

DIARY 2024

June 30th – Sunday

It had only just stopped being wet when I took ABH out first thing. The warmth that we had even in the middle of the night – she had me up at one o'clock as well – had completely evaporated and the wind, from whichever westerly direction it was coming, had ramped up and was being unreasonably cold. Winter, or at least autumn, had returned to The Cove.

I felt this most keenly while I tried to sort out our new general waste bin. I had put it out the back until it was ready to be used and in the meanwhile the builders had covered it with cement dust. It only needed a quick wash down but, as ever, I had left it until the last minute to do anything about it.

One of the issues was that it needed to be put out at the front of the shop to be washed down. Before I did that, I needed to fit the lock else it would be full inside an hour and the lock to do that had been sitting on the counter since Tuesday. I went around to fit the lock in the quiet of yesterday afternoon more as a way of escaping the tyranny of the cash and carry order than anything else and discovered that the old lock did not fit the new bin. I looked at ways to modify either the bin or the lock, but it was hopeless. A new lock was required hence incurring yet another additional cost on top of compostable food waste bags of the new waste collection scheme.

We cannot get the new lock before the middle of the week, so I have tied the lid down with twine in the interim. I will just need to replace it either side of the collection tomorrow. I have also now stuck the 'no litter' signs on it along with hard of thinking instructions on how to find the public bin twenty metres further down. I had thought to paint a dotted line on the road but while it may help in locating the public bin, it will not bring it any closer, which I think is the chief stumbling block.

So, there I was wondering what sort of day we might have with some bright sunshine breaking through but some very dark and ominous cloud out to the northwest – where the wind was coming from – when our Lifeboat pagers went off. A dive boat down near the Runnelstone had broken down and required a tow back to Newlyn. We duly launched the big boat into the teeth of a robust northwesterly, shortly before eleven o'clock.

I watched the progress with professional interest as I had to determine the time we might be recovering the boat on its return. We had already been scheduled to launch at four o'clock to take part in the National Coastwatch Institute 30th anniversary celebrations. The NCI are relaying a flag, or it might be a torch or perhaps an eggcup, around all its stations and we were set to carry the item, whatever it is, between Cape Cornwall and Gwennap Head, windiest place in the universe. It could not be taken directly to the station as it is at the top of a cliff, so it was dropped off at Porthgwarra instead.

Bearing in mind the later launch, some smart Alec at the station thought it a wizard idea to bring forward the relay element so that we did not have to launch and recover the boat twice. This was happily arranged by said smart Alec and by our usual method of telepathic communications, I discovered the new arrangements for recovery. The boat would also be left stropped at the top of the long slipway to be on display for the sing song by St Buryan Male Voice Choir later in the evening.

I had shut the shop for the launch and doubt that I inconvenienced many. When I got back, we had transitioned into a much busier day, and I had only been gone half and hour. We remained relatively busy for some hours to come, which was a much needed improvement on yesterday. We were also flying through the pasties (sorry, MS) and it was just in time as I had planned a very frugal order for Monday on the strength of sales so far.

A friendly kayaker dropped by shortly after I returned from the launch. He was interested in what had occurred as he was raising money for the RNLI by kayaking from Land's End to somewhere north of Camborne. I suggested that he put it on the back of a trailer as no one had kayaked the journey overland before. As a kindness to a clearly frail of mind grumpy shopkeeper, he changed the subject and pointed out a huge flock of gulls bobbing about half way to Cape Cornwall. We agreed that it was most likely a shoal of some sort, possibly mackerel or bait fish. He remarked that it was odd because he had kayaked through such flocks before and often had seen that there was actually nothing there. I told him that of course there was not – “Look, a kayak coming. Quick, hide.” – translated from the original mackerel.

We mustered at two o'clock to bring the Lifeboat back which was just enough time to prepare the long slipway. There was a fair swell running across the tow, aided and abetted by the robust northwesterly that made me question the advisability, a little too late, of just wearing a t-shirt to the party. I had with me a new trainee at the bottom of the slip who very quickly mastered the skill of catching the heaving line and hooking it to the span. Between us we managed to execute what was clearly a textbook recovery in rough conditions before dragging the boat to the top of the slipway. We made sure all was secure before using a ladder to allow the crew to disembark. The boat will remain in place until after the singing concert in the evening. We are, after all, a very thoughtful, very excellent Shore Crew.

I came back again to the shop just as the peak of the day was starting to slip away. There was a bit of time to do a few jobs that I had been unable to do before but the bigger jobs, such as placing some orders still eluded me. I am going to have to find time to do it because we are running out of things that I would rather we had, to avoid some awkward questions later. As luck would have it, I half managed to do the stationery order, meaning that I wrote it down, but I am yet to do it on the computer. Hopefully, I will have time in the morning.

The highlight of the evening was the St Buryan Male Voice Choir having a bit of a sing-song on the wharf above the Harbour beach. It was the reason we had left the boat out on the slipway. If it had been high tide, it would have been floating in the Harbour. The Missus had done a fair bit of organisation along with others on the Lifeboat station events team but come the time of concert, she was free to take Mother along for a listen. After it was over, she repaired to the OS as she is the keeper of the funds, raised by customers to pay for some beers for the boys and girls of the crew. Thank you all very much for your kind donations and buying of second hand books and music CDs. It is hugely appreciated, and every penny goes in some way to the benefit of the crew.

June 29th – Saturday

I was up at sparrow's, although it was a little earlier than I had planned but ABH did a marvellous job of kicking me out of bed. A speedy walk around the block with her followed by a quick lick behind my ears and I was ready for the day and in particular the arrival of our big cash and carry delivery. When I say 'ready' what I really mean is I knew that it was coming.

Matey and I made brisk work of unloading the truck that he had come in. He is a personable chap and we had discussed the world at large but more specifically the way in which deliveries had changed over recent years. We bemoaned the advent of strict controls on the driver, with tracking devices and computer models setting out the amount of time per delivery which never seems to marry up to reality. The delivery we were undertaking was free of such restriction and allowed us time to converse.

We both felt that the new world was a retrograde step because with online ordering, the delivery was very often the only time that there was contact between the company and the customer. From my own point of view, I am happier ordering from companies whose drivers are friendly and have a moment to chat than I am from a company where my delivery is thrown at me from a still moving truck. It seems that companies have sacrificed customer service at the altar of speed of fulfilment. Perhaps that is what people want these days. I know which I prefer.

So early was the delivery that I managed to get many of the big boxes done before we opened the shop. I would have managed to get a great deal more of it done during the morning had I applied myself but after a couple of hours of ploughing through the boxes, my enthusiasm waned somewhat, and I slowed to a crawl. Where I can slit open a case of something and put it straight out on the shelves, I am in clover. It is when there is overstock that I have to crowbar into some space in the store room that I find terribly tedious. Despite my stuttering performance, I finished most of the putting out or putting away by around four o'clock.

There were several notable exceptions but largely we had long periods of customer inactivity, which itself was not exactly exciting. We were competing with Maisey Day

in Penzance that would have taken a proportion of the locals away and a local wedding at Land's End would have taken the rest. The fact that it was a change-over day would have reduced visitors to a minimum, all of which may have explained things. Essentially, it was the quietest Saturday we have had in a while, which at this time of year we could do well without.

Our day followed the usual weather pattern of a dull and overcast start and towards the end of the afternoon, a breaking up of the cloud and some brighter sunshine. It was warm, right from the start and I really did not need a jacket when I walked ABH around the block at half past five o'clock in the morning. The day stayed warm against the best efforts of a northwesterly breeze that no doubt was knocking a few degrees off the temperature. The sea had calmed a fair bit but had left enough swell to appease the surfers and the strength of the northwesterly was not enough to cause the usual problems of an onshore wind. The rest of the bay looked calm enough and a few kayakers were taking advantage of for a bit of fishing. I believe that mackerel are plentiful out there currently and we have had a small fishing vessel from Newlyn on several mornings during the week.

The water board had left yesterday making sure that the buses could use the turning point, which was good of them. The only problem was, no one was sure whether they had told the bus company that. I had an early enquiry on that very subject and despite being around at the time, I could not recall seeing the early bus. I intended to keep vigil to see if the next bus turned up, but I missed that too. It was not until much later that I saw a bus turning around, so I still have no idea if the earlier buses came down to The Cove or no.

The Missus gave up on tea in the evening and surrendered to the Chinese takeaway in St Just. We had not taken advantage of its services for some time but every now and again, it serves a purpose. I had not particularly noticed at the time, but the weather was deteriorating as she went. When she came back, she announced that it was raining. It was still going a little when I took ABH out for her last spin but not so much that it needed the rain jacket I was wearing. In fact, it was the warmest that I had felt all day, and this extended into the night. We shall hope that it clears for morning as we need all the help we can get this year.

June 28th – Friday

Today we had our duvet back again and if you stood in the right place, it was warm too. The sea still was not entirely happy but at least the Lifeguards had allowed a bit of swimming and surfing to go on but only in front of the huts where they could keep an eye on things.

There were not many things to keep an eye on in the shop during the morning, at least. It was all fairly sedate until the Missus came down at which point I ran off to the gymnasium and a more blistering session than Wednesday. There seemed to be a few people shopping when I returned, but they had all run away by the time I came

back to the shop. It was so bad I had a largely uninterrupted breakfast, which is never a good thing.

It meant that I had plenty of time to clear the store room for tomorrow's delivery, so naturally, I left it until the last minute. I had spent some considerable time topping up the drinks both soft and alcoholic before the shop opened as I would never get the chance later. It also made some room for the delivery, so I had done something towards it. ABH had me up at a most unsociable hour and since I could not go back to sleep again because she just would not settle, decided to get up and get ahead of the posse. I do not know where the time goes because I still had not done everything before it was time to open.

We had packed off ABH on her travels again with our friend from up the hill. She was not keen to go up the road to the right start her journey, which is odd because we have done that during the winter without a problem. Mind, it has been quite a while since she did it last. Our friend, HL, took her to the left first then reversed her planned trip around The Cove. They were gone a good hour and when she came back, ABH was very keen to see the Missus and nothing else would do. I think she may have had a sense of humour failure, so we had better leave her a day or two to recover.

We had to wait until the middle of the afternoon to see some proper busyness. It was also about then that the sun came out, which was good of it. I know that it is a change-over day and not overly blessed with visitors, but we did not even have a slew of people buying going home presents. I think that they may have done that yesterday.

Just when I thought that I was getting on top of the clearance, a delivery arrived. It was not a very big delivery but nonetheless, distracted me from my purpose and added to the wealth of stuff that needed to be cleared. Happily, most of it could be shipped out to The Farm straight away and I tucked it into the back of the truck out of the way once I had extracted what I needed for the shop.

The water board arrived today to fix the leak that they had come and fixed before. It played havoc with the buses again, which came home to roost for me late in the afternoon. I had helped an older lady and her granddaughter to navigate the unnecessarily fraught bus timetable to get them to St Ives. The half past four o'clock bus would get them into Penzance and then be the last bus out to St Ives. Job done; except I did not factor in the water board turning up to repair the leak in the bus turning point. This scuppered any further buses arriving in The Cove.

So, at last knockings of the day I had another stranded couple asking for help. They were heading to the Carvan and Camping site on the road to St Just and their only recourse was a cab, which they duly ordered. A short while later, the grandmother and granddaughter duo appeared also asking for assistance. With stunning

efficiency, I married up the previous couple with the new couple and organised a bit of cab sharing.

Things started to get a little out of hand when a third couple turned up wanting to make the same journey as the second, over to St Just. I called the cab company to ask if a third couple was feasible. The cabs here are usually people carriers, but I thought it prudent to check, which was just as well because he was turning up in a car today. I left it that I would have a chat with him when he turned up.

The next thing I knew, a people carrier from one of the other local firms turned up and took couples two and three. Couple one had told me that the other two firms were not available, and I took them at their word. I have no idea who called the second cab company, but it would have been handy, as well as polite, if they had told me so that I could drop the first one – who would have been grateful because they were busy – and have all three couples on their way together. As it was, couple one, had to wait a further half an hour. I heard later that the second cab firm had a last minute cancellation, which still does not explain how they knew to come to The Cove. That will teach me to try and be helpful.

The water board were still working when I took ABH for a spin after tea while the Missus was taking Mother home after her week long holiday in The Cove. It is good that we can mix things up that that on a whim. It also means that we have an operation spare room again, all down to the Missus and her drive to put the flat in order. At the end, though, Mother likes being home – I think – but she is always welcome here especially by ABH who spends her entire day curled up next to her. It is good to know where we stand, at least.

June 27th – Thursday

This morning carried all the hallmarks of being a completely unexceptional day and it lived up to that. It would have been warm but for the resurgence of a northwesterly breeze and just for added mystery, the sea state went into overdrive and the Lifeguards red flagged the beach. If that were not enough, halfway through the day, it rained.

Other than that, we had a splendid time with at least half the number of customers that we enjoyed serving over each of the previous couple of days. Of course, the shape of customer volumes today did not present itself until after the deadline for the weekend pasty order (sorry, MS). I suspect that I probably over-ordered, but it is always a difficult decision when each day is so different from the next at the moment.

The slowdown allowed me to place some orders that had been outstanding for a little while. One of the things that we need quite quickly is another consignment of our popular logo tote bags. The company we used to purchase them from closed down and the man who bought some of the equipment they had, offered to do the bags for us. The bags were excellent and the price pretty good. The only problem we have is

that we have lost his contact details. I have been scrabbling around trying to find them to no avail. Blessed by a sudden inspiration I looked at one of our old account files and by some miracle, chose the correct year. A quick search for 'bag' brought up the man's name, which delighted me no end. I did have his number in my address book but had not added what he was associated with.

Another of our sometimes neighbours volunteered some while ago to take ABH for a walk. We tried last year but ABH was having none of it at that time, so the lady offered again yesterday to take her out to see if it would be any more successful. We had agreed that she would arrive in the middle of the morning, which I completely forgot. Happily, the little girl was just on her way out when I came up to get her and this time she went with our friend willingly. I was told later that she was a little surprised not to follow the usual route around the block and divert up Mayon Cliff, but she had done the route many times in the winter, so it was not completely unfamiliar to her.

It was all done in such a hurry that I had omitted to tell her of the likely course of events that ABH would almost certainly walk at least twice the distance our friend did. The concerned friend called a good hour later to assure us that she was coming back but it had taken considerably longer than she anticipated. I sympathised and told her not to worry. She clearly enjoyed it because she offered to do it all over again tomorrow.

