

DIARY 2023

September 30th – Saturday

There were no big moons or bright planets to illuminate my morning today, just a covering of grey cloud, although I only discovered it was grey later. There was a bit of pink on the eastern horizon, so something normal was happening in the world for which, I am sure, we are all very grateful.

I would have been even more grateful had there been a few more customers around during the day. It was particularly quiet even for a change-over day. It was hard to think that the weather put anyone off. Despite the cloud it was milder than yesterday and dry, too. Out in the bay, the swell had moderated some more and at some points inshore the surf was quite usable by the look of it. I was told later that it was fearsome windy on the other side of the big beach but here in The Cove, we did not feel a thing.

With nothing better to do, I tidied up down the gift aisle which is often forgotten in the pell-mell of busyness. I cleared out the empty toy and gift boxes on the shelves and by the time I finished it was looking particularly empty. The Missus will have to venture up to The Farm in the next few days to see if there is anything left up there to make the shelves look a little more shop-like.

There were one or two child hats on the floor under the hat hangers. I picked them up and realised that the hooks were completely disorganised with right hats in the wrong place, and all mixed up together. It was one of those jobs you thought was only going to take a minute and ends up taking half an hour. You only started it because there were no customers for a minute or two and by the time you had different hats in both hands trying to repatriate them to the right hook, there were customers calling from the counter asking if there was anyone in the shop.

While I was knee deep in hats, the Missus had ABH down on the Harbour beach. The little girl was down there for more than an hour and spent the entire time running about chasing with a neighbour's Jack Russells. The Missus had the rather vain hope that that amount of running about might bring about a bit of rest when she came home but apparently ABH was still bouncing off the walls a good hour later.

Well, the big tide was not as spectacular as I had hoped. Even at low water the gap through to Gwenver beach did not look half as big as it did on the last big tide in the summer and that was smaller. The swell had almost completely diminished by the roll up to high water, so there was not even a pathetic slosh coming over the Harbour wall. I do apologise, dear reader, because earlier in the week I had heralded this event as something to behold. The hyperbole from the media regarding Storm Agnes must have rubbed off a bit.

The rest of the afternoon had gone along about the same as the rest of the day, as quiet as a blind mouse in a farmhouse. I had expected to see some of the new week's contingent for a few bits and bobs but there were none of them either. A neighbour tried to placate me by telling me that the lets she looks after were full until the end of the month, but I was inconsolable. I turned to drink but discovered that I had forgotten to fill my water bottle earlier in the day and it was empty.

It was particularly gloomy, too, when I took ABH out for here evening run. With no beach to go on and her refusal to go up the hill – and it was getting to dark for that sort of venture – we had little choice but to do a simple circuit of our end of The Cove. Even on that short run, she makes the most of it, sniffing every blade of grass, exploring the grassy patch behind the Harbour car park toilets and the other grassy patch at the corner of Coastguard Row. The journey down the lane is exploratory, too, but after that it is generally head up and run for home, especially when the mizzle that commence halfway through was threatening to be as heavy as proper rain.

September 29th – Friday

“You don't have a receipt.”

Alright, perhaps I am being pedantic, fussy, picky and unreasonable, but that was not even a question – note the lack of a question mark at the end of the statement. We quite often are asked for things in the negative, “you don't have ...” to which I generally respond, “who told you that” or “you are right, we don't” depended on circumstances.

What was I supposed to do with, “You don't have a receipt”. It did come with the slightest inclination of the head as if craning a look at the till to see if a receipt had magically appeared, which it had not. What is wrong with, ‘can I have a receipt, please.’ You do not even have to say please, although it is appreciated. I gave in after my inner customer service guru had a stern word with me but I pointedly asked if she was asking for a receipt. There, I feel much better now. Thank you.

I also felt a lot better looking out to the west when I went down to get the outside display arranged for the shop. There, just above the wharf was quite the largest moon emerging from the cloud, quite dim and very orange. Creating balance out to the east was the largest Venus I have ever seen and the reason I do not use autocorrect on my word processor.

I did not take a great deal of notice of the weather when I first stepped out, only that it was dry and a good bit cooler than of late. It was not until after I had arrived back at the shop after my blistering gymnasium session and was taking ABH around the block that I noticed the utter gloriousness of the day. In fact, I think I finally woke up to my surroundings when the little girl tried to pull me in the direction of the Harbour beach and all its complete loveliness.

Last night in the gathering gloom, I noticed that all of the oar weed had been floated out of the Harbour on the increasingly large tides. The sand was smooth like an expert plasterer had been there levelling it out – except for the bit where at least one of the fishing boats had been dragged out. There was a reasonable swell first thing – I had noticed that – but that has eased a little after a while. The swell made a brief appearance again on the turn of the tide, making some big waves just east of Cowloe. When I looked again, the sea had apparently flattened out again but there was still a good amount of white water close in to the shore. That underlying ground sea was never far away.

The vast majority of our customers are happy, joyful souls willing to join in with a bit of fun and banter. There are some familiar patterns and jokes that pop up now and again. “Would you like a bag, sir?” “No thanks, I have one outside”, pointing at a wife waiting outside, that generally evokes a wince on the part of the grumpy shopkeeper. Today, the tables were firmly turned while I served a lady a collection of going home gifts. Before I could ask, she demonstrated that she had a bag at the ready. I told her how very prepared she was and as the husband was holding the bag open, I noted that she had even brought someone along to carry it. This prompted the response, “what else use is he”, which I thought evened the score for womankind.

As seems to be the way of it just now, we were unpredictably busy and quiet throughout the core of the day. This drifted into more quiet than busy as the afternoon drew on until we arrived at a half-hearted five minutes to closing rush that was more of an amble. It also cleared out our regular Paul’s Bread stock and came after I placed the order. This might have been awkward, but the shelf date of our stock was coming to an end and I would have had to throw it out tomorrow had it not sold.

The exercise options for ABH in the evening are becoming very restricted. Generally because of the shortness of available light and this week coming, because we cannot get onto the beach for the tide. I pulled on my walking boots after tea with the aim of taking her up the hill in the last of the light. For once, of course, she did not take me up the steps as she will quite often heading around that way, so I had to direct her. We got through the gate and made it a little way along the path before she decided it was straying too far from home and turned back. I could do nothing to dissuade her, so I gave up and we headed home where she moped because the Missus had gone shopping when she took Mother home.

Our extended walks require a rethink. I suspect the solution will be to take her to the remote spot by car and walk back. If her sense of direction is as good as I think it might be, I will be dragged at speed back down the hill.

September 28th – Thursday

These dark mornings and lack of busyness do not inspire me to be very driven in the mornings. I have been getting to the shop later and later and doing less and less. Of

course, all the necessary things get done, like putting out the newspapers but some of less urgent jobs are put on the back burner, like topping up the soft drinks fridge.

I have also been leaving ABH to fester in her pit longer, too, as it is such a trial trying to get her out of it. This is even if she is awake and semi-sitting up in a 'I may be awake, but I am perfectly comfy in bed, thank you' sort of way. It is far better – and easier - to acknowledge that she has won and come back later.

There are still some things that I will stand up to such as the Royal Mail sending me one of those cards that tell you, 'we are holding a package hostage because the sender was too tight to put enough postage on it'. Unless you pay up, they will destroy the package but, rest assured, next time it will be your first born. The trouble is, they never give you any clues as to what it is. They could at least say, 'it feels like a book' or 'could be a toy elephant'.

I had one of these cards yesterday and threw it in the bin as I was not going to cough up £3.50 for some junk mail catalogue, which is bound to be what it was if I did pay up. Conversely, having not paid of course, it would have been a surprise lottery win ticket worth £1 million. Anyway, it turned out to be neither of those because a chance conversation with my fudge box supplier revealed that it was the flat packed boxes he had sent to replace the damaged ones we had a few weeks ago.

He told me to pay the money and knock it off the latest invoice, which is all very well had I not ripped the card up and thrown it in the bin. Given that he was not going to send them again having offered me a solution, I had no choice but to ferret through the bin and retrieve the form. Luckily, it had fallen in one place and had not been too badly soiled. He spoke of incredulity that it had been stopped as he had put three first class stamps on it having seen a reference to small parcels being £2.99 to send. Sadly, he did not read the small print as he would have seen that £2.99 was for online postage, ordinary being £3.49. If he had sent it next week, it would not have mattered as the price increase would have covered his mistake.

By the time I got out in the morning, the 'great storm' had clearly had enough of its attempted total annihilation of the planet, well our bit of it anyway, and had headed on to pastures new. There was hardly a breath of wind stirring the Lifeboat flag but the warm air that storm Agnes had brought with it still remained. The sea was still a little disturbed in the morning but by later in the tide there was hardly enough to bother the lone fisherman at the end of the Harbour wall.

Word about the storm passing had clearly not filtered down into the nuclear bunkers that the populace had descended into last night as we were remarkably unbusy for most of the day. Given the price of electricity, I would possibly have been better off closing, although the fridges and freezers would have continued to use it up despite being shut, which is the only reason I stayed open, apart from having nothing better to do.

I finished off disassembling the packages that had turned up yesterday, of which only the preserves and chutneys remained. We now have full shelves of these, though if we will get through many of them before we close it is hard to imagine. There is plenty of date left on all of them and I know full well that the mustard will be much eroded come end of March when we open next year.

So quiet did it become in the afternoon I decided to pull in the outside display early so that I could hose down our windows. We have been unable to perform such a service since last August when our water company decided that there was so little water left in Cornwall that using hosepipes would be banned. It was clearly a splendid idea because almost at the same moment that I decided to do it, the rain commenced.

I washed the windows down anyway and watched the rain stop after I had finished. As I was pulling the hose pipe back onto the roof, the Missus kindly informed me that the upstairs windows were worse than before I started.

I have a new head torch for the darker evenings, and it has proved most useful taking ABH to the beach and around the block afterwards; I have been able to spot the beggar gull before she does. I have a new head torch because the Missus had designs on my old one and when the Missus has designs, I generally duck or get out of the way. She has it attached to ABH's lead so she can see where she is going at night when she takes her out last thing. Why she does not wear it on her head, I have not asked and neither am I daft enough to do so.

The new head torch is a very clever beast. I really only got that model because it was one of the most powerful in the family and came from the same manufacturer as the last one that has served and continues to serve very well. The features on it are quite astounding give that its function is to shed light in front of the person wearing it. I can, by turning a thumbwheel under the light, change it from spotlight to floodlight utilising additional bulbs in the body of it. There are three levels of brightness using three level of battery power and it will also blink if I should need to attract attention to myself. There is also a red light if I want to attract a different sort of attention. Most intriguing of all is that I can connect my smart mobile telephone to it and make available a whole raft of other features, some of which I would have to pay a subscription for.

As clever as that sounds it has me somewhat perplexed. I would have thought that the chief reason for using a headtorch in the first place is that it frees up the wearer's hands to do work that would be impossible, or at least awkward, when holding a traditional torch. Having to control it via a mobile telephone rather defeats the object of having the headtorch in the first place. I have yet to discover whether it responds to voice commands, which might resolve the issue. However, talking to your headtorch on a dark night in the middle of nowhere might lead to all sorts of attention and most of it of the wrong sort.

Having almost mastered the tricky function of turning it on, I utilised it later in the evening while out with ABH. I knew there was rain coming and a guts of it at that, but did not let that deter us from heading to the beach before it started. Here we, well ABH particularly, was delighted to meet a visitor's dog who was most accommodation in not minding that she dashed about beside it while it chased a ball thrown by the owner. It was not long after that a neighbour arrived with her dog who also tolerates the little girl and will, on occasion, play the chase and run around game.

This was working well until the three of us humans decided to stand together and gossip leading their two dogs to sit obediently at their feet. This completely confounded ABH for whom sitting obediently involves five seconds of waiting for a treat before dashing off again. It also started to rain, which sent us all off in different directions and left me to take the little girl off around the block on the last leg of our outing. It was here that the new head torch came into use, although somehow I had managed to turn it on in 'adaptive' mode which makes it go light or dim according to the available light in the environment. It is quite irritating after a while and took some distracted minutes try to make it not do it.

We arrived home completely drenched as the rain had stepped up its game on our last leg. The little girl now accepts that the hair dryer is not going to attack her and will let us blow her dry, as long as it is not too hot. She spent some happy and quiet minutes actually sitting on my lap wrapped in a blanket. Do not fret, dear reader, it was only a momentary cessation of hostilities and she was soon bouncing off the walls again, demanding attention.

September 27th – Wednesday

While I snoozed peacefully, the Boat Crew suffered the boredom of a five hour tow towards Newlyn. Please, dear reader, do not be compelled to feel sorry for them as it was their career choice, after all and anyway, it could also have been worse. Due to the opportunity to recover at high water, the Coastguard convinced Penlee to take over the tow for the second time in twelve hours – they had already taken a tow from St Mary's after an epic tow of theirs.

I had also assumed that the early withdrawal would have allowed our man to conclude his passing out, but after a wearying night, it was probably not for the best. Despite our man having run the night's operation in the coxswain role, the assessors would insist on being present and there would be other procedures, such as man overboard, fire drill, abandon boat and holding a cup of tea without spilling it they would want to see.

So, instead of sleeping on and waking at my usual time of six o'clock, I was roused from my slumber by a call from the duty Deputy Launching Authority at three o'clock advising that the boat would be back at the station at quarter past four o'clock. He did not explain the part of Penlee taking on the tow and when I looked to see the

position of our boat I was momentarily confused as to how it was expected to return at quarter past four o'clock when it was currently at the back of Longships. All became apparent very quickly and I in turn roused the available members of the very excellent Shore Crew to muster with all due speed.

We set up the short slipway around the time of high water when the sea was at its calmest. The boat arrived into the bay guided by the lights from the station and the leading lights on the cliff. These give the correct position to come through the gaps when seen in alignment from the sea. There was a little bit of movement on the slipway when the boat came astern but nothing much to bother a competent skipper. One member of our own team had his boots made seriously wet, so we sent him off for a cup of tea and a sit down. He made a full recovery you will be pleased to know, dear reader.

We recovered the boat up the short slip at around half past four o'clock in what was clearly, by the light of the slipway floods, a textbook recovery. There was a quick washing down and a long refuelling before we all went back home to await daylight with no prospect of an eight o'clock launch to pass out our new coxswain. We are, after all, a very disappointed, very excellent Shore Crew.

There was not much point in returning to bed and besides ABH had curled up on the space that I had vacated two hours previously. I left her snoozing for a good while and did some chores – quietly.

When I could leave it no more, I took her around the block after dragging her kicking and screaming from her bed. It had been temperate all night and it was still so in the morning as we traversed the block. There was no sign of the impending apocalypse that Radio Pasty and other agents of doom were prophesising, in fact, it was remarkably pleasant.

