

DIARY 2022/23

July 31st – Sunday

The mist was even thicker this morning and, the darned cheek of it, had invaded The Cove in part. It did not take long to back off once it had seen my hard stare and by the time the bleddy hound and I reached the sand we could see Brisons again. As for the last couple of days, there has just been enough sand there to cavort upon thanks to the tide. We were just ahead of it today and had a bit more space.

The weather once again had a detrimental effect on business, especially during the morning. In fact, the morning was so quiet I was able to top up the entire stand of small sweet packets that had nearly been picked clean in just over a week. It remains a subject of utter confusion where some of the bags are the old price and three for £1 and some at 50 pence each. We separated the two onto separate stands which did nothing to lessen the bewilderment. We have got to the stage where there are not sufficient old priced ones to fill one stand, so I have mixed the two and be darned. The dear of them will have to learn to read the label if they do not want to pay extra. Coming to our shop is also an education.

My dedication to shelf topping up was cut short as we started to get a little busier towards the middle of the day. It got even better in the middle of the afternoon, which was a real surprise given that the weather was messing everyone around. Some brightness broke through here and there but as soon as jackets came off and sunglasses went on, the mizzle moved back in again. This apparently did not phase the small crowd on the beach camped out and obviously not those frolicking in the water. For all that the weather could throw, it was not a bad afternoon – and the surfers loved it again.

The quiet of the morning also played into my hands for getting hold of the right expert at the payment card company to fix our machine. It took me two hours to get hold of someone because there was a problem with their telephone system that let me key in all the dozens of numbers its asked for but then dumped me like a cheap date when I was about to get through. I tried again after a spate of busyness and eventually got to speak with someone. It took the very pleasant man just a few minutes to fix it but by that time we were so far into the day using the backup machine it was not worth changing over.

The Missus did the grocery order for this week. We deliberately aim to run for two weeks this time and have ordered extra of the things we know sell quickest. This, of course, will be a disaster. It has only worked this far because it was unintended and worked by the grace of the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers. They will throw a meaty spanner in the works with us doing it for ourselves.

One anomaly is that water is still being rationed. During the big scary heatwave that lasted two days up country and caused mayhem, we were advised to drink plenty of

water. Both of our suppliers decided that the best way to help was to limit supply. When we came to do the order this week, our new supplier had even run out of our usual brand of water and we had to carefully select another that might fit in our drinks chiller. They were also out of stock of baked beans. I am beginning to wonder if we had jumped out of the frying pan and onto the hot plate – no one cooks on a fire anymore, unless you are a Cub Scout.

Once done with the ordering, the Missus ran off to The Farm before we could change our minds and then off to Mother's. Ordinarily, Mother would join us for tea but she has another daughter coming to whisk her off on her hols for a couple of weeks. Her appearance here three times a week ensures that we have a proper meal on those occasions, but we will be living off snacks now for a fortnight.

Maintaining normality are the arrival of our regular visitors who have not been here for a while. The children, some two years on, are different people altogether now. I confess that I have completely lost track of those who have and have not been absent but just enjoy the fact that they are here at all for a friendly chat and a bit of fun. Some people are known for not being here at all – until today. You may recall – it was some while ago, February 2020 if my memory serves me well* – that we had a Diary contributor who gave me a welcome break from filling column inches by providing his own. His entries were very PC because those are his initials, as we do not reveal names in The Diary. He provided two images drawn by a relative, one of which I still use today – when I remember – for Lifeboat shouts. It was pleasant to meet the man in the flesh.

Our five minutes to closing has seemed to arrive at a more convenient time over the last few days, giving me sufficient time to close up in an orderly fashion. The main bulk of it came and went in the last hour but I did get a few stragglers up to the final minute, which delayed my placing orders for the next day. I was very ready for my tea when I eventually arrived upstairs and an evening of entertainment ordering groceries and inputting invoices into the computer system. Living the dream, here, I can tell you.

*It did not. I cheated and looked it up, but I bet you were impressed, dear reader, until you got to the footnote.

July 30th – Saturday

Well, that was a little disappointing. Peeking through our virtual curtains this morning we were presented with a scene of greyness and mist clinging to the cliffs all about. Mercifully, we were mistless in The Cove and the air was still warm enough to step out without a jacket. We clung to this soupçon of hope.

Radio Pasty assured us that brightness would abound in the afternoon if we were very good. Clearly, we had not been good enough and the sunshine eluded us even to the end of the day. There was even some light rain in the air during the morning,

which became wet enough for the few people who came to the shop to ask for plastic bags to keep their newspapers dry.

We are now in the second year of plastic bag charges for small shops, I think, or was it only this year. Anyone, my point is that despite a ten pence charge, there is, amongst a wide range of people and more worryingly, children, a continuing casual attitude toward taking one. I once subscribed to the notion that for small shops it was difficult to do without them because of the high percentage of impulse buying but I am wavering. Many of our shoppers know that they are coming to buy large quantities of beer or arms full of groceries and still fail to bring a bag. An outright ban on plastic bags would focus the mind especially if you weighed the risk against your beer swilling down the drain because you dropped it on the pavement.

I had time to consider such things today. It was so quiet that it was like having a day off. I would have preferred not to have the day off, mind, but I used it wisely by topping up the drinks chiller with the huge quantity of soft drinks that were delivered this morning. I also took the last of the surf jewellery we had in the store room and put it out on the denuded frame. Inspired by how denuded it still looked after I had finished, I made the effort to order a whole lot more to replace it. This took a while because the company is clearly so busy there were large numbers of out of stock items. It really was not too much of an issue because whatever we buy will sell and sell well; it is a very random approach to product selection.

It was a pretty random success that we got our replacement card payment machine late into the afternoon, as well. The company clearly felt guilty for not having a spare machine at the appointed time and sent me two. Having been quiet for most of the day, the delivery driver arrived in the middle of the one busy spell of the day. Had it been just a case of delivering the item and running away, I would have been fine but the existing terminal needed to be returned and because I was not sure whether the company had sent just the handset or the charger as well, I had to open packet and check.

I had to call the Missus down to cover for me while I dealt with the swap. To give the Doing Parcels Dreadfully driver his due, he was most patient even though I know that they are on a tight schedule. It turned out it was just the handset – two of them – so I returned our broken one and one of the two arrivals, knowing that whichever one I sent back, I should have kept the other.

And so it was that when I configured the new terminal between customers, it produced an error and will not take payments. I waited until we were closed and called the helpdesk, which I must applaud for being very responsive if not always helpful. Because it was the nightshift, the very pleasant lady was not authorised to carry out all the more complicated actions that would fix our configuration and we would need to wait for a dayshift starting at nine tomorrow morning.

We had intended to start using the replacement machine from tomorrow as it is messy using two payment terminals in the same session. It leaves some of the transactions on one system and some on another. Now we will have to wait another day or have some messy administration – all supposing the dayshift can resolve the problem and I get time to call them.

I decided that since most of the bottling up had been done, I had spent fifteen fruitless minutes trying things on the terminal with the helpdesk and it was well past closing time that it was most definitely time for a beer.

July 29th – Friday

Now we are talking rip gribbler. The sun was hiding behind some cloud first thing, preparing for its big reveal a little later in the morning. Of course, it waited until there were a few people around first; they was no point in doing a big reveal to one grumpy shopkeeper, a fisherman and a practising hydrofoil boarder. Each of us was otherwise engaged by more important things at the time.

Yes, it was a day of great sunshine and warmth; of great shopping for things to go home with; for eating pasties on the beach; for dipping in the glass-like sea. The beach, available for most of the day, was strewn with tents and windbreaks along with the usual camps higher up on the sand. There were nearly as many in the water and more paddleboards that you could shake a paddle at. There must have been a large shoal of something out there halfway between us and Aire Point during the afternoon. You could tell by the number of gulls distracted to a frenzy, fluttering atop it. I wonder why they were so animated because they do not feed off the fish. Perhaps the fish tickle their feet causing them to dance about.

We must have cleared the best part of 80 pasties today. Given that I have ordered 80 for the weekend – which were to go with the overstock from today – I think we may be in trouble.

It was a busy day, although we did have some quieter periods in the middle of the afternoon interrupted by the occasional order for large numbers of pasties. Yesterday was busy enough but today capped it by some margin, I thought until I saw the numbers later on. It was less busy. In any event it made calling our payment card machine company particularly harrowing as I was on my own when I needed to chase them about delivery of our replacement machine. It seemed likely that they had missed our delivery today but it took an age to get an answer out of them. Apparently, they had a 'restocking' issue, which meant that they did not have a machine to send me, which was somewhat remiss. It will arrive tomorrow by Doing Parcels Dreadfully, so I do not hold out much hope of getting it then, either.

Once again I enlisted help from the Missus to top up the soft drinks fridge. I had been unable to see what stock we had the previous day because of the state of the stock room and was unable to order appropriately. We were therefore short of stock

in the fridge for the day and the new order arrived after I was able to do anything about it. I asked her to draw up a list for orders for the weekend and we will have a prodigious quantity arriving tomorrow. Just as the weather turns from cold refreshing drink to warming coffee, no doubt.

The Missus had gone to The Farm to attend to the crops in the afternoon and was late back to help with the drinks. We had been cleaned out of soft drinks and beer by then, the day being that sort of day. It had turned into a glorious afternoon and the way the tide was meant the Harbour wall was crowded with young dare devils jumping off and making a big splash. I have no doubt, though I did not get to see it, that the Harbour was full of families, swimmers and all sorts enjoying the day.

Many of these were there for our five minutes to closing rush. Luckily, I had made in roads into our ordering before that. I usually wait until the last moment but whatever I ordered in and in whatever quantity, we would need it this holiday. We can do this all again tomorrow if you like.

July 28th – Thursday

There were still showers passing through when the bleddy hound and I walked out first thing. I thought that it was just wet but the raindrops were still falling – very lightly. I did not bother to go back for a jacket. The showers continued until just before we opened, which was a happy coincidence. During the holidays, it is only allowed to rain here overnight.

Our opening was followed shortly after by the arrival of some of the much maligned council contractor lorries and vans. I surmised, correctly as it transpired, that they were here to erect our replacement streetlamp in the forecourt of the Lifeboat station. The post that was here before it was toppled by the station roof was a wooden affair and doubled up for use by the electric company. The replacement is a modern, slim steel job, galvanised against the salt air, with a LED light atop it. They had it fitted in no time at all but I believe we await the power being fed to it by the power company as it was not lit last night.

Despite the rain of the morning, there was plenty of blue sky and brightness even then. This became more prevalent during the day and although it was some distance from rip gribbler status, it was a pretty good day for beach dwelling. This was not just my opinion, either. The available sand was crammed full above the narrowing high tide line on the big beach and the only draw for watersports being a bit of paddling and paddle boarding on the perfectly flat water.

It should have come as no surprise that the store room was a disaster area but I had clearly wiped the trauma of it from my mind during the night. I made some inroads into clearing the top of the freezer before our pasty order arrived because it is from there that I transfer them into the fridge and the bread onto the shelf. It was the shelf that I had not yet cleared presenting the problem when everything arrived, and I had

to use the floor instead. It was coincidentally quiet in the shop for which I was grateful, as it took me a while to sort the mess out after the pasty man had left.

I had some further time before the fight started to clear the trolley that was stacked with various items of beachware and toys, which started to make a visible difference. After that I was pinned down behind the counter as it started get busy.