We spent the day largely in the doldrums. The heavy cloud covering and northwesterly kept the temperature down and people away for most of the day. Then, as if by magic, the sun broke through in the late afternoon and all the people who had been hiding around corners and down dark alleys, suddenly came out to do a bit of shopping. While that may sound like something I just made up, dear reader, I can assure you that is exactly how it was: visitor desert one minute, heaving metropolis the next. I was under the cosh for a good hour of business and that turned a potentially poor day into one that was worth getting out of bed for.

The Missus had taken a trip out earlier on a few errands and had stopped off at The Farm for some supplies. We managed to get the windbreaks that she had returned with away in the stand but everything else waited until the rush was over. I had sent her up the hill with excess t-shirts and she had returned with an equal number in sizes that we already had. I did not have time to get those out, but it will be a concerted effort to clear them and everything else from the store room ahead of tomorrow morning's dead early delivery.

Another thing that the Missus returned with was an e-bike. For those of you unfamiliar with such things, it is a bicycle with an 'e' stuck at the beginning. Alright, alright. It is a bicycle with an electric motor for cheating going up hills, so you can tell your very fit friends you cycled ten miles every morning without them knowing you have not moved your legs once.

Anyway, I digress. Now, where was I. Ah yes, the Missus returned with an e-bike in the back that had been kindly donated to raise money for our Lifeboat station by a lady who lives at the top of the hill. She had purchased the e-bike and subsequently sustain an injury which meant that she could no longer use it. While not finalised, I think the plan is to sell raffle tickets for it, the proceeds going to the Institute's coffers associated with the station. For those of you imagining a sleek racing machine with go faster stripes, the machine in question is what they used to call a 'sit up and beg' bicycle with a basket on the front. No doubt details will emerge on the station's social media pages in due course.

There was not a great deal going on at Lifeboat training in the evening. We were made familiar with the smart new fire alarm system that has recently been installed. If you are staying in The Cove for any length of time, dear reader, you too will be made familiar with it as it is likely to go off at the slightest whiff of particles in the air and any time the big boat launches. It has a sniffer system, constantly drawing local air through a pipe to test it and will trigger the alarm for anything, such as exhaust fumes when the Lifeboat starts up.

Having had my head filled with details of how to stop the alarm bells ringing, I took ABH down to the beach to clear it again. There was a young couple there swimming with their retriever. The dog was not the least interested in ABH, although she did not let that small detail stop her from chasing it around. The retriever was clearly obsessed with swimming in the sea to the point that it would not come out when the couple wanted to leave. The lady had to go and get a stick, which obviously trumps splashing around in robust waves, and tempt the dog away with it.

I was still amused by such a thing as I dragged ABH around the block afterwards. The leak in the Harbour car park has been fixed now but the leak by the bus turning space had re-emerged. Our neighbours tried to report it again, but the water board were having none of it, refusing to believe that it was a different leak to the one in the car park. We shall see how that develops but right now, I am beyond caring.

June 26th – Wednesday

This would have been in yesterday's Diary except I came to an unexpected end before I could fit it in. For the last week or maybe a little longer, the surface of the Harbour car park has been wet from a line just after the back row of parking to the sea wall and only across about a third of the area. I had put it down to the fishing crew washing down the tractor or some such, but that is a Harbour myth and the water has been there too long.

One of our temporary neighbours pointed it out last evening as we traversed the car park together. They highlighted the perfectly straight line where the water started, a join in the tarmac, and I also noticed a raised mound the width of one parking space. Underneath is the water board's sewage tanks but also I recalled our local Bobby telling me that the car park is being undermined by a hole in the sea wall. I wondered

if that was anything to do with it. The wet being there yesterday evening suggests a regular source, else it would have dried during the day. I shall make enquiries.

So, I made enquiries, and it is a leak in a mains water pipe they think. It took all day to muster sufficient water board resources to fix the problem and then they found that they could not do the job because a car had parked over it. When eventually they were able to get to the right spot, they discovered the digger that they had brought with them did not work and went off to get a new one. When I went past on our after tea walk, there was a hole and no water pouring out of it, so at least they seem to have plugged the hole if not finished the job.

When I got out and about with ABH this morning, the sun was shining and I found that I had to wear my sunglasses to make walking back home to the east a little more comfortable on the eyes. It was a pleasant enough morning, too, and I probably did not need the jacket I was wearing but you never find that out until it is a little too late. I went to the kitchen to fill the clever water boiler that we have and from there to clean my teeth. I cannot have been longer than twenty minutes and when I looked out of the living room window again, there was nothing to see. A thick fog had suddenly appeared, and I could just see as far as the railings across the road.

The mist stayed with us in varying thicknesses for the rest of the day, although by four o'clock it was nothing more than a vague haze in the air. It was one of those very localised features that prompted an entire day's worth of exclamations that it was brilliant sunshine in Porthcurno/Penzance/Camborne (delete as appropriate).

Despite the handicap, it was a busy day again. There was a bit of a buzz during the first part of the morning, but it was still fairly sedate by the time I ran off to the gymnasium. By the time I came back, which was not that long today, the street was heaving with café users and general walkabouts. I met a neighbour from the top on the beach with his two dogs which provided for ABH's exercise for the morning without me having to do very much.

The Missus was in full flight when I came back from the gymnasium and from walking ABH around. I gave her a hand briefly then went to get ready to take back over from her. When I got back downstairs, the mid-morning rush was just about over, which was alright by me because I was hankering after a brae bit of breakfast. Even then it took more than an hour to finish it off, so we were not really slack then, either.

I could not tell you much about what went on at the beach during the day. The most I saw was the square foot of counter in front of me as customers passed before my very eyes. I hasten to add that such comment was not a complaint. We love customers passing before our very eyes especially if they are buying lots of things, which most of them were today. It made progressing with our cash and carry order extremely difficult. You might consider, dear reader, that such a thing comes secondary to serving customers and you would be right. However, it still needed to

be done by the end of the business day or we would have insufficient stock to sell to the very demanding customers that would be passing through in a week or so time.

You will, dear reader, be delighted to learn that having chipped away at it all day long, I eventually pressed to 'buy' button on the website at around four o'clock. Hopefully, the company will have a comfortable amount of time to pick the order ahead of delivery on Saturday.

Of course, having devoted time to the order and to our customers, I did not have time to clear the t-shirts in the store room that need to be put out in the shop or wrapped up and sent to The Farm for storage. I will need to get onto this tomorrow because the boxes will be in the way come Saturday for the delivery of the order I have just placed. I was also reminded after the Missus' last foray out to The Farm that we have some gaps in our beachware supply. I need to place orders with two suppliers in fairly short order on top of everything else.

Talking of The Farm the growth of grass and weed up there had made access quite difficult. Our farmer friend who is also a fisherman – do not ask – very kindly gave the lane a short back and sides during the previous week but The Farm gate and access down to the barn were fearfully overgrown. Ordinarily, the Missus would don her protective armour and strim the area but she has been fully employed making the flat habitable. I asked a friend, who does that sort of thing for a living, to go up and do it for us and he reported back this morning that it had been done. He also suggested that a local dairy farmer might be interested in mowing our field for silage and pay handsomely for the privilege. We shall make enquiries.

It was delightful to see that the mist eventually cleared, and we burst into a glorious day just shortly after the shop closed at six o'clock. I know, that is such a selfish observation as I am sure there were several people keen to enjoy the day from that moment. Perhaps I should have stayed open so that they could have purchased a few libations to enjoy the last few hours of sunlight with. I shall make a note to consider dynamic opening hours.

It is probably as well that I did not because when we ventured out after tea for a stank around the block, we had clouded over again. The sun was last seen making a brief appearance through broken cloud on the horizon just before it dunked into the sea. I am so glad that I had not broken out the tropical whites.

June 25th – Tuesday

Radio Pasty issued a weather warning for temperature yesterday. I was just thinking how lucky it was that I had not put away my woolly pulleys yet when they astounded me by saying that it was for heat rather than cold. Less than a day later they were back telling us that there was indeed a warning for high temperatures but, obviously, it was not intended for us. Nevertheless, just in case it should ever happen, we should be prepared with a slightly thinner woolly hat and an unbuttoned coat.

I had things to do, so I stuffed my bitter disappointment back in its box and topped up our drinks fridges yet again. There was not quite so much to do this morning which is just as well since I was later than yesterday. ABH decided on a lie in, which suited me just fine. When she eventually decided it was time, we discovered that the day was half decent, despite missing a heat wave. I thought that it was reasonably mild then, as we walked around the small block, but I had customers later who told me that it was cold out. Perhaps we just walked around in the warm bit.

It would be hard to fault how the day turned out. I noticed around the middle of the morning the cloud clearing from the west. By the middle of the day the sun had really got its hat on, and we were all treated to some glorious deliciousness. I could not attest to just how warm it was but there were people out there with unbuttoned coats and thin woolly hats; it must have been near tropical.

The wide expanse of the big beach looked magnificent under the glare of the sun. There was quite a settlement going on up at the dune which would be washed away come high water later in the day. The upper part of the beach below that was populated by a scattering of walkers and revellers and below them were acres of clear sand. There was some action on and off down at the tide line, but the surfing population had diminished since yesterday.

There is a large finger of sand running up the middle of the bay which would be more visible in bigger tides. This provides for some lighter waves that the surf schools are fond of using as well as the less experience surfers. Further over, just short of North Rocks is another sand bar with a wave break just before it. This was where the more experienced surfers were later in the tide for the last couple of days. Today, was the first day I noticed it, so whether it is newly formed, or I am just unobservant, I have no idea.

Along with the sunshine we might have expected a little rain sometime but all we got was more sunshine and a surge in happy customers – we still have plenty of grumpy ones, of course. It was the most consistently busy day for a while, or at least the gaps were less frequent and shorter than we have been used to. It pretty much scuppered my attempt to fill shelves and do my grocery list for our big cash and carry order at the end of the week. I will have to get up early tomorrow to see if I can make some headway on that. The state of busyness can often be deceiving but the count at the end of the day was quite satisfactory, thank you. It was the sort of satisfactory that almost brings a smile to a grumpy shopkeeper's face.

What might really have done that was finding that I have been immortalised in Lego. A mother of a small child told me that he had been in awe at the last launch of the Lifeboat, not by the swanky crew in their shiny clean yellows but by the rough-edged and hardy very excellent Shore Crew and particularly the bloke in the orange hat. He has set up his Lego to represent the slipway with me at pride of place at the end of it. I thought it best not to tell him that on that occasion the role was undertaken by my

stunt double. A small boy's dreams are fragile, after all, and need protection and nurturing and besides which, I am a hero, just for one day.

June 24th – Monday

At the least the heavy layer of cloud we had today was in the more acceptable position of being above us in the sky today. It was acting like a duvet and kept us toastie all day, so much so that I had to turn on the smart fan we have in the shop again.

ABH had me out of bed dead early again this morning. It was early enough to be too early but not early enough to make it worthwhile going back to bed. It put me way ahead for day, so much so that after I had finished topping up the drinks, I looked at the clock and discovered that I still have a further hour until opening. I needed to be early because I wanted to catch the milkman but half past seven o'clock was a little extreme.

Yesterday, the milkman had delivered a case of skimmed milk. I had asked for whole, which I did not get, and he delivered margarine as well, again unordered. We think he got this far and had a small episode. There was no harm done but I was anxious to return the products, especially the milk, while it was still fresh, which was why I was down in the shop early in the first place.

As it turned out, the milkman arrived just before opening time, so I need not have got down to the shop quite so early. However, I did manage to get a few things done that would have been done anyway but without trying to squeeze them in between customers. I still had to do that anyway with a myriad of orders that arrived subsequently. In my mind that would have given me a chunk of time when I had nothing to do, because I had done it all. In my real world, a whole raft of other things appeared to be done instead.

I sat down and thought about that later. If I had not got up early and done all those things first, would the whole raft of things not have appeared, would I have done them later or did they not have to be done at all. I stopped thinking about that very quickly when my head started to hurt and purple rabbits started to swim in my vision.

We are seeing some busyness in the mornings which is encouraging. The rest of the day seems hit and miss with much more going on in the afternoon than in the morning. Of course, it may just be that I missed all the morning's busyness because I headed for the gymnasium for a blistering session. There were plenty of people on the street when I came back, gathered around the tables of the café and the ice cream kiosk. There was a fair few in the shop at that time, too, but they had nearly all gone by the time I came back from walking ABH around.

Given that I pull down the bins from the mews behind, I am up to speed on the forthcoming changes the much maligned council is inflicting upon us. I have made

sure the relevant owners have been made aware but as I walked around the block with ABH, I noticed our friend at the end of Coastguard Row had her old bin out. It took me all day before I had time to contact her but at least now she knows even if she can do little about it at present.

The plan is that I seal the old bins as soon as they are emptied as they will not be used again. They will be collected, because I made sure we booked, on the Monday following the start of the new service. The new bins will be used immediately after tomorrow's collection. We will also need to start using the new food waste collection or we will quickly run out of room in the new, slimline waste bin we have been provided with – after a bit of a fight – and we will also try and find room for the recycling cans bag. When we move into our mansion when we retire (more, if), we will start using the other four receptacles.

We have found that the new service, and I use the term loosely, has thrown holiday letters (people who let holiday accommodation, not letters written on the subject of holidays) into disarray. Unless their clients are staying a fortnight, they will miss either general waste collection or recycling, depending on the week. Also, a Monday collection is not ideal because the new client will be looking at a bin full of the previous client's rubbish all weekend. Many have taken up contracts with the local waste collector who pick up on change-over days, which is probably right and proper for a business. It also only leaves me one bin to deal with in the mews now.

Someone at the much maligned council must have done the calculation – I really hope that they did. As holiday let businesses move to business rates, they will stop paying council tax that clearly pays for more than just waste collection. They will also stop paying anything as the property sizes in most cases fall below the business rate threshold. I do wonder whether the saving in reduced waste collection services for those properties is greater than the loss of tax revenue. Somehow, I doubt it.

Gosh, that was a lot of rubbish. Let us talk about the lack of waves today. I said that yesterday and it does seem that at low water, the bay is as flat as a dish. Come high water, the swell arrives, although today was considerably less than the day before. None of this seemed to bother the surfing contingent, which was legion all day. Once again it looked like the surf schools enjoyed a bumper day and I could not count the number of people in the water at one point.

There appears to be a sudden surge in the number of young people about in The Cove. I have no idea but wonder if they have come to the end of school exams and are free to come on holiday. Many appear to be without parents and also well healed and without concept that using a credit card for 50 pence gives me the jitters. They seem perfectly well behaved and exceedingly polite. There is hope for the world yet.

June 23rd – Sunday

As starts to the day go, today's was not the most auspicious. In fact, it was utter pants. There was the heavy mizzle for one thing, the sort that soaks you through before you even notice that it is wet out. Then, visibility was down to twenty metres or so. You could hear the sea but barely see it. The drizzle stopped first then the mist began to clear around the middle of the morning. By the middle of the day, it was merely cloudy with a good deal of brightness to go with it and more than that, it was warm too and quite humid.