The media has much to answer for when it comes to weather warnings and general purveying of information that may or may not have a detrimental effect on our lives. It seems to me that they would rather scare us witless than offer some sensible knowledge and advice. Over the last few days, I have had several people come to me saying that they were going home a day early to avoid the weather. Another told me he supposed he would not be able to go anywhere today and would have to stay at home.

There are always exceptions, of course, and I had one American couple from America who planned to walk from Pendeen to The Cove today. I suggested that even being careful perhaps such a walk would be better done another day. I was told that today had been allotted for this walk and that was that.

I checked with the weather stations and at Land's End gusts had peaked at 57 miles per hour and even at Gwennap Head, the windiest place in the universe, it had only

topped 66 miles per hour. It seemed to pick up a bit more later in the evening but when I check the data much later on, the record gusts for the day had not changed.

Having not looked at any weather forecast, I was not sure whether we were expecting rain. We got it whether we were expecting it or not at the very moment that the Missus decided to take ABH down to the beach. The little girl had followed me into the shower after I had got out after my blistering session at the gymnasium, just so she could catch the water drips from the shower head. She likes splashing around under a hose, too, but apparently she draws the line at heavy, wind-blown rain. The Missus let her off down on the Harbour beach and she scarpered home as quickly as she could luckily avoiding any traffic.

One weather forecasting source was clearly upset that the threat of 60 miles per hour wind had not struck sufficient fear into the heart of its audience and promised that the storm had a 'tail' that would arrive after the main storm had gone and would bring 100 miles per hour winds. Well, that is a bit more like it.

Whether it was the weather itself or the fear of weather, it brought a dearth of visitors to The Cove. Those who did arrive hoping to see big waves were sorely disappointed. At low water the sea was unremarkable and did not show any signs of excitement until later in the evening as the tide increased. There were, however, occasional highlights for the business at least and when I returned to the shop after my blistering session at the gymnasium there were about thirty students sitting around outside eating pasties (sorry, MS). I do not know where they got them from, but it was not from us and I suspect had they done so, we would have disappointed more than a few as we would not have enough ready in one go – neither would we have had enough, I suspect.

Still, we were lucky that they were predominantly young ladies, and they spent some time at our surf jewellery stand buying all manner of trinkets, thank you very much. We saw a resurgence of their buying when the skies opened and some quite heavy rain descended. More gritty and experienced visitors would have just sheltered while the young ladies felt duty bound to buy things. Ah the innocence of youth – taken advantage of by a grumpy shopkeeper. I prefer to call it an educational service, however, as we are only here to add value to our customers' lives.

In the middle of the dreariness of the afternoon I was pleased to entertain a couple of delivery drivers who brought some boxes for me to unpack and put away. One was the postcard biscuit and fudge boxes I had ordered in a bit of a hurry. We had not long had a delivery of them along with the other postcard fudge only boxes and last week our departing customers cleaned us out of this particular line. I ordered in extra that will, of course, now be here until they go out of date.

I did not finish all the unpacking and will have to do it tomorrow as I had another appointment at the surgery in St Just. I have long used the services of a foot lady who erstwhile visited our home to perform her magic on my feet. I had called her

earlier in the year but she was not available for an extended period and I had put it to the back of my mind. She told me it was a year since the last session and in that time she had decided to give up the home visits and rent a room at the surgery, which suit her better and meant not having to drive lots of miles, find parking and lug heavy bags around.

We have always found common ground to discuss and she told me of her sojourn to Vietnam earlier in the year which explained her unavailability. We spoke of people we knew and some no longer here and lots of other things none of which were particularly related to feet. So lost were we in conversation that when I came to leave, I discovered that I had been locked in and had to find someone to let me out of the emergency exit.

It was up at St Just and a bit more exposed to it that I discovered that it had been a bit breezy. The wind must have come around a bit because it was more in evidence down on the beach when we ventured down later. It also got dark very quickly again, so we did not dawdle on the run home. We made it just as the rain started again, but it did not amount to much. In the background we could hear the waves our visitors had come to see earlier. I am sure they will be delighted when I tell them tomorrow.

September 26th – Tuesday

It was difficult to determine what our day would turn into this morning as the sky did not look all that clear first thing. A few showers blew through The Cove but happily they were short lived. We need not have worried too much as by half past nine o'clock we had horizon to, erm, cliff top blue skies and not a cloud to be seen.

Despite that and later some alluring looking waves, we were not overwhelmed with visitors to The Cove, at least not until the afternoon. It was certainly busier that it would have been had it been tipping down and we grumpy shopkeepers are masters at being grateful for small mercies – and not showing it.

With time on my hands, I set to with the grocery delivery that had arrived just at the end of my breakfast. I had rather expected it the second I put the first bit of butter on my bread but for once I got away with it. I had not got very far when the second grocery delivery turned up. It was then that we started to get a little busier and the whole enterprise went out of the window. The Missus will, no doubt, power through it while I am at the gymnasium tomorrow as there is not a great deal there. I had struggled to make minimum order from it but in the time between ordering and delivery there are several items I could have added.

The Missus took Mother into town for an appointment in the middle of the day. Three and hours later, she was still on the missing list. During that time ABH had valiantly done her duty in meeting and greeting customers whether they wanted to be met and greeted or not. She was flagging a bit at the end, but she is her own worst enemy. Not only is she constantly disturbed by nearly everyone entering the shop,

she also leaps up at the slightest sound on the street or passing dog. After some pretty persistent getting down off her perch and generally being restless I put her in her carry case.

Several people have remarked on how much she has grown. We do not see it as we see her every day, although it is clear from what she can reach on high surfaces in the living room that she has. It was the fact that she barely fits in her carry case that really underlined her growth. She is still a little squirt, though and utterly delighted to see Mother when she came home with the Missus.

Now, here is what should have happened in the evening.

One of the Lifeboat Crew, local lad and fisherman has been working up the training ladder to achieve coxswain proficiency and certificate. The training has been stepped up in recent weeks and this evening he was due to be assessed by the great and the good of the Institution assessors and very probably passed out.

To do the passing out, our old friend from Bideford turned up whose presence normally indicated that we will have at least one shout during his attendance. It has earned him the sobriquet of 'Trouble'.

What actually happened.

The time was set for us to gather fifteen minutes ahead of a feasible launch at six o'clock, which is why you may have noticed that the shop closed a little earlier today. The only thing that might scupper the plan was the sea state that had been fairly benign during low water in the morning but has become unruly as the tide approached its zenith. We duly gathered at the appointed time and watched from the crew room as big waves continued to batter Cowloe and an unreasonable swell swirled around the bottom of the long slip. There was much discussion and wondering at the end of which it was decided to come back again at eight o'clock the following morning and to try again.

This was a huge disappointment for our candidate and indeed for the rest of us who were keen to see our boy get his ticket. However, it was not as big a disappointment as being woken at half past ten by an insistent Lifeboat pager suggesting that I might like to go across the road and launch the boat.

The shout was for a Padstow fishing boat with engine overheating up near Bann Shoal, which is about fifteen miles or thirty minutes passage to the northeast of the station. It takes a bit longer coming back with a big fishing boat behind you as demonstrated less than a month ago when our boat towed a yacht back from roughly the same place. We, on the shore, waved a merry goodbye to the boat and went back to bed with an estimate of eight o'clock recovery time to take advantage of the low tide and calmer waters.

To be continued ...

September 25th – Monday

Someone told me a week or so ago that the Royal Mail were putting up the price of postage for the second time in a year. It took me by surprise as I thought they were constrained by law to only do this once a year. It seems that only applies to ordinary second class stamps as they are not going up on 2nd October.

First class stamps will be £1.25 making it a 25 percent increase this year. Where they have really taken the mickey is on second class, large letter stamps which are subject to a 26 percent increase on this rise alone and a whopping 32 percent this year. I took the precaution of buying a heap of first class stamps today ahead of the rise and for a while I might be able to sell them to people paying by credit card without making a loss.

I know that the cost is all about the last mile, which no one wants to do – probably not even Royal Mail anymore. There are companies queuing up to take on the Parcelforce role, but no one wants the door-to-door stuff. I reckon that within five years we will be picking our mail up from collection points, which may not be too tough if you live in the town but a bit of a challenge if you live in the country and even more so if you do not have transport.

It was a lovely day for being shocked at price increases. The skies were clear and then blue from the outset this morning. There was still a bit of a haze that nearly obscured Brisons but it was warm and attracted a few people out to enjoy it. The sea was once again boisterous and even more so than yesterday. It was also a lot less surfable, too, and the Lifeguards had again unfurled their red flags for the whole day.

Radio Pasty told us this morning to expect storm Agnes which is arriving on Wednesday. The tides jumped today, and we are heading towards some of the biggest tides of the year. Fortunately, the highest do not coincide with the storm but the combination will still give some problems along the south coast as the high winds, big seas and big tides coordinate.

Living on the north coast, I relaxed but then realised I was due to go to St Just to allow a very pleasant nurse empty one of my arms of blood. The surgery, or at least its automated reminder systems, had been plaguing me through the summer to go and have my annual 'birthday bloods' done where they examine my essence to make sure I am still alive. Unusually, she wanted to use my right arm because she was left-handed or right-handed or cack-handed but whichever required my right arm. I told her that all my blood was in my left arm, but she told me not to worry and that she would suck extra hard to pull it across. That is the thing with trying to be smart, someone is always smarter than you.

Our customers often ask is there anything we do not do as, for a small shop we have quite a range of goods. If you want to see a shop that truly has everything you should walk into Clemo's in St Just. The world and its limpet are arranged on the shelves in there and in the most organised order that everything is logically easy to find. I went in for some of the dog food that ABH has expressed a liking for and, of course, they had it in abundance. It is a proper old shop with bags of rabbit food and the like hand filled on the shelves. Having worked in just such a shop in my youth, it transported me.

It was some tedious in the later afternoon after nearly everyone had run away. I was forced at one point to go and gaze mindlessly at the sea as the tide declined. I was not alone as there were a number of seabirds sitting on the rocks gazing mindlessly, too. I went and got my binoculars to see if I could discover what they were, and it was immediately obvious they were common terns. I guess they were just waiting there terns. When I looked later, they had all gone; there was not a tern left. I would have seen the signs, I am sure.

Even after that I was allowed out on my own with ABH for a run around. It was a pleasant evening and seemingly brighter than the last few. The beach was a bit busy on our first run down, so I took her around the big block first and then returned to the beach after. It did shorten our time down there as it still got dark pretty quickly after an unexpectedly good looking sunset. And ABH found some skanky fish up the wharf wall to roll in, just to round the evening off perfectly.

September 24th – Sunday

It was a warm front that passed us last night bringing all that mizzle with it. When I stepped out this morning, it was reasonably temperate and stayed that way for most of the day. I had a quick geek at the synoptic chart and the warm spell was due to be short-lived. There is a monstrous low to the northwest. It brings joy and heartache for a short while.

The sea condition seemed to be calmer yesterday and surfers were allowed back in. Today, the swell came back with a vengeance but at least the wind had gone around to the southwest making the waves eminently surfable in The Cove, if a little big and not for the faint-hearted. It was enough for the Lifeguards to red flag the beach again as it drove in to high water in the middle of the day.

Despite the selective attractiveness of the sea, it was not a very alluring sort of day. We had woken to light grey covering of cloud that stayed with us all day. This did not seem to stop a slew of visitors from hanging about on the benches opposite for a rest and a spot of crout. We did well from time to time and a German couple bought several bone china mugs, which was rather good of them.

I had taken some time with these earlier in the week – the mugs, not the Germans - as I had noticed that the shelves looked a little thin. It was then that I discovered we

had sold quite a few this year despite the energy surcharge that made a mess of the pricing. We will not be ordering again until next year for delivery around Whitsun, but it is pleasing to see they are still popular.

Our building work moves inexorably closer. I have a high level of confidence that it will go ahead this year. As the old adage goes, fourth builder lucky. One of the suppliers, the solar panel company, is getting a bit jittery about timing, so I had to spend time reassuring that we are on track for the date I gave them a few months ago.

They have also suggested that my request to make the array a single source, switchable between the business and domestic systems is gaining traction with the experts. The salesman has asked for any research or evidential material I may have that says it can be done. I explained that that I do not have any and my request is based on simple physics: a switch can be put into a piece of wire carrying a current and be directed to one of two outputs – schoolboys are doing it in classrooms all over the world. If I can find someone out there who has done it with solar panels, I would be in clover.

As seems to be usual, we slipped into quiet isolation in the latter part of the afternoon. I took time to look out at the near desolate beach and noted that the Lifeguards had not changed their minds about the sea condition and maintained their red flags. It was either that or they had all fallen asleep with not an awful lot to do. The people I spoke to during the day all agreed that the surf was the best in a long while. I had watched one or two during the day managing a long and fast run in to the beach that must have been most exhilarating. My view is that it was still far too wet out there.

By the end of the afternoon, it was wet up here, too. There were two weather fronts that took a while to leave and left me with a dilemma of what to do with ABH after tea as I was not keen to repeat yesterday's soaking. By the time we wanted to go, some of the mist had cleared but it still looked fearfully dour, and the rain radar was no help as it was not that sort of rain. Both the Meteorological Office and Radio Pasty's website were telling me that it was sunny spells out there, which was remiss of me not to notice.

It was indeed dry, and we did go to the beach as there was still some light but again not for long. By the time we got to Coastguard Row, I needed my head torch and it was mizzling again – it must have been between the sunny spells – but not so much that we got as wet as we did the previous night. We probably have another couple of evenings of light enough and then we will have to implement plan B, whatever that is.

September 23rd – Saturday

I had definitely felt the chill the previous evening down on the beach with the little girl. I made mental note to gear up a little better in future and as if to underline it, it was chill again before bedtime. After that, it felt surprisingly mild this morning when I first stepped outside – on my own. Once again, ABH decided that it being dark clearly meant that it was not getting up time and even after it was it took me ten minutes to gently encourage her from her nest.

It had taken some time to encourage myself to unwire the middle outside flood light. It had fallen off its perch after the bracket rusted away and we could not risk turning them on. It had become increasingly necessary as the mornings became darker later for our delivery drivers and also for the Missus out late with ABH. I have to be more attentive now as it is very easy to forget to turn them off and they are not obvious during the day.

We have the floodlights on a remote switch that we can activate through the Internet. It makes it easier to turn on and off from the shop or upstairs where the physical switch is. We can also turn them on if we are arriving home late, which is useful on occasion. The same arrangement is employed for the shop lights using a four channel device. Previously, when we had ordinary switches, we had to stumble around in the dark to switch them on as they are tucked away behind the counter. It has been a godsend since I installed the device several years ago.

Very recently, one of the channels has become possessed and switches itself on at random times during the night. It has only once switched itself off during the day. It could be a software glitch or a random signal from outside, but I rather think replacing the device would solve the issue. They are not very expensive, but it will take a bit of time and effort to install it with the lights off. A job for after we close, I believe.

