

DIARY 2025

April 1<sup>st</sup>— Tuesday

Perhaps I should have saved the story of the Hooper until today. The trouble with April fools' pranks in the news today would be largely missed because it all looks vaguely unbelievable. Obviously, The Diary does not hold with such nonsense; every word in The Diary is true, honest guv.

The gale of wind that Radio Pasty warned of, and I missed the detail of when it would be, arrived today. I was not bothered by it when I walked ABH out in the morning, mainly because we only went as far as Tinker Taylor cottage and came back and possibly because my sense of awareness had not fully woken up from my early start. It has not taken ABH long at all to adjust to British Summer Time and she was all over me this morning from about my new waking up time.

It was not long into the shop day, though, when the pushy easterly that increased slowly during the day and was blowing at me through the first electric sliding door in The Cove, had me chilled to the bone. I could have set the first electric sliding door to automatic, and had it shut for most of the time but as I have explained before, it only leads people to believe that we are closed. The closed door only attracts people to try and open it when we really are closed. Therefore, I stood and chilled.

Since I was cold anyway it was the ideal time for the frozen order to turn up. Naturally, it turned up halfway through breakfast which I had delayed because the last of the general deliveries was late. I had been quiet all morning but the delivery arrived with a selection of visitors who demanded my attention while the frozen boxes sat waiting on the floor. It was fortunate that it was cold today. I also had to spend some time trying to sort out the insistence of one of our suppliers to send the wrong thing three times.

I had ordered some Furniss strawberry shortbread. They had sent a different brand the first time yesterday and I had returned it with the driver having spotted it on the invoice sent in advance. The company sent a replacement halfway through the day which turned out to be Furniss shortbread but without the strawberries. I ordered it again for delivery this morning and I got the box back that I had returned the day before. I sent that back with the driver and spoke with a very pleasant lady on the telephone to plead that this time, they sent the correct thing. I told her that if I got the wrong thing again, I would be using very stern words next time. Fortunately, late in the business day, the right box appeared.

Setting aside the vicious wind for a moment, the bay looked spectacular under yet another clear blue sky. The sea is still trying its best to misbehave but it too was struggling against wind. At high water the waves, faced against the sharp incline of sand at the back of the beach, were tumbling hard onto it in a jumble of foam and spray. During the day, the sea gave the illusion of moving sideways as a mass of

white tops raced westward. Later on, with lower tide, the tops of waves charging in on the shore, peeled off in long capes trailed behind them as they raced eastward. By the middle of the afternoon, loose sand was being blown out to sea giving the spray capes a yellow tinge. There was plenty of dust in the air, too, and fed up with being cold and covered in dust from some far off field, I set the first electric doors in The Cove to automatic and revelled in the warmth from the refrigeration plant in the room.

It was only moments after that a white van drew up outside. It was the arrival of the beachware order I had placed yesterday, eleven boxes to be pulled in making me open the first electric sliding door in The Cove again. I had not had the time to warm up, so it made little difference, but that wind had increased substantially since the morning and was gusting to 50 miles per hour. Land's End weather station had the windchill down to five degrees, which it certainly felt like. I had sold the first windbreak of the season in the morning. I am sure I saw it whizz past in the afternoon.

That hearty wind had seen off even the hardiest of visitors early into the afternoon and I was left with waifs and strays passing through for the rest of the afternoon. The Missus came back a little earlier today because she had a Lifeboat meeting later in the evening. She left me to load up the delivery which I had left on our newspaper box outside; it just fitted in the truck, which was handy.

At the last knockings of the day, I had two lots of customers who arrived slightly apart from each other. I really do not know what I would do for entertainment if I did not do shopkeeping. The first were a couple of more senior years we have known for some time. He brandished a walking stick as he came through the door bemoaning what life and age had brought him to. I told him not to be so downhearted because with such a fine stick at his disposal he now had the opportunity to embellish it with one of our custom, Cove walking stick badges. He protested, of course, but I told him that it would add a touch of class to an otherwise commonplace utility item. I almost had him as well but when his wife came in on my side, he put his foot down quite forcibly and the game was lost.

The other customer was a small child. They are entertainment all by themselves. I feign frustration at the time they spend choosing sweets and the mystery they find in how much can be purchased with a limited handful of loose change. Even an accurate count on their part can lead to a surplus of money because the grumpy shopkeeper might happen to miss a packet of sweets here or there or charge a different price to the one on the label. Such antics are prone to backfire when the child insists on spending a further half an hour trying to find something it can purchase with the unexpected change.

I took my just deserts for such appalling behaviour in the middle of my tea when my Lifeboat pager went off calling me to arms. It was more legs, really, as I made my way swiftly across the road and down the stairs to kit up. The shout was well

attended and the boat launched away in good time to a yacht moored in the lee of Nanjizil.

At first, the detail was sketchy. It seems the two French crew had disembarked for some reason via the yacht's small tender. Quite why they required assistance to get back again or even if they did was not clear and still was not when it was all over. Communications with the Coastguard, Cliff Team who also attended and the Boat were non-existent. Even mobile communications were fraught. Eventually it emerged that the Lifeboat would stand by until the tender had safely got back to the yacht, but the Lifeboat was milling about for two hours while that happened. I made the suggestion that the Lifeboat could have taken the crew back to the yacht and left the small tender behind but only so that I could say, small tender behind that I felt might be quite amusing except that only one person got it. When at last the crew were back on board, we expected our boat to return to the station but instead the yacht's crew had asked escort them back to Newlyn.

Having set up the short slip in expectation of a recovery sooner, we had to put everything back and close up the station until we knew when the boat would come back. It was mooted that midnight would be likely but from the comfort of my lounge chair, I noted that the Lifeboat had reached Newlyn by ten o'clock and rather hoped they would be back earlier. It was not to be. The tide and the continuing wind made it safer to wait for the tide to drop a little more and the midnight recovery was back on again. All we could do was wait.

I had confirmation that the boat would indeed aim to be on the slipway at midnight. I sent out a message to our happy band to muster at the station at half past eleven o'clock, which they duly did. It was then too close to midnight for this Diary writer and the excitement that ensued would have to wait until tomorrow's action packed Sennen Cove Diary.

## April 2<sup>nd</sup> – Wednesday

For those of you who have just joined us, the Lifeboat was called to a yacht last evening. The purpose of the call was a little uncertain, but the two French crew had decided to disembark at Nanjizil and needed some encouragement to go back to the yacht. For some unexplained reason, this had taken two hours or more after which the Lifeboat escorted the yacht back to Newlyn. My personal theory is that they had been given an April Fool phrase book and when they thought they were saying, "everything is fine", they were actually saying, "everyone's going to die, call out the Lifeboat". Due to tides and conditions, the Lifeboat elected to be back in The Cove at midnight, and thus the next Diary day, and the Very Excellent Shore Crew had mustered at half past eleven o'clock to receive them.

There was a howling gale blowing across the slipway at more than 40 miles per hour. It had applied sufficient pressure to the large wood doors to make them exceeding difficult to open and that was just the start of it. We have always dressed

the long slipway to the right as we look at it from the top. There is no reason for this other than most of us are right-handed I suppose and because we only use the right hand side of the toe, it is only that side cleaned of slippery weed for operation.

It was therefore something of a break with tradition when one of us suggested that we dress to the left. His reasoning was entirely practical: the howling gale was very likely to take any thrown heaving line from the boat over to the left from where we stood and therefore, to make it easy for the Boat Crew, us standing to the left would give them a better chance of a more accurate throw of the line. It was not all quite as altruistic as it seemed. If the Boat Crew missed twice, we would be down there longer waiting on them recoiling the lines to throw again.

There were just two stickleback in that particular sharks' fin soup of a proposal, the first being that the left side of the slipway toe had never been used since it was built in 2009. This had permitted all manner of weed of the most slippery kind to grow and proliferate and make even looking at it hazardous. The second issue was the wind that would do its utmost to push us off the walkway, which on the right side meant onto the concrete part of the toe but on the left, cold, shallow water with rocks below the surface.

Fortunately, we are very excellent Shore Crew, and we are impervious, or at least insensitive to, matters such as existential dangers, well, just insensitive generally, really. And also, expendable. So, it was almost with gay abandon occasioned largely through ignorance rather than a total disregard for our wellbeing that we gingerly stepped down the erstwhile unused side of the long slipway, hauling cable and span behind us.

The boat duly arrived in the bay at the appointed time and one eejit Head Launcher and an accomplice eejit made their way across the weed strewn steps now even more slippery with the passage of previous boots, to the very bottom of the slipway. Balanced precariously against the gusting wind, with helmets replacing tin hats, strapped on against loss, the two were passed a dummy with the first throw heading west before it even reached them. The second, thrown more into the wind, arrived over head and made for an easier catch. We had kept the cable short so that the pickup from the winch when it came was nearly immediate and reduced any hanging around and allowing the two eejits to exit stage left as rapidly as slippery grating allowed.

For those further up the slip, it had been a demonstration of a textbook recovery in a trying easterly gale, the very first time it had been attempted from the western side of the long slipway. It was a shame, therefore, that no one could see it in the gloom at the end of the slip, even if they were looking. We tucked the boat away in a swift operation reserved for late nights after lengthy services at around quarter to one o'clock in the morning. We are, after all, a very unseen, very excellent Shore Crew.

All jesting aside for a moment, the act of bringing the boat astern, into the channel and landing it precisely in the keelway in a 40 miles per hour wind, was indeed a masterful demonstration of boat skills. Our new Coxswain was at the helm.

Amazingly, I managed to wake at the appropriate time in the morning without assistance. The assistance, noting that cold air was still pouring through the skylight, promptly burrowed under the covers and curled up by my leg. She clearly felt some guilt and was up after me a few minutes later. However, she was back in bed again very soon after we had taken the morning air, and I was making ready for the day.

The wind had damped down a bit by morning; I had gone to bed with it whistling in the eaves. It did not seem too bad when running ABH around the block first thing and I could almost have done without my windproof jacket. It had all the hallmarks of a super day in the offing with little in the way of cloud and an alluring glow on the eastern clifftops as the sun tried to put in an appearance.

Talking of alluring glows, I managed to get to the new gymnasium today for the first time in what must be a fortnight. I did not quite achieve the sort of performance that I am used to and some of the equipment that I use is no longer available to me. However, it permitted as good a blistering session as I might have expected after such a lengthy absence. As an added bonus, there was no water dripping from the ceiling and the ambient temperature was comfortable. I could get used to that.

ABH, who had been waiting in the shop, immediately expected to be taken around the block when I returned. I obliged her. It was perfectly warm in the sheltered spots around our walk. Even the Harbour beach was better off than the square feet outside the shop where I had to remove the flags lest they blow off somewhere, and behind the counter. I had set the first electric sliding door in The Cove to automatic almost first thing and it remained that way for most of the day.

Sadly, as with yesterday, the insistent wind suppressed visitor numbers and the street was mainly empty all day. Naturally, whenever tried to start something useful, the door would open and a solitary visitor would come in, browse, and go out again. While it may have seemed like a business day not worth getting out of bed for, it was actually busier than yesterday for which I am grateful, of course.

One of the people who has made opening in the quieter parts of last season, and this very worthwhile is our friend from frozen Vermont, very far west of Camborne. Surely, it still cannot be frozen, but she has not said. I doubt that I will find out now because we said our farewells as she prepares to journey back home. She purchased our entire fish stock before we closed for the winter and takes home with her more hooded sweatshirts than I recall amongst a host of other things she propped up our dwindling finances with over her stay. She gave succour in the last moments of an ailing juvenile seal's life and, she says, enjoyed immensely the winter Cove life however remote it seems at times. She has also been interesting and convivial company, and we shall miss her greatly and wish her well.

The Missus had spent the day at The Farm, of course. Well, the bit after I returned to the shop after gymnasiuming, at least. I think that can be taken as read, for future days throughout the season. She and ABH return weary after a day labouring in the field and the evening is spent in quiet contemplation most times now. There is rarely an after tea walk and we settle for one last dash out before bedtime now. In short, the season has settled upon us very quickly this year and it will be thus for the next seven months. I will just reorder the words for The Dairy, dear reader. You will hardly notice.

### April 3<sup>rd</sup> – Thursday

Radio Pasty had it that we would lose the sunshine today. After quite a pretty start, the cloud did indeed roll in and hung about for most of the day. There was, however, no change to the wind strength or its direction and the first electric sliding door in The Cove was set to automatic from the very outset of shop opening.

