invoices. Sitting down with our feet up, reading a book or watching television is highly overrated, we feel and if we did not feel, it would be extremely hard luck.

August 7<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

It was tipping down when I awoke from my slumber at early o'clock. It was all rather gloomy too and full metal jacket waterproofs were required even to get the display out to the front of the shop and to take the milk in. The bleddy hound was definitely not happy about it. She got as far as the top of the slip where the wind was throwing the rain straight into our faces, turned around and went home again. We were out again ten minutes later when her best buddy called around. The rain had eased a fair bit and she took herself down to the beach after a bit of meeting and greeting.

It was understandably a slow morning. Those that did venture out after the rain had cleared complained of the wind being a bit lively. It stayed that way for most of the day, stirring up the already lumpy sea. It was shaping up a little better than it was yesterday and providing some useable surf for the boys and girls out there getting wet.

*The Times* newspaper had a feature naming the top 35 surf beaches in the UK. The Cove, including Gwenver came in at number two. Further down the list was Praa sands, another fine surfing beach, which *The Times* described as an 'unpretentious English beach'. Ouch! That is *The Times* off Mebyon Kernow's Christmas card list.

It was into the afternoon before we saw a groundswell of new arrivals. They all appeared to be hungry for pasties and we, or rather they, ate deep into our weekend stock. It upset our pasty delivery man gravely that our Saturday order included the volume that we hoped to spread across to Friday. The boys and girls of our pasty company have certainly worked out of their socks this season as the volumes have gone quite bonkers. We would never have dreamt of having 160 or more pasties just for a weekend.

It was busy enough today but it was definitely a 'rest' day for us. The afternoon looked quite alluring and was warm, apparently, out of the wind. Towards evening, with the sun dropping in the blue sky, the boisterous sea looked splendid with its deep blue and sparking white. It was bouncing up the cliffs opposite at the usual spots, which is not the sort of behaviour we expect from our weather during the summer holidays. It does have a bit of previous for being naughty during August month, so we should not be entirely surprised.

August 6<sup>th</sup> – Friday

Our friends at the water board are exceedingly diligent in their work. I had an electronic mail from them today to tell me that they had carried out a detailed risk assessment and decided that it is far too dangerous for one of its employees to

come and read our water meter. Since I would have thought that most meters are outside, I am not entirely sure what the dreaded lurgi risk might be in reading my meter, but they are experts after all and I must defer to their greater knowledge.

However, the letter offers a bit of a conundrum. In order that I might receive an accurate six monthly water bill it suggests that I might like to read the meter but it stresses that I should only do it if "it is safe for you to do so". Given that its own experts have agreed that the procedure is unsafe for its own employees I am not certain what to make of this instruction. Is the company suggesting that we are braver and more resilient than its highly trained meter readers or that we are merely more expendable? I think I may have to seek professional advice.

Whatever the case there would be no meter reading going on today. My own risk assessment said that I would either get trampled by visitors waiting on getting into the Sennen Cove Café or get very wet as it rained sporadically and without great warning on and off, certainly during the morning.

The afternoon brightened considerably and the day became one to be out and about in. Last Friday we enjoyed a little respite as a bunch of visitors left and it became proper change-over day quiet. We had rather expected the same of today, so were completely taken by surprise as our busyness returned with a vengeance. Pasties that we ordered in to supplement the weekend stock were soon being used for today instead. Alongside the pasties, our hooded sweatshirts were clearly items of great desire and we are now facing a shortage of many sizes across the range. We will have to redefine the term, busy, I think.

The sea was pretty feisty when I looked out first thing. It was even feistier later in the day and so much so that the Lifeguards red flagged the beach. They were having continual problems keeping people from diving in for a swim and trying to keep tabs on a group of young surfers who thought that going out through a rip would be a good idea. A little way into the afternoon the Lifeguards cordoned off the middle part of the beach on the discovery of what was reported as being a rusty grenade. It is just as likely that the Lifeguards thought up the idea to keep people off the beach but I suspect that the police, Coastguard team and Navy bomb disposal might have frowned upon such a ruse.