The day followed the usual change-over day pattern of reasonably busy in the early morning with going home presents followed by a bit of a lull before the new visitors started arriving. The weather helped out on the business front by being bright, though cool, through most of the day. As Radio Pasty predicted, however, the cloud rolled in during the latter stages of the afternoon and everyone went away.

Delightfully, it started to rain just as I was bringing in the outside display which rounded off the day nicely. The rain hung around for a bit but according to the rain radar had blown away to the northeast. I made the schoolboy error of not actually looking outside properly before taking ABH out for her after tea run. The rain radar fails to pick up mizzle, even as thick and heavy as it was when we stepped outside.

Luckily, I had remembered from the previous evening to put on an extra layer and put a rain jacket over the top. It has looked very gloomy when I had glanced outside and the forecast southwesterly winds were making themselves felt even in the shelter of The Cove.

The mizzle did not feel too bad on the beach but it was increasing along with the wind and it was not long before we were both properly wet. Again, darkness was falling rather more quickly than I anticipated but this time I had taken the precaution of bringing along the head torch. As we crossed the Harbour car park it was becoming increasingly obvious that this was a proper mucky night and one best experienced from inside.

It was therefore something of a surprise when a young man stopped me at the start of the Coast Path leading up Mayon Cliff to ask me if it was the way to Land's End. As I got closer to hear what he was saying, I recognised him as one of the catering staff from the OS. He is a pleasant and sensible chap and often comes by the shop for a pasty in his break. I suggested to him that tonight was probably not the ideal evening to be wandering up the Coast Path particularly as the winds were increasing up at the top, it was now properly dark, and the sort of rain we were having would make the path slippery. I glanced at his ordinary town shoes and underlined my advice not to risk it. I even suggested that the Cliff Team would be happier at home in front of the fire than coming out to rescue him.

He was not falling over drunk but in sufficient drink to mar his decision making; he told me he was pressing on. He assured me he had a torch, and someone was expecting him when I asked. I even told him that the OS was in enough trouble with kitchen staff and could do with not losing another, but he was quite determined.

The path is a way from the cliff edge and is well marked. There are only a couple of tricky spots where you have to step over streams and up rough rock steps, so barring a twisted ankle, he was likely to be fine. He told me he would reassess at the top regarding the wind – I had met two lads on the beach who told me they could lean into the wind at Land's End – so perhaps he saw sense in the end.

I am sure someone will let me know if breakfast was available at the OS on Sunday morning.

September 22nd – Friday

A rescue unfolded as we had our tea last night. Earlier, before I closed the shop, I had noticed the Coastguard Cliff Team up on Carn Towan just short of the two black huts. I was about to remark, 'quite how I forgot to mention it in yesterday's Diary, I have no idea', but I do have a very good idea why I forgot.

Most mornings, I check over the content of the Diary for spelling mistakes, inaccuracies and that it generally makes sense. I do not do anything about it, of course but it seems right to check. Also, I often finish off the last paragraph or two that I did not have time to complete the previous day. This morning, my computer was playing up and needed three attempts to start. After that my malicious software checker decided that Microsoft Word was not to be trusted and refused point blank to

open it. I used an alternative word processor and later fixed the problem, but it distracted me sufficiently to forget the crucial story of the day.

Sorry, I digress. Now, where was I? Ah yes, a rescue unfolding. I had no idea why the Cliff Team were out, but the Missus had latched onto the event and had our radio scanner turned on. The team had come out to rescue a dog fallen off the cliff at North Rocks. The cliff there is not terribly stable, and the team took their time setting up the correct equipment while one of the team, presumably an expendable one, was down with the dog keeping it amused. It was gone eight o'clock by the time the dog was hauled up the cliff and was last seen walking off with its owner in the direction they were headed when it all went wrong.

There, we can start today now. It rained on our parade in the morning. We would have missed it entirely if ABH could have stirred herself the first time I called for her. It took a further two attempts, the last resulting in snarling and grizzling, by which time we faced the tail end of a heavy lump of rain that had passed through. The little girl likes a bit of water and will go out of her way to catch a drip from a drainpipe but clearly, wet, needs to be on her terms only. With the rain lashing in on a bit of breeze from the west, we cut up into the RNLI car park for a bit of shelter and came back in double time.

By the time I opened the shop, the rain had all gone away, bowing out on the last shower with a rainbow in northwest. It left a blustery and cool day but with plenty of sunshine to offset the negatives. As with Wednesday, it was obviously not a day for hanging around and all of our customers were passing through or at least not sitting around for long. For all that it was quite busy and by the early afternoon we had made such a dent in our supply of pasties (sorry, MS) that over this weekend I will be baking off most of the extra frozen ones we bought in.

I had always thought that I had generally a good grip on the business and the general price of things to make sure that we were not doing ourselves or our customers a disservice by having prices too low or too high. Having long since kicked the habit, I had not cared overly about the sale of cigarettes. Over recent years, as the price increased, we have reduced the stock we keep as even a few cartons of a narrow range of brands can tie up thousands of pounds. The margin on cigarettes is phenomenally low to the point that selling them by credit card at the recommended retail rate is roughly a break-even operation.

I was wary at the introduction of vapes. It seemed that you needed to dedicate a large area of counter space to it given the number of different types and flavours that there were about. Last year, after a number of enquiries at the counter, we introduced disposable vapes. These came with a healthy margin and low overheads of space and effort. They have since been vilified because of their high environmental impact, so will probably be short-lived but in the meanwhile, they are selling like hot cakes.

What sparked off this detour into the somewhat taboo subject of tobacco products was a lady who had come in to purchase some traditional cigarettes. We did not have the brand she was after, so I showed her the list of what we had and the prices for each. She expressed surprise that all our cigarettes were so cheap. She qualified that by saying that our £13.50 average was cheaper than what she was used to. Somewhat alarmed, I asked her where she usually purchased her cigarettes, expecting her to say London or Manchester where I had heard they are fearfully expensive. She alarmed me further by telling me that this was in Penzance at one of the smaller national supermarket chains, where the cigarettes are £16 a packet. I feel some research coming on this winter.

It was pretty much a day for looking out at the sea but not very much a day for going into it. The Lifeguards had red flagged the beach after spotting what a tumultuous beast it was spurred on by a gusty breeze heading in from the northwest with nothing to stop it. Even at low water the Lifeguards did not relent their position largely because the sea had not either. Looking down at our end, it looked a fair bit better at the bottom of the long slip, enjoying some protection from the Cowloe reef.

What the Harbour beach has not enjoyed is the usual post-storm deluge of oar weed. A geet lump of it was wrapped around the rope running out to the end of the Harbour wall and plenty strewn about across the beach. ABH sunk into the biggest pile and looked keen to explore it further. I had hoped the higher tide earlier will have floated much of it our again by the time we went down after tea.

Sadly, this was not the case, but she used the large lump as a giant hurdle and the fronds and branches strewn about the place as her toys. It was getting dark after about half an hour down there – darkness seems to come on fast now – and by the time we were at Coastguard Row, a torch would have been handy. The light would not necessarily be useful to guide our way but to see what ABH was trying to find edible out of the nothing that was visible on the path ahead. She was scuffing the seat that the Missus sits in at one point in the morning. Thinking she had lost one of her chewing sticks down beside the cushion I went to assist, only to find she was after a snail she had brough home from somewhere at some point.

I may have mentioned that this has not been our finest year of business in the shop but I may have found the solution. A kindly visitor handed in a collapsible dog bowl left behind by some distracted owner. It looks a little like an upturned Tam O'Shanta hat. I did have it out on our newspaper box, but other kindly visitors kept bringing it in, so it remained on the counter where it was last put. All day today people have been dropping loose change into it. I am leaving it there.

September 21st – Thursday

Ah, yes, the Autumn Equinox. So famous that The Kinks wrote a song about it.

It certainly felt autumnal today. There was a bit of chill in the air after that cold front passed through yesterday and an unwelcome shower just as I was thinking about going down to the shop. It was so short-lived that by the time I opened the front door, it had stopped. It also stayed stopped when I eventually managed to wrest ABH from the clutches of her cosy bed to take her around the small block. Honestly, she makes such a fuss, snarling and grizzling it takes about fifteen minutes to encourage her out.

Today was a big day for the Lifeboat. The Saving Lives at Sea programme on television decided that it was our turn to be filmed specifically in relation to the call out for the big roll on, roll off that collided with Wolf Rock lighthouse. Yes, that one, where we launched and stood by for seven hours.

We were asked to be available to re-enact the launch at sometime in the middle of the day. I must admit that I panicked a bit because I could not remember what I was wearing that morning, and I would have hated it not to be authentic. I also cannot remember what the sea state was like that morning – someone should keep a diary to record such things – but today there was a heavy ground sea. It would make for good viewing as the boat raced across the bay but not for good recovery if you were a very excellent Shore Crew.

When the time came, the boat launched to schedule at half past one o'clock and it was agreed that the boat would make several passes across the bay to emulate racing to the scene, which it did magnificently. Ordinarily, for a middle of the week, middle of the day training launch we would be lucky to see half a dozen crew turn up. Today, with the promise of television stardom you could not move in the crew room for budding Tom Cruises. There were so many of the very excellent Shore Crew that I excused myself and headed back to the shop.

That did not stop me from feeling a virtual member of the team and to keep a sharp eye on the performance when the boat returned from its photo opportunity at quarter past two o'clock. The sea state had diminished to something far more sensible as the tide slipped away and there was no difficulty in bringing the boat up the long slip in what was clearly a textbook recovery for the camera, if the footage is ever used. As remarkable as a textbook recovery is, it is only really exciting to those can recognise the efficiency and skill. We are, after all, a very overlooked, very excellent Shore Crew.

There was quite a crowd to look on as the boat launched and recovered. We had seen an unturn in business from early on in the day, which probably had much to do with the new, improved weather – they cannot all have been here to get noticed for stardom. The sudden change in fortunes had caught out our neighbours too who had run out of things and the café had to call for milk and clotted cream from us. We had just about the right number of pasties (sorry, MS) which had definitely been more luck than judgement, as I thought that we would be overstocked today. The surge was short-lived, and we were in the doldrums by half past three o'clock.

It gave me the opportunity to unpack the hooded sweatshirts that had arrived an hour early from the courier. Each need to be labelled so that they can be easily identified when customers ask for them and we are pressed. Our little labelling machine has paid dividends over the years that we have had it. It took me less time than I had imagined, and all the boxes are now emptied and the garments put away in sensible order. It was important to get those finished as the boxes are large and the waste collection man is coming tomorrow.

We had ordered some hooded sweatshirts for ourselves this time. They have the Old Boathouse logo rather than the Sennen Cove one, or that is the idea. My old black one has gone missing, which is ridiculous as the flat is not that big. Heaven knows where it is. After several weeks of looking, I gave up and added it to this order. Not to be outdone, the Missus ordered two for herself despite hers not being missing at all.

My black one with the gold logo arrived as planned but the others that I had ordered with the logo in blue, as is usual, came with the Sennen Cove logo on them. I sent a message to our man at the company but I know what happened, although I do not have a copy of the original message. I wrote that the subsequent 'specials' on the order should have the logo in 'normal' blue which has clearly been misinterpreted as meaning the normal logo. We shall see how this goes but we will need them replaced and I just discovered that I either miscounted the heather grey pullover hooded sweatshirts in XL or we sold a great many in the interim because we have run out. I suspect a miscount.

The Missus thought that it would be a spiffing plan to have a barbeque again. Counter to my explanation last time, she had actually abandoned her plans, unbeknown to me, and had used the hob in the kitchen because of the rain. Today would be different, apparently as the weather was in her favour.

We had some light showers on and off during the day. Not one of them came to very much and it was barely worth putting up an umbrella or reaching for a raincoat. Between five and six o'clock we had the heaviest shower of the day. The Missus had already commenced the barbeque when it came. She carried on regardless.

The rain had largely gone when I took ABH out later. There was enough beach to have a quick wander on but the waves were still ferocious and getting closer. I decided that it would be too dangerous very soon and we vacated. It was a very mucky evening and we did not last long out and about and got a little wet for our troubles. After a brief encounter with the resident beggar seagull in Coastguard Row we beat a hasty retreat home to wait for the Missus to arrive back from taking Mother home. We will no doubt see more evenings like this one now that autumn is here.

September 20th – Wednesday

It could not have got much quieter today; I have seen busier Februarys.

The gusts of rain passing through The Cove early doors did not help matters very much and you could almost hear the plans being made to visit St Ives today. A lady who appeared in the midst of it all told me that it would be better in the afternoon. I do not suppose it could have got much worse. The 'getting better' involved it being exactly the same but without the wet stuff for much of the day.

It was warm, though. Those people who did turn up remarked upon it. It was warm in the shop because I was sitting, mostly, next to the pasty warmer (sorry, MS). There was no particular reason for it to be on today, but I had decided to bake off the pasties we had arranged to buy from The Beach Kiosk because they were shutting early. We are ordering lower numbers from our pasty supplier and mixing in the one we bake ourselves. We should shift the lot before we close – as long as we get some customers.

I remembered to order the logs yesterday, for the first time in a fortnight. Fortunately, it had not mattered, and no one went without. At least today he turned up with the logs covered over. The last time it rained they had got wet, not that anyone seemed to notice, so I guess it had not done them any harm. We had always intended to swap logs for barbeque coals during the summer, but everyone kept buying logs all the way through July and August the first year we did them. We think that the theory is our visitors do not get to see a real fire at home, so it is quite a novelty.

The other thing I remembered to do, although it was more a case of stirring myself to do it rather than remembering, was to move the refuse sacks from the side of the counter. They had been there for probably three weeks since they had been delivered. They might have arrived on a grocery delivery day, which is why I could not slot them into the space that is allocated for them. Even when the groceries were clear, I did not move them. I think it was because I was not tripping over them, and the windbreak stand still sat comfortably in front of them when it was brought in from outside that they lasted so long there.

Today, when the logs arrived, the refuse sacks were sitting in front of the shelf where I put most of the kindling. This effectively forced the issue, and they are now properly put away.

I also had time to test out the local bread ordering facility on our website. Not that it will worry you, dear reader, as it is on a page unrelated to The Diary, but the baker's rather top-notch bread can be ordered online and collected from the shop the next morning. In fact, the purchaser can specify any day over the next seven days to collect it the theory being I will remember to order it the day before. I was told by our neighbour that the page was most alluring on the website but he still came down to order the bread at the counter, which meant I had to test it myself.

While on the subject of bread, I noticed yesterday that the cheap national brand white bread had gone out of date, and I threw it away. Today, I noticed that the

cheap brown bread had gone out of date, all four loaves of it, and had to be thrown away. We shall only be doing our local baker's sliced bread until the half term because I am throwing less of that away.