It was not until the Missus came down that we began to make a real impact on the mess but even then it took until late afternoon before it was clear. When I say clear, we swapped the piles of full boxes and bags for boxes of flattened cardboard and bags of squished up plastic wrapping. Happily, the rubbish man is coming tomorrow to take it all away and then we can do it all again, probably not next week, but very likely the week after.

We were exceedingly lucky that the Sennen Cove Café next door was doing its evening cooking again today. The food is a blinding example of food cooked like it can be and we indulged once again. The menu was the same as last week and I had the same again because it was so good last time. The Missus could not decide on the chicken or the prawns, so ordered a half and half.

That was the grand plan, at least, because when we got there shortly after seven o'clock, they had run out of everything. News of their success last week clear had circulated and this week they were inundated. We had repaired back to the shop to gather what we could for a quickly prepared replacement meal when one of the boys from next door came around to tell us that they could cobble together a meal each for us out of scraps and leftovers. If scraps and leftovers were indeed what it was, I am sure I could not tell the difference. They put together a half and half, chicken and king prawn dish that could have adorned any top class restaurant table – except there was a proper meal's worth there – and it was bleddy delicious.

Meanwhile, over at the Lifeboat station, my compatriots carried out a training exercise without me. The launch was scheduled for after we closed by I have enough to contend with after the shop shuts that I cannot do both unfortunately. I listened to the boat return as I was eating my tea and could tell from the engine notes and the scrape of the hook along the keelway, I could instantly tell that this was a textbook recovery up the short slip. We are, after all, a very consistent, very excellent Shore Crew.

July 27th – Wednesday

Boathouse quote of the day: after being refused a toy for the umpteenth time as his family traversed the shop aisles, a young boy asks his dad, "If we're not going to buy anything, what are we doing in this shop?" Well said that man ... erm, boy.

I think the forecast scuppered us today as everyone thought that it was going to be overcast and grey. Of course, those in the know stayed behind and had a bit of a

glorious beach day again. The rest will have gone off somewhere else and missed it all.

It did start out the way the forecasters intended but it was not at all bad. The breeze remained quiet and it was still temperate and not requiring a jacket down on the beach. In fact, it was so temperate overnight that we had two guests sleeping on the sand above the high water line when we visited in the morning. They were presided over by a bemused fisherman waiting for the boats to launch.

He would have been even more bemused if he had seen them rouse themselves as they emerged in front of the shop wearing kilts in a Cornish tartan. Quite what their game was, I have no idea, but they had been around yesterday and were perfectly pleasant and friendly when they were in the shop. I thought that they were waiting for the shop to open and although they did come in for a brief snack, they were actually waiting for the café to open after which they were on their way.

The Missus had vowed to get up early to head for The Farm this morning with a view to collecting the replacement stock for the shop. Her list did not look that long but she arrived back an hour or so later with the truck full and more to come. She disappeared much longer on the second trip which included doing some watering – it is a wonder that we have water left up there, but the recent showers will have helped slightly. The truck was just as full on the second appearance and took a while to unload as we were getting busy in the shop at the time.

I had tried to disperse some of the initial load about the shop while she was away. I managed to price most of what needed pricing but getting it onto the shelves was a different challenge altogether. Whenever I struck out into the shop, customers would arrive and head for the very aisle I needed to get to. It is a common problem and is the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers playing games with us. The upshot was that when the Missus arrived with the second load, the store room was already pretty full. At the end, it was even more so and I would need to get down to the back to top up the drinks after we closed.

Both of us had laboured without a break since we started, so after unloading the truck, we took it in turns to head upstairs for a cuppa and a sit down. For me, this was a big mistake because the big rubber band that I had been running off all day, completely unwound when I sat down. It was quite some effort to get up after my cup of tea and head back to the tin stope again.

While we were nowhere close to being as busy as yesterday, it was good enough. That day had been an exception and rather oddly matched the gross take almost to the penny of the record day we had last year. Even more spooky was the fact that last year's record occurred on 25th July. I have no illusions that this year will be anything like as busy as last year - which is a shame since we have stock this year – but yesterday was quite satisfying nonetheless.

Just to round off a messy day of unopened boxes and a littered store room that we will have to master tomorrow, our smart new card payment machine went belly up. It died while processing a transaction and the family had to hang around until we could determine that it had gone through. It died again shortly afterwards when a lady returned to buy good she had collected previously but discovered she had left her purse behind. This time with her purse, she could not pay by card because I could not get the machine working.

When I called up for help I was admonished for leaving the machine in its charging cradle; I did not recall anything in the manual to say that we should not. Since it was still booting up, I could not see what the battery level was like, so I told the very pleasant lady who had answered the call that I would call back if it was still an issue. It was. The machine battery was clearly empty and not charging and I had checked all the terminal connections. I recalled earlier that I had burnt my fingers on the contacts on the base which should not have been that hot. When I called again the new very pleasant lady who answered wasted no time in telling me that she had ordered a replacement for us.

As refreshing as the smart reaction was, we will not get the machine until Friday, it being despatched tomorrow. We have a backup machine that will see us through the interim, which was a bright move last year while we were having trouble with our previous supplier. We just have to remember how it works.

July 26th – Tuesday

It was a beach day in the making when I peeked out of the window in the morning. The bleddy hound thought so too as we headed for the beach, although we did not tarry long. The breeze had diminished and the skies were pretty much clear but the sun had not yet got into full shining mood. It was a good start,

It was a good middle and end too. As we quite often notice, after a few days of less wholesome weather and quietness in the shop the first day of bright sunshine encourages a somewhat severe reaction in the other direction. Like a plague of locusts there is a mass migration to the beach, stripping everything in its path, our visitors clean us out of beachware and snacks. They return piecemeal during the day to feast some more and later, when their appetite is sated, a terrible thirst comes upon them and they return again and again to clear us out of beer, wine and other liquid refreshments but specially beer.

I had not particularly foreseen this occurrence but we are pretty much prepared in our natural state for such a thing. We had plenty of pasties and while it was emptied at least once, the beer fridge was topped up in the morning. The soft drinks, being more plentiful and more difficult to replenish mid flight, are another matter and will need some attention after we close and maybe some more in the morning before we open.

The Missus rallied to the cause after she came back from Truro where Mother had an appointment. It is a disappointing to note that the ear 'ole lady has moved there and we no longer have the convenience of such a service locally. It is a long trek for us in the middle of the season up to the big city and even after we close it is an expensive round trip especially for those less able to afford it.

They arrived back quicker than I thought, and the Missus stuck in with helping out as soon as she returned. Between floods of customers, she whizzed around the shop gathering empty display boxes and making a list of all the things that were missing and needed topping up. She will run off to The Farm in the morning and fill the truck to overflowing with goodies for us to try and distribute to our shelves.

There was scant time to look about at our environment but on the odd occasion that I looked, the beach was packed with beach dwellers. This had started quite early on in the day with people marking their patches with windbreaks, tents, towels or anything else they could get their hands on. As the tide pressed in, the crowd appeared to compact and each time I looked, people were more squeezed in. I am sure that the majority bowed to the pressure of the tide and came away but there were still plenty down there, clinging to their rocks and patches of dune that was left at high tide.

It was a record day and no surprise. The flow of customers had been pretty constant through the day and ended with a five minutes to closing rush, just for old times sake. Everyone was perfectly pleasant, which is a happy result given the enormous number of people who came through. It was a very good day.

July 25th – Monday

It was a day of many facets, the first one being grey and dour and not very inspiring at all. The punchy west wind was still bounding in first thing when the bleddy hound and I went down to the Harbour and once again I was glad of a jacket. As with yesterday, I would have been glad to be without one later on in the morning, although I fancy that the air was not as thick and humid as the day before.

By the time I came back from another blistering session at the gymnasium, the sun had broken through and we had the beginnings of a better outlook altogether. Someone should have told the sea that because it rather insisted on behaving like there was a storm in progress. It was rolling in with some enthusiasm, crashing up the cliffs opposite and making quite a mess of itself as it thundered onto the beach. I am sure it will not be long before it gets the message.

The signage of our policy regarding a minimum payment for using an electronic method of payment. We have one sign that says, 'Cash only under £3' and another sign that says, 'minimum card payment £3' –. I thought that I can covered all the angles with two notices but we either get, 'does that mean we can only pay with cash if it's under £3?' or 'does that mean you don't take cash?' but most often people just ignore the signage and offer a card for any amount no matter how small. Today, I hit

the buffers of my patience with a young man who was so confused he did not think that he was allowed to pay with cash or card, so I added two more labels to one of the signs, 'Cash for any amount' and 'Cards only if it's over £3'. The next person who asked if that includes PhonePay gets a clip around the ear 'ole.

I had called the refrigeration company as early as I could in the morning to find out what had happened with our emergency engineer visit. It seems that our call had not been booked in at first, and then it was because an engineer had gone sick and his calls were being reallocated. I suggested that they reallocate mine with some urgency since I had been waiting three days. Our man duly turned up at four o'clock and had it fixed in a jiffy. Apparently, the big heat exchanging radiator type thing was dirty and needed a good brush off. I had guessed that might be problem and had used a brush and vacuum cleaner to no effect. Our man must have had a stiffer brush and also squirted some foil cleaner into the mesh. I made a mental note to buy some foil cleaner and a stiffer brush for next time.

After the fridge temperature had settled down, I moved the stock that we had rearranged on Friday back to its rightful place bit by bit between customers. I will continue to check more frequently over the next couple of days then be more attentive on my daily routine in future.

We had just closed up for the day when my pager went off. At first it was for the big boat, then a few seconds later someone decided the D-class would also be a good plan. Of the very excellent Shore Crew who can get here quickly, one is off somewhere on holiday and the other has the dreaded lurgi. I found myself heaving the giant doors wondering how I was going to launch two boats at the same time.

Happily, whatever the incident was that we had been called to, resolved itself and both boats were stood down. However, a spare person on the Boat Crew had filled my gap at the controls of the Tooltrak and had launched the little boat already. By the time that had been recovered the only remaining member of the close by very excellent Shore Crew had turned up and between us we washed down the Inshore boat and returned it to its boathouse.

I returned to the shop to finish the closing routine and complete the orders for tomorrow. I also tested the dairy chiller temperature again, which was stable at the right temperature and everything is now back where it should be. I was quite intrigued to note that with everything askew, our sales were adversely affected. Given that most of our customers would not necessarily know where everything normally is, I must assume that it really does matter how things are set out. I will take more notice in future and see if there are any industry standards that I should be adhering to.

What with all the after closing action I did not get the opportunity to do half an hour of invoice inputting as I had planned yesterday. Well, that did not last long. I will try again tomorrow.

July 24th – Sunday

There was some more grey about to start our day. It hung around all day, as well, but came no where close to the miserable day that the weather forecasters had predicted, at least until much later. For the first time in a while I thought that a jacket might be a good plan just from looking at it. Had it not been for a quite robust breeze from somewhere in the west it probably would not, but I was glad of it when I got down to the Harbour.

It warmed up quite quickly into the morning. I stepped outside during the early part of our opening as it was warm and humid in the shop. I was very disappointed and resorted to turning up our new, smart fan that we have replaced in the shop. The old fan, ostensibly purchased for the bleddy hound, is now hers entirely, so we can stop fighting over it.