Once again, it was a very poor day trading. I did see a few more cars around from early part of the afternoon but I suspect these were people come to have a geek from the comfort of their cars and go off again. I think that unless you are walking with some purpose, such as doing the Coast Path, it would be pretty uncomfortable strolling in this breeze. There was the occasional hardly soul deciding to sit on the tables outside the café but mostly, people stayed away.

I have stuck to my guns about not doing newspapers and will continue not to do them until the end of May. We perhaps get one enquiry a day, which if turned into sales, would not pay for printing the bill let alone paying the bill itself. During Easter we might have done better but we cannot turn on and off the deliveries like that, so the schedule stands.

While we may have a gap where the newspapers go, I am still trying to plug the gaps elsewhere. It is hardly a substitute, but a delivery of postcard fudge boxes arrived yesterday. I struggle with getting the number right across the range of three types and sizes. I know that it is three, three, two but can never remember which one is the two. Just when I think I get it right the next time I order I forget which two I bought the last time. If I do remember, people start buying a different selection of size than the last time and again I run out of one before the other.

I also called in an order of savoury biscuits, most of which went out of date during our closed period and got eaten by the Lifeboat crew. These will not come until next week when hopefully I will be busy serving. Normally, we would have a couple of weeks to iron out these deficiencies but opening so close to a busy period throws up some wrinkles in the grand plan in the middle of it all.

Also distracting me from the otherwise boredom inducing quietness of the day was the arrival of some local interest books. These were from our alternative supplier as the traditional supplier is still playing hard to get. We had thought, and rumour on the street also suggested, that they had gone down the pan. I made contact eventually and they responded. We paid for the books we had sold but instead of sending back the books we had not sold, I had suggested, and they agreed, that we would use them as opening stock for this year. I kind of suspected that we would not get any further stock from them, probably at all but certainly not in time for the Easter holidays and was right. The alternative supply was most welcome and very timely.

I had defined our first big pasty order (sorry, MS) earlier on in the day. I had factored in a fairly large surplus that we had and not sold being as it was so quiet these last few days. It was obviously entirely due to this that we were deluged with orders for pasties in the latter half of the afternoon that almost entirely wiped out the surplus and probably now left us short for the weekend. Fortunately, being a grumpy shopkeeper of some experience, I had ordered a case of frozen pasties to fall back on in such a circumstance. It is good to see the old traditions still alive and kicking.

The wind abated in the back end of the afternoon enough to let in a gust of rain, which was nice. At least I was able to open the first electric sliding door in The Cove so that the visitors who had made themselves even more scarce than before the rain arrived, could see that we were open. The rain came in quite heavy initially but eased off near shop closing time, which was handy because I had failed to bring a waterproof down with me.

It had nearly stopped altogether when I made my way over to the Lifeboat station for the evening's training launch. It was well attended and both boats launched with sufficient numbers on the shore to deal with both at the same time. Things on the regulatory front continue to change with pace.

We have traditionally launched the inshore boat with a trained person driving the Tooltrak and someone, possibly Inshore Boat Crew, acting as banksman to help the driver driving over small children making sandcastles. Of course, it is also traditional to deviate from any direct course in order to flatten as many sandcastles as possible. Oh, the wailing and moaning in our wake.

In the new order, we must have an Inshore head launcher in a different colour high visibility vest to everyone else, a separate Tooltrak driver (up to now we have combined the roles) and a banksman. During busy times we will need a non Boat Crew banksman as, obviously, they are gone after launch. The head launcher also cannot be banksman. For training launches, and for some two boat services, we can stagger big and Inshore boat launches if we are short on numbers. For service launches, however, we may have to co-opt a member of the shop staff, perhaps, to stand in as banksman and hope two appropriately qualified crew turn up to act as Tooltrak driver and head launcher. We will have to play with this and see what can be achieved.

The launch today, signalled early to meet the tides, had no such issues, largely because we launched the Inshore boat in the traditional manner with one person being driver and head launcher. The boats were due to arrive back as we approached high tide, so we set up for short slip recovery and retired for tea and biscuits. Here we discussed weighty matters and learnt many new things, some of which had relevance to life and others, maybe not so much. It sharpened our resolve to meet the boats as they arrived back in the bay towards eight o'clock.

Since there were more than enough people arranged for the big boat, I joined out lone man on the Tooltrak and acted as his banksman and boat washer. I was also chief Boat Crew washer as they all require their sea water covered suits sluiced down. By the time we had the Inshore boat away and fuelled up, the big boat was at the top of the slip being washed down. Observers commented that the usual standards were applied and a textbook recovery up the short slip was achieved with aplomb. I had no doubt that was the case. We are, after all, a very consistent, very excellent Shore Crew.

## April 4<sup>th</sup> – Friday

I spent the best part of half a day trying to get the solar control box to talk to the wi-fi access point. I had rearranged the wi-fi in the shop because there were a couple of dark spots, the store room and the end of the shop, that were preventing me from controlling the two fridges that turn off during the night. At some point during the winter, the existing system, which itself was not perfect, had failed.

Having implemented the changes, the solar control box had decided not to play with the new arrangement despite the new arrangement having a much better signal than the old. Mostly everything else responds to a universal reset – turning it off and on again – but the solar control box is awkward. Whoever designed that it should be so, clearly had not heard of the word, intuitive, and had built in the most convoluted system to connect it to the Internet. I had to use two mobile telephones so that I could control the wi-fi with one while the other was tied up with the solar control box. I only discovered that was necessary at the end of trying everything else.

It was not as if the time spent was wasted; I had nothing else much to do. After the delivery of the weekend's pasties (sorry, MS) and the cramming them into our pasty fridge, there was much twiddling of thumbs. I could not place the blame for the lack of customers on the wind this time because it was much reduced from previous days. Our mornings, even in the height of last season, tended to be quiet and the meat of the day not starting until after the middle of the day. It seems like it might be the same this year.

There was a bit more cloud than the last few days but certainly far less than yesterday and, more importantly, no rain. With bright sun for most of the day it was



probably warm in the sheltered spots but the wind, although diminished from earlier in the week, was still wearing. As the day pressed on, we started to see more and more visitors arrive on the scene and the café tables opposite were busier than they had been all week. We also had some action on the pasty front, clearing the surplus and eating into the weekend supply.

I escaped the doldrums of the morning by attending the new gymnasium for another blistering session. I struggled a bit on Wednesday, but it is surprising how quickly it all falls back into place again and I blistered a bit more than I blistered then. Once again, I forgot to take my roll with me that permits me to carry out my squats against a wall. I will remember it on Monday, I am sure.

ABH was waiting on my return, and we headed for the small amount of Harbour beach the tide allowed us. It was largely sheltered and consequently warm down there and I found that I was very overdressed. The sand at the shallow end looked almost luminous under the wind rippled waves. But for those ripples, we could have been in the Caribbean. When two swimmers arrived for a dip, ABH insisted on joining them, although she only went in for a paddle. It looked very inviting but one of the swimmers told me that he had known it to be warmer. Late in the day, a visitor asked what temperature the sea was. I had not seen a recent reading, so I told him 11 degrees, maybe 12. I checked later and was not far out, 10 degrees average apparently.

We did not hang about as the Missus was keen to get off to The Farm. Unfortunately for her, we met up with some neighbours working on the plot at the end of Coastguard Row and had a chat. I have said before that the lady there has done an excellent job of planting suitable plants in the wild area there without much experience or expertise. Everything seems to blend in quite nicely.

Another neighbour from up the cliff told me that she had seen some National Trust volunteers uprooting the Montbretia on their side of the horse fence above the Coast Path. It is a very invasive species and covers most of the cliff up to and across the front of the Sennen Heights, the old hotel. The team had laboured all day to win back a few square yards. I took the point that they do very pretty - the Montbretia, not the National Trust volunteers, although I am sure that some of them are quite alluring - especially when the sun is pouring down the cliff lighting up the leaves but without some push-back that is all there would be up the cliff.

I should note that the Montbretia looking pretty is a reported notion. I understand that they are red and green, the two colours that my brain insists are synonymous. To me it looks, erm, interesting.

The conversation with our neighbours delayed my return to the shop, which was probably not well received. It was a shame that we could not be out longer, a walk up the cliff for example or along the Coast Path behind the beach because it was quite splendid to be out today. It seemed that I was not the only one who thought so. We

enjoyed a much better day than most of the days this week and we did not see a downturn until after four o'clock, which is usual.

Our groceries have not quite yet been the subject of much interest, although a few of our staying visitors have shopped with us exclusively, which is most kind. I am sure we will do much better from the start of the weekend. Even if I could not see the visitors themselves it is clear that some have arrived because of the increase in traffic from the Tesmorburys vans. I make no further comment.

At the suggestion of the Missus, we enjoyed a curry from a restaurant in town in the evening. Very occasionally, she will attend our favourite curry emporium and come away with multiples of meals that we can enjoy that evening and freeze the others. By dipping in occasionally for a curry from the freezer, we will probably have enough for six months. Of course, this only applies to Mother and me because the Missus will only eat one dish from the Indian restaurant. The Missus hates curry.

It also meant that I got to take ABH out for a run after tea. I had noticed that in the afternoon, although the wind had increased and gone around to the northeast, it carried with it a warmth it had been missing all week. It was therefore pleasurable to saunter out with just a woollen hooded sweatshirt against the breeze and admire the setting sun.

We wish the new management at The Surf Lodge, the new name for The Beach or The Surf Shack or whatever your name for it was at the end of The Beach car park. They had a bit of an inaugural opening in the evening, and I was advised that drinks and food to locals was free. We did not attend, clearly, as we had already made alternative arrangements but we hope it went well for them.

## April 5<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

As seems to be the way of things, the wind had eased off a little overnight, but not much. When ABH and I ventured out in the morning it did not seem so bad. Fair enough, we had not gone that far, just down to the Harbour beach where it was likely to have been sheltered. I did feel it a bit as we came up the slipway and I had thought that the wind had come around to the northwest, but it was just an eddy. Round the corner, it was full in the face again.

It was to be the central theme of the day as the wind ramped up all morning to peak in the early afternoon back at 45 miles per hour. It was all the way back to the start of the week again and very disappointing when I thought we had seen off the worst of it. I managed to slog it out all morning but caved in around the middle of the day when my head started to freeze over and I set the first electric sliding door in The Cove to automatic once again.

I have no idea if it was a slightly different direction, or the wind was slightly more robust than the rest of the week but it pushed over our pasty sign (sorry, MS) wherever I placed it outside. I tend to put it on top of the newspaper bin or the bin we use for logs as it cannot really be seen lower down, or it is just in the way. Fed up with having to put it back up, I pulled took it back in the shop in the middle of the afternoon.

At the end of yesterday, I decided to wash down the windows, top and bottom – that is to say the upper and lower floors, not just the top and bottom of the each window. Earlier in the week, the fierce easterly had blown up dirt from the fields and mixed with fine sand from the beach had lagged everything in the parish. There did not seem to be much point in doing it earlier with the likelihood that they would just get dirty again the next day. So, with the prospect of the wind eventually going away, I thought, I would get it done. Fortunately, the wind today did not bring back the dirt and the windows and the frames remained clean.

Again, I do not think that the wind today did us any favours. There was a definite increase in the number of visitors wandering about but with the wind increasing, most were not keen to hang around, I think. One of the Lifeboat shop staff tried to placate me by saying that it was still early and many would be on the way and be here later. We did indeed have to wait until much later and in the last two hours of the day, we had a little flurry of activity. It was also good to see that a few customers had left their grocery orders to us, for which we are always grateful.

The Missus had a day off from The Farm today. I think that the wind would have adversely affected her too. Despite our absence, it is never too far away in our minds. Yesterday evening our industrial neighbour from the field next door called me. He had received a letter from the much maligned council and he did not know what it was about. I was pretty sure that it concerned the proposed bridleway through our lane and a proposed extension through the two fields to our east to the road. We had already responded to the statutory notice that went up a year or two ago, but this sounded different. I asked that he send a copy of the letter to me, which he duly did.

I did not look too hard at it until today. It was a request for 'Landowner Evidence' regarding the proposal. I reasoned that he had received it because he owns the two fields to the east over which the proposed new part of the footpath and bridleway would run. It turns out that was only part of the reason because later in the day, we got a letter as well.