It was just as well that I moved the refuse sacks because in the later afternoon a delivery of the small sweet bags arrived. Small sweet bags they may be, but they come in four big boxes. I was about to set to getting them out onto the hooks when we suddenly started to get busy. By half past four we were having small queues at the counter and our busyness went on for about half an hour. It was enough to scupper any hope of making a good enough dent in the delivery to warrant starting, so I moved them into the store room. I will have to clear them early tomorrow because the hooded sweatshirts that I ordered a week or two ago are arriving tomorrow in even bigger boxes.

I had hardly noticed that the weather had slowly been improving as the day wore on. By the time I went and had a proper look at it, the sky was speckled with blue behind some high, mackerel sky type cloud. It was cut off in a line before some very blue sky, presumably marking out a weather front passing us. The sea had developed quite a heavy swell, indicated even at low water by a big plume of water shooting up Creagle at one point. As it pushed in for high water later in the day, there was plenty of white water and waves breaking early and rolling into the beach.

It was therefore something of a surprise to see that it was lashing down with rain just before I took ABH out. I checked and it was a rogue rain cloud that had strayed our way. By the time we were ready to go, the rain had stopped. The beach was still out of bounds, mainly because the sea was still too ferocious but otherwise there would have been enough sand down there for a run. This left us with a fairly mundane walk around the block, but we did get as far as the new gate on the footpath up the hill. I had no idea that they had put up an electric fence to contain the ponies that the National Trust has let loose up there. We will have to watch the little girl's long tail lest it brush against it – she is curly enough, thank you.

The Missus announced that she was bored when we got back; she has finished with her wool unpicking much to ABH's chagrin. She decided to go and do the small sweet bags that I had left. They would need doing early because of the arrival of the sweatshirts, so getting them done in the evening was handy. ABH, however, did not think so and was most put out that she had to suffer upstairs with me alone. Our normal night of mayhem was replaced with her moping on my lap. I think we had opposing opinions about how pleasant that was for a change.

September 19th – Tuesday

Surprisingly, for me at least as I had not looked at any weather forecasts, there was no rain about this morning, just wind and grey. The grey actually became apparent as it was still not quite light enough to determine what colours were at the time I went

out prior to the shop opening. The last time was with ABH in tow when it was just getting light enough to see across the bay at the somewhat disturbed sea.

It was a particularly slow morning in the shop so, as a grumpy shopkeeper of his word - when it suits me - I set about tidying up the store room. There was nothing especially needed to be disposed of but there was a lot of rearranging so that the drinks cases did not litter all the floor from one end to the other. Naturally, we started to get busy after I buried myself in the store room, which is all grist to the mill, whatever that means.

I took the opportunity to top up some of the food items on our shelves while I was at it. The Missus told me that the OS had cleared out our chopped tomatoes because they had curry on the menu, and no one had thought to order the ingredients. I am fed up with lambasting the OS, so I shall have a pop at Tesmorburys instead as this unesteemed journal has let them off the hook for ages now.

It was while I was topping up the chopped tomatoes that I thought to compare the product to the plum tomatoes that sit next to them on the shelf because they are two different prices. The chopped tomatoes are supplied by our cash and carry through its old supply chain and are 69 pence. The plum tomatoes, supplied to the cash and carry through its Tesmorburys owner are 85 pence. They are ostensibly the same product, with the same shelf life.

Our neighbour in the café next door came in to slake his thirst from his efforts in the kitchen there. When he came to the counter, he expressed surprise at the low price of our frozen pizzas. He told me that in Tesmorburys the cheapest there was at least twice the price of ours. I have a suspicion that Tesmorburys are controlling our prices and people's expectations of them rather more than is comfortable and are making themselves a fortune at our expense at the same time.

We have arrived at the time of year when some orders for next year need to be placed. Our wetsuit supplier made this a requirement a couple of years ago when items from the far side of the world were hard to get hold of and expensive to ship. It is no longer mandatory, but it helps them if we place our orders early and for wetsuits it is not a difficult task for us as the volumes are relatively low. So that we had some notion of how many we had sold over the year I despatched the Missus to The Farm to do a bit of counting. I counted what we had here and checked with the supplier how many we had purchased in order that I could do the usage calculation.

The other looming order is for bespoke gift items from a different company. These take some time to prepare and ordering early is necessary. Again, we needed to check the stock. Because of the quantities involved our expectation is that most of the items ordered will last over two or three years, so I had little doubt there would be several items that would not need reordering. I was right and very little needs ordering again for next year.

We were not quite as busy as we were yesterday. The weather may have put a lot of people off in the morning but as we broke into the afternoon, the day brightened. The wind diminished a fair bit, too, and people were out and about. We saw a good few of them come through the shop and some of them actually bought things. The busyness did not last very long which gave me ample time to play with my stock numbers.

As I packed the newspapers away at the last knockings, I noted with a slight tinge of sadness the shuffling off of Mr Roger Whittaker who had clearly made his last farewell. He was one of the passing sounds of my youth and made me think of weekend night entertainment programmes like Val Doonican and for some reason The Spinners – the English folk band not the Mowtown soul singers, who were definitely not BBC light entertainment in the 1970s. For some reason I had the spinners in roll-neck sweaters and beards. I might have been thinking of someone else. The whistling, though. That was something else.

We had Mother around for tea in the evening. It seemed like only yesterday she was staying with us – oh, it was yesterday she was staying with us. As the Missus had a very important meeting at the Lifeboat station, I took Mother home and took ABH with me. It was the first time out of The Cove for me in many weeks and felt very strange. The 20 miles per hour signs have been installed up the hill at great expense no doubt but as yet have not been enacted. I tore through them at 30 miles per hour just for badness and felt liberated.

It was very dull, damp and blustery when we returned to The Cove and took a run around the block. We were going nowhere near the Harbour as the sea was swilling about in it and looking menacing. It was very boisterous the other side of the wall and the waves up the Tribbens were throwing themselves over with gay abandon.

We returned home for a bit more play time, but ABH was distracted by the Missus' absence. Hopefully, we can tone this down a bit during the winter when I am around a bit more. The reunion was fund to watch, though. You have never seen a tail wag so much.

September 18th – Monday

The little girl's sleeping draught must be infectious. I slept in this morning by about half an hour. Fortunately, this was a gymnasium day and I need half an hour less getting ready time in the morning but did not stop ABH dragging out her bed time and adding to the delay.

By the time I got her out of the door, there was some rain in the air. We had two very light showers, which did not bother either of us very much although I had some concerns that it would come in heavy at any moment. I had already been down to the shop earlier and there was not a hint of rain, so I had not bothered with a rain jacket when I went back to take ABH out. Once again, the breeze was such that I decided

against putting out our flags. It had gone around to the west today, which made a pleasant change not blowing at me across the shop counter.

Apart from a shower of rain in the middle of the day, we were quite well blessed with the weather. There were blue skies with a bit of cloud and what with the breeze and the ruggedness of it all, it attracted in a few more people. The sea, flat calm yesterday, was full of wind-blown waves and there were quite a few breaking into the shore churning up some white crests as they ran in. It was a walkers' sort of day, not necessarily Coast Path hiking, but not standing around very much sort of walkers.

While we had a few more customers, we would not call it exactly busy. I had sufficient time in the morning to run about clearing the early morning deliveries and top up a few gaps in the drinks fridge, which I could not quite manage before we opened. I also tucked away a small frozen order when it arrived just before I headed for the gymnasium.

Having practised all weekend, I was ready for a proper blistering session at full pelt today. I had just started on my 5,000 metres row when the Missus called to say that the card payment machine had stopped working. Between breaths I suggested she deploy the backup machine that we keep tucked away for the purpose. She said she would, and I resumed my rowing. I did not get very far, and she called back again to ask the password for the backup machine. The last time I used it there was no need as it had started right away. I use variations on a theme for passwords but could not remember the variation I had used on the machine, so I gave up and came back to the shop.

Just as I came through the doorway, the Missus announced that she had got the original machine working again, which of course much delighted me. It is an odd machine, so I cannot blame the Missus. To reset it you have to press the power button for a minute or something daft which, if you are busy, is an impossible task. It then takes an age to boot up. Quite what it is doing, I have no idea, but I have known steam engines to come up to speed quicker.

We were quite busy for a while more during the middle of the day and then into the early afternoon. It took me quite by surprise and bucked last week's trend on pasties (sorry, MS). I had decided to greatly reduce my order for the next day based on the numbers we already had but when I tried to telephone our supplier, there was something wrong with the telephone and I could not get through. By the time they called me I had sold quite a few pasties and the trend seemed likely to continue. I was able to avert a minor pasty disaster and order a bigger number for tomorrow. It was good to see that fate sometimes – very occasionally – intervenes on my side.

The afternoon took a turn for the quieter, and I was able to tuck away the postcard order that turned up today. There were some gaps, and I will have to check whether we can expect the missing ones at some stage in the future or they are gone completely. Things have changed with postcard companies, and they no longer print

huge stocks of cards for customers to draw on. Unless I order 1,000 of them, they will remain missing. If I start ordering 1,000 of each card, I may as well print them myself and cut out the middleman.

With The Cove pretty much empty for the latter part of the afternoon, I had little to do but a spot of clearing up. The store room needs a good sort out as it is full of drinks cases that I might possibly have over ordered and cardboard boxes. I will make a concerted effort to clear it out tomorrow, honest guv.

Yesterday, when I took ABH out, she insisted we head down to the Harbour despite the tide being in. I kept her on her lead for safety, but the sea was not too impolite at that stage. She had ventured onto the sand between waves and was exploring when two came rushing at us in a pincer movement and almost caught her. She is very quick and avoided them, which was impressive.

Today, the state of the waves in the Harbour were a different matter altogether and I would not let her anywhere near them. The other side of the wall, as we traversed the car park, the sea was in a most agitated state heading towards proper feisty. As if to underline the matter, the boats were being pulled further up the slipway when we headed back. Big spring tides will make it sensible to avoid the slipway altogether at high tide.

September 17th – Sunday

We have had better days of weather, it is true, and it did not rain all of the day, so there was that. When it did rain, however, it was pretty apocalyptic, especially in the middle of the day.

Therefore, we should count ourselves lucky that ABH and I got around the block this morning unscathed. She was late up again and so was I having been woken twice in the middle of the night by a small dog obviously battling hallucinations brought about by her withdrawal symptoms from her hard sleeping drugs.

We escaped most of the morning without rain. There was only the one prolonged and reasonably heavy shower to cope with and few people around to enjoy it. We started getting a little busier around the middle of the day, just as the rain started to threaten again. By half past twelve I had bit of an influx, which was not surprising given that the sky had turned black, and darkness had descended upon The Cove.

When I looked at the rain radar, a line of heavy rain was sweeping up from the south covering the whole of the south coast and stretching up to London. We quite often seen red spots on the rain radar indication some of the heaviest rain between 20 and 38 millimetres of rain per hour. This line at our end of it had white at its core, showing rain of 76 to 96 millimetres an hour.

I reckon the heavier stuff fell a little further east but what we had was no light shower, either. A great light grey sheet fell across the beach as I looked toward Carn Keys as the rain teemed down. It had the effect of lightening the darkness as it blew threw. There was thunder, too, heralded by the bright flash of lightning from somewhere close by.

It did not last very long, and brightness followed it in, though there was still some rain about. We were very pleased that ABH did not seem bothered in the least by the flashes and the noise and concerned herself with trying to catch the raindrops the other side of the window she was looking out from.

She is quite obsessed with dripping water and will dive into the shower after one of us had come out to catch the last drops from the showerhead or stand under dripping drains to catch the water there. She will happily dance under a hose pipe stream up at The Farm (from our IBCs – oh, you must remember by now – in case anyone wishes to point out we are still under a hosepipe ban) and stick her head down drains with water running into them.

During the heaviest part of the raining, I had the company of an elderly gentlemen who had come off the bus from St Ives. He had been told bus the bus driver that another bus would be going back the same way in ten minutes. It was an odd thing to say when it was more like half an hour and would have seen the gentleman waiting in the rain had he not been sensible enough to seek shelter.

He grumbled a bit about the buses and the fact that he had come all this way from St Ives only to find that 'there was nothing here'. I let that slide, although on a day like today, he was not far wrong, and tried to see where the return bus was on the clever real time bus tracking page on the website. We were quite a way into the wait and the conversation when I told him that his bus was just leaving Land's End. He looked surprised then admitted that he thought he was at Land's End. It must have been such a disappointment to come all this way and then not quite make it.

I waited with him until the bus came in view. One of his complaints was that there was no bus shelter – he would have been worse off at Land's End – until I explained that it probably would not last long with the weather we have. I pointed out the bus as it came along the road, giving him plenty of time to reach the bus stop before the bus turned around.

I had another not long after, disappointed at having dismounted at the wrong stop. It would not harm the driver, I am sure, to announce the location or that Land's End is the next stop. Since I can see the exact location of the bus on the Internet, an automated system would not be beyond the realm of possibility.

He was not the only complainant today. I had yet another couple bemoaning the service at the OS, or lack of it. They had managed to get fed but were told to leave before six o'clock having had a reserved sign put on their table and all the others.

Looking back later, many of the tables were still empty. Their food was good, they said, though expensive but the bar service was deplorable, and the tables had glasses piled up and were uncleaned. I am still not sure why these complaints seem to come to me. I am unable to do anything about it but there again, so are the brewery it seems.

It is not all bad news and certainly not if you are a lobster. A lady asked why there were so many lobster pots piled up on the wharf. I explained that they had been brought in ahead of the generally poorer sea conditions likely from now on. She bemoaned the fact that she would not be able to get lobster from The Cove any longer and told me that the only reason she wanted them was because she painted them. I expressed mild concern and asked her if they minded terribly. I find it comforting that people can still find it in their hearts to smile kindly at me.

The weather tried its best to be kind in the afternoon as well. After the heavy downpours had drifted off to the north, the skies brightened and continued to brighten for the rest of the afternoon. By about three o'clock, it was actually starting to look half decent and by the time we closed, well, it was weather we could have done with in August. It did not do much for the surfing community as the sea was as flat as a dish as it pushed into high water.

Sadly, the new improved weather did not tempt many customers back to The Cove and in the shop we were left with the crumbs off the big table. It gave me the opportunity to sit around and do absolutely nothing for the rest of the day. I had a cursory glance around to see if we needed to place any grocery orders and we did not. I had missed the deadline for the drinks order, but I think we will not miss it anyway. I noted that our new local food service supplier that picked up some of the slack left by the closure of our local cash and carry last year did not turn up on Saturday. They were working flat out during the summer, but I imagine a good bit of their trade has diminished as indeed has ours. The order I placed will almost certainly come on Monday when I will have forgotten what we ordered and why.