I presumed that it was the weather that delayed the onset of the business day. We did not really get going until the second half of the day and even then, it was a little half-hearted. It seems the trend for the Saturday to be busier than the Sunday at the weekend is holding to be true, although it could have been that our visitors had chosen to go elsewhere given the weather they woke up to.

The weather made no difference to the Cape Cornwall run, which had come around again seemingly so quickly. This is the run where many dress as pirates. It is like one of those traditions that persist, but no one can quite remember what started it. Not everyone had made the effort. Perhaps they felt that they had made enough of an effort getting up early on a Sunday to run to Cape Cornwall via a stank up Gwenver cliff once on the way and once on the way back. I have no idea how many take part or if it was more or less that last year but there was certainly a fair few of them going out and, I presume, a similar number coming back.

On the bright side, I sold two of the remaining six Cove Diary 2 books. These had turned up like the Dead Sea Scrolls after I thought that we had sold out of the last hardcopies a few years ago. Fortunately, they were not on papyrus, but they will probably need a fair amount of interpreting. The ladies told me that they had heard I had written a couple of books but refused to say who was spreading such malicious gossip. I told them where they could find even more on the website in the hope that it will make the other reader feel a lot less alone.

The surf schools seemed to be having a good day of it given the number of students I spotted earlier in the day. They might have been the surf club, of course, at which point perhaps the schools were not having the day I thought they were. Nevertheless, there was definitely surf school activity later in the day as I recognised the bright yellow boards. Sadly, the surf had largely gone by then.

Most of the action came during the lower parts of the tide when there was a host of students and practitioners out there. It certainly looked pretty flat to me right across the bay as we neared high water. The only exception to this was over Cowloe where a few waves rolled about. It was flosing over the Harbour wall last night as we went around but it did not look as lively as that today. When I looked later from the elevation of our living room, there was a reasonable ground sea running with the swell rolling in from the northwest. It would explain the lack of white water against the cliffs opposite.

As expected ABH and I could not get down to the beach on our evening walk around, so we headed straight through to the Harbour car park instead. There, a small group were looking up the hill at something but I was darned if I could see what it was. I did not want to appear nosy or indeed fall for the old group-looking-up-gag to see who else joins them, so I will never know what it was or if it was anything at all, which is irritating. It was even more irritating that there was nothing else of note to report as we walked the rest of the journey that would have taken my mind off it.

Still, we had a delightful bit of sun setting when we ventured out at last knockings before bedtime. We hope to see some more of it higher in the sky tomorrow, maybe.

June 22nd – Saturday

Continuing with the theme of mornings starting unexpectedly, I speared my foot on something sharp on the kitchen floor while I made my cup of tea. I was bare foot and thought it to be a bit of sharp grit and nothing to worry about until I noticed I was dabbing the floor with claret everywhere I stood.

It appeared that I have punctured some sort of mains, as the darned thing refused to stop leaking. Also, being on the sole of the foot at the end of a leg with a dickie knee, I could not reach it sufficiently well to plug it. I compounded the carnage by dripping over the new carpet on my way to the bathroom and having discovered that I could not address the issue in there, dripped on the new carpet again on the way to the bedroom to rouse the Missus from her slumber to seek some assistance.

Fortunately, I had already taken ABH around the block first thing and set out the display at the front of the shop. It was looking very dark and brooding out to the west but happily it came to nothing. In fact, by the middle of the day it had perked up considerably. There was still a fair amount of cloud about, but it was clearly trying hard to be nice. The robust wind from the west or southwest had moderated and there was some heat building up allowing me to discard my jacket and, later, had to put the fan on for the first time in an age.

It might have been, of course, that I was busy finishing off the putting away from the delivery the Missus made yesterday. After that, I started on the t-shirts and rather wished that I had not. My plan was to put out into our bins as many of each size and colour as possible but first I had to separate the sizes that were all jammed into the same box together.

I used our shop baskets to do this and soon worked out that I would run out of baskets before I ran out of t-shirts. It seemed wise, therefore, to put out one size at a time but I soon realised that would only work if I put out the two colours at the same time else one side would collapse and not leave enough room for the other. That was all very well until I discovered that we only had the adult white t-shirts so far, the black were coming in a subsequent delivery. I had by that time two sizes separated into shop baskets, but I was not about to put them back again.

Happily, we did have all the children's sizes and colours and I was able to get all of those out in the shop – with the judicious use of a crowbar in some cases. It is unlikely that we will be so lucky with the adult ones, so I will need to bag the excess up against the damp and pack them off to store at The Farm.

Somehow, in the midst of all that I managed to slip in some breakfast. I only mention this because two days before I had been offered some mackerel off a neighbour who passed by on his way home having plundered the deep in his boat. I turned down the kind offer of some fish because I knew that I would not have the time to prepare it. Our neighbour's kindness clearly knows no bounds for he turned up yesterday with a box of mackerel fillets and filleted better than I could have done it as well. I am somewhat restricted how I cook downstairs so had them baked in butter with a sprinkling of Mexican style sea salt that we sell in the shop. I had them hot with a lump of seeded cob. Bleddy 'ansum, it was.

With the weather in the ascendent, we were quite busy for a change. We made a serious dent in the pasty stock (sorry, MS) and were selling beach games and outside things. It had the feel about it of a flood of visitors arriving, you know, how it used to be. I restrained myself from getting too excited, just in case. I might leave it until tomorrow to see if it is something other than a flash in the pan – like the weather.

Come the later part of the afternoon, we lost the brightness of the day as the cloud won over the sun. It did not seem to make a huge difference to the busyness but after four o'clock things started to slow down as they tend to do anyway. At least there was no heavy rain to contend with and it stayed warm into the evening.

I took ABH down to the beach after tea but there was not much of it and there will be even less tomorrow. A young lad was fishing from the sand, so we did not stay long and headed around the block for a bit of a half-hearted wander. It was a tired end to a long and busy day, and I was probably suffering from blood loss. I have heard that a good malt whisky helps with that, so I gave it a try when we got back.

June 21st – Friday

The morning was derailed somewhat by a call from our neighbour up the hill requesting some assistance. Their dog, the bleddy hound's best pal when she was alive, had decided to relive her puppyhood by visiting some old ground that she used to visit then. Then was several years and many kilograms lighter ago and now she was stuck on a ledge ten feet above a neighbouring garden.

Unfortunately, the call came just as I was expecting our weekend pasty (sorry, MS) delivery to arrive followed shortly after by the milkman. The milkman could leave the order outside by the pasties needed to be put away and the trays returned. As luck

would have it, the pasty man arrived just as I put the telephone down, so I was delayed in responding only by the minimal amount.

I closed the shop to go and assess the situation and it was rather bleak. The dog was uninjured and sat on an earthy bank at the top of a granite hedge around eight feet high. The ground sloped up from there. I did consider lifting her down, but she is a large dog and lifting above head height was probably not a great option. Really, the only way out was back the way she came which was overhung with branches leaving only a crawl space below. The dog was also not inclined to attempt the incline back that way.

I returned via the Lifeboat station where I managed to find some rope in an attempt to haul and coerce the dog back the way she came but to no avail. By this time, we had attracted the assistance of another neighbour and friend but the Lifeboat mechanic who I had initially called for on the way was not at home. With no other ideas forthcoming, I called the Fire Brigade, knowing how adept they were with a salvage pump. It seems while cats out of trees is stock in trade, dogs on ledges is not and I was advised to call the RSPCA.

I had a reasonable expectation that the Fire Brigade would be fairly prompt in their response but imagined that the RSPCA would probably be less so. Nevertheless, I resolved to go back to the shop since I had been absent during what was likely to be a busy time, and to call the agency from there. On my way back I fell upon the Lifeboat mechanic and the ex-Coxswain at the ice cream kiosk and asked for their help. The former is such a resourceful character, I had no doubt that he would save the day, which in fact he did.

Spotting that we had a queue outside the shop, I went back to clear the backlog and ask the Missus to cover for me while I went back to assist. By the time I got there I met the dog coming away from her scene of disaster as if nothing had happened and the assembled company dusting themselves off. While I did not personally affect the rescue, I did facilitation and enablement that allowed me to look vaguely heroic without actually doing anything. Had things gone terribly awry, of course, I would have been able to slip away quietly claiming little involvement in the disaster. This also worked well through my whole previous career, so I was pleased that I had not lost the old skills. Perhaps I should have gone into politics.

It took me into the afternoon to catch up on the deliveries that had occurred in my absence in the shop and cram a little breakfast in. There was then the pressing matter of clearing yesterday's deliveries of t-shirts and rash vests ahead of the Missus collecting my extensive list from the store at The Farm.

Business had been that slow that we have not needed to venture to The Farm for very much. In fact, more has gone up there than come down again. However, when I went around the shop a few days ago compiling the list of needs, there was more than I anticipated, and the list was long. I knew that there would be much to unload

from the truck when the Missus came back but when it came to it, it did not take that long to unload.

My preliminary work with yesterday's order got as far as the rash vests before the Missus got back. The t-shirts, and more arrived today, will have to wait until tomorrow as will the remnants of the stock that the Missus brought down. Her delivery also highlighted some omissions in our stock, and I will have to place yet another order to fill the gaps. Last year when trade was better, we were in the enviable position that we had excess stock and did not need to place many orders. This year, we are having buy stock in a season that is unlikely to pay it back. There is no need to fret on our behalf, dear reader. I am heartened that we will be able to eat our bread and gruel during the winter around a candle in a living room with enhanced insulation.

To add to the delight, the rain that Radio Pasty promised in the morning arrived in the later part of the afternoon. We had endured a day of varying shades of cloudy brightness but at least the breeze that had returned after its short break had gone to the southwest. The temperature, however, had plummeted in the afternoon and sent me scurrying for my jacket shortly after the rain started.

The rain had been quite effective in killing off any remaining trade for the day, so I went to find solace with some beer to cry into – while we could still afford it.

June 20th – Thursday

A very merry summer solstice to you all, I am sure.

It may have been the longest day, but the morning veritably flew by. That may have been because it was peppered with deliveries to sort out and shelves to top up that had suffered since I last did it at the weekend. It has never looked that busy but there must have been sufficient throughput to make some serious dents in the shelf stock.

Of course, it does not help when the grumpy shopkeeper forgets to place the order for greengrocery last night. This turned out to be fortuitous because I had a customer in later who wanted a cauliflower, which we do not generally stock, so I will add it to the order I did not place yesterday for tomorrow – providing I remember it at all.

The day had started with a bit of very thin mist hanging about, followed by some cloudy brightness. It took until the middle of the afternoon for the sun to break through but the leading feature of the day by its absence was the wind. The day held some proper warmth for a change, though I had to go outside to experience it.

We have three quarters of our workforce back in action and they carried on preparing the back roof section for reroofing. During this process we discovered how paper thin the inside skin is when they came through into the kitchen ceiling. It would

have been good to discover this before the Missus had decorated, perhaps, but then again better to find out now while the builders are still here to fix it.

The bill arrived from the solar panel company, having prompted them that we are nearing the time when they can get here to do the work. It did feel a bit unfair pushing them along after they had waited for us for more than a year. Our contact there reckons they can shift things along a bit, which will be welcome, although the power outage while they connect everything up will not be. In the expected run of things, this work would have been done before we were open. It will now occur at one of our busier times. Hopefully, the subsequent savings on electricity will compensate us for the loss of trade.

I did not pay very much attention to the beach during the day as I was quite busy on other things. I did notice a whole host of small children crowding around the shallows as well as in organised lines on the beach. I learnt shortly after that it was the school sports days today. Mine used to be all about sack and egg and spoon races – the latter of which I recall being rather good at – but there again, schools then all had access to sports fields of one sort or another. There is a field at the top, but I am sure it is far more attractive to head for the beach for a few water and surf related games and not an egg or spoon in sight.

After they had gone, the beach was left for those enjoying a bit of a day. When I looked again in the afternoon, there was quite a gathering pressed up against the dunes. We are heading into spring tides but not very big ones, so I thought they probably would be alright where they were for today, at least. Sitting around and taking in some rays was about the only sport on offer as the bay at near high water was as flat as a dish.

That may not be alright for surfing but for launching Lifeboats, it is just the ticket. It is probably why our venerable Coxswain decided to do just that and we gathered at the appointed time to help out. Both boats launched into the placid waters of the bay at around quarter past seven o'clock.

We had a new recruit to the very excellent Shore Crew and as you might imagine, training is vigorous and extensive. There is much to learn, and it requires the trainee to be at the peak of fitness as well as mentally prepared for the many challenges the training schedule presents. He was a very willing subject and we passed him out at half past seven o'clock.

The boat was out for around an hour and a half during which we enjoyed the warm and pleasant evening. I took the opportunity to run ABH down to the Harbour beach for a run about. She had already spent the entire day playing with the builder's Weimaraner, who had the patience of a doggie Job as the little girl pulled at her ears and plagued her near constantly. She had slept for a good while after she went home and was not all that keen to be active when I took her out, either.

There was still time to wait when we came back, so we discussed the finer points of the procedures ahead of us when the boat came back in. It was around quarter to nine o'clock that we had time to practise the theory and we sent our new man down to the end of the long slip with the acting Head Launcher of the day to get some hands-on experience. I kept a watchful eye from behind the door at the top of the slip and was pretty sure that I was watching a textbook recovery in calm conditions as the boat was brought up for a wash down.

The numerous crew that had turned up for the exercise crowded into the crew room for our usual debriefing and were dismissed at near half past nine o'clock. We are, after all, a very late, very excellent Shore Crew.

June 19th – Wednesday

The wind eased off today. So, because we are seldom allowed too much of a good thing, the cloud rolled in. This year seems to be all about swerving a falling rock and tumbling down a mineshaft.

Still, then there comes along a couple asking for a chicken pasty. I mean, I have heard of such aberrations, but I did not think people actually ate such things. They asked where they might get one and I suggested Devon where such things are commonplace, I had heard. I am informed that they even place clotted cream before jam on a scone. Ridiculous.

If that was not enough fun for one day, the road by the bus turning point sprung a leak. The waterboard were duly called and arrived very quickly and went away again. This was followed by another van that arrived and went away again. On the third arrival they came with traffic lights, road signs and things to dig holes in the road with. I was keeping an eagle eye out to see what would happen when the bus turned up and then I missed it as we got busy at the crucial time. The bus must have turned around somewhere because I saw it going up the hill, unless it had reversed down.