Given that the Navy had a look then stood around not looking particularly anxious or animated, chatting with the Lifeguards in a nonchalant sort of way, I would guess it was the rusty baked bean can I thought it was to start with. Oddly, just as I wrote that, there was a bit of a bang from the beach. Looking over, there was a small puff of smoke rising. It was clearly an explosive baked bean can. I learnt later from someone who was there that a small boy found the item while trying to find rocks to balance upon one another.

We remained busy right up to the last hour and discovered that it was another record day. There was clearly sufficient stock to make people's day and the surf jewellery I

only finished putting out yesterday is already looking depleted. I have managed to find some more buckets and spades from our suppliers, although at inflated prices, they should see us through the next three weeks of mayhem.

There was some stocking up of drinks after we closed but we are getting quite adept at doing that quickly, now. It is just all the other shelves that need attention and we just need a few more hours in the day and we shall be fine.

August 5<sup>th</sup> – Thursday

It was a bit of a surprise to look up and see rain on the skylight. I do not recall the last time I looked at a forecast so it should not have been too much of a shock that it would rain at some time.

It was more light drizzle than anything while I was preparing the shop and, more pertinently, while I was running the bloody hound down on the Harbour beach. There was a bit of a draught coming off the sea while we were down there but even so, in the ambient warmth, it was all quite pleasant. It was not until after I opened the shop that we had some of the driving rain Radio Pasty promised us,

Not long after the rain passed through there were signs of brightness. Although there was the odd shower or two throughout the day, we were largely dry and warm and a day that I thought might give us some respite turned almost as busy as the previous two. It had crossed my mind that I would have time to put out the rest of the small sweet bags that sell in abundance. I had managed to put out about half a dozen types a couple of days ago and they were being unduly depleted being the only ones available. I got as far as another half a dozen before the weight of customer traffic forced me back behind the counter. The Missus finished the job when she came down.

Instead, I switched my attention to the surf jewellery that had arrived the previous evening. This display, too, had suffered from the repeated attentions of the young cool dude and dudesses who wear that sort of thing. These trinkets can be unpacked behind the counter between customers and I sneak out to the stand that is just opposite the counter and place them when the coast is clear. Even then it took most of the day to finish it off.

That would not have been possible yesterday or the day before, so we were quite a bit less busy than that. There were even moments of quiet where a grumpy shopkeeper might scratch his behind if he were so minded to. These vanished from memory into the afternoon when much going home present buying seemed to happen.

There had been a Lifeboat training launch tentatively planned for the evening. I had several enquiries during the day. The powers that be watched the impending swell and decided that it would be not the best for training and recovery, even on the short

slip, which disappointed several small boys who had been asking all week when the boat would launch. We forget, having seen it so often, just how exciting it is to watch the big boat lumber and rattle down the slipway to a big dramatic splash at the end and for many a small child it is the highlight of the holiday.

We closed as the breeze started to increase from the west and the Missus got wet taking out the bleddy hound last thing. We had a night off from restocking the drinks cabinets, so I did a pile of invoices instead.

Tomorrow holds much excitement for me and I can hardly wait. I get to try out my shiny new gymnasium plimsols. They better be good as they cost me more than fifteen pounds. My last ones finally disintegrated after six years of blistering sessions, and they only cost ten pounds. I am hoping for better from the more expensive ones.

August 4<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday

Well, stone the crows, or rather not, as it is frowned upon these days. Our theory that grey days are the busiest was properly tested today because it was something of a rip gribbler. The sun was shining and the skies blue for all of the day and we were rammed for most of the morning and into the afternoon. Of course, had the skies been cloudy, we would have been much busier, ahem.