The business day was not going to set the world alight and even if it did, the heavy mizzle that arrived in the middle afternoon would have put it out. The forecast had pretty much seen to it that people would go off and find other things to do and they did. It gave me time to peruse our shelves and determine that we probably would not need a big grocery order this week. I am not entirely sure whether we are selling less in the way of groceries or we are ordering enough to last us two weeks because that is what we have done so far in the year. Whatever the case we will need to visit the closer big cash and carry for a few key items later in the week. If we can sustain this routine during August, it will be most helpful because that big grocery delivery is most disruptive. It could, of course, be that we have not yet shifted into top gear for the holiday.

There was a choppy sea out in the bay on top of the less than clement weather. There seemed to be some surf over towards North Rocks, so at least some were happy. High tide was at half past two o'clock but by five o'clock it was still clinging to the upper reaches of the beach. Together with the poor afternoon weather, it was no surprise that the beach was not densely populated. It meant that we had customers coming and going throughout the day but there was no frenzied buying sessions for beachware of groceries, although we did pretty well on the pasty front.

The mizzle had dried up and there was some brightness at the end of the day, which was not of great use to anyone. When it came to doing the orders at the end of the day I found that I was pretty stumped. Everything is in the wrong place because of our dickie dairy fridge. Usually, I can see what is there and what is missing and know at once what to order. With it all in the wrong place I am utterly confused. We have decided that buying a replacement for the dairy fridge would be a good idea since the old one must be at least fifteen years old. I have already earmarked one, which is bigger, but it will have to wait until after August as changing it mid holiday would be challenging.

After tea, I made a start on the huge pile of invoices that we have amassed since the end of May. I spent the best part of half an hour sorting them into date order last night and have resolved to do a small amount each night. I have placed a big weight on them just in case we have a sudden draught that displaces them again. Having gathered all my loin girding to get to this stage, that would be slightly more than I could bear.

July 23rd – Saturday

It had all gone a bit grey by the time morning came around. By the look of the marking on the sand at the bottom of the slipway on the Harbour beach, it had rained quite heavily during the night. I had not heard a thing. It was, however, very mild with a bit of a breeze blowing in from somewhere. It did not look too bad for a day of shopkeeping and even the drizzle later did not seem to make much difference.

There was clearly an uplift in the numbers; the street was a good deal busier than we had seen it for a while. Had it been a proper sunny day I think that we would have been mobbed but with a constant wandering in and out, it was not the worst day we had ever had.

I read with trepidation and a deep foreboding about the development of the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) in Scotland. This is the plan to encourage the recycling of drink bottles and cans by having a deposit charged at the point of purchase that can be redeemed by returning it to a vendor or recycling point and it is coming to a store near you, south of the border.

I am pretty sure that I explored this very issue when it first came to the fore a few years ago, so I have no intention of rehashing the arguments here again. Since then, after delays caused by the Dreaded Lurgi, things in Scotland have moved onto the detailed planning stage and it is this that has struck fear into my heart. The powers that be there have selected the waste collecting supplier that we have spent years trying to avoid, sometimes without success. They are awful. I do not think I ever had a correct invoice and contacting them or getting them to do anything is a lost cause before you pick up the telephone.

When we attempted to join the battery collection scheme, we were told that we had to store up 25kg of batteries before the collector would even think about collecting them. After five years, we had 5kg and I gave up. I foresee the same with bottles. Unless they collect daily during the summer months we will be stuck with huge sacks of bottles and cans that no doubt we will have responsibility for sorting. As for changing to, perhaps, weekly at the end of the summer bun fight and then suspending when we close – oh woe is me.

Meanwhile, back at the shop in the present day, our dairy fridge continued to be a problem. All the dairy is now scattered about and even I cannot remember where we put everything. The engineer failed to show today, that I shall be having words about

on Monday as we pay a lot of money each year for a maintenance contract. It is perhaps fortunate that we did not sell much in the way of soft drinks. Topping them up would necessarily mean leaving the door open while the milk gets warm.

The rain set in after five o'clock which made a comparatively quiet day even quieter. We ran through to closing without seeing much action at all until, at five minutes to closing a very nice family wetsuit purchase. We do love it when a plan comes together.

July 22nd – Friday

It is probably not a surprise that the Missus will not let me on Face Page as I am prone to the occasional slip of the tongue. A case in point was a lady arriving at the counter today with Canary Diving on her t-shirt. I asked if she did not think that was particularly cruel, which I perhaps meant to think rather than say. It caused a few moments of perplexity until the penny dropped. She told me it was tricky because they did not swim very well. I think she was humouring me.

At last the cloud that had blighted our days had drifted off. There was a bit left first thing out to the east that the sun manfully best off as it rose leaving us with largely clear blue skies and a few cumulus clouds dotted around to the east. It had turned into a proper beach day but with no beach and a lot of people heading home. We know this because a lot of people bought going home presents. Apparently, looking after potted plants in a heatwave is worth two packets of Cornish biscuits and a bar of Cornish chocolate.

It was such a lovely day I decided that a trip to gymnasium would be in order, executing a blistering session in the somewhat cooler air than was available on Monday. During busier times I keep my blistering to a minimum but nevertheless gave it a fair turn. It is a little more guesswork on the rowing machine, now. The gig club has taken out one of the two remaining machines, selecting the one with the only working display. It is an outrage, just because they own the machines they think they can do with them as they please.

At least half of the screen on the remaining machine works but it takes five minutes before I generate enough residual power for it to light up. I have to time the first three minute warm up on my clever mobile telephone else I will miss the start of the more rigorous session. It works but it is not ideal and I am minded to buy a display for myself since I probably use the machine more than anyone while they are here. If they take the last machine at least I can look at my display and pretend.

We were busy and quiet in blocks throughout the day, as ever. It is likely the last we will see of quiet, at least in such long chunks for a week or two. If it were possible, the day became more glorious as it went on so it was very fitting to see, near the end of the day, a big tall ship on the horizon. The barque called Tenacious looked

magnificent in full sail lit up by the sunshine that made it even more splendid and en route from Dublin to Fowey.

As the business day drew to a close we saw and increase in last minute customers buying groceries and wine for their evenings in the declining sun. These we new faces and the sudden burst made me revise my ordering for the morning.

We spent the evening rearranging the contents of the fridges as our dairy fridge decided to throw a wobbly and run a little hot. We apologise to everyone affected and hopefully we shall see an engineer arrive over the weekend to make everything better again. I think we may need to invest in a new chiller as that one must be eighteen years old and about time it found a new life elsewhere. I will get onto that in the morning along with everything else.

July 21st – Thursday

I think that I should run a competition to see who comes back quickest for an other half pasty. We see it numerous times, a couple coming in, one wanting a pasty and the other not. 'You have one if you want. I don't want one'. We wait a moment or two and then ... 'the other half nicked the first one', or 'I gave the other half a taste and now he/she wants one too'. I was going to base the competition on speed of return alone, but I think it is more complex than that and it would need to be fair. There are variables, such as can the other half smell delivered pasty or is it purely on visual appreciation of the other half consuming it or, as noted, after sampling. I would need a questionnaire sheet, a computer program to collate the data, oh, and a prize. Forget that, then.

The day was a little more fitting for pasty eating, the temperature having dropped away from red hot to mildly hot and stuffy. There was a bit of breeze from somewhere north or eastish and no beach to revel on for all of the morning and some of the afternoon. It has started out clouded over when the bleddy hound headed for the beach but the sea had calmed to flat after yesterday's blow. The fishing boats were all out from very early on and will probably be out for most of the day. They had to break early yesterday due to the sea state.

There has been a bit of a lobsterfest going on with our visitors over the last week. I cannot remember the last time we sold quite so many in such a short time. A lady telephoned today with another much larger order for delivery tomorrow. Fortunately, our fishermen will be going out tomorrow and between two of them we should be able to fulfil the order. It works well for all parties as we are able to pay the fishermen a better than market rate and charge the customer a lower price than they would normally pay retail and we have pots available for them to use.

The afternoon developed into quite a pleasant day as the blue skies returned and the beached widened out. As the tide receded, the little community of tents and windbreak corrals expanded along the high tide line at the back of the beach. In past

years there would have been a bigger spread at the near end of the beach but this year the sand has disappeared. Right under the Beach car park and all along to the Lifeguard's hut is a wedge of weed covered rocks. At present, the tide leaves a large lagoon on the sea side of the reef, which is not a bad little paddling pool for the young ones and a range of gulls. This will no doubt change over the weeks to come but those exposed rocks are here to stay until after the winter storms – unless we have a few summer storms, of course.

There were no storms, thankfully, for the Lifeboat exercise that fired off at around six o'clock. I had excused myself on the grounds that I still had at least another hour of work to do. I did see the launch but I heard nothing more of it after that as I was too busy. I am certain that the boat did come back again as I am sure I would have heard if it did not. I am equally assured that there was a textbook recovery up the long slipway because we are, after all, a very interchangeable, very excellent Shore Crew.

We had been looking forward to it since we noticed the A stand going up across the road from Sennen Cove Café. They decided to dip their toes into a couple of evening sessions a week. Just a couple of hours from six o'clock, a limited menu and a few complementary cocktails. The Missus was particularly in favour of it because she did not have to cook and the menu looked very enticing – grilled garlic, lemon and paprika chicken thighs or chilli and garlic tiger prawns with a vegetarian option too. We settled for the chicken with jasmine rice, pickled coleslaw and mixed leaves.

My, my, what a treat it was and the portion size was sensible as well. It drew quite a crowd and I believe that the cocktails went down a storm. I avoided those on this occasion. It was busy outside for the whole of the open period and then cleared out very quickly after the café closed. It was exceedingly well organised and from a visual point of view, hugely successful. They will be doing it again come Tuesday and we are definitely signed up.

July 20th – Wednesday

I was not expecting grey and overcast this morning with a bit of a cooling breeze from somewhere. There again I do not look at the weather forecast very often. It also came as a surprise when that turned into a bit of mizzle later on and blotted out our morning trade. It gave me some time to focus on the larger than average fish order I had placed, which turned out to be larger than I anticipated. The supplier had no pollack and had replaced them like for like with hake; there is around 4kg difference between the filleted pollack and hake.

The Missus came down early as well to finish off the delivery we had yesterday and to clear the store room. It took her most of the rest of the morning but left soon afterwards to plant some lettuce to try and get us producing again. After she went, I had some quiet time to finish off packing the fish that I had portioned when I went upstairs for a spot of breakfast. It was all a bit helter skelter to be honest, trying to fit

everything in around each other and the customers. At least in the end we had a clear store room – apart from a veritable mountain of cardboard – and a big pile of fish in vacuum bags.

It was again not a busy day for us even if the sun did come out for a while in the afternoon. That weather to start the day off probably sent many people off to St Ives to be crushed into crowded streets for a couple of hours. I cannot have been from off as one customer overheard me telling another that is what I thought and confirmed it was a living hell there – for him, at least.

The afternoon was a fairly sedate affair. We had some beachware sales that suggested relatively new arrivals and we had quite a few buyings of leaving presents. Given that it was a Wednesday it seemed a little premature for both, but I was not complaining, just grateful.