The small gods of grumpy shopkeepers were clearly displeased with my afternoon of idleness and sent me a Lifeboat shout at the outset of our sitting down to tea. The big boat was launched to some kayaks in 'trouble' the other side of Cape Cornwall. A man in a kayak handlining for fish will lift his arm up and down to jig the bait. This can be misconstrued by the uninitiated as a frantic wave for help, which is what happened in this instance. The kayaking fisherman, of course, in his stealthy approach to the fishing ground suddenly has a big, noisy Lifeboat ruining his day.

Back at the station, without even knowing the outcome were reasonably sure that the boat would return in short order and initiated a setting up of the shop slip. It was fast approaching high water on a spring tide and the water was up to the rollers even on the short slip. The advantage for us is that we can quite precisely position the 'fishing rod' from which the Boat Crew collect the heaving line and collect it without fear of getting our boots wet later. It all helps to execute a textbook recovery, which of

course we did, at around seven o'clock or so and brought the boat swiftly back into the house. We are, after all, a very expedient, very excellent Shore Crew.

September 16th – Saturday

The breeze picked up this morning and some of the papers were late. Whether the former had anything to do with the latter, I have no idea, but they both happened at the same time, so I am not ruling anything out.

It also rained during the night. Quite heavily according to the amount of wet still on the street when I first came down. Yes, that was I in the singular, ABH still insisting to stay in bed until absolutely bleddy necessary to be dragged out of it. I pulled out the shop display by myself these last few weeks. It is a lonely existence being a grumpy shopkeeper with a bed obsessed ABH.

The Missus has experimented with new treats for the girl just before bedtime. I forget the name of them, but they are laced with various sleep inducing herbs and potions, guaranteed to give your pet a long and peaceful sleep. Probably also contains laudanum judging by its effectiveness. The Missus just needs to find something to wake her up in the morning and we are laughing.

What woke me up this morning was a letter from our accountant telling us about the Government's plan to make changes to the accounting basis periods. It is part of their master plan on tax that they call Making Tax Digital, which would more appropriately be called Making Tax Difficult. The latest hurdle thrown in our path is change our accounting periods which we have set up to coincide with our seasonal opening and closing.

We run from March to February each year and we are being urged to change that to April to March. We could dig our heels in, but this will only cause us trouble, and no doubt extra cost, in the long run. It may not be too bad as we now do not open until Easter but in some years, such as the coming year, we will reopen in the previous accounting year and that will be very messy.

To distract myself from these horrors, I carried out my plan to add the facility for customers to order our artisan bread from Paul's Bread online. This was tricky to set up given the multiple options available for each bread type: large, small, sliced, unsliced. The new website software is not quite as flexible as the previous and we have ended up with multiple selections available in the category.

As ungainly as it looks, it covers most of the available options, the only thing I cannot restrict is the deadline each day, which online will be half past three o'clock to allow time for messages to be transmitted and me to see them. I have placed bold notices in as many places as I can to inform the purchaser that it is collection only, but I have no doubt I will have complaints that the bread did not arrive. This is further confused because there is no 'collection only' option in the software, so it will ask for the

customer's address during the checkout. We shall see how this goes and if it is too complicated, I will have to remove it – not that it will concern you, dear reader, as you by-pass the shop completely on the way to The Diary, despite my efforts to have the new system mess up your shortcuts.

The Missus had burning desire, so to speak, to have a barbeque for tea. This will be the reason it started to rain in the early afternoon and remained drizzly for the rest of the day. It had been fairly bright during the morning, although cloudy, but the afternoon looked very dreary. Fortunately, the event was to be staged at home rather than heading up to The Farm as we have a small portable unit at the back of the building. The Missus was able to tend to it from the backdoor. Frankly, I would have opted to use the hob and grill, but the Missus is a determined soul and would not let a small monsoon put her off.

The rain may not have put the Missus off the barbeque, but it certainly threw our business batsman a googly. There were a few wayward souls stopping by from time to time but otherwise The Cove was a desolate wasteland. I am sure there were a number of jobs that I could have done to fill the idle hours but somehow, I could not stir myself to do them. Instead, someone had posted that it was Russ Abbot's birthday on social media, who's simple and childlike humour is much in line with my own. I ended I listening to various clips people had posted and cursing any customer who dared interrupt me – oops.

Just ahead of bedtime tonight, we wondered about those bedtime treats we have been giving ABH as she has been sleeping particularly soundly. We thought it might be sensible to see if there might be guidance on the packet as to how many to give your dog for a peaceful night's sleep. There was. It was one. The Missus has been giving her three. We gave her two before bedtime tonight as we did not want her to go cold turkey.

September 15th – Friday

It was into the unknown today, not quite knowing what the weather would do. Change is on the way most certainly but when it will happen is open to conjecture and the guesswork of the various weather forecasters out there. The fishermen know that it is time to haul in their pots and they have been working hard over the last few days bringing them in from wherever they can remember that they left them. If you want lobster from now on, it will not be coming from The Cove.

The day offered us a mixture of blue skies and cloud today, having started out reasonably dull after a fine sunrise. The wind had dropped to a mere waft, and it was quite warm on the street but humid I was told. It looked pretty alright to me as I cowered in the shop all day, except for the bit where I was beating out a blistering session in the gymnasium in the morning. I was not so much on my game today, so I will need to do a bit more exercise before I go again.

In the shop it was a bit up and down during the day. We had long periods of quiet and short periods of quite intense busyness. The long awaited purchasing of going home presents eventually arrived and we had a flurry of fudge and biscuit boxes being packed up and sent home. There was much talk about the A30 closure expected from tonight and some people had rearranged their travel plans because of it.

The detours are the same as ever with travellers arriving being sent around the huge dogleg of Truro and turn right at Stithians and if you have ever been to Stithians you will understand how convoluted that journey is. The going home is slightly less tortuous, via the roads close to Perranporth. I suspect that some Cornish Nationalist on the much maligned council thought up those routes. The way in was to put visitors off before they even got here and the shorter detour going home was to ensure our visitors left with the utmost of haste.

There was not a lot going on in the afternoon. The Missus went over to Mother's to clean the carpets ahead of her going home at the weekend. The tattoo removal has come along nicely, and she is already considering having another of Popeye to replace it. She says not, but I think secretly she is impressed by my post-gymnasium physique.

Naturally, ABH and I stepped out for a run around the beach after tea. The afternoon had perked up no end and had turned The Cove into a proper late summer evening, with sunshine and warmth in abundance. Most of that was on the wane when we went out, but it was surely pleasant enough. Sadly, there was not much beach to run about on and there were sufficient people down there to make it awkward. We settled for a walk around the block, which, by the time we got to the start of the footpath up the cliff, I thought would be woefully inadequate for a full of energy little girl.

I considered going up to the lookout at the top of Pedn-Men-Du but was not sure about young legs on such a climb not to mention old, crumbling ones and the possibility of being vigilant for late season adders. We continued around our normal route but then carried on through The Cove to the OS slipway. It was some busy at both ends of the street and in between where the chip shop, the only reasonably accessible food source in town now that the OS has given up, was heaving.

ABH was still game to play when we got back. She has discovered wool and has plagued Mother with her knitting since she has been here. The Missus too has found life unravelling after unpicking an old blanket to reuse the wool. Trying to wind it into balls has been a challenge.

To defuse the situation, I took ABH down to the Harbour armed with a torch to see if we could run about for a week. As gloomy as it was, there were still some youths down there in a little ground who we were both wary of, probably unnecessarily. We

did some running about but it was not ideal and fifteen minutes later returned for more wool antics. Ah the joys of puppyhood.

September 14th – Thursday

Today was dull but perfectly temperate. Despite that ABH still had to be dragged kicking and screaming from her bed to take a walk around the block. I shall be glad when the shop closes and we can go out on a more equitable basis, although I do fear it will not be quite like that. We will also be in a strange house, if all goes well with our building plans.

Almost certainly as a consequence of the not so attractive weather, our visitor numbers were down. We did not even get a flow of going home present buying, so either no one is going home, or those leaving do not have pets, gardens or friends. The morning, at least, was so slow it was infectious, and I quite forgot to put pasties on sale (sorry, MS) until the middle of the day when I was reminded by someone asking if they had been delivered.

Some of our deliveries were indeed late as the A30 had been shut up by Crowlas, where our milk hails from – it actually comes from cows in a field a bit further up but allow a sloppy writer some leeway. It is a critical bit of road around which there are few options for detour. Most of the options that are available end taking you down single track lanes and small hamlets. I think all of these detours end up in Gulval, which was apparently in gridlock for much of the morning. Our friends staying at the back of us very wisely delayed their departure until the road was open again.

It took a little effort to find some motivation, but I managed to do a bit more topping up of shelves and cleaning away empty boxes where the products had sold some time ago. It is an annual irony that I our shelves are better maintained and filled when we have fewer customers at the end of the season.

Today, we were quite lucky that we had stock left on the shelves down the grocery aisle. On occasion, a walker will somehow forget that they have a huge sack on their back and dance down our aisles with abandon. Some think that they can be ultra careful and walk up only to reverse back down so that they do not have to turn around. This is all very well until something on a shelf catches their eye and suddenly, the pack on their back is forgotten and stock on the opposite shelf is knocked flying.

We had a young lady visitor today who did not feel it worthwhile to exercise even a modicum of caution as she traversed the food aisle. The issue did not register even after she had knocked some bread rolls off the shelf. She simply picked them up and proceeded down the aisle with her pack swaying dangerously. Next to feel the impact of the pack was the box of kites further down which landed with a bang behind her. Tutting, she dropped her pack in the middle of the aisle, picked up the box and continued back up the aisle leaving the pack behind, blocking it.

I directed her to our pens in the middle aisle when she asked and, with the pack back slung over one shoulder, went down there. Fortunately, the items at risk in the middle aisle are less costly and largely bounce when knocked over; the bone china mugs are on higher shelves.

She then discovered that she could not purchase a 40 pence pen on a credit card and decided to return to the grocery aisle with her pack once again slung over her shoulder. Here she scatted over a bottle of beer upping the ante considerably and I suggested that she might like to rest her pack somewhere safe as there were some costly products where she was. She agreed with me then carried on down the aisle, her pack still swinging out from her shoulder. I was much relieved after she had paid and left.

Large rucksacks were the least of my concern when I shut the shop at one o'clock to go and launch the Inshore Lifeboat. I was pipped at the post by our fleet of foot neighbour so I, with quite a few others, stood as banksmen which were needed given the numbers of visitors milling about at that moment and the traffic that suddenly increased. We had much the same problem when it came to bringing the boat back. It is quite astounding how people will wander aimlessly into the way oblivious and the traffic that will try and push through the smallest of gaps rather than wait two minutes for the Tooltrak and trailer to pass.

The shout was to a dog reportedly fallen off the cliff at Creagle. He was smartly lifted to safety by four crewmen who clearly knew a photo opportunity when they see one. The resulting picture will no doubt be syndicated to the national press in time for tomorrow's front pages – or very possibly page nine of the Cornishman next week. I met the dog later, eating bits of pasty from one of the crew. It looked most unconcerned, wondering what all the fuss was about.

Just when we thought it was safe to go back into the shop, well, a little time after we thought it was safe to go back into the shop, our pagers went off again. This time human swimmers were thought to be in trouble around at Nanjizal. The Inshore boat was the priority and my fleet of foot neighbour who seemed to have the edge on me again took the Tooltrak out while I attended to getting the big boat ready. With few of us on the ground it was thought expedient to launch the boat from inside the house, which we did as soon as the last crew member was aboard.

Knowing that it was unlikely to be a long task, we set up the short slip in readiness for the boat to return, then waited. When it did come back less than half an hour later it was carrying the casualty, shaken and a little stirred at her experience but otherwise unharmed. With the addition of one more arrival for our team, we were able to service both recoveries at the same time. We brought the big boat back on the short slip in what was clearly a textbook recovery and brought her straight into the boathouse so that we could land the casualty as soon as possible. We are, after all, a very timely, very excellent Shore Crew.

It is getting quite gloomy now for our evening expedition to the beach. At least we had the beach almost to ourselves, which makes it a little less fun for ABH but a much less concerning for me. She still managed a good run around but before the end of next week we are likely to need a torch for our run outs. Still, the sunset aftermath was pleasant to look at as we crossed the car park and watched the sunset watchers drive off. A quiet end to a curious day.

September 13th – Wednesday

Out of the corner of my eye, while I was pounding out my daily 40 press-ups, I could see some blueness to the sky out to the east. The sun had not yet risen but it was not far behind me. That blue sky stayed with us through the day but over to the east it was pretty thick with cloud.

The wind had diminished greatly in the morning and dropped further during the day. It was hot in the sun, I was told, but clearly had not appreciated that as I tripped down to the gymnasium. Here I was very hot an hour later after a blistering session that left me invigorated for the rest of the day.

All that hotness and sunshine brought an increase in the number of visitors to The Cove and an upsurge in the customers in the shop. That does sound much grander than it was but there were certainly more customers than yesterday. Many were sat on the tables across the road and these continued to be busy from late morning through to late afternoon.

The Missus came down to let me go to the gymnasium and set to clearing the store room of the grocery order from yesterday. She was still doing it when I returned an hour or so later on. I lent a hand, and she was all done by two o'clock just leaving me the heavy water to transport down to the drinks fridge at the end of the shop.

This threw up a conundrum that I was not expecting. I had cleared what appeared to be a pool of orange squash from the bottom of the fridge a few days ago. I had checked the drinks above and could not immediately see a culprit, so I hoped that the offending drink container had gone out although that happening unnoticed was probably unlikely.

When I came to refill the big bottles of water today, the orangey pool was annoyingly back. I cleaned it up again and this time gave the fridge a proper look to trace the origin. The most likely source was a can of Red Bull, which I did not think was that colour but am happy to be corrected. The can was soft but seemingly unholed but having eliminated the impossible options, this, although improbable, seemed the only option – thank you, Sherlock. I filled up the fridge anyway and if we end up with sticky water bottles, so be it.

Certainly not leaking, well not very much anyway, was a working boat that entered the bay and moored up some way off the Lifeboat station. It had come from Falmouth, but its purpose was not entirely clear. My clever computer told me that it was a harbour tender but given that it was not in the Harbour I guessed that it had been repurposed, most probably as a dive boat. Quite what was being dived on was a complete mystery unless they were Chinese spies tapping the international fibre that secretly runs out of the bay to America. Mind, they did not look Chinese but there again, they did not look like spies, either – all spies wear trench coats, dark glasses and trilby hats, of course. I shall continue to enquire.

As seems to be usual, the later afternoon calmed to a dribble of customers every now and then. I had been meaning to top up the preserves and chutney shelves but through a mixture of insufficient time and idleness, I had not done it for weeks. It was a little too much to bear when I passed the shelf by today, so I stirred myself to open a few boxes and put out the stock. Unfortunately, what was available to put out bore no resemblance to what was missing on the shelf, although I am sure it was a closer fit when I placed the order. More than anything, the mustard which I find quite delicious but was hitherto selling very slowly and did not warrant a reorder, has now all but run out. I am mortified.