I telephoned our neighbour this morning and explained the purpose of the letter that I had determined from reading it. I was unaware of his views but told him that if he planned to respond, he should do so before 14<sup>th</sup> May, the deadline for submissions. He had already told me that he had a retired planning officer from the much maligned council on his payroll. I suggested he sought advice from him.

Our view is that the proposal should be resisted. We use the existing lane, which is also a registered footpath, not as far as we know a bridleway. It is difficult enough when we meet walkers coming the other way but if we start meeting horses, it would cause an impasse and there are only two possible passing places, and they are not ideal. If the route is opened through to Brew Lane, the chances are it will become much busier. It is already difficult maintaining, such as we can, the thoroughfare and we spend money on having the hedges trimmed twice yearly. The much maligned council already struggling with the paths they have, are unlikely to commit funds to maintain yet another and it will need it with heavier traffic.

We too received a letter asking for landowner evidence today. It requests from very narrow views, so we will provide some freehand additional information as well. The letter states that this is not the platform for objections, which will come later, but we need to highlight the issues as early as possible.

The end of the shop day came upon me very quickly and largely unannounced. I had a small and very premature five minutes to closing rush then a very quiet run up to the closing hour. It must have been that wrong footing me. I had opened the first electric sliding door in The Cove during our premature five minute to closing rush, largely because the frequent swosh that accompanies its opening was being amplified by my false ear and annoying my real ear. Having opened it, I noted that the wind seemed to have diminished a tad and I had left it open after the rush had gone. It was only when I went outside to bring in the outside display that it became apparent that the wind was just lurking around the corner, and it ambushed me as I stepped outside.

It did not stop me from taking ABH around the block after tea. Having not spent a sleepless day at The Farm, she was much more lively in the evening. It is pleasant being able to traverse the route in daylight, although it was fading fast today with a little more in the way of cloud on the horizon. The wind, while still insistent and robust, was at least not quite as chilly as it felt in the shop all day. Had it not been for the wind that ruffled the surface of the bay, flicking up whitecaps all over, it would be as flat as a dish. We could do with a few waves to keep the visiting surfers out of trouble in the coming week. We will, however, settle for no rain and a diminishing wind.

## April 6<sup>th</sup> – Sunday

In a surprise move, the wind abated at around half past eleven o'clock. Given that I had been shivering in my shoes and had to get a hat to wear because I refused to shut the first electric sliding door in The Cove, the cessation was most welcome.

It was with a sigh of resignation, or it might have been a sigh of resentment, that I set out into The Cove with ABH, the pair of us shoved from behind by a wind that had possibly moderated a little overnight. We headed to the beach where, I noted, a seal

had come in before us and spent an hour or so before departing again. ABH seemed unphased by it and only gave the trail a cursory sniff before moving on. The bleddy hound would have sniffed that from our front door and avoided the beach for the next fortnight.

We suffered an extremely quiet morning in the shop. I do not think we saw half a dozen customers before the middle of the day. Our boy from next door came around to enquire if someone had closed off the road down because he too had seen hardly anyone around this morning. I do partly blame the wind for keeping people in but usually we would at least have seen small children coming in for breakfast goods. I was beginning to think that I should be concerned.

I decided that I might postpone being concerned until later in the day and instead concentrate on the cash and carry order. Ordinarily, we would have left it for another week because we have hardly been inundated with grocery sales since the last delivery. The problem being that the following week's delivery will fall on Easter Saturday. I am sure that they would deliver then but I am conscious that we have a special delivery arrangement and do not want to rock the boat unnecessarily. It will also probably be a busy weekend and not having a big delivery on that day will be useful.

Naturally, we started getting busy while I tried to refill the shelves and compile the list and eventually, I had to abandon the venture. I managed to get half of it done and will do the rest piecemeal though the week until the deadline for placing the order on Thursday.

Despite the assurances of our friend in the Lifeboat shop that it would be busier today, it was not. Pasty sales (sorry, MS) especially were a bitter disappointment along with most everything else. There were some notable periods of busyness but largely I spent the day gazing out of the window and hoping for the best. I filled in the blanks by refreshing some of our signage that I had been meaning to do since we opened. It passed some time after which I remembered that I missed a deadline for ordering some bottles of beer. Unfortunately, the boredom can dull the mind.

So sure was I that we would see a bit of action today that I asked the Missus to bring down a truck load of beachware and gifts. She arrived back from The Farm covered head to foot in dirt. She told me that she had finished filling the raised beds with deweeded earth, so at least one of us was happy. I shifted half of the delivery onto the shelves and will do the rest tomorrow, assuming I am not prevented by an unprecedented rush of customers.

The delivery came with windbreaks, possibly a little late, but so far we have not disappointed any customers asking for them – both were very happy with their purchases. There were enough on the truck to fill the stand, which was the intention. The full stand is extremely heavy, but it is more than able for the weight which is possibly more than could be said of the person trying to bring it in at the end of the

day. The shopping trolleyesque wheels that it sits upon were also in dire need of lubrication, which can also be said of the person who had eventually moved it into its place in the shop. The wheels got oiled outside before it was shifted; the mover had to wait until after we closed.

The beach had people on it when we stepped out for our after tea stroll – the very idea of it. There was another hound down there already, running after a ball thrown by a half attendant boy who was rather more interested in his sandcastle. It was the right sort of breed and size, and I thought that it might have given ABH a little sport, but it ignored her completely. Normally, this would not have mattered as she would have chased alongside the other dog regardless, but the boy was only throwing the ball a yard or two, which was no fun at all. It is the first time I have seen ABH give up on a prospect. I took her around the block as some sort of consolation.

Tomorrow, I shall be engaged in a game of hide the pasty. I ordered a slew of them for today before I discovered we were not going to sell any today. Here we go again.

## April 7<sup>th</sup> – Monday

I marvelled at the clear sky while ABH sniffed about on the Harbour beach first thing. It had all the hallmarks of an early rip gribbler of a day and had it not been for the persistence of the easterly draft, much diminished, it might well have been one.

It was the sort of day to contemplate things, such as, perhaps, the price of pasties (sorry, MS). I shall dispose of this at the outset lest I upset someone, although according to The Daily Mail, that has already been done.

Our friend and neighbour from a little way up the hill alerted me to what the venerable newspaper had dubbed ‘pasty wars’ in its article. It concerned a deli in Mousehole that is purveying pasties at £10 each. The newspaper would have it that the locals are preventing her from increasing the price to £13.50 by ‘whingeing’ and being ‘abusive’.

There are a few holes in the story that worried me, such that you can be worried by a newspaper article. First, what locals. Like The Cove, Mousehole has precious few left and almost certainly would not be getting their pasties from a deli. On the face of it, the price might seem ‘extortionate’, but the take-away price of £6 is not far off what Land’s End charge for a pasty of lesser provenance, thus the story starts to fall apart.

The article quoted prices from around Penzance, picking out pasties from bulk suppliers such as Rowe’s, Warren’s and Lavenders, which were not broadly comparable. (Incidentally, all the above mention quoted prices are ‘extortionate’ too compared to ours, so people in glasshouses and all that ...) The Deli is getting its pasties from Ann’s, which is a more artisan supplier, perhaps. All the competition

mentioned would be coming it at less than £2 wholesale per pasty, I would have thought. There was enough price information in the article to determine that the deli's wholesale price was £3.55 which, even for an artisan pasty, is a bit rich. For that price I would need to advertise it being made with holy water and flour from the last batch out of the Garden of Eden. At the very least it should come with a side of beluga caviar and lark's tongues in aspic.

Never mind. The lady in the deli can charge what she likes. If people do not like it, they can go elsewhere. If they do not sell, she will know she is charging too much but now she has her own free advertisement in a national newspaper, I imagine she will be stacked out with customers falling over themselves to be outraged.

Talking of exorbitant prices, I ordered some stamps today from Royal Mail. I had to put off the purchase until today so that I could get the international stamps at the new price. It would be convenient if the new price stamps were available a day or two before the price increased so that we had a stock today, when they were needed. It would have made sense to order the UK stamps last week when they were cheaper, but they have a minimum order and I would have needed to buy more international stamps than I needed had I not included the UK stamps into the order. As it was, even a moderate order fleeced us of nearly £800.

I often point out to customers who remark on the high price of stamps that it is the last mile that presents the problem. Many other companies have joined the postal market, but none wish to take on the delivery of domestic mail from the sorting office to the front door because it is too expensive. The problem is just going to get worse. It is a vicious circle. The higher the price, the fewer letters being sent making the cost of delivery per unit more expensive. I am convinced that we are not far off having to collect our mail from a central station.

Still, it was a beautiful day, right from the outset and such things as the price of a postage stamp were mere bagatelles in the grand order of things. I was busy in the shop first thing, clearing the morning deliveries, pricing and putting out onto the shelf and in the fridges. There was so much to do that I barely got started on the beachware that the Missus brought down late yesterday.

It was as well that I was busy with the stock because I was definitely not busy with customers. Once again, there was nothing doing at all until the middle of the day and then we had a very slow burn start. Like yesterday, business came in fits and starts and there were several busy times here and there but nothing consistent. Pasties are clearly not the draw that they once were. The numbers are so poor I have fallen back on ordering every other day. One customer who was after a pasty told me he had trouble finding one having started from the OS end of The Cove. Then they were spoiled for choice. If demand falls any more I will have to consider taking a leaf out of the Mousehole Deli's book.

It was still a ghost town when I went off to the gymnasium in the morning. The sessions are coming together quite nicely now, and I managed a proper blistering session, just like the old days. I also remembered the roll that permits me to do my weighted squats against a wall, so I am now as complete as I am likely to be in the breadth of what I am able to do.

As is required, I took ABH for a spin after my gymnasium session. Today there was no need for a jacket, and we took to the Harbour beach since there was rather a lot of it. ABH was immediately alert to a gentleman figure sitting with his back to the Harbour wall, taking in the sunshine. She was tentative about the approach and barked. I think she is more used to people standing up when she meets them.

The gentleman gave no indication that he was pleased or displeased with the attention he was receiving, so I warned ABH away in case she was not welcome. It was not until we were much closer that the gentleman reached out his hand to her. The ice broken, we fell into pleasant conversation. He told me that he was an artist. Even had he not told me I could have had a pretty good guess. If I were to imagine what an artist looked like, he fitted the bill. He was wearing very worn, red corduroy trousers, a short woollen jacket that had seen better days over a thick knit, round neck sweater all but the sweater with evidence of paint spots on them. Atop his head was a wide brimmed black beret, almost bespotted. If he had his thumb in a palate and smelt of turpentine, he could not resemble more like an artist. Also, he did not look back.

He told me that he was twenty years older than me but still looked like he might be sprightly. Having experienced a bit of a heart scare yesterday, he said he was resting today, and I said that there was no better place. The breeze could still be felt down on the beach but where he was in the sun, was entirely pleasant, nonetheless. I told him that we could not tarry, and the Missus was keen to get up to The Farm but that we had enjoyed his company for a few minutes.

In the afternoon, we had a delivery of our local preserves and chutneys. It was a sizeable order and comes in small boxes due to the weight of each. It therefore takes some time to unwrap and to put out on the shelves. I do not price each item, which saves time, and this time would also have saved having two prices on the shelf as, inevitably, the new stock has increased in price.

For some reason, some items do not incite 'outrage' or comment when the price inflates unreasonably; it is just accepted. A couple of years ago, raspberries were in short supply and consequently the price of the commercial strawberry jam, a quality brand that we stocked, jumped. Strawberry jam was something like £3 a jar and the raspberry sitting beside it was £4.50. No one blinked an eyelid, and it continued to sell at the same pace it had before. I was astounded. I have ceased to worry about having to increase the price of our preserves but still strive to keep it the margin sensible.



I still have not completely finished clearing the stock that the Missus brought down and the preserves delivery did not help in that regard. I also had another delivery of gift stock that remains in its boxes. They are new gifts from a supplier I met at the trade show, so I am anxious to see how the items perform, so I had best get my finger out tomorrow.

The Missus was very late back from The Farm. She had struggled to take the trailer off the tractor and struggled again attaching the flail mower. I am sure that if we did these things more regularly, we would not find it such a trial. Once attached, she mowed most of the field. Since it has been more than a year since it was last done, she will need to go over it again and possibly a third time to get it back in order again. It is not something that can be done at speed, either, so it was no surprise she was late.

Watching the Missus mow the field clearly wore out the little girl who spent most of the evening asleep. She eschewed a walk around after tea, which was no surprise since she had not long returned at that time. She was in bed when the time came to take her out on her last run, and she was not best pleased about being disturbed. Later, I could empathise.