The busy bit that made me miss the bus event was a coach load of foreign students, possibly East European, all buying snacks and minor souvenirs. It was quick-fire stuff as none of them were buying very much. Toward the end of the rush, the teacher or guide approached and asked if I knew the local area. I had assumed directions to Land's End or the nearest proper shop, so I was somewhat taken about when she said, Crown Mines.

I took a moment to collect myself then quickly calculated the time it might take, knowing that Cape Cornwall for an average walker was around two and a half hours. The fact that the group was at least 30 strong would no doubt slow them down considerably while they accounted for kiddiwinks fallen down rabbit holes and wandering off to look at gorse bushes. The lady was quite insistent, despite my doubtfulness, that they could all get there, meet the bus and be tucked up in their hostel in Penzance at whatever time she told me that they had to be back. I

suggested that if they were determined that they ought to get cracking. This was at half past two o'clock.

So much did they value my expert opinion they were all still sitting at the benches across the road at three o'clock ordering coffees and ice creams from the kiosk. I thought, perhaps, that they had reconsidered given the hour, the potential pitfalls of the journey and the time remaining to them. This was not so. Half an hour later, I saw them climbing the steps off the beach up to Carn Keys with some already on the path and some venturing down to the tide line to have a look at the waves. Oh my.

It took until the afternoon for business to gain any traction. We had stumbled through the morning very much in the doldrums and I doubt that many people noted my absence when I headed to the gymnasium for a blistering session. It was a bit of a struggle, to be honest, which I put down to ABH getting me up once more in the middle of the night. She has done so well over the last few days, I thought that we might have got out of the habit of such things but apparently not.

I was kept busy throughout the whole of the afternoon and when it was not customers it was the hooded sweatshirt order that needed labelling and putting away. Then came the postcard fudge boxes that had developed an interesting sales profile with the cheapest and most expensive outselling the middle size boxes. This gave me a bit of a problem reordering and meeting the medium order level. That is all away now but we have more stock arriving tomorrow.

One of the building boys has returned from his dreaded lurgi confinement and started with the continuing work on the western side of the back of the roof. The construction of the building was laid bare there and the tops of the original granite building could be viewed in all its horrific glory. It looks no more than rubble loosely packed together. They moved so fast I did not have the chance to record it for posterity, but I shall remember it in my nightmares. They have also removed the skylights on that side, one of which was in the bathroom which proved awkward for a short while. These required more work because the new Velux windows are bigger than the existing ones. Interestingly, the ones before that – they must have been changed twice – were the larger size. We do not know whether the changes in size were to do with fashion or an intervening window tax, perhaps.

A friendly soul let me know that the first bus to arrive when the waterboard started on its hole, reversed up to the OS and turned there. The waterboard has not finished but it seems that they left enough room for the buses to turn around their roadworks. They have left the traffic lights working while the work continues. Having watched the traffic for a good time during the later afternoon I must conclude that far more drivers than I realised are colour blind and to a worse condition than myself. Even I could see it was a red light they were driving through. Perhaps I have it wrong and they are just decorative, an art installation, maybe.

I had it in the back of my mind that I placed an order with our stationery company for labels and printing paper. It normally arrives the next business day and I knew that that had long passed but I really was not sure whether I had placed the order or just thought I had. It was during this deliberation that a person from the OS turned up with half the order in his arms. It has been delivered in error and they had clearly only just thought to drop it down. When I checked, a case of black refuse sacks was missing from the order. I considered going to the OS to discover them but thought it easier to write to the company to let them sort it out.

The Missus and I descended on the Harbour beach together in the evening. I was slightly delayed because I had once again forgotten to pack away the day's newspapers. When I reached the beach there was the swimming family I had met before whose dachshund puppy was fully engaged with ABH running about and play fighting. They spent a good half an hour at their play, and both were fair worn out at the end of it. The worn out did not last very long into the evening and we now have a bed full of sand to sleep in alongside a damp hound.

Sweet dreams all.

June 18th – Tuesday

It was clear from the banging of the front door and the loosely shut windows that there was a bit of a breeze blowing this morning. It seemed a bit fresh when I took ABH around, but I had clearly been half asleep at the time. When I came down to start on the shop, it was proper thumping in from the northeast, chilly and by the time the shop was open, exceedingly irritating. Halfway through the morning it briefly crossed my mind that I should close the first electric sliding door in The Cove and risk everyone thinking we were closed. The thought did not last long. Business is tough enough with the weather and the economy against us without throwing marbles under my own feet as well.

I had eventually got around to calling our carpet man now that the porch is completed. It was the last bit of work of his outstanding and I had been distracted long enough from making the call. He called back early this morning and asked if it was alright to come at shop opening time, which was fine by me as I would be in the shop. It was a great relief to have it done because I had been constantly stepping on the exposed grippers with my bare feet, forgetting each time they were there. Even laboratory rats learn pain response faster than that but I suppose they do not have a shop to run – well, surely not all of them.

Business was a little more animated today with most of it coming in during the afternoon. This was probably because I had decided that then was when I would take photographs of all the items we wanted to go to the local auction house as they requested. This turned out to be a bit of a pain in the rear end as one box contains a selection of glassware that we had removed from the Aged Parent. The Aged Parent did know about or at least does now. Even grouping similar items together, took an

age because each item had been wrapped in newspaper to provide a modicum of protection. I then had to remember which bit of paper covered which one so that the sizes roughly matched up.

There is one item left to do which is up at The Farm. The Missus was due to go up today, but her machete needs sharpening, and her pith helmet is in the wash. She will also need a team of bearers and a native guide, although I did ask a pal of ours to go up there and trim some of the strategic bits. That was on Sunday, and he may not have had time to do it yet. She may also be putting it off because I have a list as long as a tall person's arm of stock to bring back down again. It will also be a bit more comfortable if she goes tomorrow as the wind is set to drop a bit.

I may have to amend the list because we sold rather a lot of windbreaks today. There were also several hooded sweatshirts sold against the sharp cool of the day and I have just heard that the reinforcements for those should be arriving tomorrow, Doing Parcels Dreadfully willing.

Talking of which, a neighbour asked that we take in a parcel the company was due to deliver because he would not be in when it came and needed to be signed for. He told me he had pressed all the right buttons to divert the delivery to us. At the appointed time, the driver arrived, not as I thought to deliver the parcel but to ask directions to our neighbour. Clearly it was not the seamless process that either party thought it might be, but quite by chance, the end result worked out alright. And I did not have to sign for it.

We had been relatively busy – for a sunny day blessed with a howling and chill wind. Through the main part of the afternoon and even into the latter part of the day, there were still frequent forays for a bit of last minute shopping. This went on almost to the point of closing, although I could not say there was a five minutes to closing rush today. It all accumulated to what was surprisingly not a bad day at all and better than some of the more attractive days we have had recently – if I could only remember one.

I weathered up against the wind and took ABH out after tea. It is a strange thing wrapping up warm when the evening looks like it should be blazing hot. Without the wind, it probably would be – or at least, pleasantly warm. We had just started to explore the beach when the local volunteer fire brigade turned up. They came with the full fleet of appliances - super clean fire engine, fire truck, handcart and Raleigh bicycle with a basket on the front - and invaded the beach. They used the truck to drop a salvage pump down at the tide line and then proceeded to pump sea water in and out of the Harbour for half an hour.

The little girl met her neighbour down on the beach for a run on a bit of beach not being used by the brigade. That over, we finished with a walk around the block. Sunset must be becoming old hat as they were few cars in the car park for people watching it. I suppose also that it was a bit early but even when we went out for the

last run shortly before sunset, there were not many around as they had been on previous days. Maybe a softer day tomorrow will help sort that out.

June 17th – Monday

Three quarters of our building workforce are now off with the dreaded lurgi. Of the two who had been languishing all last week, one had given it to the remaining one, leaving just the builder. The first two to go off did not seem to be so ill that they could not get their bill in on time. One of them even managed to tell me that it was safe to open because he had run an anti-virus program against it. It seems that it was a particularly unpleasant turn and, all jesting aside, we wish them all well soon.

They probably did not think so, but it was a pleasant enough day to be at home with nothing much to do. It was also pleasant enough to be promenading on the beach or taking some refreshment at the tables outside the café. We had a largely cloudless sky from early on and the wind, while coming from the north, was hardly noticeable during the day – maybe that is because I was inside for most of it.

I had my head in the dairy fridge when our pagers went off, so I only just heard the warble. We were asked to launch the Inshore boat but the whole thing was cancelled before we even got to the boat shed. At least it shows that we were paying attention even if I was a little behind due to the milk being put away. It was a miracle that I heard the pager at all that was at the front of the shop at the time and the other end from the dairy fridge.

The upside was that the ruckus brought the Missus down early so that I could escape to the gymnasium. There was some proper warmth in the air and, for once, there was not a chill on the inside of the hut with a tin roof. I built up quite a head of steam during my blistering session. I had to restrain myself a little as I have done something unspeakable but temporary to my left wrist. Throwing weights around was completely out of the question but rowing seemed not to present a problem – at the time, at least. I discovered later it had made it worse, which was awkward.

It did not stop me from running ABH down to the Harbour beach after I came back. A couple of the fishing punts had come back after a very early start and were just washing down. I had noticed that there were gone when I took ABH around first thing, which was early enough thank you very much. She did not take very much notice of the fishermen milling about but a couple of ladies sitting on fold-out chairs further up the beach upset her no end. It is all about things being different, it seems, and the ladies were definitely out of place from her normal expected view of the beach.

We ended going around the block not because I did not want her to cause a scene with the ladies, one of which was fast asleep and catching flies, but because she had settled down to munch of a length of seaweed again. That is all very well but there is

limited separation between the fresh stuff and the rapidly decaying stuff at present and it was not at all clear which she had her teeth into.

Once more, it was a difficult day to determine whether it was busy or quiet. We had long periods with nothing happening but many shorter interludes where the shop was buzzing with activity. There were also a few higher number transactions going through the till, which brought great comfort. We have also seen a surge in the sale of hooded sweatshirts, which I surmise is to do with the continuing chill winds we have been having. This is also comforting in respect of increased sales, but I did not take into account such a surge when I placed our recent order. Running out after just getting a delivery would be embarrassing.

While I was gone at the gymnasium, the Missus had made contact with Age Concern over at St Just who were happy to take our collection of charity give away goods. It is pleasing to know I shall have benefit of our generosity very shortly. She took her pal from the ice cream kiosk and they both played hooky by stopping off at the airport café for a spell on the way back. When she returned, we loaded up the remainder of the goods that are destined for the local auctioneer as having a little more value than the rest. When we last went there, we simply made an appointment and dropped the stuff off. This time they actually want to assess it by photograph before they agree to take it. I suspect that they had been caught out with too much old tat being passed their way. We still may have cause to use the services of the St Just charity shop yet.

The wind had got back up by the time I took ABH out again in the evening. It was not unpleasantly cold, but it was sufficient for a jacket outside the warmth of the setting sun. It did not seem to bother a family from playing with small children in the calm of the Harbour and splashing about. I was happy to leave them to it, though. I missed what might have been a picturesque sunset when we went out again for our last run. Even at nine o'clock there seemed to be plenty of time left before the sun eventually set but in truth, we only missed it by half an hour. Solstice is hard by when we will dig out our kaftans and funny hats.

June 16th – Sunday

The weather was very much undecided first thing. There was still damp in the air from some overnight rain and here and there suspect cloud lurked. A German lady asked while she was at the counter if it was going to rain here today. She was eating with her husband at the café outside tables and did not want to get wet. I told her that the Meteorological Office website that I had just looked at for another customer painted a picture of sweetness and light and no rain at all for today. She then pointed to the north where it was clearly raining and told me that it was that she was concerned about. I told her that while it looked like rain, it clearly was not because our national institute of weather, the Meteorological Office, are never wrong about such things.

I did look at the rain radar for her and ascertained that it was indeed rain out to the north. I assured her that it was heading west and was set to miss her table by at least three feet. I do not know if she believed me, but they continued to sit at the table. Perhaps they were just trying not to seem rude.

The rain that did not exist did in fact pass us by, which was a relief, and the day developed into a bit of a rip gribbler. I am usually quite circumspect about the use of that phrase but the way things are going today looked to be about as good as it is likely to get. There was some thin high-level cloud but by and large the skies were clear for much of the day and the sun quite fierce. We did still have that rather smart west wind carrying with it a bit of a chill. This time the air seems to have arrived from Scandinavia.

It seemed the perfect day for a bit of Lifeboat launching. This was a duty for our fellow very excellent Shore Crew member and winchman whose ashes were to be cast to the waves in the bay. There was some concern about this going ahead given the state of the sea yesterday but today, the bay had been transformed into a place of reasonably gentle swell and very little wind chop.

We launched into the sunlight and the blue of the sea at around midday with several members of the family on board as well as a small crew. Because our man was deeply involved with the gig club too, the gig launched in his honour, and we sent out the Inshore boat as well. His own punt was taken out by his son who is normally winchman now. He would have laughed his socks off had he been there to see his boat break down and be towed in by the Inshore.

The boats were not out for very long, but we had adequate time to set up the short slip for its return. The moderate swell and the fact that I was first in the queue heading to the bottom of the slipway meant getting my boots wet setting up the 'fishing rod' recovery tool. We will have discussions about who in the pecking order should be getting wet boots at the next training session. I was suitably well away from the water when the boat returned, and we executed what was clearly a textbook recovery up the short slip. We were tucked up and back in the sunshine at the front of the station by just gone one o'clock. We are, after all, a very effective, very excellent Shore Crew.

I took ABH around the block before I returned to my shop duties. It was busy on the street and the Harbour car park was not far off being full of cars and people milling about all over it. We avoided people heading off to Land's End as there were quite a few and we fell upon quieter space as we went along Coastguard Row. From there it was easy to look down on the bustle in the car park.

Perhaps oddly, all that busyness did not spread to the shop after we got back. There had been some frequent activity during the early part of the day, but the afternoon was eerily quiet. Sure, we had flurries of customer activity, but it was varied and infrequent. It could have been that having been denied the sea yesterday, everyone

had gone for a dip today. Certainly, when I looked toward the end of the afternoon there seemed to be a quite a gathering of surfers and swimmers out there in the shallows. The beach, too, was busier than it was yesterday with a few camps down there but mainly walkers and people revelling.

We had a few peaks of business before we closed but it was generally quiet until the end. I took ABH before tea for a quick run around and was quite delighted that I did not need a jacket, especially as I had not brought one with me. I did change my mind when I took her out for a longer spin after tea and found it necessary by then.