I was much more pleased to meet a young girl on the beach when I took ABH down there later on. ABH had an affinity for small children, it is probably the size, and the girl happily ran around the beach for half an hour with ABH chasing her. I stopped and chatted with mother who is a local lady we have known for some time, enjoying a very pleasant evening as the sun set away leaving just embers. By the time we tore ourselves away, the light was going and dusk coming on. It was not completely clear who had won the battle of attrition, but the small child looked quite worn out and ABH was showing small signs of slowing down. As I suspected, this was only temporary and short lived.

Our spy boat in the bay was lit up with flood lights well into the night, so it must have good batteries or alternatively will be asking for a tow in the morning.

September 12th – Tuesday

It always good to start the morning with a bit of lively argument and some cross-street shouting. I had a local customer park outside the shop to collect his newspaper when another local lady parked opposite. Despite there being at that hour little traffic about, my customer felt it worthwhile to point out to me that the second local parker had effectively blocked the road before stepping outside to remonstrate with the lady.

A sharper wit than mine might have defused the situation by stating at the time that it was a moot point as both vehicles were parked on double yellow lines. I only thought of saying it later, so I apologise for not being quicker witted.

I had already been punished for my dismal failure earlier when the big grocery delivery, the pasty man (sorry, MS) and the greengrocery driver all arrived at precisely the same moment. I was only fortunate in that I not placed a dairy order for the day as he arrived shortly after the others. Happily, it was before our opening time and there were few people about at that hour. I dismissed the pasty man and the greengrocer quickly and three of us emptied the grocery van in quiet and efficient determination. I was even able to finish topping up the drinks fridge in time for opening that I was in the middle of when the mayhem broke loose.

It was in stark contrast to most of the rest of the day. Despite a forecast for sunny spells, we were under a cloud for much of it. The accompanying northerly wind that seemed to increase in fits and starts through the day, dropped the temperature. The resulting decrease in the number of visitors milling about gave way to a quiet shop day with the added benefit of a few hooded sweatshirt being sold.

Much of my morning was dedicated to finishing off the accounts so that the Missus could take the files over to the accountants in Penzance. This distracted me from any clearing of the large order in the store room and by the time I had finished the accounts, there were a few more customers about. Apart from a few hooded sweatshirts, the buying was main small fry and after international buy a postcard day came, best have some stamps to go with the postcards we bought yesterday.

It was not until the end of the afternoon that we started to sell windbreaks. I thought this a bit odd but then considered people in campsites might be looking for some respite from the fairly vicious blow. The Missus headed off into town again to drop the paperwork at the accountants and carry out other errands too numerous to name. It left me in the company of ABH again and once again she lasted a couple of hours at her station before I had to move her to her carry case. This time, however, it was because she had started to shiver in the wind that was blowing straight it at her.

I closed the shop early today. I would have asked the Missus to cover but there were so few people about it hardly seemed worthwhile – except for those people who had left their essential items to the last minute. On service on Monday morning the Lifeboat had experienced some engine and throttle problems. Being fly-by-wire, it required electricians to come and sort it out rather than a mechanic and by the end of the day today they reckoned to have resolved the issue, but the boat needed to go to sea to try it out.

We launched at around half past five o'clock in our usual, daytime, full noise launch. Under attack from that blustery north wind all day, the sea was quite stirred up and the boat made a big splash when it hit the water at top slipway speed. We who also serve by standing around and waiting, stood around and waited for it to come back again, which it did around an hour later.

It was the tail end of our window for using the short slipway, which was just as well given the sea state. The blustery wind made it a tricky job where a quick take-up was

essential adding a little edge to proceedings. Even under such pressure we brought the boat up the short slip in what was clearly a textbook recovery, recorded for posterity – and viewing gallery movie - by one of our Deputy Launching Authorities on his mobile telephone camera. We are, after all, a very camera-conscious, very excellent Shore Crew.

September 11th – Monday

It was just after midnight o'clock when the pagers went off, so officially I could not mention anything at all about the shout in yesterday's Diary. You were lucky, dear reader, that the chief editor's boss's wife was shampooing the goldfish at the time that I managed to slip mention the fact that the pagers went off at all.

The boat was tasked to attend a yacht somewhere north of Pendeen that had lost all power. Not only had it lost all power, it could not tell where it was in the dark. Even if they could see, there are precious few signposts in that general area. This is on purpose to help conceal the location of Pendeen.

It was a, fortunately passing by, big boat that found the yacht in its radar and allowed the Lifeboat to locate it quite quickly. It was 20 miles off, where the sea is quite big, so finding it would have been very difficult without some sort of clue. The game plan was to tow it to St Ives, which was closest and would have our boat back home at four o'clock. Unfortunately for our crew, there was no room at the inn at St Ives and the tow had to be conducted to Newlyn instead. Obviously, the very selfless members of the very excellent Shore Crew were mortified that they must now wait until a more reasonable seven o'clock in the morning to conduct a recovery. Clearly, we felt every moment of the protracted boredom of the long tow as we slept peacefully in our beds for a further three hours.

Having been alerted by the Coxswain of the day that they were leaving Newlyn, I mustered a small but perfectly formed team to set up the long slipway in the gloom of the morning. After days of stillness in the bay, it was a surprise to see six feet of rise and fall at the tow of the slipway, which pulled and tangled our cables. As the tide was falling a little faster than I had allowed for, I asked for some additional cable as the boat came back on the slip. It takes minutes of practise and at least one go of experience to ensure the cable is just the right length to execute a textbook recovery that some of our keen residents may have witnessed today.

When I opened the shop later, many of those keen residents were not even aware that the boat had launched in the first place. This is gratifying as it demonstrates the effectiveness of our nighttime, silent launch procedures. All members of the crew wear towelling covers on their boots to ensure our footfall does not sound across the still of the night. We also launch the boat very slowly so that it does not make such a big splash when it hits the water. We apologise to the lady who mentioned this morning that she would not have known that the Lifeboat went out but for the peep of the horn, signalling to the crew member at the back end of the boat to cut the piece

of string holding it in place. We have an operations team meeting tomorrow evening and I shall bring this to their attention. We are, after all, a very community-minded, very excellent Shore Crew.

We have been entertaining mother for the last week or so at home here. She needs to have the site of her rose tattoo moisturised four times a day and it is in a difficult place for her to reach. As an aside, I was very impressed to see that she elected to keep the old chapter insignia next to it from her Hells Angels days of hell raising. If you see her, please do not mention it because I think she is slightly embarrassed by it these days.

Today, she needed to return to the hospital to have the stitches on her face lift checked and tightened. I had no idea the process was so involved. Having looked after ABH in the shop for a couple of shopping hours yesterday, I was once again tasked to keep her entertained on her throne by the first electric sliding door in The Cove.

Here she meets and greets a large number of people even in the limited time she is there. She did a sterling job yesterday for two hours during the shopping trip and today, it was more like three. Like the bleddy hound before her, it seems that she tunes out, knowing she will be going nowhere for a little while and settles down for the long haul.

It can be a little fraught just now because the whole period is full of interruptions. Just as she lies down and gets comfortable, someone will come along to smooth her, another time, she will do it herself when she hears a sound she wants to investigate. Eventually, though, either she or I will decide that she had had enough, and I will move to her to her shrinking basket on the counter. She used to fit into it comfortably with room to spare. Now she fits end to end but still has enough spare to bed down and sleep.

It was gone two o'clock when the Missus returned with Mother. All had gone well at the hospital and Mother repaired upstairs for a rest. The Missus took ABH down to the Harbour beach and returned half an hour later with a dripping little girl after a much needed run about and somewhat enforced swim to get cool.

The afternoon in the shop drifted into a slow, irregular pace. It seemed to be internationally recognised buy a postcard day, for we sold many. The problems I have had with stamps have not entirely gone away but at least we are getting invoices again. They have reverted to sending them, which I do not care about but when the world and his great aunt Thora are moving to the customer bearing the cost and printing them themselves, it seems a retrograde step. I still cannot get airmail stickers, but I am beyond caring. In fact, I do not think I ever cared. It was the bureaucratic stupidity of it that I railed against.

I spent a little time in the afternoon clearing up the store room on the off chance that the big grocery delivery arrives early. All during the summer, it was into the afternoon but they will be quieter now and may rearrange their schedule to suit. It took a little while to do as the afternoons are busier and I was distracted by a lady looking for low cost accommodation in The Cove.

She told me she had little money as she was a pilgrim. In West Cornwall, where the earlier inhabitants had to be beaten into submission by a succession of Irish saints and strong-willed Methodist preachers and the incidence of religious centres are thin on the ground, I can only assume she was lost. I rang around a few places, but they are clearly unused to spontaneous requests for accommodation; I either had messaging services or no answers at all. I sent her off to St Just, where the miners used to have religion in the hope that there was still some there – religion, that is, the miners are long gone.

ABH and I had the beach to ourselves later but she seemed less inclined to play this evening. We did spend a good half an hour down there, but she seemed to tire and we continued around the block in the gathering gloom. It was pleasant enough but the cloud we had all day remained along with some humidity, although any heat from the day had seeped away by then.

I took her out again last thing as the Missus was finishing off some batch cooking – our freezer is full of batches. I use a head torch which I would not recommend. While you can see where you are going and what the little girl is up to, you have a face full of flies attracted by the light. Hopefully, all the yachts out there will have lights tonight – and no flies.

September 10th – Sunday

There was no evidence that we had thunderstorms in the night. I suppose it might have rained, but the street was dry when I stepped out this morning. I took ABH a little while later when she could be bothered to get out of bed and the day was already thick with humidity, but our blue skies had disappeared behind a layer of cloud. That humidity combined with a drop in temperature plagued us the rest of the day and by early afternoon we were closed in by a thick sea mist.

We had enjoyed a very busy day yesterday and it was soon very apparent that it was not to be repeated today. The shop was largely empty for most of the morning, and it was not until the early afternoon that we saw any action and even then, it was limited.

I would love to tell you all about the sea and how many people were in it and what they were doing, but I could not see it for most of the day. The sea state before the mist had rolled in from the north was as flat as it had been over the last few days. It is reasonable to assume that it was paddleboarders only along with the very hopeful out there enjoying it.

In the quiet of the morning, I was able to go around the rest of the shelves I had missed yesterday, topping up here and there. I also managed to tidy up the shelves in the store room where the non-food items are because it was in a dreadful mess. It had made it difficult finding anything and, for ordering, seeing what we had. The latter issue had resulted in a glut of toothbrushes, which sell well but perhaps not as well as the stock level we had suggests.

It still took long into the afternoon to complete the big order and then to start on the secondary grocery order. This proved more problematic as more customers started appearing in the wake of the café next door closing. It was hardly busy, but the flow was reasonably steady and kept me from completing the list. To make matters worse, for the order, at least, although it did business no harm at all, the mist cleared away at around half past four o'clock. We picked up even more after that with a few barbeques being prepared by the look of it with the accompaniment of many bottles of wine and beer.

After a very poor start, the day had rallied, and we ended up with a half decent day. Because we were busy until the end, it took me quite a while to complete the orders for the next day. I had tried before to place an order with our greengrocery supplier for delivery on a Sunday. They never arrived and I supposed they did not work on Sundays but was never certain that they just had not got my order. I tried again Saturday night after a particularly big clean out of our fruit and vegetable fridge but again the delivery never came, so now I am sure that they do not work Sundays. The uncertainty was fuelled by the fact that their answering service still accepts order like every other day. It would be useful to have a message explain that they are closed.

ABH and I hit the nearly deserted Harbour beach after tea and had a glorious run around and a splash in the sea. All was going well until a lady arrived with a dog on a lead and made it patently clear her dog was not going to play with a rough lout like ABH. The lady sat on the sand with her dog resolutely tethered but despite a warning from the dog itself, ABH would not take no for an answer and lay siege to the couple.

I pulled her away a couple of times, but she kept returning. I put ABH on her lead, but it severely hampered our play despite getting her away to the far side of the beach. In the end we had to abandon play and head around the block.

So, did the grumpy shopkeeper retire to his bed for a peaceful night's kip? Or did his pager go off at some uncomfortable hour and send him scurrying to the Lifeboat station in his jimjams. Find out in tomorrow's somewhat less than tedious for a change, Sennen Cove Diary. To be continued ...

September 9th – Saturday

The mornings are always a good time to get one over on sleepy customers, especially when the grumpy shopkeeper was up at sparrows' with an eager ABH.

Unlike our milk nowadays, we distinguish our sparkling water from the still variety by its white lid. Some customers are familiar with this but sometimes cannot recall which way around it is. So, when our customer this morning asked what colour our sparkling water was, I told him that it was transparent just like ordinary tap water. Being almost our first customer of the morning and the hour early, it took a moment or two for this jolly jape to register.

While the customer in question will never forgive this unkind ribbing, and especially its exposure in this narrowly read journal, it brought some joie de vie to a grumpy shopkeeper's grim existence.

On the subject of water, we have a lady staying in the studio flat next to the shop this week. Originally from New York, a long way west of Camborne, in a place called America, she now lives in Nanquidno, which is much closer to Camborne and on the right side. I felt it a little intrusive to ask why she was renting a holiday accommodation a little more than a couple of miles from her home, so I did not ask. She enquired about the taste of the water here in The Cove and said that she could not abide it and had to purchase bottled water to make her tea.

We both found it hard to believe that there should be a noticeable difference in the water between the two locations. Aware that the flat next door had recently been refurbished, I wondered if that had been responsible. Being used to the water here, I offered to try it and she brought some around in a cup for me to try. Having tasted the water, I confirmed that there was not much difference between that and the water I was used to out of our own taps so we concluded that the water in Nanquidno must, indeed, be different. It is difficult to fathom why that might be the case unless the water there comes from a different source, such as a borehole. I shall investigate further.

We were quite busy in the morning with new visitors in some abundance. There was a lot of soft drinks and snacks being purchased for days in the sunshine and I suspect there will be much topping up of our drinks fridge at the end of the day. I have also girded my loins for an afternoon of beer selling, and prepared replacements to backfill the gaps.

Our wised-up locals come in early on days such as these to avoid the rush. One lady attends regularly twice a week to collect a bread order and does a little grocery shopping at the weekend. Today, unusually she purchased sardines and putting two and two together I suggested that the fish might possibly be for a certain juvenile gull. I had to laugh, and I explained that she was at least the third person I knew of feeding it sardines. It is no wonder the gull cannot fly; it is too bleddy fat.

In fleeting moments that I was required to walk down our grocery aisle, it was very apparent that there were gaping holes on some of the shelves where stock should have been. We were busy for most of the day, so it was between customer visits that

I had to slip tins of beans onto the shelves one trip and chopped tomatoes another. It took some time to work my way down the shelves like that, but it is looking a little more presentable than it was.