It was quite deceptive as to how busy the beach was, the tide being high for most of the afternoon. Everyone was squashed up against the dunes but thankfully, the tides are small and there was a bit of room left for a foothold. Even then, it was clear it was probably a day that was one of the busiest that the beach had been with the camps thinning out past the Valley and nearly to North Rocks. Once again there was little movement in the water and paddleboarding or kayaking was the order of the day.

The Missus eventually managed to break away after fending off a pasty fest and several rear guard actions. She left me with a warmer full in case a reserve battalion turned up and she made a swift exit. We seem to be getting the numbers about right over the last few days and have enough for a bit of flexibility in demand. We just hope that the hordes do not change their habits.

After the Missus returned with goodies from our store at The Farm, we took stock of where we are. It seems we are now running out of buckets and spades and only a limited supply of these is available from our suppliers and even those at inflated prices. I think we probably ordered twice what we normally would have at the outset of the year but should still have gone bigger. Gosh, who would have thought.

The beer fiends are back with a vengeance and are working their way through our emergency supplies I secured last week. I was right in assuming that it did not matter

what the beer was called as long as we had some; the alternative brews are flying out. I spent the first hour of the evening replacing the gaps in the beer fridge – alright, replacing the entire contents of the beer fridge and the Missus went down later to do the soft drinks.

We have fallen into a routine where we both instinctively know our tasks. My early morning was managed sufficiently well to get a call in to the birthday girl. I feared that it was a little early, but she had been up watching the Olympics – who knew there were Olympics going on? I was delighted that she remembered who I was; it has been some time since I called last.

As I looked out into the gathering gloom, while I addressed the three hundred newspaper vouchers we had accumulated in the past few weeks, I watched a couple of silhouettes of paddleboarders as they made their way across to the big beach. It reminded me of the summers of my student youth, watching the more well-off students steer their punts smoothly across the Cherwell at Oxford. I saw photographs in a book once; we were allowed to use the library for good behaviour in the school I was at.

August 3<sup>rd</sup> – Tuesday

Crickey! It was some busy today.

It was overcast but quite warm down on the Harbour beach this morning. It stayed that way throughout the day with the temperature climbing as it went. The sea went flat calm and an army of paddle boards issued forth from the beaches, cruising here and there across the bay all day long.

Out of the melee that was our entire day, a gentleman came and explained that an elder relative used to trade locally. He would say that grey days were always the best for shopping as people did not want to spend all day on the beach. It is a phenomenon that we are very familiar with and not more so than today.

We were busy in the extreme today. Another previous record day now lies in tatters as we unconsciously trod all over it, we thought. Unconsciously, mainly because I could not have told you during the day which way was up or which way to tie your shoe laces. All there we knew was a queue down the shop and relentless keying numbers into the till. If that sounds like a complaint, I can happily assure you, dear reader, that it was not. I can dance to that particular tune all day long and if the shelves filled themselves up, even longer.

You might imagine how disappointing it was, therefore, to see at the end of the day that no records were broken. The result was not too shoddy, it is just that you get a feel for these things and it was quite the busiest day we have had so far. My guess is that we no longer have any high value goods, such as wetsuits, boadyboards and

windbreaks that would have ramped up the numbers and the sales were a plethora of smaller transactions.

While all this was going on the Missus was laboring away in the store room with the three huge deliveries that we had during the morning. There was so much that the entrance to the store room was chock full of boxes and it was impossible to get further than the pasty oven. A mark of how busy it was, we were selling goods that had not yet been unpacked and priced.

Needless to say, the Missus did not get up to The Farm today but while the cat's away ...

August 2<sup>nd</sup> – Monday

This year's contender for I-don't-care-if-it's-unconventional-I'm-going-to-do-it-anyway goes to:

a small girl child who attended the shop to pick up some items for her breakfast. Her father told me that she had been offered all manner of alternatives for a breakfast on the beach from sandwiches to sausage rolls. So, what did our young lady want? Cornflakes, of course. They came to the shop not only to purchase the cornflakes and the milk but also to buy a bucket to put them in and a small spoon to eat them with – luckily we have spoons, else I imagine a small spade would have been purchased too. Way to go, girl – break free of those chains.