The Harbour beach still has a large amount of oar weed still but the subsequent tides with some help from the Harbour tractor had bundled in into piles here and there across the beach. It is fascinating how it wraps around and piles up along the rope that runs down the beach for the fishing boat painters to tie to. I do not know why I suddenly had to look that up, but painter comes from latin *pendere* meaning to hang something – or so the Internet tells me – also the origin of pendant and pendulum. No doubt you already knew that, dear clever reader, but I added it anyway for dunces like me who did not. Dunce comes from the name given to followers of the Scottish theologian, John Duns Scotus, who were ridiculed by those who were not followers, but you probably knew that too, dear reader.

I think we will leave things there.

June 15th – Saturday

ABH must have known that I had an early start because she had me up early doors. I was able to take her out and fit in most of my morning routine before the delivery arrived. I had eschewed my morning workout for lack of time but heaving cases of beer and water into the shop were an adequate substitute.

I had enough time after to have a sit down and a cup of tea after the obligatory game of tug of war with ABH. I was downstairs just ahead of the newspaper delivery which is always a little late at the weekends due to the volume of paper. I have to feel sorry for the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company employees. They clearly do not have a building to work in and have to work out in the open. During summer days, I am sure that might be quite pleasant but through inclement weather, it must be uncomfortable. I have never visited the local depot, but I know this because all our newspapers were soaking wet this morning and I can think of no other explanation.

While this may be somewhat indelicate for some, especially if you read The Diary over croissants or toast at breakfast time – turn away now if that is you, dear reader – I shall proceed with caution. One of our first customers of the morning wanted to know if we sold dried fruit, primarily prunes or figs, he asked. I informed him that sadly, we did not. He then asked for toilet roll. It crossed my mind that since we did not have the former then the latter was probably superfluous. I had not seen the gentleman before, so he is not a regular customer.

Radio Pasty's assessment that today would be slightly better than yesterday was something of an understatement. We had a glorious day with none of the scattered showers they spoke about in the morning. Sure enough, there was still a strong breeze blowing but it seemed a moderated version of yesterday's as well as decreasing during the day. I had heard that on the south coast the sea was pretty ferocious. Here, in the bay, it was merely a bit upset but under a bright blue sky it looked rather attractive with its white capped waves and its thumping up the headland at Creagle. It was poor enough for the Lifeguards to red flag the beach, but you would have had to be exceedingly keen to want to venture out in it anyway.

I did not have a great deal of time to be staring out of the window, however. The grocery delivery demanded most of my time today and the customers the rest, or rather the other way around. Thanks to the weather, we had a good and fairly regular flow of business throughout the day. Amongst that were some reasonably substantial sales, which was very gratifying. In the later part of the afternoon, we even had a moderate rush with actual queues at the till – not for very long, obviously.

At some point in the afternoon, I switched my allegiance from groceries to surf jewellery when that order unexpectedly arrived. I think I already mentioned that the prices had changed. This caused me a bit of anguish as I struggled to set a fair new price banding. Previously, the cost prices were fairly basic allowing for one price for bracelets and a higher price for anklets. There were, of course, some anomalies and more recently we had been having some more premium bracelets in that I price marked. Part of the problem is that the items are numerous and do not hold a price label well, they keep falling off.

The latest order presented some problems because the cost prices are far more varied. This has made it difficult to apply sensible price banding that was kind to pocket money budgets as well as to those with deeper pockets. It took a while, but I think that I have cracked it, keeping both customers and grumpy shopkeepers happy – well, relatively speaking.

By the time I had settled my internal pricing debate, it was too late to do much putting out, which I will continue tomorrow. At least I had been far less than idle during the day and had actually achieved things, which is more than I had felt for the last couple of days.

The sunniness of the day disappeared in the late afternoon, a chill settled in and all but the stalwart few of our customers beggared off. We had seen some new faces during the day, which is always refreshing and a good few familiar faces, which is comforting knowing that some traditions persist. Then, to round the day off nicely, it rained just as I was closing the shop.

Fortunately, the rain was short-lived and the evening was apparently pleasant enough for the Missus and I to go to the Harbour beach with ABH. There were two

issues with this, the first being that it was bleddy cold and despite having been smart enough to add an extra layer, I was still uncomfortable. The second was that the beach is strewn with oar weed from the recent rough and tumble out in the bay. The longer it is between rough seas, the more weed there is, and it has been a while since the sea had been so stirred up. In some places the weed is deep and impassible except for small girls who use it to get away from owners keen to see what they picked up at the top of the slip to chew on. It turned out to be pigeon eggs, smashed when the nest was dislodged by the high winds or a predator, I would guess.

In the end, because I was inactive and cold, I took her for a spin around the block and collected the Missus on our return. I was glad to be out of it at the end and into our ultimately sealed and newly insulated front room.

June 14th – Friday

We had been welcomed to the shop day by a heavy shower of rain that went on for a bit. It had previously announced its impending arrival by being dark and menacing out to the west. When it came, we were blessed with some unintended customers as they sheltered from the rain. Later, it provided for some interesting seascapes where the sun was blotted out by the cloudy southern sky but the sea was bright blue with vivid white caps to the waves.

I had thought that this might just be my day today. A lady called in early and asked for 14 pasties (sorry, MS). Any other day that might have been a problem but on Friday we have enough for the weekend. I had just finished emptying a case of fairings, which is the box of choice for pasties in volume. I had also placed the weekend order in haste and in retrospect had probably ordered a few too many, so a sizable order to start with was most welcome.

Any pretence that I was being smiled upon by the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers was, of course, quickly dispelled by the frequent showers that came and went during the day and the pasty man delivering just two cheese pasties when I had ordered twelve.

With the showers improving in the early afternoon – they had got better at raining more frequently – I decided to book in the collection of my old wheelie bin. We had a pamphlet from the much maligned council yesterday announcing that the new waste collection regime would commence 1st July. If we wanted our wheelie bin collected, we would have to register by 3rd July. Judging by some of the promises I have seen being bandied about by our politicians, after 4th July our rubbish will be picked up by fairies and we will be paid for it as well as being given a free house to keep the bin at.

Having completed the complicated form that had asked for the bin's age, size and provenance and precisely where on the boundary of our property it would be on the

day of collection, my eye was drawn again to the start date. We have been moved to a Monday collection. I know that previously, bin collections have never been made on public holidays, which for those unlucky enough to be in an affected area, their bins would go untouched for a fortnight. Now, with waste and recycling in alternate weeks, I wondered would our waste collection go ignored for a month. Worse still, the weekly food waste might go uncollected for a fortnight waiting in a bin that is far from airtight.

Eager for some answers, I lodged an enquiry with the much maligned council through their website message facility. It told me that I might wait up to five days for a reply at busy times. I must therefore conclude that today was a slow one at the much maligned council offices, else they are terribly overmanned, as I had a response inside half an hour. Collections will continue through public holidays, although Christmas is a mystery waiting to be solved, I was told.

I was very mindful that our big grocery order is due for delivery tomorrow. Last time the driver told me he would like to be early, which is fine by us as long as we know. It would have been helpful to know today, but that might be a little too much to ask. I was just thinking that when a text message arrived from the driver. He asked if quarter to seven o'clock would be alright. I told him that it was fine provided he did not mind me in my pyjamas. With this in mind, I went and did some heavy lifting in the store room, moving cases of water hither and thither to maximise the space. I will have to get ABH, my ablutions and publishing The Diary out of the way before the allotted time so that I can be in my starting blocks for when he arrives.

The quick succession of showers in the earlier part of the afternoon really stuck the boot into trade for the rest of the day. As a result, we coasted into the end of the day with very few calls upon my time at the till. The beach was predominantly empty, and you would have had to be a very optimistic surfer to be out anywhere in the bay in the afternoon. The curious blue of the waves had long gone, and everything was steel grey.

When I stepped out with ABH after tea we were punched in the face by a very robust wind heading in from somewhere west but swirling around The Cove coming from all directions. It was taking the edge off any temperature we did have and I was not all that comfortable in just a t-shirt and fleece. If we must end today on a positive note, it was not raining.

June 13th – Thursday

Oh dear. Oh, very dear.

It was perfectly lovely at half past early o'clock when I took ABH around for a spin. I was thinking that the forecasters might have been wrong again when, sitting at my desk half an hour later, the rain started in earnest – and did not stop.

On the bright side, however ... oh, sorry, I was being far too optimistic. There was not one.

It was the sort of day, if you were not careful, that you could end up with all that spare time the absence of customers left you, doing absolutely nothing at all. Mindful of such a big pothole, I spent much of the day not being careful at all. I did discover, though, that after a time, that became very tedious and I stirred myself to top up some of the shelves and because the stand's emptiness had started to irritate me, started on a surf jewellery order.

I suppose that it must have been three or four years that the price of the various items has held steady. It was something of a surprise to find that the prices across the ranges had increased by some margin. The minor increases over the years, we have absorbed so that we could maintain the simplistic price levels for bracelets and anklets. This time, we will have to change them all. In the last year or so we have added a few higher priced items, and these have sold well, too, so I do not think that the price increase will too badly damage sales.

That finished and I had proven to myself that I could actually stir myself to action, I topped up the drinks fridge. This was spurred on a little by the arrival of a delivery halfway through the afternoon that I had wondered if it was coming at all. Once I had cleared that out of the way and tidied up the drinks area in the store room, I spotted some shorts that could do with going out. It was then that I discovered that my get up and go had a limited range, so I settled back to watch the thin rain smoke across the beach.

True to the Radio Pasty forecast, the rain had lasted most of the day and now we were left with the last remnants of it and the ensuing low cloud and mizzle. There had been a few souls passing through, many more than I had imagined might venture out on such a day. I think that some of the walkers that came upon us were on a schedule and did not have much choice about whether they went out or not. Others were just hardy. In any case, we sold many more pasties (sorry, MS) that we sold on Tuesday and that was a decent day.

Inspired once again to get off my behind and doing things, I started to do some relabelling toward the tail end of the afternoon. The trouble here was that it had ceased to rain, and word had got around. I had only started my minor project by a few minutes and the customers started pouring in. I should note here that 'pouring in' is comparative to the rest of the day when there were no customers at all. Had had chosen my project poorly, as it was something that could not be left half done. It left me hard pressed at the end to complete it before closing time.

For a day that had seen very few customers – sorry, did I mention that already – there was a slew of orders to place with suppliers for missing stock. Someone must have bought it since I looked last night at the same time for the same items of stock.

There was a Lifeboat training meeting after tea to attend. There was no launch of the big boat, but a couple of the more experienced crew took a newbie out on the Inshore for a bit of a spin. While the Coxswain took three new very excellent Shore Crew around on a safety briefing, I took another to the winch room to pass him out on its operation. This was supposed to be done by a visiting inspector but he had failed to turn up, so we did it ourselves. We have been waiting for this pass out for some time and in the interim our man has done the job on numerous occasions and is perfectly competent. He just did not have his official ticket. He does now and I shall spend his fiver wisely, believe me.

The crew of the Inshore boat were having far too much fun, obviously, and stayed out late. We admonished them when they came back in, telling them that we were worried sick, and they could have called. All was quickly forgiven, and we all mucked in to wash down and put it away.

I just remained to take ABH around one last time for the day. There was some intermittent light rain which we hardly noticed and anyway, we were not out for long. It is odd how doing nothing all day can make you tired.

June 12th – Wednesday

The rain was good enough to fall after I had finished any work required outside, this morning. It was the thinnest of bans of rain but came upon us lengthwise and therefore went on for a bit in a series of heavy showers. Radio Pasty had it just right that there would be showers at our end in the morning. Mind, I heard that while they were happening, so it was probably more a cast than a forecast. They also said that the day would brighten as it went along, and it did, and that did count as a forecast.

In fact, the day turned out to be quite glorious and easily the best of the week. The very best thing about it was that the wind that had been banging in from the north for a fortnight, went around to the west. Along with the weather came a few more people, which was nice. There was also the benefit that people can now see that we are a shop, perhaps, although I have yet to get around to sweeping up the accumulated rubbish from the front.

I made a proper effort at the gymnasium today, managing a perfectly blistering session. It had been warm, if damp, on the way down there and it was warming up nicely on the way back. I rewarded myself with a trip down to the Harbour beach with ABH after I came back and down there, it was warmer still. We met up with the neighbour's dog we had met down there a few days ago but he had been walked ragged during the previous week and was far too worn out for playing with ABH. It was no matter because she did not seem particularly keen either and was quite happy wandering about while I had a chat with the neighbour.

Dragging her off the beach, I dragged her some more around the block. Whether she is just recuperating at her own pace or just finding more things to sniff at after the

rain, it was hard to tell. It took us quite a time to saunter around the block just as it had done at six o'clock when I had taken her around the first time and that was before the rain so she had no excuse. She also had me up at four o'clock, just for a bit of fun, so she had sniffed the same route, more or less, three times. I must say I enjoyed the last time most as it was extremely pleasant being out in the sun for a change.

I had already made a start on our big grocery order the previous day and had started to pick it off on the computer during the morning. It has taken an unreasonable amount of effort to get used to placing the order mid-week, although having carried out this routine on a Sunday for twenty years, I suppose it would be. It also struck me that it would be quite interesting to see an order we made back then to see how things compare today. Also quite scary, I imagine.

The Missus disappeared off to Mother's in the afternoon. Mother was expecting a telephone call that the Missus needed to be there for and too ABH with her. As Mother has a bit of garden out there, ABH had a whale of a time running about and sniffing flowers. Well, she did until the Missus decided to mow the law at which point it was out of bounds for half an hour.

Deep into the afternoon, we started to lose traction with our busy day. I use the term loosely, as busy is such a subjective term. To put it into perspective, we sold more than four pasties (sorry, MS), which was a great relief. It had certainly been busier than yesterday, but these things can be deceiving sometimes. Looking out at the beach, looking resplendent under the bright sunlight, it was not exactly packed with those chasing after a bit of a tan. The surfers had mostly turned their back and gone to the nearest hostelry for the lack of waves gracing the bay.

They were a friendly bunch that we had through the first electric sliding door in The Cove today. We had some chucklesome interactions at the till with a few, which always lightens the load a little. It can sometimes be a bit of a risk and I have been caught out once or twice making a light-hearted comment only to find that the customer is German or some such and did not understand a word.

The customer does not necessarily have to be foreign for the jest to fall flat. A lady today brought to the counter two gift boxes of fudge and biscuits, and I duly packed them into colourful bags for her. She asked if I had removed the price label and I told her that they were not labelled because it made it difficult for me to make the price up when they came to the till. It was a timely reminder that not everyone shares my sense of humour.

As I turned my back on another day in the shop, I paid more attention to the evening outside. It was sumptuous when I took the little girl around after tea with a local family enjoying the remaining heat of the day down on the Harbour beach. We did not tarry long and carried on around the block. I let the Missus enjoy the late turn and

the sunset as I headed for an early bath. My candle is very much singed at one end and I did not fancy burning out the other as well.