It is also very clear that we grossly underestimated the stock requirements on our last order as we are short of a few things. The next order is coming up tomorrow and if I react too smartly to the shortages, we will find ourselves overstocked at close of play. If I do not replace the missing with enough, then we will be the same position in a fortnight.

Swimming was the sport of choice today, I would have said. Most of the swimmers must have started from the Harbour as there were precious few people in the water on the big beach for much of the day. The most I saw at any one time was toward the end of the afternoon when a surf school took its students in, trying to explain what a wave looked like and how to pretend to surf without one.

The bay had been as flat as a dish from the very outset of the day and at no state of tide did it show the remotest interest in being sea-like. There had been scarcely a ripple right across the bay from start to finish of the day save those created by the odd craft on the water. The breeze that was quite welcome during the week and still noticeable this morning seemed to have disappeared during the day. I recall yesterday being the first day I had felt it warm inside the shop and today, with the air quite still, or any breeze in from the wrong direction, it was very warm. I was very happy to have our smart fan and the extractor at the rear of the shop going full blast to provide a modicum of relief.

As seems to be the norm, we became quiet toward the end of the afternoon and entertained a five minute to closing rush before we closed. It had been a good day of business and an even better evening in the offing. Everyone else though so too and it was far too busy on the Harbour beach to be running inquisitive ABHs down there. The car park was full to the first three ranks from the sea with beach goers and sunset watchers. The sun remained hidden behind cloud until, in the best entertainment traditions, did a final reveal at the last moment as it dropped into the sea just at the edge of Pedn-men-du. By the end of next week, it will be around the corner.

Just to add a little freshness to the air, it rained before bedtime. It did not work. Another stuffy night in store, I reckon.

September 8th – Friday

A day of the similar stamp to yesterday. There was much cloud moving about and some initial haze in the bay, which near enough disappeared by the late morning. Our pasty man (sorry, MS) told me of thick fog over all the rest of the places he had been this morning. We were the only place that was relatively clear.

I am sure there is a conspiracy between the milkman and the pasty man. Three days this week they have arrived at roughly the same time causing me anguish. The milk has to go away in the fridge pretty quickly and at the rear of the current stock and the pasties need to be put away quickly so that the driver can be on his way. Today, their timing was so close that I had to choose between which I did first. The pasty delivery won because it was so large.

We enjoyed some unusual busyness during the morning, probably on the basis of it being a changeover day. It was relatively calm when I left for the gymnasium but when I got back the shop was heaving. I almost felt guilty for going. It was a blistering session, especially in the humid heat that had already seeped into the hut with a tin roof. Feeling guilty or any other emotion about anything was pretty much beyond me when I came out again.

I had run out of breakfasts about three days ago and with little option other than repeating what I had previously, I opened the smoked salmon I had frozen a few weeks before; the Beluga ran out a little while ago, so I had no choice other than to slum it. It was a tad unfortunate that I had frozen it in such a large block when it would have been more helpful to split it. I have been dining on smoke salmon since and there is only so much you can do with it within the confines of the shop store room.

Today, I stole some time after the gymnasium to blend together some left over savoury rice that the Missus had stirred up with our rib eye steaks in oyster sauce the other night and turned it into a salad with the salmon. It was very nice but sadly a little too early for the Bolinger that would have gone down very well with it. I cannot wait for the shop to close so that I can return to a proper diet with decent food again.

Early this morning, just as the sun was rising, happily there were no forlorn maidens in valleys, but I met with two young men of The Cove heading to the Harbour with kayaks in hand. One is a fisherman, working the pilchard boats in Mount's Bay, but still goes fishing in his spare time – we call this obsession, I think. I saw him late in the afternoon buying some beer. He told me that he and his pal had been at the Harbour or on the sea kayaking or in it swimming all day long. It was a busy schedule, and they accuse the youth of today of idleness. Honestly.

The afternoon lull seems to have become a regular feature. It allowed me to finish off the last of the invoices that we had to hand. The Missus needs to do the till that will turn up the remaining cash receipts that need to be keyed in and I need to produce the bank statements and summary sheet for our accountant. The second quarter is a challenging one with over 500 invoices, consuming two lever arch files bursting at the seams. I will be glad to see the back of it.

By closing time, the day started to look a little brooding. It looked glowering by the time it came to taking the little girl for a run and come the end of our time on the beach, it was looking the gloaming had come early. You do not take any risks on an

evening that is both brooding and glowering and the gloaming comes on early and I had checked the rain radar before we went out. Geet lumps of rain were on their way from the south, so we went with caution.

On the beach ABH from a new 'friend'. As with many of her friends, the relationship was unrequited, but she was not going to let a few fierce growls and a couple of snaps ruin a good friendship and ran around after the other dog as it chased a ball. To give ABH her due, she lay down watchfully a respectful distance away when the other dog joined its family group and the side of the western slip. She was off again as soon as the other dog came away, chasing after it oblivious to the cold shoulder she was getting.

We did not waste too much time coming home around the big block. We watched the sun setting gloriously on the way but by the time we got to Coastguard Row, it was getting quite gloomy. The heavy rain must have split up before it arrived here but the Missus felt a spot or two when she ran the girl out last thing. I did not look, but I think more was on the way. It is allowed to rain at night here.

September 7th - Thursday

I was fearfully late starting this morning, not that it made a great deal of difference in the end. ABH refused point blank to get out of bed, or rather made it look like she was so snug and comfortable that I could not bear to wrest her from it, more like. When push had arrived at shove, and I had no more time to wait, she made a terrible fuss of snarling and pretending to bite me, a reaction we will have to break her of in very short order. Unlike a Cornish maid, she does not hold a grudge and we walked the block very peaceably after that.

There was quite a lot of thick haze around during the morning and we had high level cloud after that for most of the rest of the day. It took the edge off our full on late summer days but was still perfectly reasonable, thank you very much. Today, the breeze came back a little, which made the humid heat a little more tolerable. That was especially true this morning when I could hardly wait to get clear of the rear of the flat where it was quite airless despite the windows all being open. It is hard to believe how cold it is there during the winter.

It was another mixed day of customer activity, and it was busy enough first thing to keep me from doing very much else. The Marines were out on their boats this morning from ten o'clock and stocking up on energy food before they went kept me busy through the first part of the day. Next to keep me busy was a fairly large delivery of greengrocery. I had skipped an order the previous day for the first time in weeks and quite a lot went out yesterday. There was much weighing and bagging, which all takes time.

My main desire was to finish off the big pile of invoices. I had cleared a third of it the first time and possibly more the second. The remaining pile was doable in a single

day, and I was keen to get it finished. There are a few more to do after that and some odd and ends to tie up to finish the quarter end accounts completely, but the invoices are the biggest task. I had to wait until the early afternoon and was then able to steam through them in near enough a single session.

As the bus timetable scarcely changed, I did not think we would have too much trouble with bus times and enquiries. Even the very pleasant man who delivers the timetables said to keep on using the leaflets we had, and he had that from the bus company. I was therefore somewhat perturbed when a visitor popped into the shop and asked for an up-to-date timetable only to refuse the one I offered, telling me it was out of date. It seemed that he had just missed a bus that had left the bus stop ahead of the time he was expecting to catch it. Another bus was hot on its exhaust pipe, so he asked the driver if this was the bus he was expecting and was told it was indeed the previous one. Asking why the bus had left early, the driver told him that the timetable had changed.

I am not normally pressed to gainsay a professional in his career, but I ventured that the bus driver was telling porky pies in order not to look at fault or was working to a timetable of his own. It took me a minute or two to convince my visitor, but he agreed that the online version that agreed with the paper leaflet we offer and that they both surely could not be wrong and the driver right. The bus timetable is complicated enough for the uninitiated, but having the bus drivers adding fuel to the fire is a bit much.

Once again, the later afternoon went very quiet followed by a five minute to closing rush. I had ABH in the shop in the early afternoon after the Missus had taken her for a spin. She stayed at her post for well over an hour meeting and greeting a much thinner crowd than she was used to during the height of the season. I could tell that she would dearly have loved to rest a bit but every time someone approached the shop, she was alert again to see who it was.

Eventually, the Missus came down and rescued her and took her down to the Harbour beach for a dip and a swim. I suppose all dogs are natural swimmers, but I suspect not all of them necessarily like it. With some encouragement, she actually took herself in. This was not quite the case when I took her down after tea. She followed some swimmers in but as I was not equipped for paddling, she stopped short of going all the way, but it would not have taken much to persuade her.

Now we have full run of a near empty beach, we are far more comfortable in letting her run wild, which she does without direction. She will follow nearly anyone who comes down for a stroll and most are kindly toward her. Fortunately, she has become very good on the recall, expecting a treat for doing so. We finished off with a stroll around the bigger block but ay hope that I had that between us we had exhausted her was scotched when she arrived home for more bouncing off the walls.

She was clearly very tired as she went to sleep almost immediately after we went to bed. She just will not rest during the day when there are 'things' going on. All we needed was a dog with FOMO (Fear of Missing Out).

September 6th – Wednesday

Well, what can you say. This weather of ours just keeps on coming. Another rip gribbler on the doorstep and warm from the very outset of the day. The heat does not seem to bother the little girl overly, but the Missus dropped her in the sea halfway through the day to cool her down anyway.

There was still a bit of breeze around first thing for our run around the block. It is still a trial trying to get her out of bed, so I try some flexibility in letting her lie and coming back. It plays havoc with my schedule and particularly today when I had the fridge full of soft drinks to top up on top of the usual deliveries. I just about managed to finish them before we had to open.

The day's business is still a bit hit and miss with no regular busy and quiet times. We were certainly busier in the last of the morning and through the middle of the day today and after about three o'clock, the streets near enough emptied. By five o'clock it was like a ghost town.

It is possible that the gig club stole all the attention in the afternoon but when I checked later that did not happen until the evening. It was a regular customer who alerted me to the event, as I did not have a clue about it. Apparently, the club was receiving an award from Rowing Great Britain, I think she said, for saving someone's life. The casualty had suffered a heart attack on the gig and the crew had performed CPR until the rescue helicopter arrived. That may be a little light on detail as I was not there, and I am reporting second hand.

I had noticed all the flags adorning the gig club building in the Harbour car park yesterday evening when we walked out that way. I had wondered what it was all about, then completely forgot about it. It happens, you know. I was reliably informed there was a presentation and a party to follow, television crews and doyens from the press and the weather lady from Radio Pasty. I made the last bit up in case you were there and think you missed her.

Being such a beautiful day, it would have seemed an awful shame to waste it. Someone higher up than me thought so to and decided to launch the Lifeboat into it to train one of the up and coming coxswains of the parish. He has been at the training for some time and is coming to the point where he will soon be passed out but before that, much practise is required. Since our boy works nights hauling sardines out of Mounts Bay, the training must take place during the day and such crew who are available need to help out where they can.

We launched the boat into a beautifully azure sea at just after two o'clock in the afternoon and set up on the long slipway for its return on a dropping tide. I slipped into the winch room on this occasion as we were short a winchman. I fear too that my skin is unused to the blazing sunshine outside the shop and that I might turn to ashes at the mere thought of it. We then set to and waited a couple of hours for its return.

Since the Missus had been kind enough to stand in for me while the Lifeboating went on, I returned to the shop in the interim. I was there for quite a while as the boat was out somewhat longer than we anticipated. Typically, it started to coincide with our bread order cut off time and eventually, I had to send the order off early and hope that we did not get any last minute orders come in. Happily, we did not.

Waiting for the bread cutoff also meant that I had left it until the last minute to get back to the station and was called on the radio by an anxious Head Launcher asking where his winchman was. I arrived within the whisker of necessity to pay out a little more line as the tide had receded beyond expectations. The boat came onto the slipway from a dead calm sea nearing low water. From my winch room eerie, it looked to be pretty much the textbook recovery that we are used to at this station, hauled up the long slipway.

There was a little bit of washing down followed by a bit of tucking away for the next call on its services. There will be a few more mid-week, middle of the day launches as we bring our man up to speed. We are, after all, a very flexible, very excellent Shore Crew.

The shop was just as dead calm as the sea when I returned later, and we coasted into closing time with a very minimal five minutes to closing rush. That description of the sea state may not be entirely accurate because the surfing in the last couple of evenings has been exemplary, depending on where you were. Last night, there was some decent action in the middle of the big beach and tonight, you really needed to be over at Gwenver. That did not stop at least 30 avid surfers from dotting the water and picking up the occasional good break split between the middle of the big beach and North Rocks down the far end.

It was turning a bit hazy as the evening drew on and the breeze had dipped to the point that it was getting quite insufferably warm and muggy. The gigs were out until quite late even as the presentation went ahead, as it was when ABH and me walked by later. We avoided the beach as it was just too busy with the gigs coming and going and the entourage down there, too. All the same it was an enjoyable, if sticky, walk around.

Just before the little girl's last run out, it rained. How dare it.

September 5th – Tuesday

There is not a lot left that surprises me concerning the disposal of visitor rubbish. Like the big pile of beer cans neatly placed under the tree mallow at the far end of the Harbour car park. Today's biscuit to be taken was the remnants of someone's fish and chip tea carefully placed in our domestic bin at the bottom of our steps. In order to place the bulky rubbish there they would have had to wiggle the bin lock off – easily done but time consuming – and remove the bungy strap. They also carefully replaced both, which was good of them. Of course, it was too much of a hardship to walk the 20 paces to the public bin, there for that very purpose, which they had just walked past on the way back from the beach or were about to pass on their way from the chip shop.

Even grumpy shopkeepers cannot stay too grumpy for long when faced with yet another rip gribbler of a day. That easterly breeze, apparently from the southeast but who is counting, was still pushing through The Cove and had been for most of the night, I believe. Certainly, for the odd times I woke up I was very grateful for the cool draught blowing through the room. The breeze slowly diminished through the day but there was enough to keep our yellow weather warning for heat something we could bite our thumbs at.

Interestingly, I looked up where the weather warning had been indicated for. It had been all over Radio Pasty in the morning, but the Meteorological Office was having none of it. Perhaps, Radio Pasty were seeking to strike fear into the local populace to make them stay inside and boost their listener ratings.

Again today, the beach did not seem terribly busy. There was a small gathering up by the dunes and an equally small number in the water. I noticed yesterday that the sand is back and all the rocks that had been exposed from the dunes out had been covered again. A closer look revealed that the sand had been scooped out from a little further down the beach where there was a line of rocks laid bare and piled up at the back. This gave the effect of the beach gently inclining away to the sea and probably best to avoid the shore break between the beach complex and the Lifeguard hut when surfing at higher tides.