I am not sure that I should be grateful to our neighbours in the Sennen Cove Café. They were preparing for their venture into evening opening tomorrow when they will be doing some street food style nibbles and cocktails. The food was not being trialled in the later afternoon but the cocktails were. Our man from next door was keen that someone taste test the cocktails that his lady had made for the occasion and given that everyone else had begged off, it fell to me.

The first was a Mai Tai - gosh, I spelt that right first time. I was not overly keen as it had almond in it, I discovered later, which I dislike. I still finished it thought, just in case I changed my mind. The second, or was it the fifth, was a gin and lime mix, the name of which eludes me but was verry nice. After that, things were not all that clear but I am sure they will make a big impact tomorrow and we, of course, wish them well.

I think I should be grateful that trade was light after that. When I came to do some bottling up, there was not a great deal of that either, which speaks volume to the sort of trade we had today. Quite possibly the sunshine at the start of the week rather ruined everyone. We should look to having our sunshine at the end of the week instead.

July 19th – Tuesday

I am glad I am not an expert. There are so many difficult questions you get asked and being an expert there are people who rely on your expert advice and opinion. Take the expert they had on Radio Pasty this morning, the top man from the Cornwall hospital talking about the upsurge of Dreaded Lurgi. He was asked his expert opinion on how that might go over the near future and I could almost hear the collective breaths of the people of Cornwall being bated ahead of his response.

“Well,” said he, in well considered tones, “We have two scenarios we are looking at. The first sees the rate stabilising and decreasing from the end of the month.” We all

felt the relief; it was palpable in the air but what about the second scenario, we asked wordlessly. "The second scenario that our boffins are working on is that the rate increases from the end of the month." One thing that does seem for certain is that the rate is not going to stay the same. As I said, I am so glad I am not an expert.

As if to punish me for such a frightful slur on the credentials of a senior and respected healthcare professional, I entertained some regular customers who sought advice about cooking fish on a barbeque that they had no previous experience of. I am not an expert in the field, but I am a fast learner when the occasion demands. Drawing on my recent knowledge, gleaned from our esteemed head man at the hospital I replied confidently that they should buy the right fish and cook it until it was done.

At least the day had become worthy of a barbeque; it had started out very differently. We met up with bleddy hound's best pal down on the Harbour beach having failed to notice the big black cloud filled sky to the south and west. A flash of lightning later and a few drops of rain suggested some urgency about of mission and on the first peel of thunder, bleddy hound's best pal was off. The bleddy hound has never been bothered about thunder and lightning or fireworks for that matter, she shrugs them off as if nothing has happened. She is either an extremely chilled bleddy hound or is deaf.

There was rain that followed and the thunder persisted for at least an hour before it made its way east. I am rather hoping that it rained a bit harder up at The Farm than it did in The Cove because what fell here would not lay an inch of water in our collective rain collection system. The rain arrived in a little mini storm, complete with squalls stirring up the sea in which the lobsters I had asked for were being collected, that I was not sure our fishermen had completely expected. We got our lobsters, though.

It was another beautifully sunny day after the rain had passed through around the middle of the morning. Despite the revival of the weather, the beach was relatively quiet with not even half the numbers that were there yesterday. How fickle these beach dwellers are. After my initial look see I did not get the chance to do much observing again as our big order came in. We were lucky in that it had become quiet in the shop at that time and we were able to move everything in almost unencumbered by shoppers blocking the route.

The order filled the store room and the Missus set to trying to empty it again. Halfway through the afternoon, the delivery of little sweet bags that we had been expecting arrived. It caused a bit of a stir because he blocked the road. Far be it from me to absolve Doing Parcels Dreadfully from any misdemeanour but on this occasion the driver had little choice. It was a delivery of large and heavy boxes and with a car illegally parked on the double yellow lines opposite he – indeed we – would have had to carry them a distance from down the street.

Ordinarily, although the numbers of bags of sweets are legion, we take them straight from the box to the rack, which takes the best part of an hour but it is then finished for a month or so, depending just how many children are in The Cove at the time. What wrong footed us this time was that the price of the bag has gone up on roughly two thirds of the delivery making them not the popular three for a pound any longer. We would have had problems transitioning the regular buyers in any case but we now have one third at the old price and three for a pound and two thirds at 50 pence each. It will be utter carnage as young children with a pound in their hand from Auntie or Grandma try and mix the two tiers. There will be tears before bedtime, I am sure.

Mine might have been amongst them. It was a physically demanding day and while it was the quietest we have had for a while there was still a decent throughput of customers. The store room is still a mess and I cannot easily reach all the drinks at the back with which to top up the drinks fridge. Hopefully, we will restore order tomorrow and hope that we do not have excessive demand for soft drinks in the meanwhile.

The cloud rolled in during the later afternoon as it will do for people planning barbecues. After a bright sunny day, it also heralded a humid and stuffy night. I brought our very clever and quiet fan up from the shop to appease the bleddy hound and will fight her for it in the morning to bring it down again. I have ordered another fan to stop the arguments and it was due next day. I have no doubt it will arrive just as a cold snap kicks in. It was that sort of day.

July 18th – Monday

The hottest day of the year, breaking all records. We have been told to stay indoors, close the blinds and hydrate well. This will explain while the world, his wife and three kittens are all down the beach today making it the busiest I have seen it all summer.

I was told that there was hardly a breath of that pleasing easterly airflow down on the upper part of the beach where everyone gathering and that it was baking hot. In fairness, of course, it has probably been hotter in this locality and without the aid of a breeze, at least. The water probably did a good job of keeping down the body temperature temporarily but it was a fearful long way off across the hot sand under the unforgiving sun. There were some waves for the surfers when they got there, the sea just warming up for its bun fight forecast to be here by Wednesday. One happy customer got in with a lobster order just in time.

Clearly, being on the beach was going to be hot so I elected to stay cool and go to the gymnasium for a blistering session. Inside the hut with the tin roof the temperature was surprisingly a good three or four degrees lower than the air outside. This was most helpful. It probably was not the smartest move to put on two sweatshirts after I finished but it kept the flies off on my journey home, which is always a good thing.

While attending the beach seemed to be the thing to do, visiting shops was clearly not. We were the quietest we had been for some days and possibly a couple of weeks. There also was not great action on the pasty front either but I would hazard a guess that today was not really the day for eating pasties, although we sold more than I anticipated. It left me time to top up the sunglasses that desperately needed doing and to clear the store room ahead of the mammoth delivery tomorrow.

I did not quite have a clear run at topping up the soft drinks today. I was interrupted almost as soon as I got going but with some persistence, the work got done. The unfortunate consequence of doing this before we close is that we have room temperature drinks at the front of the fridge – I do not have time to remove everything to put the new ones at the back. People already 'mine' for drinks that they perceive to be colder toward the back of the fridge – it is air cooled so, in theory, all drinks are chilled at the same rate. This caused carnage by having cans moved all over the place as they reach for ones further back. My putting warmer drinks at the front only serves to encourage the practice.

All that was rather forgotten when a Lifeboat crewman ran past shouting that the Inshore boat needed to be launched. To emphasise this, our pagers went off right afterwards. I managed to get the boat down to the Harbour beach where we were stood down. The surfer or swimmer in trouble – I did not find out exactly what happened – had been rescued by other water users in the vicinity.

This was a happy outcome, not only for the rescued water user, but also for a grumpy shopkeeper who had been close to closing the shop for the day when the balloon went up. I closed up without disturbance after that and went up for my tea and with the breeze from the east diminishing we could be in for a warm night and a overly hot bleddy hound.

July 17th – Sunday

The rising sun broke through some cloud on top of Escalls Cliff this morning taking the gleam out of it and releasing me from the need for sunglasses. That easterly breeze had picked up again and it was exceeding pleasant to be out and about before the crowds descended; there was not another soul about.

It was about mid-morning that the breeze dropped off, or rather went around to the southeast and it became noticeably warmer in The Cove. In the winter when the wind goes around to the southeast, it swirls around down through Gwenver and right through the door. Today, when it would have been quite welcome, it did not. How obtuse.

This week is a bit of a dress rehearsal for it getting properly busy next week. To test our systems and probably our resolve as well, we like it to be as realistic as possible and we must thank our visitors for giving us a good testing by arriving all at once at

several points of the day. To ensure that we were not too overawed, they gave us a good rest in the middle of the afternoon and only came to the shop in small groups but even then, they tested us with big purchases and I now find myself being faced with ordering some more Squid Ink gin. Life can be like that sometimes.

The beach was enormous for the crucial part of the day. It was difficult to determine whether the beach was crowded or not as the little camps were more spread out. On balance, I do not think that it was as busy as it has ever been down there and we will wait another week before we see the real crowds turn up.

There was little in the way of surf for the big boys and girls and much of the goings on was cavorting and splashing about in some very pleasant and cooling water while getting the skin burnt off your back. There were people strewn across the beach varying distances from the water's edge as if they had made a valiant effort to get into the sea but had given up on the way. It was an idyllic scene of summer loveliness that you might imagine Laura Knight painting when she was not going to school in Newlyn.

I was very pleased that I had devoted some time to the surf jewellery stand a couple of days ago. Since then we have sold an inordinate number of anklets, particularly, and as we have a surfeit of them I am even more pleased. It has always been a popular point in the shop, so much so that I have had to move it from the door, but I do not recall the sales being quite so prolific. It is a good job we have a large number of spares.

The breeze returned in the afternoon. I did not ask it whether it had gone back to the east and warm though it was, it was most welcome after some fierce heat of the day. It did not encourage many people to return for our extended hour of the day, which is beginning to look a little wasted. It did, however, give me time to top up the soft drinks fridge before we closed, which was handy, as I did not have to linger after closing to do it. If I can manage that trick each day, I shall be very happy – for a grumpy shopkeeper.

July 16th – Saturday

It does not matter how well you think that you have prepared for a day at the shop, whatever you have done is never enough and there is always something that you missed that comes back and bites you on the behind. Today, that was bread that I should have ordered more of. There were probably other things.

It was such a glorious day to forget bread that I really did not mind one bit. We have other types of bread, after all, and the lack of a few white sliced loaves would not harm, surely. It was the last thing on my mind, mainly because I did not know about it then, when we stepped out first thing. It was all very pleasant with a soft breeze heading in from the east and a bigger sliver of beach to wander upon than yesterday.

Our day followed the traditional format of leavers and joiners, present buying and provisioning for the holiday to come. While the attendance was none too shabby, I confess that I had expected to see it much busier. Perhaps they were shy of the east wind that picked up in the afternoon and became a bit of a pest at 30 miles per hour. That naughty wind brought a covering of cloud over us towards the end of the afternoon, which is not what we were expecting at all – ‘the country will suffer heat like you have never known it ... except for the Far West of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly’. Aye thang yew.

I made several attempts to try and fill shelves during the day. This is an important step in preparing to do the grocery order, of course. Each time I thought that I had time to dash into the store room, I would come out to find someone in the grocery aisle where I was heading. Waiting for them to clear, even more people would turn up until the point where I would put the things back in the store room because they were in their way on the counter where I dropped them. It then became apparent that actually there was not that much in the store room to replace the gaps on the shelves with. We had obviously been busier than we thought – or we had been less observant that we should have been but not doing grocery order last week was a bit of a gamble.

Amongst everything else that the Missus returned from The Farm with yesterday, were some of our own tomatoes and cucumbers. The cucumbers have been making an appearance on and off for a week or so but this was the first time the tomatoes have come down and they were of saleable quality and size. I put them with the other tomatoes we already had in the fridge – yes, I know, tomatoes should not go in the fridge – and we had one customer single them out, which was encouraging. We still have some hope that the lettuce can be rescued but it may take a week or so.