## April 8<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday

I was early out of bed this morning, although not by much. It was for no special reason, just I was awake. It did not take long for ABH to join me, and we stepped out into the chilly morning air for our first walk of the day. We avoided the beach because one of the fishing boats was coming in and we would have been in the way. We took a little peek down Coastguard Row but did not stop long before heading back home again.

The day developed in much the same way as yesterday, with clear skies from the outset and a breeze that was a little less breezy than the day before. All the whitecaps from the bay have gone but so too have all the waves. Approaching high water, there was not even a shore break, and any surfers would have to be content with a bit of standup paddling.

After dispensing with the morning deliveries, I managed to crack on with the various deliveries that were still lying around in the store room. Two boxes arrived yesterday of new stock some of which I was looking forward to seeing. Having seen samples of the fridge magnets and hanging decorations on the show stand, the ones arriving to us were customised for The Cove. They are indeed most alluring, and I shall make some of them available on our online shop. This is accessible from the home page of website using the button that sits next to The Diary, in case you had not seen it, dear reader.

The Missus headed off for The Farm again. Today she had it in mind to unearth the bodyboards. Not that we had sold any, but it would be useful to have the stock in the shop just in case we did. I would have had them sooner, but we have moved a lot of other boxes and bags on top and in front of them when we came to extract the tipping trailer in the barn. I am sure she had a joyous time with all that. It was, if not joyous, successful at least because she arrived back a little earlier than yesterday with the boards in the truck.

She also came back with a large plastic storage box. The tote bags are the last remaining item in the store room that need to be shifted. They were up at the barn but we lost several due to damp and mouse attack, the little beggars. I have been waiting on a second box - the first lot of bags went up before Christmas – to put them in. They will also need a sack or two of silica crystals, those little bags that suck up the moisture, which I have been trying to track down on the Internet. Happily, I found a website that also stated the size bag we would require. We will discover that mice just love silica.

It remained a glorious day from dawn to dusk and beyond, although the beyond bit was more accurately a glorious night. The colours all around were enhanced by the bright sunlight and it was the sort of day to spend outside taking it all in. If our visitors were out taking it all in, they decided to avoid the shop. The café next door I heard was very busy, but we had a quieter day than yesterday. I am wondering, perhaps, if it was something I had said. The shop is due a coat of paint after all the work we had done yesterday, and I am considering asking the OS where they got theirs because white is clearly out of vogue this year.

At least one person liked coming to the shop. She commented about the breadth of our offering and highly recommended us. She also wrote about a 'lovely shop owner', so it is most likely she was writing about somewhere else, but I am claiming it anyway.

I had a meeting at the Lifeboat station in the evening, so I did not get out until last knockings with ABH. I did not look too closely, but the sky looked as glorious studded with stars and planets as it did during the day all pale blue with a big sun in it. We also managed to generate exactly fifty percent of the electricity used in the shop from the solar panels in a 24 hour period. That almost made me smile.

## April 9<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday

Oh, joy! The Sennen Cove Diary has a new International Correspondent, United States of America – (Unpaid) to give the official title. I am not entirely sure that the lady in question, our friend from frozen Vermont, very far west of Camborne, is aware of her new position. As everyone knows, a foreign national sending a message to The Diarist from a foreign country constitutes a binding contract in anyone's book. We are, of course, delighted to welcome her onto the team.

She writes that Vermont is indeed frozen; it snowed the night previous to her correspondence. There again, our correspondent does live in the mountains, which is probably not much of a surprise since it seems that most of Vermont is mountains apart from a bit in the top left that borders a lake. I did take cursory look at the details of the state, which is about the size of Wales and Northern Ireland combined with eight times fewer people living in it.

I was sent a lovely film taken from the back of a 'oss – I am going to have to come up with something shorter than our friend from Vermont, very far west of Camborne. How about, MV (Ms, Miss or Mrs Vermont). I am sure I will be told if that is not acceptable. She negotiated her way through what looked to be a forest of birch trees - alright, tall slender trees of some type – and the scenery looked, as far as you could tell with all the trees about, very much like a forest anywhere in the northern hemisphere; apart from West Cornwall where trees are thin on the ground. There was another picture with mist covering the view, which was very much like West Cornwall.

MV tells me that the frozen Vermont is now beginning to thaw and the locals dub the time of the year 'Mud Season'. The clay soil that gives rise to the name lies largely in areas to the southwest of the various mountain ranges that run down the spine of the state, from what I can determine. In the Champlain Valley and closer to the lake of the same name, the soil becomes more loamy and sandy. The whole state appears to be shaped from the last ice age, and I imagine that it resembles Scotland and possibly the Lake District. I admit that these are merely educated guesses, and I am sure MV will roundly admonish me if I have it wrong. We look forward to hearing more from time to time.

I would like to say that I am intimately familiar with the soil types of Vermont having studied them for many years. Actually, I think I would not, mainly because it is not true and also because I think that I might look a little, shall we say, focussed on a very specific topic. I am very grateful to the Vermont government that has mapped the soil type of every square inch of the state and created an interactive map on the Internet to make dunces like me look very knowledgeable indeed ... and somewhat too focussed on a very specific topic.

We are always keen to help customers where we can but it is clear that some customers may be a little beyond the help we can provide. Entertaining a Coast Path walker this morning we encountered the part where we prefer to take cash for small purchases, in this case one pound. The lady explained that she only had a twenty pound note. I replied that a twenty pound note was perfectly acceptable as it was more than the asking price and that I would furnish her with change for the difference.

Herein we discovered the crux of her complaint. It appears that because she was walking, she was fearful that the weight of the four pound coins might well exhaust her before she reached the end of her planned journey to Porthcurno. She asked if

perhaps I had some two-pound coins, instead. Sensing that I may already be on the outskirts of a volatile circumstance, I decided it best not to suggest that one two-pound coin might, in all probability, be of similar weight to two one-pound coins but told her that we did not have any of the larger coin.

Just before she left, she asked if walking to Porthcurno today was doable. I said that it was eminently so and that it would take her about two and a half hours. She seemed a little disappointed that it would not take longer, as indeed was I that it was not further.

Well, they say that a busy day starts with but a single customer. They do not, but it sounded good in my head. I had to wait a while but by the middle of the afternoon, we were flying. It was the sort of busyness that I had been expecting since Saturday and was beginning to think might be postponed until next week. The only concerning aspect of it was that there appeared to be an awful lot of going home presents. I did not let that spoil the moment and revelled in the busyness of it all.

The run eventually ground to a crawl shortly after four o'clock. Even then there were sporadic spurts of action through to closing time. I also consoled myself that amongst the many going home type purchases there were also a few wetsuits, body boards and beach games in the mix, which suggested more of a continuation.

I noticed yesterday that the flags on the Lifeboat channel changed at the end of the day to indicate that the wind had gone northwesterly. When I looked again in the morning, they had gone back to showing an easterly breeze. I did wonder if I had imagined it. When it happened again this evening there was a customer in the shop. Happily, it meant I had a witness, so at least I had my sanity – unless we were both looney tunes. I looked at the Land's End weather station which was still registering an easterly, so I must assume that this is a local variation – or indeed the end of days, which would be a shame since business had just picked up.

We also got through a good swath of pasties (sorry, MS) which was something of a relief. It coincides with having to do the weekend pasty order, so that came along quite nicely. The upturn also gave me hope that the savoury biscuit delivery that came in late in the day might not be of some benefit. I am not so worried about that as the shelf life of the biscuits is quite long. I did struggle to get them out, however, as we had customers right up until closing time.

The last customers of the day were from a sizeable families' gathering on the Harbour beach. They are more commonly there during the summer evenings and the children keep me occupied with frequent sweets and drinks visits as they wear themselves ragged cavorting in the sea. It usually means that the shop floor is awash right until closing and in the morning, salty footprints adorn the remains of our tiles. It still amuses me when people hesitate to come into the shop because they are wet. I tell them I would not have much of a business if I stopped wet and sandy

people from coming in. In any case, they would better off wiping their feet on the way out.

When I was eventually able to close up, I reflected that it seemed that the season had really started, even if it was just a glimpse.

## April 10<sup>th</sup> – Thursday

We had a perfect moment this morning. It is very hard to describe but I assume that all the planets were in alignment and all toast landed butter side up, just for that moment. The street was almost empty and very quiet. The bay looked utterly calm; it was not because there was a chilly northeasterly draft blowing through. And the light: not bright, not dull, just right, lent the fluttering surface of the sea a rather leaden look. In the air half the Sahara floated by, we were told, and layered a haze across our scene. So, what made this moment so perfect: the white of dozens of seabirds right across the bay, stood out like luminescent dots on an artist's canvas wash.

While on the subject of the bay, the low water of the mid morning showed off the parlous state of sand on the beach once more. Some calm seas a few weeks ago had brought in a levelling, covering much of the big rock field we had been observing all winter. I have watched over the last few days as the same sort of calm seas have systematically ripped the sand back out again. Looking back, I seem to recall some big surf on the tide line at neap high water that would not have helped. It does look from here like the sand at the back of the beach is largely unaffected, although some has gone in front of The Beach car park. Most of the damage seems to be from the neap tide high water line. Here a line of rocks has been uncovered and marks the start of an incline of sand up behind it, whereas the beach running down to the low tide line, is level.

Occasionally, alright, slightly more than occasionally, I am distracted by some event or something I have read somewhere. It happened just a minute ago when on social media I spotted a response to a writer who had complained about not being able to get timber readily for some economic reason or other. A responder very quickly jumped in by saying that the latest innovation is to make 'timber' by using a process that compressed hemp. There is a UK company selling flooring that has been made of the stuff. I suspect using it on bonfires may produce interesting results. Organisers probably could dispense with fireworks as watchers would see them anyway.

It looks like the manufacture is all in the USA at the moment and I can see that there might be a few issues with bringing it to the UK.

Police Officer arrives at a door of a terraced house in a quiet suburb, some city, England. A somewhat dodgy looking character opens the door as aromatic smoke drifts out.

*Police Officer.*: “Evenin’ all. May I have a word with the householder, please?”

*Dodgy Character.*: “I am the householder. How can I help you officer.”

*Police Officer.*: “Well, our helicopter, equipped with heat sensors has noted your house shining out like a beacon, sir. In fact, the pilot said the image was so bright he had to wear his sun goggles.”

*Dodgy Character.*: “Darn it, officer. I knew we should have had the loft insulation done and we do like the heating on a bit, officer.”

*Police Officer.*: “It’s the middle of June, sir, and a heatwave.”

*Dodgy Character.*: “Ah, yes, right. How silly of me, officer. That will be my cannabis farm, then, officer, in the attic.”

*Police Officer.*: “In that case, sir, I arrest you in the name of the law.”

*Dodgy Character.*: “Not so fast, copper. You’ll never take me alive.”

*Police Officer.*: “We weren’t going to shoot you, sir. Just arrest you for growing cannabis illegally.”

*Dodgy Character.*: “No, I know. I just always wanted to say that. The point is, officer, that I am growing the plants so that I can make floor panels for my living room. It is more environmentally friendly than wood, longer lasting and fully sustainable. It would take seven years to replace the same amount of trees.”

*Police Officer.*: “Oh, I see. Highly commendable, sir. Well, in that case, sir, sorry for troubling you.”

It seems that our little bit of busyness yesterday may not have been a flash in the pan. We were busy again today, though not quite as busy as Wednesday. I do not know if I somehow got the holidays wrong but the change in numbers suggests so. Several people have also told me that schools up country are yet to break up. It is unusual to have a mass of arrivals mid-week but I will not dwell on it too long. I resisted the urge to ramp up the pasty order for the weekend (sorry, MS). Whichever way I went would have been wrong and we have plenty of frozen, just in case, although cheese pasties and sausage rolls may run out if we get busy.

I was quite pleased that the busyness did not extend right up to closing time today; we went into a lull at around four o’clock and ticked over until the end. For a second week running an early Lifeboat launch had been organised. I quite prefer the early start at the moment, it means we finish earlier. Also, if there is too long a period between me closing the shop and going across the road, I will have sat down and would not feel inclined to get up again.

We launched both boats at around half past six taking care to furnish the Inshore boat with a driver, head launcher and banskman as instructed. We now need more crew to launch the Inshore boat than we do the big boat. This may seem vaguely ridiculous during quieter times but when the beach is busy it is the more the merrier – or safer, at least.