June 11th – Tuesday

There was not a breath of wind first thing when I eventually persuaded ABH out of bed this morning. The Lifeboat flag hung like a wet rag and the bay was glass-like. The sun was out and there was some proper warmth in the air. If only it had lasted.

The sandwich lady comes at early o'clock during the week and the pasty man (sorry, MS) is filling in for the normal driver and he is an early bird, too. I had sat at my desk that has a view of the road through the scaffolding with my cup of tea doing the normal morning computer things. Three times I had to come to visit the shop before my usual start time and my tea was cold by the time I eventually settled to drink it. It is the lot of a grumpy shopkeeper designed to keep him grumpy forever.

We were able to make a rare individual order for fish yesterday. They are regular visitors and it just so happened I needed to order scallops anyway. Two boxes of scallops equals a minimum order with this St Ives supplier, so adding some fish on top was no problem. I only really use them if we have a smaller order, like scallops and they also do some excellent smoked mackerel.

One of the reasons I am not keen on using them more often is that the portion sizes they generally supply are restaurant size. The order I had was for some haddock, so I asked for whole fish, filleted and portioned at 250 grammes as far as possible. What arrived was four tiny fillets of haddock barely 170 grammes, which was pretty poor show. I considered calling to ask why if they could not provide bigger portions, they did not tell me when I ordered, but felt it would not resolve the problem, so left it.

On the plus side, they sent some cracking megrim sole that could scarcely have been more fresh. It was my own error because I forgot to ask if the customer wanted it filleted, which they did. It has been a while since I did any filleting and although I remembered what to do, my filleting knife could have been sharper. I did it in the shop because there was hardly a soul about – until I started filleting the fish. We were then flooded with customers. Clearly, I should fillet fish more often.

Also starting early today were our scaffolders. I had been told to expect them on Wednesday, so their arrival was a surprise but no cause for complaint. They had come to add the scaffolding on the other side at the back of the building and to at last remove the scaffolding at the front. They started around the back because our builders were keen to crack on with that side of the roof and finished off at the front. I think that everyone was keen to see what the new front looked like, revealed for the first time in six months. It did not take them long and were finished shortly into the afternoon.

The boys have done an excellent job with the front and the letters for our sign, more than 25 years old, look as good as new. The composite cladding does not look out of place at all. Having endured the metal framework for six months and had it to gaze through since the shop was open, it will take some getting used to, in fact, I feel quite exposed and insecure with it gone. I also know of one or two pensioners who will miss the hand holds for getting up and down our slope outside.

The Missus missed the great reveal as she had to head into town on a slew of errands. There was a geet pile of 'stuff' that we deemed no longer of use to us and may be more beneficial to others via the great institution of the charity shop. Fortunately, there is one at the old car dealership in Eastern Green which can be driven to. Given the amount of 'stuff' there was, we could not have shipped it to any of the ones in town. While we though this a great plan, the charity did not and refused our donation. The Missus will telephone around tomorrow and see if anyone else wants it before it goes to the tip, sorry, Household Waste Recycling Centre where it will be tipped.

The other major requirement was to deliver ABH to the veterinary doctor for an assessment on her state of health. There is some further investigation that is required to see if they can determine the nature of the bug she has but in the interim she was given an injection to perk he up a bit. We did not necessary require a second opinion regarding her resilience to pain but the medic she saw today gave it anyway. After screaming the place down as she was given the injection – ABH that is, I think the medic was quite reserved - the conclusion from two medical professionals independently is that she is class A, card carrying wimp.

Through a double glazed window, the day looked spectacular. Outside, it was the sort of day that you would elect to spend in the shelter of Porthcurno, although one reporter noted that it was not all sweetness and light there either. Our beach was largely deserted all day and so was the shop – until I started filleting fish. Not that it is the only measurement of busyness but by four o'clock we had sole precisely four pasties, just short of one every two hours. This was not our finest day.

I was grateful to close up the shop, since it was hardly worth opening and go up for tea. The Missus had her very important meeting at the Lifeboat station starting before I got there, so I finished off tea for Mother and me. I had my rather less important meeting at the Lifeboat station at seven o'clock and knowing that the Missus would not finish her really important meeting until we arrived for ours, I headed over there to wait. She then returned to take Mother home.

My rather less important meeting at the Lifeboat station did not go on very long. It is a rather less important meeting, after all, and allowed me to get the washing up done and preparation for a bit of salad breakfast with the leftovers from our tea. Since the Missus had taken ABH with her, both of us of had to wait until last thing before we took a short walk around the block.

She seemed to be much improved after her veterinary visit, which is the whole point of taking her in the first place. We had inadvertently timed it for the setting of the sun in the clear sky to an audience of watchers littered around the Harbour. It was a glorious setting, but they tend to be more spectacular with a bit of cloud around. Without intention, we remained out as the sun dropped into the sea through a ribbon of cloud on the horizon with cameras clicking all about.

At present it is difficult to walk back to the shop without admiring our frontage. It will look even better when the lights are back up and maybe not so much when the cameras go back. This may be a while as the boys are focussed on the big stuff further back.

June 10th – Monday

Winter arrived back in The Cove in the morning. The wind went around to the north in the night, bringing even colder air down, this time from Iceland. It was accompanied for good measure by a band of rain that swept through. I was counting my lucky stars that I managed to take ABH around the block before it arrived when she decided she wanted to go out again in the middle of it.

By the time I came back from a proper blistering session at the gymnasium, the skies had cleared to blue and there was some warmth in the sunshine. The wind had dropped out a little, but it was still incredibly unkind for the time of year. I had spent the morning fielding comments about it still being winter and, frankly, there was not much difference at the time.

ABH seemed a little better in the morning and I took her down the Harbour beach. Here she ran around with a dachshund but soon got bored and wandered off. I think that there was a difference in pace that might have hampered her a bit. The dachshund left shortly after, and we wandered the beach by ourselves. Thankfully, the breeze was not too insistent down there and, unlike the first time I went out with her, I was not shivering in my boots – well, I would have had I been wearing some.

We get asked a lot of questions throughout the season. Chief amongst these at present is regarding bus times, which is no surprise given the appalling state of the timetables. The range of questions is broad after that and may encompass the walk to Land's End, where various places are, tide times, where best to do crabbing and do we have Cornish pasties (sorry, MS) that come from Vega.

By far the strangest, however, and I have been asked more than once, is, 'how much are your books'. It is not immediately obvious that our books are second hand and sold to bolster our counter collection and even if it was, surely, they would not all be the same price. I have considered starting at the top left and reading out a range of different numbers but thought that someone might actually check. I do wonder if these people would walk into Foyles and ask the same question. Perhaps I am missing something here, I do not know.

Sometimes the conversation with our customers turns out some interesting facts. I had a gentleman in purchasing some named brand fly killer spray. It has recently gone up, but we sell such products at the manufacturers recommended selling price generally. The gentleman expressed amused surprise that we were cheaper than Tesmorburys for the same product and by some margin. What is worse is that we are cheaper than the supermarket that owns the cash and carry we purchase this product from as well. Our customer makes the point – not me for a change – that Tesmorburys shoppers are lured in by cheap headline products like milk, under-cost alcohol and poor quality food stuffs but are thoroughly rinsed by everything else. I rest my case, ladies and gentlemen of the jury.

The wind had died down a bit during the day but come the late afternoon it returned with something of a vengeance. The bay was flecked with white horses and the sea a steely blue, much darker than the sky. Any surf that there might have been was blown flat and even the wing surfers who had increased in number today, seemed to have had enough of it.

It was no wonder that ABH was not fussed about going out. She had spent the afternoon on the roof garden where she had refused the Missus a walk out earlier. Come evening, she made it very clear that she was staying put on the sofa. She is still not well. I managed to get her out just before bedtime but was very keen to get back and settle in for the night. I could give her a good run for her money on that score.

June 9th – Sunday

Another of those not bad days, sort of, to entertain us. Sadly, the breeze had gone around to the northwest again and had returned to being chilly, bringing its cold air all the way from Greenland. It was ideal for the wing surfer out for a while in the late morning but of very little use to any serious traditional surfer. There were, of course, the usual suspects crammed in on top of the sand bar running out from the beach where a few waves meant a little fun was possible near low water.

An early flurry of interest in the shop gave me high hopes for the day but by the late morning it had fizzled out into almost nothing. It was disappointing but a dull and chill day was hardly going to set our little world alight, now was it. I busied myself with a grocery order on the basis that trade could only get better, although I had to imagine hard that it might.

One item of stock that I had been studiously avoiding all year so far was our postcards. That is not precisely true as I had a delivery of a few cards when I placed an order for fridge magnets earlier in the year. It was expressly the company that has provided most of our cards over the years that I was ignoring. The thing with postcards is that the particular one a customer may have wanted might be out of

stock, but there is always another they will choose in its stead. It is not like running out of toilet paper.

It was not until today, when I was at a loose end, that I even thought about topping them up with the spare stock we have. It turns that that while we have some spare stock, it does not correspond to the gaps in the display we have in the shop. I filled up where I could and then made a list of the ones we should order. The company also does mugs that sell quite well but are awkward to store, and coasters. We used to have fridge magnets off them until they upped the price unreasonably. I will have to combine the numbers for all these items then consider when we can afford to order them.

That really is not going to happen with more days like today. The sun broke through a couple of times, which was pleasant to see. More shoppers would have been pleasanter. Looking down on the beach in the earlier part of the afternoon there was a good gathering of little camps nestled under the dunes. It surprised me that anyone would have chosen to set up on the beach with a fairly stiff northwesterly coming at you. I may not have been the only one to realise that as we sold a few windbreaks near the end of the day, which is a bit wise after the event but demonstrates that our visitors are stalwart and do not give up easily.

ABH had been poorly through the night but by the end of the day had begun to rally. It appears to be some kind of bug rather than something she ate and if it persists into tomorrow, we will let the veterinary doctor have a look at her. She came with me around the block after tea willingly enough and we had a nose around the Harbour car park and Coastguard Row as usual. The beach was out of bounds as the tide was in and waves were robustly thumping at the sand. There were some local boys down there making the best of the day but few others.

We were very happy to draw this day to a close after that and look forward to better tomorrow.

June 8th – Saturday

It is national florists' day today I am told by Radio Pasty. Who would have thought it.

This morning The Cove was an oasis of calm. Well, it was just gone six in the morning when we ventured around the block as the sun rose in the sky. There was no sunshine but there was no noticeable wind either and it seemed quite temperate, although there was evidence of some condensation here and there from an overnight chill. There cannot have been much damp in the air because my dickie knee was not giving me any gyp.

There are times when I am not too fussed, but today I was rather keen on my first cup of tea of the morning. I only take a pinch of sugar in it in the morning, hence giving it aster before getting my tulips around it. I put it on one of the many coasters

we have about the place, but it looked elevated this morning. I am sure it was hyacinth I saw it last.

Radio Pasty led us astray again. We were supposed to have cloud and misery until evening time but, lo and behold, the sun flowered much earlier and by the middle of the day we were under clear blue skies with just a ribbon of cloud on the horizon. I suppose we were lucky to have it dry because, for rain, this has been a high range year. After a continuously wet start to the year, we seem to have had wet weeks followed by dry weeks just lupin around ever since. However, despite the sunshine, the temperature seems to have dropped but not so much as to freesia.

We had a fair few deliveries this morning. I had just about had time to check our stocks yesterday before we closed and noticed that we were bereft of some soft drinks, fruit and vegetables. I just had time to put an order together before I went off to meet our friends. We also need cornflower, but we cannot get that until next Saturday, if I remember to order it. I have put it on my forget-me-not list. I could have ordered some crisps but thought it would be alright if I risk running out.

Up to the middle of the afternoon, the street was buzzing like a live wire with people filling the benches opposite enjoying food and ice creams from our neighbours. We enjoyed some sizable crumbs from their table with a few mobbings now again. I have no idea where they all came from because we did not appear to be overwhelmed with traffic and we are, after all, a car nation. They mostly disappeared again after three o'clock, so there must have been something else to do such as lie lackadaisically down on the beach.

The forecasters were right about the evening being exceeding pleasant, they just omitted to say that the whole of the afternoon would be, too. I enjoyed it very much when I went around with ABH twice after tea. It was getting a bit breezy by then, but it was not cold like it was earlier in the week. The sea too had been whipped up a little, which did not stop a huge flock of sea birds congregating on what was probably a large shoal of bait fish out towards Brisons.

It also did not stop the very sleek schooner, Adix, from racing across the horizon in the direction of the north coast. Two of its three masts were full of sail and even at that distance it looked magnificent. If you get the chance, dear reader, look it up as it will be far more satisfying that today's Diary, I suspect.

Footnote: the Diarist takes no responsibility for damage to devices being thrown across rooms or against solid objects as the result of reading today's Diary. The Diarist does, however, apologise, in an inadmissible and non-committal sort of way, for contrivances such as 'high range year' (hydrangea) and 'lie lackadaisically' (lilac and daisy), which was actually truly inspired, in my own humble opinion, oh, and 'I risk' (iris(k)). If you were counting, there are fifteen flower names and three related objects. I will ever regret being unable to squeeze in 'jasmine' and 'poppy' into the text.

June 7th – Friday

It was a somewhat less frantic morning, this one, than the last. Despite a weekend's worth of pasties (sorry, MS) arriving at the same time as the milkman. They swear that they do not conspire to do so, but I have my doubts.

The sun was blazing first thing and the wind had dropped out almost completely, which was what we had been waiting for all week. By the middle of the day, the cloud had arrived, and the day went downhill from there. That is a bit unfair because it was dry and temperate, but I think that we are allowed to be aggrieved at having our sunshine taken away.

I was not quite as early as I was on Wednesday getting down to the gymnasium. The boys had been warned – spelt threatened – against evicting the Missus too early from her bed. I had tried bribing them, but the Missus' warnings are clearly scary enough. The going was tough again today and blistering though it was, it took some effort to achieve it. I was grateful to return and run ABH down to the Harbour beach for a run.

The spring tides have done nothing to restore the sand to the beach. It was no real surprise as the bay was dead calm all day with not a ripple on the water. With high pressure creeping back in again over the weekend, it does not look like much will change for a few days at least.

Out on the big beach there was plenty of room in the middle of the day. There was a big expanse of sand for the half a dozen people there to cavort on. Their numbers were boosted later on by a couple of surf schools plying their trade but there was scant evidence of any little camps up on the high water line. Someone yesterday who had not been down for a year or two said that they always remembered the beach having much more sand than at present. She is right, the sand has been gone for so long now it has become normal for us that see it every day.