Our new extended hours were not exactly a raving success on the first day. Many arrivers have a grocery delivery waiting for them from Tesmorburys these days. We do see a fair amount of beer and wine go out and more so in recent times. One customer who came in told me that he was a refugee from the bar on the beach where they wanted to charge him £6.50 for a pint of what he was buying in bottles from us for less than half the price. I can now see why our beer fridge is emptied with such speed these last couple of years. I do hope we have enough to last us until the next delivery arrives. Just in case, I made sure I had mine after we closed.

July 15th – Friday

Today had rip gribbler written all over it. It was the sort of day you could wind up, point in the right direction and then forget all about because it was going to be the same at whichever point you dipped into it – just downright glorious.

I am up earlier every day now. Because I beat the milk delivery, I decided rather than pretend to find other jobs in the shop I would get the bleddy hound around the block first. There was probably just enough room for us on the Harbour beach but we had

not been around the block for a while, so I told her that was what we were doing. She is back on form again and was reasonably keen to trot off in the direction of the Harbour car park.

There was just enough breeze to make the air comfortable but the warmth from the sun was already quite intense even at that time of the morning. I imagine it will be different from Saturday but there was not a soul stirring as we made our way around and the only sound was from the noisy gulls making a fuss over something above Stonechair Lane. Earlier in the week I had seen a thatcher drive passed the shop first thing and wondered which of the thatched cottages was getting a makeover. It is the turn of Little Cottage and, my, how they cracked on with that. It is nearly all done with just the apex left to do.

It was a pleasant little stroll around and even more so that it was the last bit of peace and solitude I had until the evening. We had a bit of a busy day one way or another what with leavers and joiners and present buying and deliveries coming in. By the end of the day I had even managed to put out on the shelf the snow globes that we had ordered months ago but had only just arrived. They had been delivered a few days ago but I mistook the box for a part order of hooded sweatshirts. I had decided to leave it until the rest turned up. It was only because I needed the space that I opened it. Just to serve me right the four very large boxes of hooded sweatshirts arrived in the afternoon, all at once but will have to wait until tomorrow to be sorted out now.

What clear could not wait until Monday, which was the day I thought it was scheduled for, was the reopening of the Lifeboat shop. This had not opened since the roof came off and has suffered some subsequently when the rain dripped through. The shop bosses from up the line have been working in there over the last few days, putting up more shelves and gondolas so that the shop is now expanded. At present, I have no idea what that means for the viewing gallery as I was not directly involved. I am sure it will be open when the shop is but beyond that I am not certain. I will investigate and report back. I know quite a few small people who will be mightily upset if they cannot get their Lifeboat fix and put tuppences into the swirly money box – it was probably designed for pennies but now works best with the two pence coin. There will be hellup if they cannot get in.

The Missus had gone up to The Farm to see if she could rescue the lettuce production that had failed after our experiment of growing it on the table tops to save her knees. While she was gone it occurred to me that we really had better make sure we had at least a starting stock of everything in the shop for the wave of new arrivals expected tomorrow and Sunday. She was not best pleased at the intrusion but delivered what was by comparison to some, a small order to the shop toward last knockings. The most time consuming element of the delivery was the wet shoes that need to be unwrapped and destuffed before being put out. I then need to put all the existing shoes on the right pegs – they get left in an awful state if unattended for too long.

The Missus arrived back during a proper five minutes to closing rush that kept me from my closing up routine. It rather demonstrates that we are indeed being overrun from this weekend and the following week we will be even more so, I suspect. It is sort of the end of the time when we have the opportunity to stop and chat to the regulars. From now on we will be a bit more pressed and have to be somewhat business-like, if I can remember how that goes.

I had warned the Missus and Mother that I would be late up for my tea as I attended to the shoes I had unwrapped and the drinks fridge. The beer fridge will wait until tomorrow morning. I just about made it up at the time I said as it would have been criminal to ruin the beautifully cooked lump of haddock I had selected out of the freezer. We have sold quite a bit in recent days, which I am most happy about and people have been coming back for more. I had one lady turn her nose up because the fish was frozen but really, because it is vacuum packed and frozen on the day it arrives, there is no discernible difference when it is cooked from fresh and I would challenge anyone to tell the difference. I think I shall have to do another big order shortly and be prepared to do the processing after we close at night.

As we dined, we watched the local youth jumping off the Harbour wall. Some of them are real youngsters emulating older siblings and in some cases parents doing the same. It was probably the same at the other end of The Cove where a collection of gulls and possibly terns were crushed into a lagoon at the end of the OS slipway. They were still there at close of play when I called it a day and went to bed. I have to be at my best for my public in the morning, although it will probably take more than a good night's sleep for that to happen.

July 14th – Thursday

The bleddy hound had a minor relapse this morning, which caught me out a bit. Fortunately, I did not have a big pile of things to do in the shop first thing – just a small pile – so I took her out twice. As luck would have it on the first occasion that was rather early, we met up with her best pal down on the sliver of beach that the tide allowed us. Owner of best pal was swimming, which was brave given how wet it was out there. It was quite choppy, too.

That chop was down to quite a lively north wind that had been with us all night and quite a blessing. By the end of the evening it was blowing a gale just before it gave up the ghost altogether. It lingered for the day and it would, in my humble opinion, be quite nice if it hung around for a bit longer – as a breeze, not a gale. I think that the bleddy hound, at least, will be with me there.

Every day more 'stuff' arrives. It may be groceries or cans of beer or, today, hooded sweatshirts and snow globes. Try as I might, I do not seem to be able to get ahead of them all and the store room is filling up. Much of it is boxes of waste cardboard that appear to be larger than the sum of the boxes that arrived when they were full.

How does that happen. I think if we closed for a couple of days I would clear it in no time or, more likely, sit on my behind until it was almost time to reopen again and then find I am no better off.

We are finding that the hot, sunny weather is not regarded as pasty weather. We are doing alright but given the numbers here, we would expect to do much better. While I have been keeping tabs on it during the week and the numbers have been reasonably stable, a big question mark hangs over the weekend. We extend our hours from Saturday, heaven help me, although I am not sure why I mentioned that as it will not have any effect on the pasty sales, just the grumpiness of the shopkeeper selling them.

The Missus slipped off to do a spot of shopping. She had planned an after training buffet for the Lifeboat crew to mark the return of our own boat back to the station. We have been unable to have any sort of crew function for some time, so it was a good excuse and we were able to do it outside, which was a great help. She came back laden with food stuffs enough for several Lifeboat crews, even if the whole crew did turn up.

She had also been to the cash and carry for a top up for the shop. We were close to running out of big bottles of water, which was no surprise given the weather and I knew that we would not make it through the weekend without some more beer. She got the beer but it appears we are being rationed for cases of water. We may have sufficient until the delivery of the next cash and carry order, but it will be a close run thing. We will need a plan B, which I suspect means sourcing from both cash and carries, which means regular trips to Hayle unfortunately.

Again this week the Lifeboat exercise was scheduled in early for the tides, so I would have been unable to make the launch. As it so happened, about twenty minutes before it was due to launch, our Lifeboat pagers went off requesting a launch of the big boat. Most of the crew had already gathered for the training session and they mounted a very swift launch to a reportedly capsized yacht in the area of Porthcurno. So swift was the launch that having evacuated the shop and thrown the bleddy hound upstairs, I was late to the party and the boat was launched before I even had my kit on.

For both the reasons that there were enough people at the station to take of business and that the boat had gone a fair way south of Porthcurno for the casualty, I went back to the shop. The customers that I turfed out returned and were very sweet about their treatment and we became a lot busier in our last hour than we have been for a while.

The large trimaran that had come to grief had been taken under tow by a trawler that had been in the area and was heading for Newlyn. The powers that be had clearly heard about the Lifeboat station buffet and thought leaving the arrangements in

place was a jolly good idea allowing the boat to return to station few a few beverages and a sandwich or five.

Given enough at the station already and the fact that one of them had swagged my kit, I returned to the shop to help set up the table in the ILB house and put the beer on ice. The hot food took a little while longer to come ready and the crew dutifully came to the shop to help ferry it up to the ILB house. It was, as expected, a sumptuous feast that I will be enjoying for the weeks to come as breakfast and tea, using up the left-overs. The fact that there were left-overs, knowing the consumption capacity of some of the lads on the crew, is testament to the sheer volume of food that the Missus churned out. Had she been around in Napoleon's day, he would never have retreated from Moscow and the world would be a very different place, I am sure.

July 13th – Wednesday

We still had some cloud this morning but there were a few more breaks in it than yesterday. Down on the beach first thing a cool northerly breeze was blowing in and it was most welcome after a draught free and muggy night. I think that the bleddy hound, now much recovered, was very keen to remain there. I had to explain in great detail the economics of having to work to put food in her bowl and she was most understanding ... do not be daft, I had to drag her kicking and screaming every inch of the slipway to the top.

That breeze hung in there for most of the day, which was useful. It was not so useful that with the windows and door open upstairs it scat my orderly pile of sorted invoices all over the living room floor. Fortunately, it was only a small pile, which is not at all like the pile I have in the shop. At some point very soon I am going to have to knuckle down and input these to the computer system or have an impossibly bigger pile to do in a hurry at the end of August when I suspect it will be exponentially busier than it is now.

It did not seem very busy today, but we generally have a down day during any week. Someone came in later and said that it might be the breeze putting people off and it had not occurred to me to see it as a disadvantage. If so, many people would have gone around to Porthcurno for a spot of shelter and unadulterated heat.

We had quite a bit of pop delivered in the morning and it took me a while to clear it to the back of the store room. Along with some bits delivered by the Missus from The Farm I eventually got the store into a state where I could start on the delivery that arrived last night despite postponing it until today. I had made my displeasure known by filling out the customer satisfaction survey, which resulted in a call first thing. A very pleasant lady apologised profusely and in a stern voice told me that it was not good enough. I was not entirely sure whether she mean the service delivered by Doing Parcels Dreadfully or my report that I was not happy. Either way I strongly

suspect that I will not hear another word about it despite hearing things like 'escalated' and 'complaints process' during the call.

I had just started on the surf jewellery, because it was this that was delivered, when it all started getting busy again. I managed to put out all the flip flops that arrived in the box as well but after that I was pretty much stumped.

At half past four my pager going off delivered the coup de grace to my jewellery unwrapping and sending shoppers cascading out of the shop ahead of me in my rush to the station. The call was for the Inshore boat but before I could get into the driving seat my oppo turned up and went instead. I acted as banksman and saw the boat safely away at near enough high water, which is the most awkward state of the tide to launch in because of the angle of the slipway.

We later understood, mainly because the Coastguard helicopter was hovering over the spot, that someone had fallen off the cliff path and was being attended to by medics. It must have been a very difficult spot because people were being winched in and out and two hours later the casualty was taken in in a stretcher. As with most launches, we do not get very much detail if we are not directly involved and rarely hear about outcomes. The inshore boat stood by, bobbing just off the shore in some choppy water for two hours in a 'just in case' role.