We had a fair gathering of onlookers today. They crowded the beach and lined the Harbour Wall, waving flags and throwing their top hats into the air. Alright, that may

be a slight exaggeration, but it did resemble a scene from the nineteenth century when the first kumquat arrived in the local store to great acclaim and expectation.

Despite the staffing requirements, we launched both boats at approximately the same time. Our numbers were supplemented by one of the Boat Crew who is prevented from going afloat because his medical certification has expired. He is a pilot for a day job, flying to the Isles of Scilly. He has just spent five months in the Caribbean on some sort of loan to a company there flying between islands. Nice work if you can get it, I am sure.

We spent an hour or so discussing important matters. Alright, we spent five minutes discussing important matters and the rest of the time talking nonsense about this and that. A couple of us carry our radios with them so that we can be alerted when the boats are on their way back. Having already set up the long slip for recovery, we do not need to rush when we get the call.

The boats arrived back at around eight o'clock. The Inshore boat came back first which gave sufficient time for the assigned crew to conclude the recovery and join the rest of us on the big boat. Since we were already fully complemented, and some, there was a lot of standing around for some of us. There are only four lifejackets – it restricts the numbers on the slipway at any given time – so those without can only work on non slipway parts of the routine.

We were able to watch a magnificent sunset as we watched the boat come back into the bay. It was light enough when it came back onto the slipway to note that it was, indeed, a textbook recovery up the long slipway in calm conditions. Despite the somewhat overmanning of our crew, there was some implicit understanding that permitted a smooth operation without tripping over each other. We are, after all, a very integrated, very excellent Shore Crew.

## April 11<sup>th</sup> – Friday

The little girl had me up early this morning, which was alright because I had the drinks fridge to top up. That takes a while when it has been ignored for a bit, and I had definitely done that for more than a few days. We took a walk into our end of Coastguard Row because we could not get onto the beach. The tri-cornered garlic are everywhere and everywhere in abundance. It is their time. With the breeze absent for a change and before the more overpowering smells of the day took hold, the air was filled with their subtle aroma. How very pleasant it was.

There was no time to dwell on such things and soon it was down to the shop again. It is usual that when we have a few larger deliveries, they all come at once. Something went wrong this morning, and they all arrived at convenient moments adequate spaced so that I could deal with one then the other. Clearly, I will pay heavily for such advantage, and I only need to look forward to tomorrow when our large grocery order is due.

I decided that it was not worth being concerned with that and finished off my duties just in time to open the shop. Despite being busy the last couple of days, the mornings have been unaffected by the change and are still shopping deserts. Having concluded my chores, I had nothing better to do than look out over the sublime colours of the bay highlighted by the morning sun.

Once again, we were blessed with a day of sunshine. First thing, it was a little chilly as we took the morning air but when we headed down to the Harbour beach after a blistering session at the gymnasium, it was like a summer's day down there. We met up with a visiting family who are down twice a year or so. They have a big dog that was not much interested in ABH, not that it bothered her much. We were joined by two long haired dachshunds later, who were decidedly more fun. Our girl led them down to the water for a swim, which was good for her especially as, apparently, they were not very keen on the water. It seemed a bit of a shame to go back to the shop, but needs must when the Missus was keen on getting up to The Farm.

More confusion abounded for the rest of the day. Business was buoyant but the day progressed pretty much in the manner of a change-over day. If everyone had just arrived on Wednesday, how come they were all going home on a Friday. The other reader confirmed that in her neck of the woods, southern England, the school holidays were the same as ours.

Just to make sure I had not completely lost my marbles I looked at a selection of schools across England and Wales. It seems the Midlands, most of Wales and the far north will holiday in the weeks either side of Easter while those in the North West have the same holidays as us. It is looking like we might enjoy three weeks of moderate busyness as opposed to two weeks of mayhem. It still looks like I messed up my weekend pasty order (sorry, MS).

Heading towards the back end of the afternoon when it started to get a bit quieter, I made a concerted effort to try and clear as much space as I could in the store room. I had made quite a bit of progress during the week with our big cash and carry delivery in mind. While I was at the gymnasium, we had another grocery delivery which consisted mainly of bottles and cans of pop. It was late in the day when I managed to get a few cases into the fridge and out of the way and the rest in the back and the shelves of the store room. It is the clearest the store room has been for some while. I do not expect it to last.

I had returned almost to solitude by the time the Missus came back from The Farm with Mother. Mother was not supposed to be joining us today. The in-laws planned to be here but had broken down at St Kew and had been towed back home again. The Missus had made a fruit salad, sufficient to feed a small island nation, which we now need to consume ourselves. She had distributed some to neighbours, friends, a few passing strangers and a stray cat but we were still left with half a bowl full. Perhaps it can be frozen on sticks and turned into fruit salad lollies, but I am dubious.



Just as I was thinking about getting the outside display in, we saw a resurgence in the busyness. It is sometimes known as the five minutes to closing rush and after a lengthy lull, caught me unawares. It was therefore late when I filed my remaining orders and closed the shop.

ABH was reasonably keen for a walk around the block after tea, which is more than can be said of the last walk of the day when she hid so that I could not get to her. It was actually me who was more intent to get out. It was a glorious evening and having been in the shop for most of the day, I wanted to see the world.

We avoided the Harbour beach that even at gone seven o'clock was alive with small children and bigger ones enjoying a lark. It was definitely the sort of evening for frolicking on the sand and splashing about in the shallows. They looked to be having fun and we best off without a small bothersome hound running about trying to nose in on the shenanigans. We strolled out across the car park shielding our eyes against the setting sun that was directly ahead at that time – well, I was shielding my eyes but ABH's paws were all employed; I imagine she squinted a bit.

The walk was every bit as pleasant as I had imagined it would be. It was almost as pleasant as sitting on my behind for the rest of the evening with my feet up and two fingers of a rather good malt whisky by my side as I read my book. If I smoked cigars, I would have had my man clip the end off one for me. It seemed the sort of evening to tug on an enormous Cuban and enjoy some old world decadence.

## April 12<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

It was a disappointing start to the shop day when it started raining an hour before we opened. ABH and I escaped it by getting ourselves out early. It started just as the cash and carry delivery arrived but thankfully, the rain was very light. It only took ten minutes or so to bring the delivery in, so it was hardly an inconvenience at all.

That all changed when we were open for customers. It was a major inconvenience to most of them because they stayed away in droves. Of course, it could also have been the fact that it was a change-over day and there were no droves anyway; the new visitors had not yet arrived and the old ones had gone before we opened.

The lack of business gave me ample opportunity to clear the delivery onto the shop shelves and the shelves of the store room. I was finished just into the afternoon. It was not a large order and most of it went out on the shelves. I think that I sent the order off on Wednesday before the increase in visitors was noticeable. By the end of Friday, it was becoming clear that I should have ordered quite a few more lines. I could have delayed sending off the order but at the time I did it I could not have guessed at the impending upturn in trade. There are things that we will run out of now which we can do nothing about. Fortunately, most of the items are not essential

and while they would have been nice to have, we will survive without and so too will our customers.

Having finished the work that was obvious, I had to find work that was not so obvious to combat the utter tedium that set in soon after clearing the delivery. I had thought that the rain, that seemed to be exclusively dropping on West Cornwall, would be gone more quickly than it did. It had a last heavy throw at us at around two o'clock and the day then brightened a bit. We saw a few small groups starting to emerge but in reality, we had lost the whole day, and I had drunk more tea than was good for a person.

On the plus side, I could stop worrying about running out of pasties (sorry, MS). Instead, I could start worrying about having too many.

Now, on the basis that absolutely nothing of interest occurred today, a ditty for your delectation.

#### Your Own Road

*Walking through the joyful years  
Long forgot the many tears,  
Here at last I find a home,  
In your arms, no more alone.*

*In your eyes a spark of joy;  
A laughing child with Christmas toy.  
All along the winding road  
The path my elders did forbode.*

*But in life I have enjoyed  
All the things they said avoid,  
Until at last upon the brink  
I stop and look but then I think,*

*If all that's wrong is really good  
To avoid these things whene're we could  
We would not know the joy around,  
If we listened to our elders' sound*

*So, with life I will abide,  
And know that I have really tried,  
To find the worth of everything  
And not let others tidings bring.*

## April 13<sup>th</sup> – Sunday

I had hoped for better today but some heavy showers that came through soon after we opened gave me cause for concern. It brightened after the rain went but later in the day the forecast threatened a few showers which happily did not arrive. At least the wind had changed direction, coming in from somewhere vaguely southwesterly which meant that I was not that bothered by the wind chill. It was, however, around three degrees colder anyway, so for me behind the counter, little change from the last few weeks.

The early rain might have scared a few people off, although we had some reasonably good sales to the few that were around first thing. We had to wait until late morning before there was anything like a stirring in The Cove and after the middle of the day before business was anything like worthwhile.

Trying hard not to be idle, I topped up the surf jewellery with what we had left as overstock and as much of the groceries that I missed out previously. I then cast about the other shelves to see if there were gaps that I might fill with replacements from the store room. The only problem with doing this and being idle is that there is the temptation to go ordering things. As hard as I tried to resist, I ended up placing a sizeable order for gift soap. It is not that we do not need it, and it sells very well but we probably could have put the order off a couple of weeks.

A better, or at least cheaper use of my time was to gaze out on the beach in the early afternoon. We are bang in the middle of spring tides again – it seems to come around so quickly. There is less than a metre difference between this spring tide and the previous one but the difference on the ground is huge. Last springs, it seemed you might walk to Cowloe but this time around the channel is flooded. On the big beach, apart from a gully preventing it, you might have walked to Gwenver but this time the sea comes right up to the edge of North Rocks. The wide expanse of beach also looks much smaller.

There was enough beach, however, to note that more sand has layered in on the lower section and the incline at the back of the beach is less obvious. The rocks that lay at the foot of the incline are also now covered up and I think too at the back of the remaining bit of the rock field. I am reasonably sure that this happened overnight. The last time the sand came in, we had calm seas for a week. This morning, the swell had returned, and we had some flogging over the near end of the Harbour wall and white water dancing up the cliffs at Aire Point. There appears to be no clear set of conditions that will bring or take away the sand and I have long since stopped trying to identify them. It still leaves me wondering though, each time it happens.

Thankfully, on a quiet day for news, our new International Correspondent, our friend from frozen Vermont, very far west of Camborne, has filed another report. Yes, we are back to the long version as I was roundly admonished for shortening it as it 'felt like a demotion'. In the old days, the International Correspondent used to tell me

about the latest encounter with cotton tail snakes and how big her pumpkins were. I shall have to get used to the modern ways, I suppose.

In the report we learned that it is still snowing in frozen Vermont and also that our correspondent's horses, of which she has two, do not seem to mind the snowy ground at all. Our friend from frozen Vermont, very far west of Camborne tells me that the horses are Icelandics. I think that is a cover and that they are really Greenlanders, but she has changed the name to stop them being invaded. She also has a cat, a ragdoll cat, with striking blue eyes. It likes to rest on top of a bureau next to a ragdoll hippopotamus, which seems quite appropriate.

I have a strong aversion to horses and avoid them. It is historic. They are fine, majestic, and very intelligent animals. I try and avoid being associated or in close proximity to any animal smarter than me. It is a wonder we have a dog.

When business did not take off as I had hoped I went about the 'farm shop' cash and carry order. It was an explorative look around at first to see if we needed one, but it soon became apparent that we had gone through more than I had thought. We also took some orders for our local breads and cakes, so it was good to see some people interested in the local food arrangements we try and promote. Half an hour before closing with little prospect of much more business for the day, I managed to get all the end of day ordering done. While it was good to have everything done ahead of closing, I would still prefer to be selling it rather than buying.

I consoled myself by looking out of the window while we had tea. The swell had refined its action by high water and big rolling waves thundered in on the rocks just along from us. The light was just right to show off the vivid white in the tumbling surf as it the waves broke up late on the shore.

Later, as we took an amble around the block, there were a few swimmers in the Harbour that was quite benign given the swell in the bay. We avoided the beach because the tide was still quite far in and the waves still running up the sand. It will still perfectly pleasant walking around the block once we had finished being blinded by the setting sun. The car park was still busy with people watching the waves and they tossed and crashed around Tribbens and into the Harbour wall.

Later still, we had stars to admire. I am hoping for some more of those clear skies tomorrow as it seems we need all the help we can get.