It was not a bad morning for sitting on the beach and having some breakfast, in fairness. Probably not on the Harbour beach, though, that had accumulated some oar weed from the last storm. This was just as the tides receded and it will be left high and dry until the next spring tide by which time it will honking and infested with flies. I think I will avoid taking the Inshore boat out for a bit.

A little bit of high water is clearly no impediment to camping down on the big beach. It was not the biggest of tides and there was a modicum of sand to sit on and sit on it our visitors did. They were packed in there for a while until the tide receded and things became a little more comfortable. Despite Radio Pasty's warning of isolated showers, it was a pretty tolerable beach day. It was a pretty tolerable shop day, too, because it was not so hot that our beachgoers did not feel like moving about from time to time; we were busy all afternoon and, it turned out, busier than yesterday.

I mentioned last week that the Missus used our counter top collection to fund some bacon sandwiches for those that had been out all night helping to pull sailors off stricken yachts all night. The incident attracted a few donations at the time, which were most welcome but I had not appreciated that the word had travelled. A local lady from the top of the hill came by today with a gift for us. It would have been her and her husband's wedding anniversary today and she told me it could not have been a more fitting way of marking the day. That was a bit special.

The Missus was late back from The Farm and we hurried after closing to top up the fridges and clear out the store room ahead of tomorrow's big deliveries. The bleddy hound was most put out about this change in operations as she was already late for her tea when they got back, waiting a further hour was just bad form. Luckily one of the sausage ladies from next door – who was a man this time – left a spare sausage for her and she was treated to some of that in the meanwhile. Sadly, no one had left a sausage for me, and I just had to wait for mine.

August 1<sup>st</sup> – Sunday

Grey again it might have been first thing, but it seemed to have some potential. By the middle of the day we were seeing a widening blue sky through a bit of haze and the good visitors to The Cove were exalted. Our end of the street went from quiet contemplation to thronging hordes in very short order and summer balance was restored.

At the other end of our see saw and, indeed, the other end of The Cove, the beach was packed with revellers. So busy was it that some had spilled into the sea, but they did not seem to mind very much because they stayed there for most of the day. I think that there were rather more camped above the high water line than we have seen in a while. They must have built up during the later part of the afternoon because when I first looked around the middle of the day, it looked pretty thin.

It got a tad busy in the afternoon so I quite surprised myself that I managed to sort out our hangers. Hangers are entirely necessary items in the shop for displaying our hooded sweatshirts, shorts and wetsuits and all manner of other clothing types. They are also, when they are not in use, a monumental pain in the bottom. As items come to the till, we strip the hanger out and it gets unceremoniously slung under the counter.

It does not take long for them to start spilling out onto the floor, at which point we start tripping over them. If we are feeling in a tidy mood, they get slung into an old crisp box along with previously slung hangers. Eventually, the boxes – there were three full ones when I looked – need to be sorted out because we can fit no more hangers into them and there is not enough space for a further box.

I was brutal with my operation, dumping an entire box of hangers that were either not suitable any longer or just because we had sufficient better ones. We will, of course, buy in some garments in the near future that will require the hangers that I threw out but that is just something I have become accustomed to over the years.

The day was far busier than I realised. It is too easy to become embroiled in all the busyness and become part of it rather than being able to look at it objectively. Some call it firefighting where the urgent items get attended to and the important ones get left behind.

After we closed, I was determined to catch up a little of some of the important bits and after doing our weekly order, I attacked a pile of invoices that needed to be input into the computer system we share with our accountant. I managed to do a pile of about forty and if I can do at least twenty for the next few days we shall make a reasonable dent in the bigger pile that awaits me. It is a good job that my name is not Jack, else I would be a very dull boy indeed.