I was still working when the boat came back in and was recovered by my pal who very kindly covered for me. Fortunately, Inshore launches do not require much of a team and everything was very quietly put away without much fuss. We shall probably see chapter and verse in the Cornishman's online presence soon, unless they are still too busy stirring up discontent with a nice little piece that warns that our summer visitors will be taking all our precious water when they arrive in numbers. Bless.

July 12th – Tuesday

What a glorious summer that was. I can still feel the heat of it now as the cloud sits heavy over the top of us. We even had some rain, first thing, before anyone was generally aware but the evidence of that dried up a few minutes later.

The high level cloud blotting out the sunshine did indeed change the mood in The Cove. It did not stop a whole horde of beach dwellers settling on the newly expanded stretch of sand courtesy of the later tide, so that was alright. Our visitors seem to have the hang of being on holiday now and were later in for their newspapers and breakfast goods. There was less of a bun fight for buckets, spades and parasols with everyone who wanted them presumably having them.

The heat and humidity were quite oppressive and it was clear that the level of activity, particularly of those not in the water, was very much restricted. That cannot have been many – the sea was packed. It did not help grumpy shopkeepers with the orders arriving that required more effort than it was desirable to give. Thankfully, the

grocery order was reasonably early and so I had some time to process it and this was followed by Mr Tarquin's gin that I had put off buying earlier because of the cost and attendant lack of demand.

It might, to you and me, dear reader, have seemed logical that since a Doing Parcels Dreadfully van was down here delivering the Tarquin's it might also have delivered the surf jewellery. Instead, it had decided that delivering the parcel much later, well after most businesses would have closed, was a spiffing idea. I conveyed my disagreement with such a notion by postponing the delivery until tomorrow in the hope that they may reschedule it for a time when the shop might be open and that someone would be here to receive it. Well, it made me feel better, anyway, and we were both out at the time they said.

My feeling better lasted as long as it was until the original due delivery time when the ghastly company delivered it anyway. It makes you wonder why the option to postpone is given at all if they are going to ignore it.

Radio Pasty was full of it this morning and all I have heard all day is all about the big heat coming. I saw the forecasters' weather warning area and we are excluded; the big yellow blob stopped at Camborne, east Camborne at that. We will not be seeing any of the naughty high temperatures and will be biting our thumbs at those in, say, Chacewater who probably will be doing just that.

I think that in the later afternoon we had a bit of a rush – so small an untrained eye would have missed it - from those being chased from the beach by the tide. The hardcore ones moved off towards the Valley and were duly pinned down. We had no hope of getting them as I am sure that they would not have gone around the back and back up the Coastpath just to get to us. Consequently, we had a lull in the run up to closing excluding the notable exception of a bit of a five minutes to closing rush.

I was due for a meeting at the Lifeboat station and that scuppered my topping up of drinks in the evening. It will not be done in the morning, where I hope I shall have enough time.

July 11th – Monday

Well, we can stop worrying about the bleddy hound. She had a small bit of breakfast this morning and we hope for greater things later. She had been on a fast since last Wednesday, which to be fair did her waistline a few favours, but was not ideal for nutrition.

Today we had half a rip gribbler with cloud appearing in the middle of the afternoon briefly. I braced myself for complaints but, in truth, I was already getting them for how hot it was or as one senior citizen of The Cove put it, 'hot enough in my back yard to grow cannabis', which raised a few eyebrows.

There was a downshift in busyness today, although we probably would not have guessed that from the deluge of customers we had through the door during the first part of the morning. Rather irritatingly, our bread and pastry delivery was late and not only that, it was short of bread. It seems the problems they have getting bread from their outsourced supplier continue. That I do not mind, if we are told that when we place the order. What I object to is being told that all the problems are behind them now, placing the order then not getting the bread. Fool that I am, I keep on believing it, mainly because we would prefer that bread to the 'plastic' mass produced, full of preservatives stuff we get from the milkman. However, when I place an order for that, it arrives, which is what will happen until I get some sort of assurance that the bakery have the problems well and truly nailed.

As expected, or rather hoped, the demand for beer shrunk with the onset of the weekdays. It means that we will not have to panic about emergency shopping for cases of beer that we can only get from the cash and carry. It does not let me off the hook for stopping after school to top up the soft drinks fridge, however. Happily, we can call in orders for these six days of the week, which means we do not have to carry huge volumes of stock. It also comes at a price similar to that of the big cash and carries for which we are very grateful. If only someone would deliver it and put it out on the shelves.

The bit of beach that is there for the main part of the day is diminishing day by day. Fortunately, high water is getting later and soon we will be back to it chasing our customers off the beach and reminding them to get to the shop before we close. The dead period during the day at least gave me time for a tour of the shop and to see the gaps in the stock that have developed unchecked. We will need more hats and shorts before very long, so I placed an order for surf jewellery instead.

To explain that I have not completely taken leave of the senses I have remaining to me, I think we have spare shorts and hats up and at the store. We need to check this before I go placing potentially unnecessary orders. The surf jewellery stand I can see from the counter and its bareness has been giving me palpitations as I see myriad young ladies attend it looking for stock. Last time I placed an order only half of it arrived so this time I doubled the order in anticipation of the same. Of course, there will be no out of stocks this time and I will get the lot. Still, it will sell eventually.

I was late again coming up for tea. It does not do to keep Mother waiting but the drinks fridges will not fill themselves up. Even using some time in the evening, I have not got enough time to complete the job. I have resolved to get up earlier, which in previous years I would have left until our hour extended. It seems we are busy earlier this year but that could have much to do with the weather as well as the Scottish, who have a holiday earlier than the rest of us.

It seems the starting gun for summer has gone off.

July 10th – Sunday

A proper rip gribbler from the very outset today, even the breeze had moderated, although it had gone around to the east today, just for fun. It was also a proper beach day and this time we did see a drop in footfall in the middle of the day and the early afternoon. The beach dwellers spent a good part of the day squeezed up against the dunes but luckily, it being a neap tide still, there was a bit of beach left to pitch on. Also, high water is no good for surfing or bathing at present, so there were precious few people doing anything in the water for the main part of the day.

For our main part of the day, we were picking up morsels of sales from the stragglers, the passers by and those not happy about sitting on a beach. I was getting the impression that it was mightily hot outside and even the stragglers tailed off in the end, wilting in the heat of the day. It was pretty hot in the shop as well, even with our clever bladeless fan at close to top speed and the extractor working overtime. Happily, the occasional trilling of the till kept pulling me back from swooning in the heat.

The problem with buses seems to continue. I had yet another customer asking when the next bus would be this time to Penzance. On this occasion she had just missed one and the next bus, according to the website tracker, looked to be running to time. However, coming the other way, the next bus was going to be nowhere near its appointed time. Rumour has it that it is a staffing problem, but some information would be handy. It would be useful if they could schedule the dropped out buses, too, so at least people would know when not to expect one. Sadly, it is hardly encouraging people to take their cars off the road and use public transport instead.

Employing a different mode of transport was yet another interesting character appearing in the shop. He looked like he had been cycling judging only by his lycra shorts. Apparently, canoeists wear these too and he told me that he had canoed from Praa Sands this morning when he appeared in the middle of the afternoon. I asked and he told me that there was some charity involvement but he did not tell me which one or press or even hint that I donate. Mainly, he said he was doing it because he could and because he was enjoying it. He had started in Newquay, paddled up to Bristol and then through the canal network to London and back along the south coast. It was definitely different.

I asked if he was planning on writing a book about his exploits and he told me that he had a Face Page which he updated but could not imagine anyone would be interested in such boring things as paddling along and camping here and there. I suggested that it was probably a sight more exciting that the exploits of a grumpy shopkeeper being in print, ahem – as if any eejit would do such a thing – but he was not persuaded. It is a shame. It did Jerome K Jerome no harm at all and I for one would happily buy it.

There must have been a few travelling by bus, possibly canoe, or not travelling at all because the beer we went through today was legion. At the beginning of the day, I swapped the two lager brands around so that the latest biggest seller had the most room in the fridge, which seemed a reasonable strategy. I had replaced that stock yesterday and today I did that three times with twice as much in the fridge. I spoke with the Missus before she went up to The Farm and we agreed that we would leave it a week before the next grocery delivery and top up by driving to the closer one at Hayle. I think that trip maybe closer than we thought just for beer alone, although we will run out of big bottles of water too before the weekend if the weather holds. The likelihood is, we hope, that drinking will moderate during the week but if it does not, I might have to join them – if there is any left.

July 9th – Saturday

They say that every day is an education and today I learned that we can change our busyness level at anytime but most especially when we are not expecting it.

Today, the sun shone. It shone from early in the morning until the time it stopped being sunny when the sun went away. Ordinarily, we would see people fore and aft of the day but today, for some reason and probably much to do with change-over day, we were busy in the early afternoon as well. I think we must look on this as a bonus and worry later about tomorrow's shortage of pasties.

While the sun shone, we still had that cooling northerly draught to contend with. I had thought that its ferocity first thing would put people off buying parasols today but happily I was wrong. We sell umbrellas when it is wet with the inherent risk that they will blow inside out – our rain and wind tent to work side by side here – so there was no particular reason for my concern. Oddly, we did not sell too many windbreaks but being a change-over day it was likely that those staying for the beach had been here all week and might already have purchased one and the new contingent yet to arrive.

There were a few farewells, but I do not recall much as it because it all went by so quickly. The lobsters order that we put in during the week, the first this year, failed to materialise. I had a text first thing from the fisherman and tried to look elsewhere but none of them went out today. We were not entirely sure why but we were assured that they were going out tomorrow and the customer, who had no choice else, was happy to change days.

For the first time in a while the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper company made a proper mess of the newspapers – I have got used to the regular mess they make of magazines. One of the most popular titles was replaced with another title that we already had plenty of. It was an honest sorting mistake at the depot but left me with a day long series of questions of what had happened to them and why had I not ordered enough. "Failed to get delivered" turned into "because I hate my customers that much I decided to punish them" after about enquiry number twenty.

The busyness of the afternoon came in fits and starts, although there were way more starts than fits or possibly the other way around. I did try and stock up the surf jewellery stand but gave up halfway through the anklets as the number of starts, or was it fits, increased. It was no holds barred season on hats, windbreaks - some, swimsuits, games and beer, particularly beer and I tried hopelessly to keep the beer fridge topped up against the outgoing flow. It was hopeless. I gave this up too and tried a little later with the footballs outside where I was a little more successful.

The Missus went back up to The Farm again in the middle of the day. She is trying to rescue the lettuce and spinach. We experimented this year with growing them in bags on a tabletop to save the Missus's knees but it was an abject failure. The lettuce has not done well at all and she is trying to revert back to using the beds again but we have struggled to get us both up there to move the tables. With our guests up there camping, we have extracted a pitch fee in the form of some help. With any luck we can rescue our baby leaf bags in time for the holidays.

She told me that since it was far too hot to labour long in the polytunnel she switched her attention to the huge pile of stock in the store. With a bit more organisation she is actually able to find things now and to get to them. This had been a big problem to date where we know we have the stock but extracting it has been exceedingly difficult. Since we have probably six or so weeks left of mad busy selling, this came not a moment too soon.

Our guests decided to spend a second night up at The Farm, so they cannot have found it too uncomfortable the first night. I am still taking bets that they will make it to the end of the week but I think the weather is set to hold, which will be a bonus. They have indicated that they want to do it again in August when the weather usually holds a few surprises. That will test their resolve and my odds will shorten.