## April 14<sup>th</sup> – Monday

I am beginning to think that the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers are enacting some kind of vendetta against me. It rained again today most unexpectedly. It was unexpected largely because I do not look at, or at least take note of, the weather forecasts. The reason being amply demonstrated by having seen the Meteorological

Office website yesterday which showed no rain at all for today. They changed it presumably when someone looked out of the window today and panicked.

I had not based my pasty order (sorry, MS) on such spurious information but was, nevertheless, wide of the mark with regards to the number ordered even though I had ordered very few. I also had not thought to take a weatherproof jacket with me when I took ABH out this morning, either. It was just as well that it had not rained then else we would have got very wet, so perhaps the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers were not being as vicious as they might have been.

We also avoided the rain when we headed for the Harbour beach after a particularly blistering session at the gymnasium. I had thought that I noticed the odd spot of rain here or there but again, we got home unscathed. The rain only started when I headed down to the shop just before the middle of the day and then it came in heavily. While the forecast stated that we would have continuous heavy rain all afternoon, it stopped, albeit temporarily, not long after it started and the only thing we had continuously all afternoon was a lack of customers.

Since there was little else to do, I considered that there would be little harm in indulging in a bit of bus timetable gazing. The bus timetables are due to change this coming Sunday with the promise of buses in abundance and cleverly organised by a shiny new artificial intelligence (AI) system no doubt acquired at great expense. It would not surprise me in the least if this was why the bus company could no longer afford to run the Land's End Coaster around to St Ives.

My first impression was that if this was designed by AI, perhaps they did not spend quite as much money as perhaps they should have done. The other possibility was, of course, RIRO, which is as old as computers themselves: Rubbish In, Rubbish Out. I suspect this latter suggestion is more likely. For example, certain locations have an arrival and departure time. The first one I looked at has an arrival time but no departure time but still arrives at the next location.

We also have buses running in a two hourly sequence, the first leaving at twenty minutes past the hour and the subsequent buses at nineteen minutes past the hour for no apparent reason. They apparently take a minute longer to get to their next destination when they catch up again. Then, a bus running to three locations at 13, 28 and 46 minutes past the hour, three hours later runs at 13, 25 and 46 minutes past the hour. There are other examples that I will not bore you with. I rest my case.

Resting is exactly what was required having spent at least two hours trying to make sense of the timetables. I find it easier to work with the timetables printed out and filling in a template by hand as I try and distil the information relevant to The Cove. I will type this up later and publish the summary on the website where everyone can puzzle over it.

On a positive note, the buses are indeed more plentiful and run on a fairly regular two hourly service. The route is the same as it currently is with one service running via Land's End and Porthcurno and another a more direct route via St Buryan. The buses also no longer arrive at The Cove together, or at least not intentionally, although they do run in the same hour but around twenty minutes apart. There is a plentiful but more restricted service on a Sunday. There is also another service that runs early in the morning on Truro College Days only. I have left that out completely as it is likely to confuse. It will also be full of spotty teenagers yelling about and possibly enacting the latest fads on TikTubeGram or whatever it is they get their news from and would not be for the faint hearted.

I have yet to root out the other company's offering for its 'limited' Land's End to St Ives service, but I felt that it would be greedy to have all that fun, all at once.

Assisting in keeping the joy of the day at bay, the rain made an unwelcome return shortly before closing time. It had been on and off all day but at least it was very light and hardly a bother. It did not stop certain families from heading to the beach and faced with that or being enclosed in a tight space indoors without ear defenders, who can blame them. We had some business from them in passing and a bit of postcard buying but largely we were very quiet – until I started on the bus timetables. Who needs tariffs when you can have a bit of rain stop trade.

Thankfully, ABH was not in the least interested in heading out in the rain after tea, so I let her be. I did have to drag her out last thing but by then the rain was abating or at least it was not as heavy as I had expected. We are led to believe that it will continue all night and into the morning and a late weather warning for rain was issued. Sweet joy.

## April 15<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday

I had not appreciated that the rain was going to be a permanent feature. Out of a strong urge to do something pointless, I looked at both the Meteorological Office website and that of BBC weather and both are in agreement that the rain will go on forever. Given that the two align once every 547 years, I have to believe it is true. If you live in a wet or poorly drained area already, the sound advice is to start building an ark, although if you can afford to wait a day or two, Been & Queued will have a flat packed version you can order online. Trading Standards, however, are warning against buying the inflatable version available on the oriental website, Doyou.

The weather today was truly atrocious. Not only was there a gush of rain worse than yesterday, it was accompanied by a force seven northwesterly. It took me a while to notice that the rain was blowing a good way into the shop as it will when we have a strong northwesterly and rain. I had just forgotten as it has been a while. We were pretty wet by the time I turned the first electric sliding door in The Cove to automatic.

I should have realised earlier because our wheelie bin that I had untied to allow emptying of the commercial bin it was lashed to last week had fallen over in the night. It took a second falling over halfway through the morning before I thought to go and retie it and the same time bring in our pasty sign (sorry, MS) that had also toppled over in the wind. It was also then that I also noticed that it was bleddy cold.

Given that I would have plenty of time on my hands today, I went in search of the timetable for the new route 7 bus that will run a 'limited' service from Land's End to St Ives. It seems that it will be so limited that there is no need for a timetable – or a bus, quite possibly. If you are very keen to take a bus from Land's End to St Ives there is a strong possibility you will be able to do so on Easter Sunday when the vintage bus people will be laying on free service. They do not have a timetable but I do know that they have buses.

I neglected to mention yesterday but the scaffold has gone up on the hut with the tin roof, previously gymnasium. I believe the first scaffolding is there to facilitate removal of the roof, that you might be forgiven thinking is made of tin. It is actually made of corrugated fibre cement which is treated like asbestos and needs to be removed professionally, I believe. I do not know when that has been arranged for but at least the work is on the way. As far as I know, the building will not be completed until spring next year. I think that they must be using the same builders hired to replace the Lifeguards hut above the beach, which still looks like it has not been finished.

I had thought that yesterday was about as tedious as it could get. How wrong could I be. At least yesterday I found the bus timetable I could work on that was marginally less boring than not doing it. I could, I suppose have done the other timetable that cuts in at the end of May with presumably more buses, but there are limits. I found that I had to make frequent forays to the entrance area with a mop because we had begun to flood out. Of course, this just made it worse because each time I approached with the mop, the first electric sliding door in The Cove opened and let more rain in. It also opened with every person passing by and, since it also opened when they did not, I suspect that it opened when a collection of raindrops fell in front of the sensor.

It is a mark of just how boring it became when I resorted to organising our collection of invoices and started to input them. They are not even due to be completed until the end of May. If that does not smack of desperation, then I do not know what does.

The process of date ordering and data entry adequately passed the time between the few customers we had. The grocery and pasty ordering for the last few days may have been completely trashed by such extreme weather but there was one thing I did get right. Late on Sunday, I had ordered in a consignment of firewood and kindling. We were running low but hitherto had not been overly bothered by a high demand. In the run up to closing today, virtually every customer left with a bag of logs or a bag of kindling and some, both. We are now once again short of logs, and I will need to order again.

At one point in the later afternoon, the rain cleared up a bit. It seemed an opportunity to do some intensive mopping up as I had been fighting a losing battle up until that point. I opened the first electric sliding door in The Cove to stop its incessant opening and closing while I worked and filled a bucket with the flood. I noticed even as I worked, the wind blowing through the doorway was drying the wet floor as I cleared the excess water. I let it continue until the rain came back and I needed to close the first electric sliding door in The Cove again before the rain ruined my handiwork again.

I had been expecting to see our 'farm shop' cash and carry delivery today but by close of play, it still had not arrived. It must be something in the air because next door's milk did not arrive yesterday, and they had to get a special delivery. That failure was due to the chef omitting to press 'one' on the telephone to leave a message. My, how we laughed at his expense. Later, I discovered that when I placed the order online for our groceries, I had not pressed the last confirmation button. Obviously, that was deliberate, at least subconsciously, as I must have sensed the impending downturn in trade and that stayed my hand. Honest, guv.

If we ever redo the floor of the shop, I will get the floor people to make sure that it runs to the front. I thought that I had mopped up all the rainwater that had blown in but when I went over to the card stand when I was bringing in the outside display, I noticed it had run down that side and well into the shop. I already had to move the cardboard bodyboard holders and the dog's bed that normally sits in the doorway. That is soaked and will take days to dry.

It was still raining, though perhaps not quite so hard, when I took ABH around the block after tea. I was quite surprised that she wanted to go but we did not stray very far. The rain was still pelting down for our last excursion that I restricted to going around the back and for probably less than a minute. I am hoping that the accuracy of today's weather forecasts was a flash in the pan because the way they look for the next five days, including the Easter weekend do not make for pleasant reading. I will not look again.

## April 16<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday

I found myself still cleaning up after yesterday's rain when I went down to the shop in the morning to prepare for opening. ABH was most put out when we stopped by after our first morning walk. Her bed was not in the doorway and worse still, it was damp from being left too long in the doorway. The floor still looked pretty poor with sand and muck from the street streaked about where the mop had left it behind even after I had washed out the mop head several times. Remarkably, by the middle of the day, the floor looked like nothing had happened – meaning it did not look as dirty as it did after the flood; it looked as dirty as it did before the flood.



I had noted from our early morning walk that the skies looked like they were clearing nicely. My next thought was that we would probably have a backlash from everyone being under self-imposed house arrest yesterday. It is a feature of the day after a very poor weather day when everyone takes to the streets in an extreme reaction to being incarcerated the previous day. Today was no exception and it seems to be the brighter the day, the bigger the backlash. Today was very bright indeed.

It did not seem to upset the routine of the day, however, and we really did not see the huge increase in numbers of customers until later in the morning. (I should note that the term 'huge' in the previous sentence is a comparative one.) We were busy across the range of our goods but the most noticeable increase in sales was for pasties (sorry, MS). This, once again, knocked my cleverly laid plans for using up some of the pasties that had been secreted into the freezer into a cocked hat. I have to order a minimum number of pasties for each delivery and it seems that the current demand matches the minimum supply. I had intended to defrost some overnight and supplement what was left but then we ran out of cheese pasties, so I had to place a new order anyway.

I also placed a new order for logs. The very pleasant lady who answered the telephone reminded me that they only had tomorrow to deliver for the weekend and most of those slots were planned already. They would try their best, they told me. Everyone I have met at the company seem very helpful and pleasant and I have no doubt that they will try. We did have some logs left from yesterday but given that I sold three bags before the middle of the day today, I do not think we will last the weekend.

With the wind gone - it had decreased and moved to the southwest - it opened the door to some better surfing that would have been had yesterday. Yesterday, the beach was largely deserted. Today, there was a sizeable row of camps in front of The Beach car park and a group of surfers piling in between the flags and another large group paddling in the shallows. Earlier in the day, the waves were thumping over the Harbour wall but an hour into the flood in the afternoon, the sea looked far more benign.

The backlash started to tail off in the middle of the afternoon and we returned to a bit of normal shopkeeping. That in turn became a bit of a lull for an hour or so before we headed into a premature five minutes to closing rush. Alright, it was nothing like a five minutes to closing rush but it was a rush, nevertheless, and most welcome.

The day had tried very hard to be glorious, almost an apology for yesterday, but I think that the temperature held it back. By the time evening came along it succeeded in being splendid. It was the sort of evening to let children loose in the Harbour for a bit of fun, although they would have to wade through oar weed to get to the sea. When ABH and I passed by after tea, there were groups of local children down there doing just that. I have seen the weed deeper, but it is bad enough and is likely to get worse as the spring tides slip away.

The Missus was able to return to The Farm again today leading ABH to cart herself off to bed almost as soon as we came back from our evening walk. The Missus has pressed on with her preparations for growing and has constructed eight large beds for peas and beans. Last week she did the first pass on the field with the flail mower, so she has been a busy girl. We will give up the shop next year and concentrate on our new venture of making garden things – in the, erm, rustic style.

## April 17<sup>th</sup> – Thursday

Today, I got to the bottom of a conundrum that has been puzzling me for five years. In 2020 a Europe wide ban that the UK joined in on was placed on menthol cigarettes. It had been determined that the tobacco companies were using menthol flavouring to make cigarettes more palatable to young people. We only carried one menthol cigarette and duly complied by ceasing to stock them.