Since I started this story, I may as well finish it – briefly. I had a letter from the hospital people today with the result of my big magnet experience last week. It was far faster than I had thought or indeed had been told, which worried me a little. There was, of course, no need to be concerned because despite examining the inside of my head thoroughly, they had found nothing.

The boys have been labouring hard and fast all this week trying to get the cladding across the front of the shop finished ahead of the scaffolding being taken away. It is likely that the scaffolders will get away with doing on Monday on the belief that the much maligned council inspectors do not work weekends. Today, they finished the lettering that now look resplendent – or as resplendent as it can behind the scaffolding - against its new corrugated backdrop. In the end, they attached the lettering to the cladding itself rather than an additional board on top of that. We will have a grand reveal when the scaffolding comes down.

The other reader commented on my use of 'mayhemie' yesterday and informed me that it was neologism, a word I had to look up. I must confess that I do not understand the hieroglyphs the dictionary uses to help with the pronunciation, in this case "nē- 'ä-lə- ,ji-zəm" the only thing I took away from that was a soft g. However, thanks to Meriman-Webster online, I was able to play a recording of someone saying it. That is not to say that they are necessarily correct, I say tomato you say tomato (although that does not work very well written down, but you know what I mean. I hope). Never mind, I can now say neologism with a female American accent.

Despite weather that was completely reasonable – it brightened again in the later afternoon – it was not what we might call a terrific business day. In fact, quite the opposite. Fair enough, it was a change-over day but where were the queues of people buying going home presents. Perhaps taking fudge and biscuits home has had its day or people have AI robots to water their goldfish and feed the lawn these days. I promise it will not be long before the AI robots get shirty about not getting fudge and biscuits even if they only enjoy it conceptionally.

I did not have to wait long to discover where the queues of people buying fudge and biscuits were. I had arranged to go and say a farewell after the shop closed to our friends from the North (of Camborne) who had been staying here all week. I had started the daily orders early and had wrapped up the newspapers when ex-Head Launcher dropped in for a chat. While we were talking, the lovely G turned up and joined in. Then, at a couple of minutes to six o'clock, the world, her great aunt and cousins twice removed – along with their pet rabbit – showed up to buy fudge and biscuits for the folk at home looking after gardens and goldfish. We were open for nine and a half quiet hours before that but clearly, the day being so glorious, no one wanted to waste it doing their going home shopping.

I made our rendezvous a little later than planned and it was still worth every minute, although ABH was not overly impressed. She has not fully recovered from her being under the weather the other day and had relapsed a bit. She sends her apologies but she really was a brae bit poorly.

June 6th – Thursday

I imagine that it does the spirit good to have a morning of mayhem every now and again. I only wish that it had happened another morning, although, if it had, I suppose that it would not have been so, erm, mayhemie.

It was not as if I was late getting up; I roused myself before the latest time I would get out of bed this morning. ABH was quite compliant in coming out when I called as she had stayed in bed when I had first got up. I had even skipped my morning exercise because there was not a square inch of the living room floor to lie down in. Things only started to go awry when I came to tidy up and post the Diary when I discovered that I had somehow wiped out the previous two days and had to do them again.

In the middle of doing that, ABH needed to go out again and after that, our sandwich lady turned up. This perplexed me because I had asked to reduce our deliveries to two a week now we are not so busy. On top of that I had to go downstairs again because we had run out of tea bags – I shall be having words with the housekeeper – and had to go down again when I realised that two of the lights that the electricians were to install were down there.

All of this conspired to make me late getting downstairs to open the shop. When I got there, I was getting through the newspapers when the pasties (sorry, MS) turned up and while I was doing that, the milk arrived. It was during this press that the electrician arrived and wanted to know where the lights were and where a couple of electric points needed replacing. All the while the boys are hammering and banging about the place and in the space of a day, needed me to order in another skip.

Because life was complicated enough, I thought that this morning would be an ideal day to count the hooded sweatshirts. What I discovered, having emptied every box, was that we seem to have plenty and in some sizes we have more than plenty. There are a few sizes in specific colours that need to be topped up, which were the sizes that were not selling previously but after not buying as many of those as the others, they now are. We do sell a moderate number of children's hooded sweatshirts but, strangely, there always seems to be plenty of stock left. Anyway, that order is off along with my guess for t-shirts.

First thing, I thought that we had lost the sunshine for the day as there was quite a lot of cloud about. By the middle of the morning, the sun was out in full force, but it took until well into the afternoon before we started getting anywhere close to serious business. At the end of the quarter, we are a bit behind on last year, but the last year half term was exceptional. We will watch with interest – which is code for biting our nails and drinking heavily - how the next few months develop as we can do nothing about it whatever happens.

The Missus threw her lot in with the boys as they struggle to get our name letters back on the front of the building. She started cleaning them ahead of the installation. All of the original fixings are corroded and required replacing but that was one of the easiest things to remedy. The main problem is that they letters need to be fixed from behind and no one could work out quite how it was done originally. They were either fixed from behind before the interior was completed or they were fixed to the cladding plank before it went up.

The only solution the combined brains of the team could come up with was to attach the letters to a board and attach that to the cladding. It was the only solution I could come up with as well. The Highly Professional Craftsperson belatedly thought that we should have retained one of the original planks and used that as the backing board. It would have been a nice touch if we had thought that far ahead.

A telephone call in the afternoon offered some reassurance on our solar panel installation as well. The National Grid look like they are close to agreeing the configuration that our solar company has proposed. They want a couple of points clarified but have given the go ahead on the proviso that those can be satisfied. One of the requests was indecipherable and the other was asking if the switch had a 'null' position between the two outputs. The plans they were sent clearly shows a switch with a 'null' position, so they clearly had not looked at them or at least not well enough. It is disappointing to think that is what we were up against.

I have to hand it to the solar company. They have worked exceedingly hard on our behalf to have this agreed and for no extra cost. In fact, we are having one less inverter because of it. I might have to send them a case of beer when they are done installing as a thank you – I will take it off the bill, obviously.

Our later afternoon got busier. It seems to have been a trend so far this week. My guess is people staying here are heading over to Porthcurno and the south coast to get away from the chilly northwest draft. They certainly were not on the big beach today that was conspicuously empty and any there would have been driven off by the tide at around half past three o'clock.

Towards the end of the day the Missus and I put the furniture back so that we did not have to do it in the evening. The living room is still a scene of carnage and where the electricians had to move ceiling lights in both bedrooms, there was bits of plaster and paint on both beds. The Missus; new vacuum cleaner, acquired at great expense is playing up, so I had to fetch the hand held one from the shop and use that before we could get into bed.

One day, all this will be a distant memory but right now it appears to be an endless pain in the bottom. I think we have cleared the living room three times only to have to use it again to decant things from another room when something else comes up. Ah well, we have nothing better to do with our spare time.

June 5th – Wednesday

It was an unexpectedly bright and sunny day and caught me completely unawares. At this time of year, it is sunshine that drives business, although that is somewhat mitigated by the continuing chill draft from northern climes. As I indicated earlier in the week, we were due for a change today, but I was expecting poorer not better weather. I had a quick look and the high pressure system had given over to low pressure way to the north of us, dragging its air down from Iceland. It is cold in Iceland I have heard.

It was not madly busy today, but we did sell a few hooded sweatshirts on the basis of the cold. I need to get to grips with the stock shortly, else I will either be running out or getting a delivery as we start to get busy. I was supposed to drop an order in before half term as the company boss told me they would start to get busy

themselves after and our lead times would extend. I just have not had time to do anything about it.

There was a bit of tidying up of the accounts and some invoices that I had forgotten about to input this morning. I just about managed to get those done when the Missus came down to let me go to the gymnasium. I raised an eyebrow at her earliness, and she saw my eyebrows and raised a scowl. I threw in my hand and headed for the gymnasium before she changed her mind. The boys have been working on the skylights on the bedroom side of the building and had hailed her through the hole in the roof where it had been. She was somewhat compelled to get out of bed or be showered with dust and debris as they started work. They are very brave boys, I must say.

Executing a blistering session an hour early took my internal eco system by surprise. I am used to it during the winter but when the shop is open, I am much later in attendance. I cannot say it did me much harm, although it was a bit of a struggle especially when another comedy sketch came over my earphones during my 5,000 metres row. I was certainly fit enough to run ABH down to the Harbour beach afterwards where a couple of fishermen were working on their punt. You could tell they were engineers as they had a big hammer and were belting something noisy under the blunt end.

Neap tides are giving way to spring tides once again and there was very little water down at the bottom of the Harbour. So far, there is little change to the state of the sand, although where the last high tide ended it had brought more shingle further up the beach. It was good for a run around and for rolling around on a small crab leg she found under the short slip. We did not tarry long as the Missus was keen to get on with her work in the flat and who was I to hold her back. Before the end of the day we would have to do some moving around of furniture as the electrician is coming back tomorrow to finish off the interior work.

It probably was not the top priority, but it was a bit of work that had been niggling at me since we had the special brackets made for the front flood lights. In the normal run of things, the brackets as supplied with the lights disintegrate inside a season. It is well in advance of the life expiry of the lights themselves and it is a trial to replace them. We have had the brackets replaced with marine grade steel, which should last considerably longer. The clever fellow who made them warned, however, that we needed to somehow buffer his marine grade steel from the stainless steel and aluminium screws and fixings. The two different metals react against each other and corrode.

Our Lifeboat mechanic, who also knows about such things, provided us with a tub of goo which needed to be spread liberally on the affected parts. He suggested I wear surgical gloves while doing it as it is greasy and mucky stuff. I did as I was told and went through six pairs of gloves because, as usual, as soon as I started spreading the goo in a quiet moment in the day, it suddenly became busy. Still, the job is now

done, and I have retained the tub of goo so that it can be used on the screws used to attach them to the cladding.

I had not long finished this bit of work when a van turned up outside and a fellow in a high visibility jacket came and waited at the counter until I had finished serving the customers that were in the shop. My eyes lit up when I noticed the 'First Bus' logo on his jacket. The much maligned council councillor who I wrote to, wrote back saying he would forward my complaint about lack of timetables in the shop. I thought that it had borne fruit but apparently, and perhaps unsurprisingly, not. Our man today came of his own volition, after a lady he met while changing the timetable at the bus stop suggested he should see me.

I would say that on balance, he probably regretted following her suggestion because I unloaded on him quite comprehensively the issues and complaints that had arisen since the new timetables had become known. He was not in the least taken aback and agreed many of the points that I brought to him. He said that he had argued the point about four changes in a year at meetings when it was discussed, but was overruled. He noted my complaint about the timeliness of the change of paperwork at the bus stop but he had only one pair of hands and it was only him doing it.

Asking for timetables to hand out in the shop, he told me that the Land's End Coaster flysheet that was produced last year was not available in that form this year. Instead, the flyer is no better than a brochure for attractions along the route with coloured pictures and a map where they might have more usefully put bus times. There is a QR code, which is readable by smart mobile telephones with an Internet signal, which will land you at the timetables if you press the right buttons. You then have to work out which season you are in and scroll down to the correct sheet. It will confuse utterly or frustrate. If you do not have a smart mobile telephone or more importantly in these parts, an Internet signal, it will do both.

I pointed out that both the app and the website are equally confusing. The 'next bus' option on the app labels every bus 'LAND'S END to Penzance' regardless which direction it is going in. It is fiercely accurate, but entirely without use. All the buses go from Land's End to Penzance, some via St Just and St Ives and some the other way via Porthcurno and St Buryan but neither program tells you which. Our man stoically listened to my litany of complaints and promised to bring them to the attention of the people who might do something about it next year. He seemed in earnest, but I have no idea if the bosses will pay any attention.

I now have a pile of leaflets and a box of spares. I will not explain the requirements for using it as I will end up spending most of my time doing so. It is definitely better than not having leaflets but probably not better than not having timetables.

Given that it was such a lovely day – ignoring the chill wind – some important person had organised a joint exercise between the Lifeboats, the Lifeguards and the Coast Team. The venue was to be Porthcurno and both our boats would be involved. The

only water buffalo in the deer park for me was that it started at six o'clock, just when I would be closing the shop. All it would take would be a five minutes to closing rush to delay me still further and miss the launch altogether.

It started with a trickle at around twenty minutes to closing and ended with a stream right the way through to six o'clock. It should not have been a surprise, first with the good weather and the opportunity for a few al fresco glasses of wine in the evening and snacks for the small children that are here. Secondly, the Lifeboat launch usually attracts a crowd and members of that crowd slipped away for a spot of shopping as they waited for the posted launch time.

I managed to close and finish up at around ten past six o'clock but there was still no sign of the boat on the slipway. So, having finished off, I went across the road to see what was going on. I was told that the Coastguard will calling the shots tonight and that we were waiting on a telephone call. The game being that Penlee Lifeboat would arrive at Porthcurno first and discover that they needed some assistance. We would then launch on the call.

As time leached away, we fretted a little that the not inconsiderable crowd who had gathered in the viewing gallery and along the railings opposite the shop and café, might be anxious that the launch may not go ahead. Since I was the last to arrive and therefore missed out on the lifejackets and could not help with the launch, it was decided it was down to me to tell the assembled crowd what was going on.

I started in the viewing gallery with the few people there and they seemed grateful for the information. I did consider telling the next lot down by the railings that we had found a hole in the boat and we were waiting for three volunteers to chew enough gum to temporarily plug it but thought better of it. I had just finished telling the last lot further down when the launch announcement was sounded. I got back to the boathouse just as the boat was running down onto the slipway.

With prior experience of such things, I was aware that this would not be a short exercise. It takes a lot of effort to coordinate the time of the various parties and such an opportunity is not to be squandered. Knowing that our electrician is due tomorrow, I returned home to help shift the furniture ahead of his visit. I managed to give our man just enough room to do his work and returned to the station when I saw that the boats were returning home.

We did not have to wait long before the big boat came charging through the sunset and into the bay. It was brought up the long slip in what to me looked like a textbook recovery in benign conditions. A quick washdown followed and we were home for a quick snifter and a last ABH run out before bed. We are, after all, a very efficient, very excellent Shore Crew.

June 4th – Tuesday

Some days just exude disappointment from the outset, and this was one of them. It does not help when the builders turn up wearing half a dozen layers, woolly hats and hoodies. I held off from wearing mine until close to the middle of the day, which was heroic, but even I succumbed in the end.

It became the sort of day to finish off inputting the quarter's invoices, or what remained of them, and to tidy up the accounts. I had wisely done all the invoices up to the first week of May when we were quiet as I knew that I would be pressed at the end of May. There was still at least 150 invoices accumulated from the following three weeks and I did them in two chunks over the last couple of days.