July 8th – Friday

Just for a change today we had our blistering sunshine in the morning and cloud cover in the afternoon. It was, of course, the day the Missus decided that a barbeque up at The Farm would be a good idea.

It was a proper rip gribbler to start with and no mistake The bleddy hound was only just encouraged to come with me down to the beach but it was a half-hearted affair; she is clearly still not the full shilling. If it needed any confirmation, she did not eat her breakfast, which is a very clear signal.

Given that I had gone missing for a few hours yesterday, I did not go to the gymnasium today. I will have to make a special effort on Monday to catch up before I melt into a pool in the heat. Instead, I rallied myself in the shop putting out an early delivery of Cornish biscuits and loading up with the diminutive pasty delivery that I thought would be sufficient.

We are getting a solid flow of customers in the mornings now, in for newspapers and breakfast goods. On good days such as today, we then have the early beach birds and a demand for parasols which were still unfortunately still up at The Farm. I despatched the Missus as soon as I could and we had them on display by early in the afternoon, roughly the same time as the cloud cover started rolling in and a bit of a breeze started up from the north again. I suspect that it will not be the last time in the next several days that we have a demand for parasols, so next time we will be prepared, at least, when everyone will want something else that we do not have.

As expected, given the weather, we were busy at the start and the end of the day with the bit in the middle particularly devoid of many customers. Those that we did have were an interesting and eclectic bunch such as the four Indian ladies, possibly mother and middle aged daughters, who bought identical sun hats, laughing and giggling like a bunch of schoolgirls; a joyous sound that filled the shop. Earlier, I had met with Frank, an unusual contemporary name, who was sporting a t-shirt and little else, blowing me kisses as he left. I suspect that I will be seeing more of Frank, although there was not much that I had not already seen. I should add, for the avoidance of all sorts of confusion, that Frank was a very small child.

There was a lull in proceedings at five o'clock. It went to demonstrate that perhaps we had not been as quiet as thought for the previous few hours. It gave me time to look out across the beach where a string of camps had been set up along the tide line. It was no surprise they were still there at five o'clock as the sun had broken through again. The sea was dotted with a number of surf types over to the north and quite a few more bathers. I entertained a young lad earlier in the day who had asked if we had any thermal wetsuits as the sea temperature was only 14 degrees at present. I concluded he was more used to warmer climes as the bathing section was full of people in swimming costumes having a whale of a time.

I think that was what the Missus intended when she decided upon a barbeque up at The Farm – not the swimsuit bit but the whale of a time bit. The sun had made a re-appearance, which was a blessing and for a time it was rather warm up at The Farm in the shelter of the northerly breeze. That temperature dropped like a stone when the sun dipped onto the horizon and I was glad that I brought a jacket.

The Missus has some problems up there, mainly due to her being just one person and taking on about three people's full time work. The celandine, the spindly yellow weed that grows everywhere here, has taken over behind the cabin and the bank of earth we threw up when we dug the growing beds at the back of the greenhouse. Those growing beds have been encroached and are dotted with thickening thistle and other weeds. Much of the growth has surpassed trimmer level and now is machete size or even chain saw. I will call my man tomorrow to discuss options.

It was a Missus size barbeque, of course, and fortunately we had a visitor and partner to help with that. They are camping up at The Farm, which was an interesting choice. If I were to want to pitch a tent it would be over the end of Pedn-men-du and

retiring to my nice comfortable bed shortly after. We wish them well and the horseflies a good meal. We have calamine lotion in the flat on standby.

July 7th – Thursday

We were overcast again this morning, not that it bothered the bleddy hound too much. The best she could do was to drag herself down to the beach and back and that looked like a supreme effort. She was up in the middle of the night, too, so after an initial involvement, I handed over to the Missus and went back to bed.

There were some brief moments of brightness in the day, but that cloud was somewhat persistent. So too was the northerly draught that the weather forecast, all happy with high pressure and no rain, failed to mention last night. It did not stop a veritable army of beach dwellers setting up camp on the big beach today armed with their beach shelters and windbreaks – some of them ours, so it cannot be all bad.

It explained the afternoon of customer absence. We did have our moments during the morning and while I was away at the bone cruncher, the Missus managed to clear our backlog of pasties, unless she tipped them over the cliff when no one was looking. This would ordinarily be a good thing – the selling them, not tipping them over a cliff - but for the fact I had not anticipated the Missus clearing the backlog and only ordered in a small number of pasties for tomorrow. I think I will have much explaining to do tomorrow.

With some effort I managed to escape the gravitational pull of The Cove for a while in the late morning. It was my final bone cruncher visit this side of the holidays and was about as late as I could leave it. Even then we have mounting pressure with much to do before holidays and the fight starts for six weeks or so. I left with extra time allowed for traffic, which was very sensible but would have been even more sensible if I had left ten minutes earlier than that. The roads are very busy even now with cars going very slowly – except in the 30 miles per hour zones where inexplicably they go really fast for some reason.

I arrived with minutes to spare and now feel all springy and new; she really is a very good bone cruncher but I should stress that is an affectionate term and no bones were crushed in the making of this new man. So enthused was I that I visited the petrol station immediately after my session and filled the truck up with fuel as I was running on fumes on the way into town. Much has been made of the milestone £100 to fill a tank in the press recently. It is unlike the press to trivialise such things; I managed £120 without even trying.

There was just as much traffic on the return leg of the journey, which sucked up the fuel nicely, but I was not under the clock, thankfully. I detoured via St Buryan to pick up Mother on my way back, which was a pleasant interlude. Despite 'no mow May' having expired long ago now, the hedgerows are still blooming over the road from

both sides. It is probably best to drive with the windows wound up to avoid being left with a face full of grass seed as the fronds slash through the window.

The afternoon in the shop went very quietly. There was a bit of action as people moved off the beach but since they were not chased off by the tide and could make their way up when they wanted to, the flow was sporadic. With the absence of crowds at our end of the street, the Lifeboat made a lonely slide down the slipway on a training launch at five o'clock.

The launch was arranged for earlier than normal to meet the low water conditions that were rather kinder than the brisk breeze from the north had made them earlier. Because it was so early several of us could not make the launch including me. The Missus had booked the bleddy hound into the veterinary doctor as she had made no improvement during the day and was looking very sorry for herself, which meant I had no cover in the shop.

The boat was only out for an hour but I just about made it for the return. Sadly, I missed having to expend all that physical effort hauling cables and span to the bottom of the very long slipway. I was there to catch the heaving line, which I missed. In my defence, I am not eight feet tall with arms like twizzle. The acting Head Launcher a few steps further up the slipway behind me caught it and subsequently we conducted what was obviously, even to the inexperienced observer, a textbook recovery up the long slip. Followed by a clean up at the top of the slipway with the rest of the crew, we put the boat to rest and finished off at around half past six o'clock. We are, after all, a very team-orientated, very excellent Shore Crew.

July 6th – Wednesday

The Missus played a proper blinder with the store room and had it empty shortly before I came back from the gymnasium. There were a few items left that she did not have a price for, but I cleared those away in no time having returned despite a particularly blistering session not an hour before.

We were overcast once again when we ran out for a quick stroll in the morning. It was perfectly warm and there was no hint of moisture unless you count the sea. With 'high pressure building' and 'good weather on the way' being soundbites from the various weather forecasters, it was all very disappointing for the last few days. Someone must have taken pity and put a few holes in the clouds today and from late morning it was a cracking little day.

I have to assume that our customers must have slipped through the cracks in our cracking little day because there was neither hide nor hair of them for much of it. We had moments of busyness, one of which was occurring when my bank manager called to discuss interest rates and how much more money we owed him. Sadly, I had to cut him off, but he threatened to call later when we were not so busy.

I took the opportunity to open the boxes that had arrived in our delivery melee yesterday from our postcard company. Also in the box, alongside the postcards, were some more metal bottles that people love to carry their water in and some old fashioned enamel mugs that sell particularly well – or did before the price went up. Alongside those, indeed, were traditional stoneware mugs.

We have had these before and they seemed to be quite popular, so popular in fact that I had a telephone call some months ago from a customer who had purchased one and had broken it. He required a replacement but until now we have not ventured to get any more. The actual one he wanted was from another supplier who has gone out of business, but we have the image and have reproduced it. The mug will be subtly different from the original, I am sure, but hopefully it will fit the bill. I have the customer's telephone number and will call later when the image is on the website to see if it meets muster for him.

The Missus was very late returning from The Farm and it was a particular fine day for being there, so who could blame her. It was looking pretty good in The Cove as well by that time and there was a number of people who felt that they had missed out by not coming earlier and decided shopping was the thing to do. In the end, a potentially poor day turned out very well proving conclusively that the show ain't over until the grumpy shopkeeper has emptied the last purse.

The day was rounded off nicely by the bleddy hound being off colour again, this time from consuming something unsavoury at The Farm. Ah yes, fat ladies singing; I knew something was missing.

July 5th – Tuesday

Today was make-a-delivery-to-the-shop day, in case you were unaware. We certainly were until about three deliveries in when it became obvious that a conspiracy was afoot to fill the shop with all manner of parcels from different suppliers. I do know that we asked for all but one of them but not necessarily for them to arrive on the same day and certainly not that the three biggest arrived within an hour of each other.

It all started out so well. The sky was incredibly blue and the breeze slight. I wore sunglasses as a sensible precaution but, for the first time in a week, no jacket was required for our stroll down to the Harbour beach. Because I was in a bit of a rush with plenty to do in the shop before we opened, the bleddy hound dawdled. I am certain that it was on purpose.

By the time I came to open the shop the cloud had rolled in and that was the end of our blistering summer. The sun was probably splitting the hedges a mile down the road but our roving visitors kindly refrained from rubbing our noses in it. We

remained under cloud for the rest of the day but at least the late afternoon sun managed to poke through underneath it at the last gasp.

For the first time since I can remember our frozen food company decided to deliver the very next day after the order went in. Had we known that, we would have left it a day because, with the Missus off on a message, handling the frozen order in a timely manner with the potential of any other deliveries would be fraught. As it happened, the frozen came first with enough of a gap between the second to allow me to squirrel it away in any available freezer space that I could find. It was not pretty, but it was effective.

Next was the smaller of the two grocery deliveries, which was not the ideal order because it was all placed at the top end of the store room, creating a bit of a blockage for everything else. This was particular not useful because the third, bigger order arrived before I could do anything about it. Happily, we were not overly busy with customers when the main delivery arrived. Not so happily, a car had parked opposite causing the lorry driver to park less kindly outside the café. Fortunately, the order comes in cages, and these were relatively easily rolled along the pavement to the front of the doorway.

In the middle of that, two other orders came in, one, a small fridge ,which was for one of the holiday lets whose visitors were out for the day. I am very pleased that it was a small fridge as I had half expected a full size one that I would have had no idea what to do with.

Into this fray came the deadline for our business insurance. The company we had been using for a few years since our original independent broker shuffled off, sent a rather inflated quote from a person I did not know. When I asked why the increase, I was told it was because the firm had been purchased and the buyer automatically increased all quotes by 10%. I was not best pleased that I had not been informed of this soupçon and despite the short notice asked another broker for a quote.