Very oddly, we were still able to stock and legally buy a product call Sterling Dual that has a little button on the filter that allowed some sort of menthol like taste to leak into the cigarette. I must say that I was bemused but did not lose too much sleep over it. Since then, we have had customers asking for 'menthol' cigarettes quite frequently. I have always responded that 'menthol' cigarettes have been banned. It has led to some customers getting quite shirty about it.

Someone asked again today, and it occurred to me that with so many people believing that menthol cigarettes were available, because they were buying them elsewhere, I was very much in the wrong or at least in the dark. I decided that after five years it might be a good idea to go and look it up. I had looked before but could find nothing concrete and had not bothered since. Today, I found an article that explained in simple terms that the tobacco companies had never stopped producing menthol cigarettes, they just called the brands with menthol, 'green'.

Apparently, it is all to do with the wording of the law. The restriction covers a 'characterising menthol flavour' but failed to define what that meant. All the tobacco companies had to do was say that the flavour they were adding was not characterising and no one could prove else. What utter buffoonery.

Putting such things behind me, I marvelled at the day we had provided to us. We had started out with clear skies and little in the way of breeze to spoil it. Most important was that it did not rain although the cloud, cumulus mostly, started to build up from the east during the day.

There seemed no particular reason for it, but we were mobbed today almost from the very outset. This is a bit of an exaggeration. The busyness started halfway through the morning but compared to most business days this season where we rarely seen anyone before midday, that counts as the very outset. Some told me it was their last

day, which is as good a reason as any to make it a beach day. Others provided no reason at all. Overall, we were far busier all at once than any of the other days so far and at times, I was quite stretched.

We were even selling pasties (sorry, MS) from early in the day. It became clear that we would soon run out of the delivered ones, so I fished some out of the freezer, that has been the aim for the last week. I had intended to hold back on a volume order for the weekend having been stung twice in the previous two weekends but the way the pasties were selling today made me doubt my resolve. So, once again we have a shipping order of pasties coming tomorrow that will leave me vulnerable to the vagaries of weather and the fickleness of our visitors.

While on the subject, we have a man from Falmouth come from time to time with pamphlets on the Fal River area. He is a man of the world; I do not get out much. We fell to talking about this and that, mainly of a business nature such as how busy it was elsewhere and, curiously, the price of pasties. He told me that we were far too cheap and even £4 would be a bargain. I had only just put them up for this season and thought that I was being brutal then. What a disappointment I will be at the league of grumpy shopkeepers' dinner and dance at the end of the season (obviously there is no dancing; dancing is far too jolly).

Perhaps I will do better with the Rosemullion spirits that turned up today. A gentleman comes every year to purchase their malt whisky. I let him down this year and had to sell him one that I had salted away for myself. It is a very decent bit of stuff, too. They make everything from the ground up including the base alcohol and do it exceedingly well. I had expected the price to have leapt as well since the Government changed the duty rules and made it much more expensive. The company must have refined their processes because they have broadly managed to keep a lid on the increases, which I am sure we much appreciate.

While the Rosemullion company was doing its best for its customers, I cannot say the same about the company providing us with local interest books. This is the company that seemed to be teetering on the brink over the last six months or so but appear to have brought themselves back from the edge. I had asked that they send a list of the books that they had singled out for us as we usually get lumbered with titles that we have no hope of selling. Last year we barely had enough titles to fill a third of the book stand but this year they have excelled themselves.

We had no notice at all of the delivery nor of the titles that arrived with us today. We were still short of a display stand full, which was just as well because since they had taken so long with the delivery, we had used the space for competitor books. For what they lacked in those format of books, they loaded us with titles of bigger books that I have no room in the shop to display. They are lumped together on a bottom shelf. Had I had the list in advance, we could have headed these books off at the pass. Instead, I have to find space for them until the end of the season. We shall be having words, I think.

Somehow, I managed to disperse both orders to the shop shelves and the remainder to the store room between customers. We had been very busy since the middle of the morning with only a few lulls in the flow. We ran out of pasties after some topping up from the freezer late in the afternoon. It did not see many disappointed customers, so I think we must have had it broadly right.

Trade tailed off towards the last of the afternoon, which was alright by me because I had to cram some tea in. A Lifeboat exercise had been organised for half past six o'clock with a muster time fifteen minutes before. This barely gave me enough time to do the end of day orders and collect myself to get across the road.

I joined with sufficient of us on the ground to staff the launch of both boats including the overmanning of the Inshore launch. Since the tide was still pushing in, we set up the short slip for a high water recovery which meant hauling in the long slip cable, turning the turntable and pulling the short slip cable down into position. It also mean repairing to the crew room for tea and biscuits.

All this week we have a trainee coxswain with us. The Institution has had the bright idea that they need peripatetic coxswains, trained in the driving of all classes of Lifeboat so that they can deploy them across the country to stand in for regular coxswains on leave or off service. It is not a perfect solution as much of the requirement for a station coxswain is to know the waters in their area, where the rocks and the sandbanks are and other peculiarities of the area. It means that although the visiting coxswain can drive the boat, they would need an experienced local crew person with them. Anyway, the young lady with us all week too the big boat out supervised by our own Coxswain.

It is a good job that I am not the sort of Diarist that would make wry comment about a lady coxswain reversing onto the slipway. What I can say is that the boat was gently placed in the right place so that we could conduct a textbook recovery with our own trainee head launcher. It was only shortly after that the boat was strapped down, turned around and made ready for the next launch. We are, after all, a very noble, very excellent Shore Crew.

## April 18<sup>th</sup> – Friday

It had rained at some stage during the night, early in the morning, I think. It sounded quite heavy. The pasty man (sorry, MS) who must have started early doors told me that it had absolutely bucketed down when he was loading up. Having been out with ABH in the dry first thing, I had not considered that we would have more, so it was an impolite surprise when the pasty man told me it had started again here.

It was even more impolite to discover that it rained heavily for the next couple of hours and thereafter was just miserable with bit of rain now and again. It came with a

blanket of low cloud that stayed atop the cliffs and drifted into the valleys. Cape Cornwall was invisible as was anything after Creagle. I suddenly regretted panicking about the pasty numbers yesterday and should have stuck with my original plan of reduced numbers.

We had a few early morning customers then a whole rest of the morning of emptiness. It gave the opportunity to read the latest report from the new International Correspondent, our friend from frozen Vermont, very far west of Camborne. It seems that they have similar concerns and perhaps prejudices there as we do here regarding visitors or at least some of us in each location.

The visitors there are grouped under the term Airbnbers and relates to the use of trails. I have to assume that the Airbnbers have previously mistreated the paths in some way. I can imagine that the complaints are similar to the complaints levelled again visitors here: not clearing up after them, misusing the land and generally showing a lack of respect to other people's property. It is not clear whether the trails are generally accessible to the public as they are here but our correspondent noted fairly blunt 'no trespassing' signs along the treeline of one wooded area.

She was out riding and, taking note of the signs, went the other way. This led her across a meadow to another trail with no signs at all. "Happy to find somewhere to go, we followed the trail and came to a little outdoor sitting area overlooking a bubbly creek in a deep ravine." It sounds idyllic but I am not so sure about being on the edge of a deep ravine – and on an 'oss. She was wondering about the lack of signs which made me think that the trail looked a bit more private than public, but she continued and eventually came out of the woods and to a private drive.

Our correspondent, who is clearly a glass half full sort of lady, elected to seek permission to ride the trail she was on rather than to apologise later. It was a hard choice because she had to get her 'oss to approach a porch, which it was not keen to do. She had reason to be optimistic because these were her neighbours. It turned out to be entirely the wrong decision because the lady of the house refused permission citing that she had already done so to the Airbnbers and it would be unfair therefore to grant permission to our correspondent, even if she were a neighbour. In a comedic development, the man of the house appeared and was altogether more positive about the prospect especially as the couple's grandchildren visit our correspondent's horses. Unfortunately, it seems that he was given hard meaningful looks and changed his mind.

To make matters even more uncomfortable, our friend from frozen Vermont, very far west of Camborne, was refused to use a rock in the driveway to mount her 'oss lest she damage it. I imagine at such a moment our correspondent was grateful that she lives in an area where neighbours such as the one she encountered, live an 'oss ride away.

It would seem that, as everywhere, the mindless actions of the few, spoil it for the many and the reactions of some of the aggrieved can be somewhat more extreme than others. I find it hard to comment because I do not have enough detail about who owns the trails, who maintains them nor the underlying issues with the visitors.

Also, we will be faced with being the grumpy party when it comes to the application to make The Farm lane into a bridlepath. We will oppose this on the grounds that it is unsuitable for horses while motorcars also use the lane. There is nowhere to pass sensibly.

We also have a footpath that crosses the field. People are welcome to use it, mainly as we have no right to stop them, although they would have to find some way of getting across the hedge at the point marked on the map; it is impassable. I would however take a dim view if the people crossing it dropped litter and generally abused the privilege.

Last from our friend from frozen Vermont, very far west of Camborne is that we learn that one of the 'osses names is Mjolnir. Smart Alec here asked if it was an Abenaki, native name. I have obviously let the juggernaut of Marvel Comic films pass me by, although equally, I could have been more versed in Norse mythology. It is the name of Thor's hammer. I call mine a far more prosaic, 'you begger', but only usually after I have clouted my thumb with it.

By the middle of the day, the rain went away, and the day brightened considerably. It did nothing to entice people out and about and even if they had intended to, the rain came back again for an hour in the early part of the afternoon. It went away again but left the day overcast, misty, grey and humid. There was not even much in the way of surf as some sort of compensation.

At about two o'clock, I gave up expecting some sort of resurgence and started again on my data entry of invoices. Despite this being a dull and repetitive task, mind-numbingly boring and requiring only a modicum of intellect – that made it very suitable for me– it beat the backside off staring out of the window or trying to make any sense from other people's social media posts. I had so few interruptions I managed to finish the lot. I will hand them over to the Missus later so that she can do the filing.

We did have a bit of business towards the end of the day as new visitors started to arrive. We also had the rain back and this time it was not mucking about. It rained heavily, on and off right through into the night. It did not prevent ABH and I from having a run around the block after tea but I had to kit up in full metal jacket waterproofs and run her down after we got back. I had to repeat the process later for our last walk.

The busy Easter weekend has so far failed to live up to expectations. Radio Pasty assured me that the weekend weather was looking reasonable with little rain. It does

not align with what the Meteorological Office is predicting, so anything could happen. What a tease.

## April 19<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

It was as well that I did not have much preparation to do in the shop this morning as I was diverted almost immediately to the flood in aisle one. It is a common occurrence that seems to bear no relation to the amount of rain or maybe wind direction. It is impossible to predict when it will happen and even if I could, it would not help particularly.

It is a feature of living in a 160 year old granite building with no foundations and a mystery to modern science. I have had several professionals look at it and a camera poked down the drain. No one has yet been able to put their finger on the cause or source of the rainwater that floods in from somewhere down the middle part of the western side of the shop.

The only apparent solution is a mop and bucket and a lot of time. Having cleared the water once, five minutes later it was back again. It continues to leak out from somewhere long after any rain has stopped. The rain had long gone but an hour after I started mopping, I was still at it.

The rain may have gone by the time we got up, but it still looked threatening and did so for most of the day. The breeze has spiked up a little, too; I could feel it from behind the counter, so I guessed that it had gone around to the east again. There were breaks in the cloud tempting us with a little blue sky and occasional brightness that tempered the overall feeling of doom hanging about. By the end of the afternoon, hostilities, it seemed were being reconsidered and all looked quite bright.

The sea remained fairly flat out in the bay which would explain the weed remaining in the Harbour and assisted by the reducing tides. If that was not completely to the surfers' tastes, it certainly played into the hands of the to dive boats out in the bay, diving on Beaumaris again. For a wreck of minor interest, it gets a lot of interest. I imagine it is because it is an easy and safe dive and none too deep. From the footage I have seen online, which is now a bit dated, it is mainly the boilers of the World War I torpedoed tanker that can be seen. The binnacle used to emerge at very low tides above the surface like some periscope, but it has not been seen for a fair few years now.

Business picked up in the late morning and into the afternoon. Thankfully, the pasties (sorry, MS) started to sell as well, which was something of a relief. A good proportion of our customers today were associated with the wedding of a locally living fellow. His brother is one of the Lifeboat crew who is sometime Boat Crew and sometimes with us on the shore. They are from Liverpool and have retained their strong accent. At times today, it was like being in a Harry Enfield sketch.