As with yesterday, our busyness came in fits and starts and largely through the morning. As we rolled towards the middle of the day things began to slow considerably and I made the fateful decision to not order any pasties (sorry, MS) for the next day. It was not long after the deadline for ordering passed that the orders for pasties started coming in thick and fast. For the second time in a few days I found myself cooking off our frozen pasties, the ones that arrived this morning in the delivery.

Perhaps it should have been no surprise that we were inundated with requests for food. Someone had breezed by in the morning and told me that the chef at the OS had resigned and that they were not doing food today. Given that they have several chefs or kitchen staff, it would be reasonable to assume that there were other problems as well.

The food service at the OS has been fraught for the whole of the summer and long before that most probably. It is irksome, because it affects all of the business in The Cove either directly or indirectly not to mention customer inconvenienced. I have mentioned this before in relation to the bar on the beach that was closed more often than it was open for some years. Sooner or later visitors will cease to come because they cannot get a decent food service for enough of them.

The excuse that chefs are hard to come by are wearing a bit thin when we see other venues around and about seemingly to have little trouble. I have resorted to sending enquirers over to St Just and beyond just to get a meal served. It is quite embarrassing.

The Missus spent the day at The Farm. ABH loves it up there and can roam freely and play in her paddling pool. When the Missus came back, it was late and she was laden with a glut of blackberries. It is not the first load either and we have jars of bramble jelly about the kitchen and rings of purple on the worktop. Earlier in the week she scat a bit bowl of the drained juice all over the worktop, sink and floor. It now smells of bleach, instead.

ABH and I had a very pleasant run out in the evening. We made it down to the beach for the first time in ages where she ran about like a dog possessed. There were only a few local lads down there enjoying the last evening before school starts again tomorrow. There was a small knot of people at the far end of the car park to watch the sun sink into the ocean. It is creeping around more to Pedn-men-du these nights and soon our watchers will have to climb up to the lookout to watch it or risk the number plate cameras up at Land's End. Not long to Christmas, then.

September 4th – Monday

There were still a few flies about, bouncing off my head, first thing when I took ABH out this morning. It is a wonder to me how they manage in the brisk wind that was thumping in from the east or perhaps that it is why they were bouncing off my head. That wind stayed for the rest of the day but was offset by the gloriousness of the day. I rather suspect that the wind made the temperature a lot more tolerable than it would otherwise have been.

It certainly helped me in the shop. Usually, I would be considering switching on the first electric sliding door in The Cove for such a breeze in the colder months, but today it was most welcome. I was even warmer earlier on during my blistering session at the gymnasium. I had to be a bit earlier today as the management are having a consultation day about plans to rebuild the hut with a tin roof and attract more people. Having more people might make it a bit more restrictive for my attendance but it is better than having no gymnasium at all, which I suspect is the next stop if more interest cannot be generated.

The Missus told me that she had been busy in my absence. When I took over, we were clearly on the decline as the majority of people will have had their beach supplies and headed off. If they were heading for the big beach, it was not immediately apparent where they had all gone as, once again, it seemed very sparsely populated. Even the water was not as busy as in previous days, although with a bit of easterly and reasonable waves here and there, the surf conditions were heading towards perfect.

Towards the middle of the afternoon, cloud started to slowly roll in over The Cove and really put the mockers on the day. The warmth stayed awhile but the glory went out of it a bit. Business had ticked over since the middle of the day and never really got going again despite some notable sales here and there. I was able to post the jewellery order I spoke of yesterday as there was plenty of time between some customers to do so. I think I may have over done it somewhat, but they will last for next year if they do not sell out during the half term at the end of October.

Doing the postcard order was a little more time consuming and a little more tedious. It was one of those jobs that could easily be put off until it is too late, so I will have to force myself to do it sooner rather than later. That still leaves the order for the hooded sweatshirts, which is sitting there complete and just needs to be typed in. My geet pile of invoices still sits by the laptop in the shop but that is because the time to do them has not presented itself. Welcome to the end of season malaise.

There were far fewer people about during our evening stroll. The only cars in the car park were lined up against the sea wall, the owners watching the continued bouncy sea rather than the sunset tonight. The small children were down in the Harbour once again – a local family with lots of them. Even they were just packing up for the day.

The breeze made a jacket required, although it was still a warm breeze but some of the direct heat had gone out of the day. We met Big Sis and her dog on the last leg of the walk and had a quick dual to see who was top dog. On this occasion, I believe youth and enthusiasm won out over age and cannot-be-bothered-with-this-lark and they went on their way. What a strange old world we live in.

September 3rd – Sunday

It is the summer we never had but without people. Of course, that is not exactly true as there are more people about than there would have been if the weather was ordinary. Still, it was exceedingly pleasant first thing in the silence of the morning and good to see the parties gathering for a day on the beach a little later on.

It must have been some comfortable in bed because I could not get ABH out of it this morning. Notwithstanding she had leapt out of bed at half past five o'clock when Mother walking along the corridor alarmed her. She came back to bed and lay down where I would have got back in having got up to fetch her back. I had to come back

for her a second time to drag her out kicking and screaming. I would lay bets on her not being so keen to stay in bed when the shop is closed and I do not have to get up early.

The business day was much slower today. There was some activity in the morning that kept me busy but by the middle of the day everything went very quiet indeed. Even starting a list to replace our missing postcards failed to generate an influx of people to interrupt the task. While I was doing that, I also noticed that the jewellery stand was looking a little empty having only topped it up last week. The same applied to the small sweet bags but much worse. We have some spares of those but that was clearly a job too far for the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers to let pass. I had barely finished contemplating reaching for the first box when the first of a wave of customers came into the shop.

It was a beautiful day to be serving customers, I could see. I was also told repeatedly that it was warm out, which was kind of people as I do not get out much. Once again there was acres of beach to bask upon but very few people wishing to do so, looking at the thin blue line at the top of the beach. It looked pretty much as it did a couple of days ago now that the sea has returned to a bit more of a benign state at low water. This rather meant that there was little for the surfers but there were plenty of swimmers and revellers splashing about. I was told later that the surf over at Gwenver was pretty good as it sometimes is when the big beach is flat.

There was a little more activity as the tide pushed in and by an hour before high water, the big swell was back, although not quite as big as it was a few days ago. It is unusual for there to be such a difference between high and low tides. It, of course, led to much jumping off the Harbour wall again and when ABH and I passed a little later, youngsters were revelling in the stirred up water at the bottom of the slipway.

The car park was full again for the sunset and people lined the western slip, the wall and the grassy patch at the far end. It was not the most spectacular of sunsets in my view as there was little going on other than an orange orb dropping into the sea. There may have been a green flash, but I doubt that I could tell even if I had seen it. I am sure someone will tell me that I missed it if I did.

Our gull was back at the end of Coastguard Row when we reached there. We nearly tripped over it as it blends in very well with the stony path. There was an adult gull at the top of the telegraph pole it was under but given its indifference when ABH nearly had the juvenile, it was unlikely to be related. It was probably wondering where the free sardines were.

The Missus came back in after ABH's last run out of the night and reported that there was an abundance of flies about. This does not surprise me at all. After the year of missing visitors, poor weather, raging seas and periods of no sand on the beach, a plague of flies, locusts and raining frogs would be about right.

September 2nd – Saturday

We were faced with another rip gribblesque morning when eventually the sun came up. It extended all through the day except later when it was the afternoon. The skies were blue all day, save the occasional cloud floating by, but I fancy that there was a bit more of a breeze about today and the sea did not look quite as glassy as it did yesterday during the day.

During the period of low water there was no evidence of the heavy ground sea that had been apparent late yesterday. This did not stop a veritable army of borders of all sorts from hanging about in the water all across the designated areas. The surf schools seem to have their own area, which always seems to be on top of the sand bar at the near end of the beach.

Even despite the weather, the top of the beach was very sparsely populated. There were about the same number on Gwenver, which would have been easy to get to today, with acres of sand between the two beaches. I always enjoyed the walk across at low water. There was something of the forbidden about it or the (slight) danger of being caught by the tide. I have not done it for some time as the bleddy hound was not really able for it in her later years. ABH is a while off that sort of length of walk, so maybe next year.

I did not quite expect the sort of busyness that we had right from the off this morning. It had been better than the previous Friday yesterday but still a marked change downward from our holiday season volumes. There was no time at all for resuming my input of invoices, which will now probably have to wait until Monday.

Where I was really caught out was in the pasty department (sorry, MS). It was always going to be a difficult call ordering for this weekend which would be the first after the holidays. It appears that I shorted myself quite badly and just about ran out today with a day to go. Happily, I recognised this early in the day and ferreted about in the freezer for the frozen stock. Unhappily, there were fewer frozen pasties than I had thought but it will give us a bit of breathing space tomorrow.

It helped tremendously then that I had to close the shop when my Lifeboat pager went off at quarter to three o'clock in the afternoon. Apologies to the Australian gentleman whom I had to unceremoniously kick out of the shop before he had finished browsing. I spoke with him later and he was most sympathetic having worked for the volunteer fire department, on standby for bush fires. It must be tricky up in the Alps like that, eh, RC.

Both boats were demanded for a kayaker who had fallen out of his kayak and had been caught by the tide. During spring tides, the flow can be much faster and stronger and can easily catch out the unwary. The kayaker was helped initially by a passing fishing boat and then by our boats when they arrived. They were not gone too long.

On shore we had anticipated the call being short-lived and had set up the long slipway for recovery. Both the boat and our own crew were in short supply – Saturday afternoon is the worst time to get a call as crews are often cast to the winds with family and other commitments. We had cobbled together a thinly spread crew for the launch and by the time recovery came along less than an hour later, a couple more had arrived.

Both boats returned to station at around quarter to four o'clock, just as the tide was pushing in. When we had set up half an hour or so before, the water was a few feet off the bottom of the slipway steps. By the time we arrived down there to bring the boat back in, the water was lapping at the first step. It was moving in visibly while we stood there, too, which demonstrates just how quickly the tide can move on spring tides. That aside, it was exceedingly pleasant down there in late summer sun and the clarity of the water was to be wondered at and appreciated. As was the textbook recovery up the long slipway that ensued. We are, after all, a very environmentally conscious, very excellent Shore Crew.

I returned to the shop to allow my Australian friend to finish his browsing and to entertain two older ladies who told me that they had watched the recovery with interest. I told them that it was one of our exemplary textbook recoveries and they were most impressed. I also said that I was aware of their studious looking at had worn my best orange hat and yellow wellies for the occasion. It is possible there is only so much suspension of belief and wool over eyes pulling and the ladies smiled politely and wished us on the crew well.

When I dashed off, the frozen pasties were just finishing their cooking. At the end of this it is advisable to open the oven door to allow them to cool but essentially to stop them continuing to cook. Since I was not there to open the door, they are a little more brown than I had aimed for. I do hope our customers can forgive a little crispiness.

At the last gasp of the day some special visitors arrived. We had not seen Big Sis in over a year and her parents for a lot longer before that. They are all staying up behind us for the week, so we will have plenty of time to catch up.

When I arrive up from closing the shop, they were doing some catching up in the living room. Mother is staying with us for a while to be cared for after her elective surgery. I have to say she is looking ten years younger after her face lift and you would hardly notice where the tattoos were. Conversation was in full flow, which was disappointing as I was expecting my tea. Later, Big Sis will have her dog arriving with her partner, which will hopefully give ABH someone to play with. It will be like one big family party – hopefully without the falling out.

September 1st – Friday

There could not have been a day more different from the one before it. Today was a proper rip gribbler and no mistake.

I did playfully have a little look at the Meteorological Office website to see if they had black clouds and rain chalked up, but they did not. They were indicating sunny spells and though there was no cloud directly above us, there was large cumulus lumps bubbling up to the east of us.

The sea was the sort of colour that you see in magazines for far off exotic places, like Marazion. The tides are huge this week and at low water the big sand bar stretched out from the main beach as far as the chip shop, I would have thought. It would have been easy to walk across to Gwenver as well. The surfers had to wait until the tide started moving back in again for any waves, the best looked to be over at Gwenver, but North Rocks was beginning to look better as the tide moved on.

Nothing tells you that the season of business has changed for the shop than oversleeping and it not mattering too much. It was lucky that it was a gymnasium day, as I have less to do in the mornings before I go downstairs. There was very little in the way of topping up to do and the milkman has returned to arriving shortly after the shop opens, so makes no difference at all. I will, however, have to consider using an alarm clock again as ABH has become utterly useless in that regard.

It was even still relatively quiet when I came back from my blistering session at the gymnasium. I have slipped back into a full cycle at once without having to work up to it this year. Either I am very much fitter this year or I was just being pathetically wimpish last.

Normally, I would take the little girl out for a spin when I get back, but I was diverted by a plea for help starting a car with a dead battery again. First, it was on the back of the truck where it should be for a change but secondly, I had omitted to charge it after the last time. I kept this soupçon to myself for fear of spreading alarm and just hoped that there would be enough left in it to start the car. Happily, there was just enough for the small vehicle, and it was on the last red warning light when it did so. I was very impressed because I do not recall when I last charged it and have used it several times in the interim. The devices are less than £100 and do not use up much room. There is not much of a reason not to have one in your car.

The day proceeded quite gently but with insufficient time between customers to really get to grips with anything else. I have been wanting to top up the hooded sweatshirts in the shop for the last few days as the hangers I wanted to swap them on to are covering the top of the store room freezer and are in the way. It seems that we over bought the metal hangers that we had chosen for the wetsuits, so using them for the sweatshirts and dumping the old and bent ones currently in use, seemed sensible. We have also noted that the metal ones are not really suitable for the bigger full wetsuits because they disfigure the shoulders. Wood hangers will be

better, and we will slowly migrate these suits to those. The older hangers will have to go because already we are struggling to find room for the spare metal ones.

I did manage to get a few of the tops out but also swapped some that were on wooden hangers with metal ones. I used the wooden ones to hang the wetsuits on, so now have just as many metal hangers as I started with. I am not entirely sure I thought that one through properly.

As usual, high water on a spring tide with a good bit of weather brought about a rash of wall jumping. Having had a day where the sea state was largely benign and the surfers having to rely on a shore break, I had not anticipated the ground sea that kicked up shortly before high water. This made for perfect conditions for the adrenaline-seeking wall jumpers as it provided just enough power for the waves to flush over the Harbour wall. When I looked over while we were having our tea, the Harbour was full of water and that was full of little heads bobbing about in it.

The waves became a little more serious at the cusp of high water and were properly bounding over the wall. ABH and I stopped on the ground at the end of the car park to watch as the stirred up water raced in the direction of the wall. The car park was full of people doing something similar and waiting for the sunset. We did not hang about and continued on our walk.

I noticed that the runt gull has disappeared. The people who were buying a few tins of sardines a day for it have gone home. I told them that my theory was that the gull would hang around all day, flapping its useless wings and waiting for gullible humans to feed it. In the evening I reckoned it flew home to have a good laugh with its pals. Must be a Cornish gull.