When I came to review the building invoices that I have been keeping careful track of, there was a couple of weeks missing. I knew that I would have printed them but could not imagine where I might have left them. It was by chance that I caught a glimpse of an invoice under a pile of other papers and books that I found the pile of missing invoices. I must have brought them down from the printer, been distracted and left them to one side. Over the weeks, things just piled on top of them not to be seen again until today.

If Making Tax Difficult was not making things difficult enough, then the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company are always there to add to the confusion. A customer asked for the Financial Times and since it was not on our current list, I had to order it. Because that was a Saturday, the first day it would be available was today. Naturally, it did not turn up. I sent a message to the customer service team given that they were so helpful last time. They responded inside a couple of hours, which was good of them, with a message that was a master class in obfuscation and inscrutability.

"As checked the allocation was blocked till today due to which it was not delivered. But, from tomorrow you will be receiving the FINANCIAL TIMES".

So, that explains it, then.

The boys were here in force today and cracked on with the roof at the back and preparing the front of the building for the cladding, signage, lights and so forth. At one point a spirit level was being waved about and I had to call foul. I said that if the building would lose its Cornish identity if it was actually level. It turns out that the front is indeed not level in several places, and they were wondering just how to put a level set of cladding on our wonky front. By the time they left, I was told that they had a plan.

They had the same problem on the first floor; the whole building is squint apparently. It was probably done on purpose so that they could fit the Lifeboat in around the corner. The current builders fixed it in the steel frame that they put in square and built to that. If you close one eye and lose focus, it is hardly noticeable.

A plan is more than the solar panel people have at present. The battle with National Grid continues as the latter reject proposal after proposal. The body is trying to press on us the solar share system they have developed which does not meet our needs at all. It would equally share the output from the roof between the flat and the business whereas we want to direct all the output to the business in the summer and the flat in winter. We are so close to the installation now that the solar company asked us to choose how we wanted the installation to go without the switch. I railed a bit at that and asked for assurances that the switch would be installed in time. The second message suggested that they were just waiting on the go ahead from National Grid, which just me confused. I will talk with them tomorrow.

I cannot remember what I was in the middle of but the arrival of our consignment of small bags of sweets rather caught me off guard. They were only ordered yesterday, so I was not expecting them for a day or two. The four boxes that arrived were sizeable and could not be accommodated in the already busy store room, so I set to in putting out as much as I could and squeezed the rest onto a store room shelf. It took a good part of the afternoon to complete and the display is bursting off their hooks.

It was pretty much close to closing time when I finished and, although we had a bit of grocery buying near the end of the day, we were far from yesterday's business and no hint of a five minutes to closing rush. I should remember these relaxed runs to closing as they will be precious in the near future – I hope.

It was not quite the glorious sort of evening we had yesterday but it was certainly the best part of the day after a short shower blew through. We did not have the beach to ourselves, either and shared with two large but friendly weimaraners. The little girl gave a good account of herself and managed to shake each off in the chase by her ability to twist and turn sharply rather than outrun them. She became a bit overwhelmed by them in the end and came and sought refuge between my feet, but she had enjoyed a good run in the meantime.

The close number work and the lack of respite during the day had quite worn me out. Maybe I need to go to the gymnasium a bit more often – or perhaps less often.

June 3rd – Monday

We think that ABH was a little under the weather today. Instead of plaguing me to get up, she curled up on my head and went back to sleep again. I just about managed to crowbar her out of bed for a quick walk around before I went down to start in the shop.

For some reason I found myself quite pressed carrying out my pre-opening chores. The pasty fridge (sorry, MS) needed cleaning and some of the orders we placed started to arrive together. There were things in the way in the store room that needed

clearing out of the way and the builders, who turned up today after staying away for the half term busyness, wanted to have a chat about what was happening next.

I was still clearing deliveries and cleaning things into the morning after the shop opened. This coincided with a flurry of morning custom, which slowed me up a bit and I was replenishing our display of fridge magnets when the Missus came down to relieve me so I could go to the gymnasium.

It had been a week since I last went, and even then, it was a cut-down session. I felt every day of it. Crucially, I managed a blistering session cutting no corners at all. I am still wondering how I will fit into the grand plans of the new two storey building especially if a host of people decide that they want to join. I have had the unsustainable luxury of being able to come and go as I please for several years being the only regular user. Heaven forbid that I might have to book my sessions one day.

Under the weather or no, I still took ABH out for a post-gymnasium run when I came back. We headed down to the near deserted Harbour beach for a mooch around – I did not think that she would be up for running around very much and she was not. She munched her way through some seaweed, which she seems to have taken a liking to and had to be encouraged off the beach because all she was doing was lying there chewing.

After the roof garden had been cleared of scaffolding, the boys did an excellent job of clearing the accumulated flowerpots and other ornamentation and weeding the plastic grass. Yes, we must have had the only plastic grass in the country that grew weeds. Anyway, the Missus has been determined to start using it again and to make it a bit of a play area for ABH. To that end put some temporary netting up on the front end to make it a bit safer.

She started off the use of it last night by setting up the small barbeque we have there. She had indicated that the barbeque was to replace our Sunday tea a couple of days earlier. I definitely heard the words being said but the implications clearly did not register with me. Implications such as selling the last bag of charcoal in the shop and wondering why I was given such a hard stare.

Anyway, I am I think forgiven and ABH has been out there today enjoying the warmth of the day. The warmth coming off the sand was the most notable things down on the Harbour beach, despite the now light breeze from the north,. It was not as if we had blazing sunshine all day, because we did not. Most of the day was mired by a dry mist and cloud obscuring the sun. It was not until late in the afternoon that it actually looked like a warm summer's day. It is quite often the case that the sun breaks through when it gets lower in the sky and for a while the beach was lit up quite nicely.

Our new cladding arrived late in the day and too late for the boys to commence fitting it. Instead, they spent the day stripping the tiles off the eastern side of the roof. They might have started on the western side had the scaffolders held to their assurance that they would be back last week to set it up. Just to add to the jeopardy, the scaffolder called the builder to tell him that our pavement licence expires next week and the scaffolding at the front of the shop needs to be removed or we need to pay the much maligned council another few hundred pounds for a new licence. We think that there will be a lot of activity on the front of the building in the next week and at least we will not have to worry about the scaffolding not being removed on time – we just have to worry about the work not being finished before it goes.

Business today was not going to set the world alight, although, as predicted, it was better than the weeks rolling up to half term. I will have to watch my volumes of everyday goods as it is easy to ramp up but for some reason much harder to ramp down. Pasties (sorry, MS) are a classic example, and it will take a few days to get the numbers right. Still, in the quiet spells, I managed to get the drinks fridge fully stocked and the Missus has ordered another consignment of the small sweet packets that had been completely wiped out by an army of small children in the course of a week.

Both the Missus and I headed to the Harbour after tea, she to collect sea glass and me to watch ABH eat seaweed. I seemed to recall some rumour of it not being what small hounds should eat but it did not seem to bother the bleddy hound and ABH has shown little sign of it affecting her either – apart from possible addition. Since I was doing nothing else, I checked on the Internet. The first entry was quite cautionary but highlighted that the soy sauce was the main problem being high in sodium. I checked with ABH and she told me she had left the soy sauce at home, so that was alright. Another pointed out the pitfalls of it being roasted with salt, onions and garlic – I mean, who looks at their dog and thinks, 'What will I feed my dog today? On, I know, seaweed roasted with salt, onions and garlic. Ideal'.

It seems that the majority of problems concern dried seaweed and not the fresh, which is rich in "iron, magnesium, iodine, and of course, omega-3 fatty acids", yes, of course, I almost forgot those omega-3 fatty acids. There, nothing to worry about – apart from the possible addition.

We spent quite a while down there doing our different things and watching the sun disappear behind the Harbour wall through the haze of high level cloud. The sea was placid and lapping quietly against the shingle down at the bottom of the Harbour. A lot of sand has been dragged out and the only sand now is at the top of the beach. It is unlikely to change while high pressure is in charge but in the meanwhile, it is a paradise for sea glass searchers. Bless, them.

June 2nd – Sunday

The irony of it is that the huge high pressure system that is bringing dry weather and sunshine is also driving that irritating and chilly northerly breeze. The pressure

system will stretch across the Atlantic before it is done, which looks like Wednesday or thereabouts.

That breeze seemed to absent first thing. It was the first morning for a while that I could have headed around the block with ABH without a jacket on. It was only later, when I came down to open the shop that it started back up again and kept with us for the rest of the day. She had not bothered to get me up this morning and instead slept in for an hour after I had got up. The loss of the now usual half an hour had me quite pressed for time that I was not used to.

I had left myself a few jobs to do in the morning, which would have been fine had I started at the time I have been coming down. Today, I had allowed myself just half an hour to top up the drinks and beers fridges, stuff and put out the newspapers and refill the ice creams. It was never going to work, and I was knee deep in ice creams when the first customers came in, which was as soon as we opened.

I did catch up before very long, but we were busy throughout the morning. It was almost certainly much to do with the sunshine in the clear blue sky and people rushed out despite the wind. What I had not appreciated and what would also have driven people to take advantage of today was some forecaster had promised rain for tomorrow. I thought it unlikely but what do I know. It brought a few people out and that could only be a good thing.

By early afternoon there was very little beach left and nothing in the way of waves. When I looked, the beach seemed quieter than yesterday but when I looked closer with the binoculars, there were just as many merged in with the rocks all along the high water line. In the shop we had gone spectacularly quiet. It is an effect usually reserved for very hot and sunny days. People encamp on the beach and cannot be bothered to head up this way. We would probably get them towards teatime as they ventured home. At least that was the hope.

Of the customers we did have, some still leave me in a state of confusion. A German lady came in to buy postcards and while she was looking asked if she could post them from here. I told her that there was a post box opposite and, when she enquired, told her that we could sell her an international stamp with an air mail sticker now that the Missus had nicked some from the post office in town. She seemed perfectly happy with this arrangement until suddenly she announced that she could not buy them anyway as she did not have a pen and she was gone. Since she had gone to the trouble of finding out if we sold stamps, I cannot imagine she was shy of asking if we had pens too. It cannot have been a lack of funds either as she could have bought half a dozen pens for the price of a stamp. It left me somewhat dumbfounded.

It was not the only thing that left me perplexed. I found some time at last to replenish the bone china mug display after selling a host of them over the last week. I had all the boxes out and filled the gaps on the shelves. I intended to remember what went

out and what was still missing so that I could place another order but by the time I had finished the last box, I could not recall what patterns we still have left and in what style of mug. I concluded that I would need to be a bit more scientific about it and make a record of what we had against what we ordered, so I went back and reopened each box. I now have another order ready but I will have to check the lead time.

We did indeed get our customers as they came off the beach in the later afternoon. We were hardly inundated but it was a good indicator of the numbers we should get used to now that the holiday is over. It allowed me a better idea of what orders to place for the next day and narrowly avoided missing the deadline for bread. Despite the bit of late afternoon busyness, there was no five minutes to closing rush, which was a huge disappointment, of course. I wrapped up the newspapers early as an impotent act of revenge and closed the first electric sliding door in The Cove a whole minute before closing time. Do not mess with me.

There was a family of sea glass collectors out last night when we took our after tea run to the beach yesterday. They were there again when we went out tonight. I know that people have been doing it for years, but it seems to be more prolific this year.

The Missus collects, too, and she has a bag in the living room that just gets bigger each time she goes. I am not sure of the point of it. Perhaps the satisfaction of making the collection is sufficient. I recall the Aged Parent collecting semi-precious stones years ago that he spent weeks turning in a polishing machine in the garden shed. I seem to remember one or two pieces of jewellery emanating from the hobby, but the rest of the stones sat in a bowl in the hearth – it was in the years when hearths were a thing – doing very little but looking pretty and collecting dust. You could only see the top ones though. Ah well, it kept him off the streets nights.

June 1st – Saturday

The wind dropped out a bit today. For three days of relentless howling northerlies, we sold precisely no windbreaks at all. Today, we sold three before the middle of the day. What sort of world are we living in, I have to ask.

Yes, today we had some semblance of a decent day. There was still some breeze from the north, but it was nothing compared to the last few days. There was enough sun and warmth in the air to encourage many of those leaving to delay their departure by a few hours to enjoy what they missed through the rest of the week. It was difficult to know whether it was just this that gave us an unexpected boost for the day or there was a larger influx for the coming week. Certainly, there were some faces that I had not seen before, so it is likely that the season may have started.

It was the sort of day that the arrival of a cash and carry order would have been quite awkward as I would have little time between customers to process the new stock. We had one anyway because that is the sort of people we are; we love a good

challenge. I spent the remainder of the day balancing the needs of our customers – and indeed our own need for income – against the requirement to clear the store room floor. The delivery came in early again, as expected, but with a different driver. This one asked if he could be even earlier next time, which is fine by us provided he calls ahead to let us know when.

The beach was the busiest we had seen it probably since the start of the year. With the wind onshore still, it was never going to be a big surfing day but there were plenty of people in the water with boards and quite a few without, too. The encampment at the head of the beach looked bigger than it had all week, but I did not spend much time looking as we were busy. The little camps were still there long into the afternoon. They will be pressed a little before long this week as high water draws ever closer to the middle of the day but with neap tides they should be safe where they were.

By near closing time I had just about finished the unpacking of the delivery, so I can claim a feather in my cap, thank you. We are seeing a few more grocery purchases, now, which is heartening. Also today, two customers conspired to coordinate two advanced postal orders which I managed to get right, even though I spent the day fretting that I had got one wrong when I had not. We are grateful for the faith placed in us over a Tesmorburys order or even in addition to one. The advantage we offer over delivery is that we have top quality local produce that is not available from the big supermarkets and you get to hand your money over to a fawning, Uriah Heep of a grumpy shopkeeper and who can resist that.

I had taken a risk and placed a larger than normal order with our local bread supplier. I was clearly not brave or big enough because when I looked close to the end of the day, it had all gone. We are also bereft on other bread too, which I can do nothing about until Monday. And there was me thinking that it was too expensive but it is also very good, which makes it worthwhile. I should realise that people are prepared to pay for quality and many still are not as sensitive about price as I worry that they are.

A gentleman, well, he might have been, came to me to ask the price of our wet shoes. I told him that they were less than ten pounds, just, and he raised an eyebrow. Rather than berate me for being a seaside grasper, he was amazed that they were so cheap. This worries me more than someone complaining that they are too expensive, and I then have to go and check that I have got the price right. As it happened, the price of shoes has gone up again this year and our price has been the same for several years in a row. It probably is time for a review, so if you are buying wet shoes this summer and they are more than you expected, blame the fellow I saw today.

Very subtly through the day that northerly wind increased until, just before I closed the shop – and hour earlier than yesterday – it was blowing a bleddy hooley again. I

knew of at least three people with new windbreaks who would be feeling very smug about that.