The other broker moaned a bit about the short notice then promptly forgot to do anything about it. When I telephoned this morning to ask for the numbers, they were most embarrassed and very apologetic. They turned around the quote in half a day, which made me wonder why they complained about a week. However, the quote was very advantageous and allowed me to tell the original broker to go fly a kite, which gave me much pleasure. We are now fully insured in both shop and Farm for a significant discount to the number I would have paid.

We were comparatively quiet in the shop during the deliveries but after the main ones had come and gone, the numbers started to increase while I tried to put some of the stock out on the shelves and free some space in the store room. I made some headway but the main bulk of it will wait for the Missus to take hold of it tomorrow.

In the evening we sat at the table with Mother for our fish tea that we missed on Friday. It was a placid vista of quiet sea and soft light. The beach was quite busy and there were some surfers in the water wondering if they would ever see surf again. It was calming to look at such a peaceful scene when the day had been so frantic in the shop. Nothing like a bit of yin and yang to go with your pollack goujons.

July 4th – Monday

We spent the entire day under a cloud of varying depth and coverage but it was warm and quite humid and the breeze had dropped away – eventually. I would not call that a bad day at all – until I stepped outside later and discovered that it was completely different than it was first thing. It turned out that it was all about the weather today.

The bleddy hound and I were out in the thick of it, early as usual and had the Harbour to ourselves. The Fishing boats had all gone out much earlier, braving the more robust wind of the morning in the knowledge that it would be gone by the middle of the day. Any notion of the swell that had been evident yesterday had gone also.

There was quite a bit of bottling up to do in the shop in advance of opening. The beer fridge had been cleaned out and the soft drinks fridge was in no better state of depletion. I did some more topping up of the soft drinks later in the day in order to clear as much space from the store room as possible ahead of the big grocery delivery tomorrow.

Business was pretty much stuttering along, sporadic moments of busyness and periods of desertion. It was during one of these and just after someone had told me that it was cold today that I stepped out to experience what it was like for myself. At some point during the day, mist had crept up on us from the north. I had not noticed until a few moments before and when I ventured outside I found that it was indeed not as warm as I thought and it was dampening. It would account for all the people I saw in light jackets that I had given no mind to previously.

Given that it was so quiet today, I busied myself with the hooded sweatshirts. The salesman had been around at least a month ago and told me that if I needed more for the summer, I would need to order them shortly after his visit. It was not that I ignored him, but it is a monumental task to count all the sweatshirts and it was not really feasible until today. We now have the basis for an order, but they may not arrive for the holidays and we are a couple of sizes missing,

I did not dwell on the dilemma because the next time I looked out of the window the mist had cleared from the north and large sections of blue sky were appearing. Not only that but the air had suddenly become very warm and humid. There was much in the forecast about the weather changing for this week as the jet streams moves to the north of us, so I guessed that this was the beginning of it and the end of the mist.

It was not long after that, having been distracted by another wave of busyness and pasty buying that I noticed the last of the rush of customers coming in, wet from head to toe. The mizzle was back with a vengeance with the rain that will soak you through before you know it and many people had discovered this. The mild air persisted, however, although the rain took the edge off it slightly. Less than an hour later the blue skies pushed through again. I have no idea what you are supposed to wear for weather like that.

I managed to get quite a lot done today, although it was not directly customer related, mainly as we had precious few direct customers to related to. I am not sure that we will hope for better tomorrow as we have that big delivery due and now have a frozen delivery to go with that. It also looks like the Missus will not be here to help as she has to take Mother to an appointment. That could be fun.

July 3rd – Sunday

It was an ugly duckling of a day that waited until late morning before turning into a, well, half decent swan.

The bleddy hound and I were bowled over by the strong breeze at the corner of the Lifeboat station before we headed down to the beach. It was overcast then but dry and perfectly temperate. The newspapers arrived early, which was a blessing because I had to get on and cook the frozen pasties we extracted for today's stock. They take an hour to do and there was enough, along with the vegetable pasties and a few cheese and the Missus's lamb and mint abomination to see us through until the early afternoon. I felt that this was quite respectable having been faced with, what looked like an empty Sunday warmer, at the last knockings yesterday.

There seemed to be a lot of people milling around at times during the day but at others it was exceedingly quiet. For all the sunshine that we had, the beach looked remarkably empty but at a guess I would say that the smart money went around to Porthcurno and into the lee of the northwesterly draught.

The rather sedate afternoon permitted me to finish off the grocery orders and fill the rest of the grocery shelves. I also did a list for the Missus who had decamped up to The Farm as I noticed that beachware goods had been slowly eroded from the shelves without me noticing too much. I have to remind myself to walk down the gift aisle occasionally so that I can view the carnage there. Small hands play havoc with the order of things and it needs more tidying up than it generally gets through my neglect. One day will be able to keep all these plates spinning at the same time.

The Missus duly returned with the order at around half past four that occupied me for the rest of our opening hours. There is still some to put away but that will be managed in the morning. The putting out was soon overtaken by the regular tasks associated with shutting the shop such as clearing away the remaining newspapers,

bringing in the outside display and serving the five minutes to closing rush. Today, that was a sodden group of wetsuit clad local youth who had commandeered the Harbour as their playground for the late afternoon. A more pleasant and polite bunch you might struggle to meet, which gladdens the heart when you think what they might be up to else in a less kind environment.

The evening was a little corker with enough swell to keep a bunch of surfers in the water over on the big beach for much of the afternoon. While it was not all that busy during the day, there were enough down there, surfing or just enjoying a peaceful sunset walk to make it interesting. It was certainly much more interesting than wrestling with a grocery supplier with more holes in its stock than gruyere cheese. At least with the new mob we know before it gets here what is missing. Oh, the joy of shopkeeping.

July 2nd – Saturday

It got me. I managed to avoid being rained upon for some considerable time but this morning it was inescapable. I might have waited a few minutes but the bleddy hound's best pal was waiting outside and the bleddy hound had seen her. I stood no chance, so I was outside without a rain jacket too. Luckily, it was only a heavy mizzle after all the proper rain had passed through.

The morning was overcast but dried up pretty quickly. We were busy from our opening mainly for newspapers but there was also a large pasty order to go out and some last minute going home gifts. The tables to the café filled up pretty quickly after that, so I put the first pasties of the day in the oven a bit earlier than usual. By the middle of the afternoon all the pasties, including stock that would have been used for tomorrow, had all disappeared in a flurry of pasty buying. We have some frozen uncooked pasties that I will turn out for tomorrow plus a couple of the lamb and mint the Missus thought to try. I also have half a dozen vegetable pasties that I bought in for another customer who did not eat them all. It will not be enough, but it will at least allow me to say we ran out rather than did not have any to start with. Perception is all.

The day brightened after the cloud rolled away and the sunshine burst through. This was very fitting for the Rat Race contestants who had started in Long Rock earlier in the morning. By the time they had got here they had run overland to Zennor or somewhere close by and followed the coast path on and off to get here. There then followed a run across the foreshore to the Harbour where they had to get wet before they continued to Land's End. Many found their way back here for pasties – part of our problem – or decided not to do the last mile – unlikely. I saw the marshals here yesterday, so I should have guessed that something was on and I might have been better prepared.

As usual, we saw a dip in customer performance through the afternoon – they really should try harder. I used the time to restock the grocery shelves ahead of our large order to be penned tomorrow. Of course, no sooner had I diverted my attention to the store room than the customers, alerted to my decision, piled into the shop again. Piecemeal, I managed to complete the task and we will be in a good position to breeze through the order tomorrow. We have been managing to get away with an order every three weeks up until now, with a couple of exceptions, but this is the first regular week that the frequency has dropped to two. Ergo, we must be getting busier.

Towards the end of the afternoon, the next visitor contingent started to arrive in numbers. They had been arriving in dribs and drabs all day and it had been a wonderful day laced with humour from and with many of them. With some it is interesting to fall into conversation as they have such different lives and opinions. One such man this morning, an engineer by trade, could not help but spend his week fixing the various things in the holiday let that were not quite right: the sticky window; the less than efficient freezer that he took care to defrost; and the shower that did not quite drain properly, taken apart and cleaned. If he had not been going home I would have invited him to stay the week with us. It is people like this that make being a grumpy shopkeeper such a pleasure. It is just a shame that in return they have to put up with me.

Quite fittingly the clouds rolled back in at around closing time. The Cove was filled with runners in various states of elation, deflation and downright knackeredness and visitors looking on bemused. The small gods of grumpy shopkeepers were all tucked up for the night and all was well with our little world. Must be time for a beer.

July 1st – Friday

You will be very happy to note, dear reader, that the average Diary page has slipped to 766 words a day from over 900+ during the winter. I do realise that it seems obtuse that you have less to read in the longer days but my assumption is that you have more time indoors during the winter and your spirits are low enough anyway in the gloom and the cold that a few more column inches of Diary will not make much difference.

Surprisingly, there was still a sliver of beach for the bleddy hound this morning. We must have just timed out walks to an hour before or after high water during these peak times. We were all alone in the world today after meeting up with best pal for the last two days now. We did not tarry today.

The Lifeboat was launching this morning on its little cruise around to Salcombe, which is a little to the southeast of Camborne, I believe. The purpose was to collect our proper boat after its refit and bring it back home. I avoided the launch, a one man job on this occasion, in favour of someone who had been working up to that moment

of going solo and without the aid of a net. He must have done alright because I saw the Lifeboat splash into the water at the appointed time.

It is about a four hour haul around to Salcombe at a decent speed, so the Missus provided sandwiches and lashings of ginger beer. It is also a four hour haul on the way back, so I hope she made enough sandwiches for both directions. Actually, I have no doubt that she did and then some. My guess is that the boat made better progress on the way back as it was carrying less weight.

The day was definitely looking good for both the boat and us in the shop, it being bright and sunny. Probably not helping the boat very much was a punchy breeze from the southwest. It seemed to be a pasty day and I should have guessed that we would have had a few going home orders. The end result was that we cleared out very quickly and were finished by early in the afternoon, which disappointed a few later comers. The smart visitors called in their pasty orders for the next day to avoid disappointment but we still seem to be running pretty quietly at present so I have not over-ordered for the weekend.

Business dried up almost completely in the later afternoon, which was quite convenient as I convened the very excellent Shore Crew at the station for five o'clock in anticipation of the return of our boat. The boat had frequently changed its speed over the course of the journey making it exceedingly tricky to call accurately. We either would be bang in the money or have to wait around for a bit. We, ahem, I, was bang on the money as indeed I was on calling where to put the fishing rod that the Boat Crew pick up the span from. On a pushing tide this is important. Get it wrong and the person who goes and picks it up has to wear scuba gear.

We received the boat on the short slip an hour or so ahead of high tide with the Harbour full of happy revellers, probably there to welcome home our own boat after several months of refit. It will have all the latest bits and upgrades to the equipment on board and a new coat of paint unfortunately already sullied by having been sitting in the water for a period of time. There will have to be some serious scrubbing to clean that up.

Nevertheless, it responded well to what was obviously a textbook recovery in the bright sunlight of the end of the day. We set the pressure washer on it as the crew commenced the refuelling and we were all done by six o'clock. We would have all gone home were it not for the fact that the boat still needed to be tipped onto the launch slip and we could not do that until the fuelling had finished. The fuel pumps were on a slow down, it seemed, and it took an inordinate time for the tanks to be filled but we stood by counting the litres in solidarity with the Boat Crew. We are after all, a very sympathetic, very excellent Shore Crew.