In other news, the Lifeguard hut appears to be open for business. I thought that I saw the flag flying yesterday and today I note that the temporary hut in The Beach car park has gone. Order has been restored to the universe and all is well with the world.

At least the Lifeguards had something to do today. There was a bit of a shore break going on towards North Rocks and there were numerous surfers in there giving it a go. There were just as many on the foreshore thinking about giving it a go as well and another good number swimming and bodyboarding. You did not have to be a water users either to be down on the sand. There were just as many people wondering about and several small camps dotted along the sand at the bottom of the dunes. I got the sense that it was considered a bit of a beach day.

I am hearing good reports regarding the operation of The Surf Lodge, previously known as a lot of things, but to me and many others as The Beach restaurant. The reports have not been too detailed and largely of the 'it's alright' sort of tone. Mainly, there is a lot of gratitude that it is open and well into the evening, too. The menu looks like it has tried to strike a happy medium and is mainly bistro, single course meals. There is no fine dining but if the dishes are done well, the haddock sandwich for example, it might be worth a try. I have yet to see how much their beer is but I cannot imagine they would undercut the OS by much as it would be pointless.

We had remained busy in the shop up until the last hour of opening, which was fine by me. As if often the case, the weather had blossomed in the last couple of hours and our walk around the block after tea was very pleasant. The temperature has dropped a little, but I found I had to take my hat off half way around as it was not as chilly as I had thought. Although invited to the wedding party in the evening, it was at the end of a long and busy day, so we demurred – plus we do not speak Scouse. I am sure that they managed to have a good time without us.

They tell us it will be a better weather day tomorrow. I do hope they are right.

## April 20<sup>th</sup> – Sunday

I had best get this over with quickly as it makes me grumpier just thinking about it. I discovered yesterday that the much maligned council has eventually broken cover on the new St Just and St Ives bus service. It promised a limited service and they have certainly over-achieved at that. The service will run during half term week and during the summer school holidays. Clearly, this is being put on for our visitors and not for the benefit of residents. This is very welcome from my business perspective but let us not pretend, much maligned council, that it is part of 'connecting people, communities, business and services' or indeed the 'inclusive' bit of the transport vision statement. I would be even more disturbed if this service is subsidised as well.



If we were disappointed with the much maligned council bus service, we could at least enjoy the one day of the year the amateurs put on a free service in their antique buses. I had one couple tell me that they had felt like they were doing 80 miles per hour along the A30. They were in an ex-Spanish bus that might have been more used to the precipitous, winding roads of the Spanish mountains than the not quite so precipitous winding roads of West Cornwall. A neighbour reported that he watched one bus go slower and slower up Cove Hill until it came to complete stop. After disgorging its passengers to walk the rest of the way up the hill, it started off again, a little lighter on the wheels. Our neighbour suggested that the old buses were used to people being a little lighter than today. I pointed out that after 50 or so years, we all felt a little less capable going up hills.

It was a glorious day to enjoy such fun. The day had started out bright and sunshiny and had continued the same throughout. Well done Radio Pasty for getting it right. The tides were not being overly helpful with the main body of water filling the bay in the middle of the day and forcing everyone up against the dunes. It probably made the beach look a little more crowded than it actually was but there was a fair few down there with little encampments dotted all over. Once again, the surf was not up to much with all the action being in the shore break. That did not stop a cohort from bobbing around at the back for a futile few hours. I am sure that they had loads of fun.

I had some fun, too. We had moments of busyness that cheered me up no end. It did not seem that we were as busy as yesterday but then again, there were not quite so many down on the beach all day as there was today. Outside the really busy times we still ticked over at a reasonable rate, which was most gratifying.

In between the busy bits I managed to put the 'farm shop' cash and carry order together and this time remembered to press the right button. I also topped up the shelves as there was quite a bit missing. It is difficult to note individual lines being sold so the only way to find out is to tour the shop occasionally. That is hard to do if we are busy and then I forget. We have a regular customer who does it for me when she comes in to shop, which is most helpful even if I do forget the moment she leaves again.

It is one thing listening and forgetting and quite another to ask, be told and completely ignore the instruction. I suspect that they hear, 'down the first aisle' and ignore the rest thinking whatever it is will be easy to find in such a small establishment. I had several customers today who asked for things which I then provided as concise a direction to as I could. The number of people who when told an item is on the left will look right and if told bottom shelf will studiously study the top. It is quite often now that I call after them, 'your other left/right' or 'the other bottom/top, by your feet/head'. Even then it often results in a look of consternation. If I am not busy, I go and point at the item, which is far easier.

When we closed at six o'clock, the street was empty, and the beach very much thinned out. There was no one in the Harbour although the Harbour car park was still busy after seven o'clock when I took ABH around for her after tea run. It was still pleasant enough and no need again for my woolly hat but just as we completed the back nine along Coastguard Row, there were a few spots of rain about.

I had not noticed, but it must have rained properly after we got back home as the streets were wet when we stepped out again for the last run before bedtime. We usually have The Cove to ourselves at that time but for two nights running we have met people to chat with. Tonight, a lady bemoaned the loss of her wetsuit which she had left on the railings to dry. It is highly unlikely that someone mistook it for their own because it was on its own. It is also almost unheard of for things to go missing for nefarious reasons in The Cove, so this was a none too pleasant end to the day.

The Missus lightened the mood by telling me that the rain filled day the forecasters were expecting for tomorrow, had changed to a sun filled day. Ain't we lucky.

### April 21<sup>st</sup> – Monday

Standing in the shop doorway in the middle of the day I had the distinct impression that the beggars had all gone home – and without so much as a by your leave or parting gesture. It was either that or they were not keen on the tart northwesterly that had blown up during the morning. Or perhaps both. Whatever it was, it left us with a very sudden downturn in trade and I found myself scowling, although that may just have been being a little too over-zealous with the lime in my smoked salmon salad.

Having attended the gymnasium in the morning during what I feared was the last bit of busyness of the day, I felt that I should treat my body like the temple to fitness that it is – despite it looking more like a mosque – hence the salad. Alright, it was actually because the Missus had purchased some smoked salmon when she went shopping on Saturday and I had to find something to do with it. Nevertheless, the salad was most welcome after my blistering session and subsequent walk down to the Harbour beach with ABH afterwards.

As I suspected, the piles of oar weed are starting to dry out having been left behind by the dropping tides. In its current state, it would be ideal to bed down for compost if we could be fagged to bring the trailer down. Of course, that might also mean suffering the ignominy of asking to get the Harbour tractor to pull us out of the soft sand. It would be alright if the sand had been washed by the tide and was a little more firm, but this week the tides are not reaching the back of the beach. If the tides were reaching the back of the beach and the sand was firm, the weed would not have dried out and there would be no point in collecting it. You see, we think of everything.

Later in the year we might expect a plague of flies to go with a pile of weed like that. Up on the slipway they can be a proper menace but thankfully the conditions do not

appear to be right. Cutting a swathe through it all were three or four kayakers keen on a day's doing whatever kayakers do who do not go fishing. They seemed pretty well kitted out, but I could not help thinking that it would still be a bit fresh out there despite the sunshine.

The rain was clearing when ABH and I took to the street first thing. I was wondering if I had made a mistake not bringing a rain jacket, but we had the last few spots as we crossed the street and then nothing further. It did cross my mind whether the previously rainy forecast had sent everyone home early. The sunshine was a late feature, and I am sure not everyone would have seen it. I should not have worried too much, I just had to wait a little bit later than usual for the visitors who did remain to wake up.

It turned into a pleasant afternoon and while we did see a fair few people milling about, we are clearly not going to get back to where we were this coming week. The beach was thinly populated and only a few tents and camps dotted the remaining sand above the high water mark. One customer remarked on how suddenly quiet it was and told me that there was not one person sitting out at the OS whereas the day before, it had been packed. She did say there the new Surf Lodge was busy, which was odd since it would be head on into the wind.

Anyway, it must be the end of it because the contingent from Bridgnorth without an 'e' arrived today and they are never here when it is busy. I am not sure whether they arrive when it is not busy, or it is not busy because they have arrived. They have been coming as long as we have had the shop, so it might be a little late for analysis.

I went to Bridgnorth without an 'e' on rugby tour once. I do not remember a thing about it.

As the quiet spells of the afternoon got longer, I amused myself by doing the cash and carry order. Once again, I think we will struggle making up a minimum order for delivery, although I do not want to leave it an extra week because there are things that we need having been stripped in certain areas during our busyness. It is either testament to how little we need or how quiet it was, but I finished the list in record time as well as topping up the shelves as we went.

We had also run out of most of the stock our local butcher provides. That is a tricky order as we do not want too much for the quieter weeks ahead but neither do I wish to get his down here for only a few items. As expected there was little else we needed from the daily orders when it came time to close up.

If I had little to do in the shop, the Missus made up for it at The Farm. She has started to fill the eight bean and pea beds behind the cabin. I have only seen a photograph of them, but they look to be around six feet by four feet each and will take a fair amount of earth which the Missus is collecting in buckets from the end of the field. I did suggest she get the digger back again, but she said she would see

how she got on without it. She definitely looked like she had been shifting earth when she got home.

Conversely, ABH who is usually worn out when she comes back from a day at The Farm was full of beans during the evening. I wish I could have matched her enthusiasm, but I ended up taking her out twice after tea for a run on the beach and around the block. I have told the Missus she will have to work harder at wearing her out tomorrow. I did not have my false ears in at the time but I think she said something like, 'of course, dear'.

## April 22<sup>nd</sup> – Tuesday

The train has definitely left the station as if there was any doubt after yesterday. My first customer deigned to turn up two and a half hours after we opened. Had I only known I would have stayed in bed.

Radio Pasty gleefully announced that we should expect some rain later on. I am sure that the very pleasant lady was not deliberately gleeful about the rain. I expect that she is told to sound gleeful whatever weather she is announcing. Fortunately, for much of the day we were blessed with sunshine, albeit of a hazy nature through some highish level cloud. We held onto our good weather, if you ignore the thirty miles per hour northerly banging in, until the later part of the afternoon when we lost the sun and all our customers too.

We only had the one delivery in the morning and that was quickly dealt with. I had little else to do until the 'farm shop' cash and carry delivery arrived halfway through the morning. That took a whole half an hour to finish off and was not very exciting since there was nothing new in the delivery. The two new wireless units to switch the fridges on and off in the shop came in the afternoon and that distracted me for a short while. They work very well, thank you for asking.

I am going to have to find a project that I can do in the shop and that I can pick up or drop as required when customers come in. The alternatives are either to eat lots of things that I should not or buy things that, while necessary, should be bought when needed not because I had nothing better to do.

When I bent my mind to it, I recalled that one of our postcard suppliers had offered to print our own photographs at a very favourable rate that did not require huge quantities being produced. We have a dwindling supply of cards on our second stand. The images are not being reproduced by the suppliers anymore and the stand is getting emptier and emptier. Having a selection of our own photographs made into

postcards will resolve the problem and at no greater cost than it would have been had we purchased stock cards.

Every time I take a photograph on my smart mobile telephone, the image is saved to a store online. I have taken so many over the years that the provider sends me a little message every time I start my computer to remind me to delete some or pay for extra storage. These images have been accumulating since 2013 I discovered today. It does not give me a count but there will be thousands. I went through them all – I started yesterday - and managed to select 42 for the first pass. I will consult with the Missus and try and whittle them down a bit. Perhaps I should have started with an idea of how many we need and of what size but now that I have done it this way around, we will see how many we end up with.

One thing that was very apparent as I flicked through the years is the improving quality of the photographs. Actually, I noticed the degrading quality as I worked back through the years. When I took the photographs more than ten years ago, they looked perfectly good. Comparing those images now with the ones I have taken more recently, the improvement in image quality is remarkable. I do not think that it will matter when the postcard is printed, or at least I hope not, but we will have to be a bit more critical with the older ones if we choose them.

With something now to do, the afternoon passed a little more quickly or at least constructively. There are still families on holiday this week so and they provided most of the business we saw today. It will be even quieter next week and I will have to brace myself for that. As predicted, the rain finished us off from around half past four o'clock.

We had tea with the in-laws who are visiting Mother this week and I took ABH as usual after we had finished. We had put off our Sunday roast in their honour and it now felt like a Sunday. It was as quiet as a Sunday as we walked around a short block in the rain. The rain was not that heavy, but it was exacerbated by the strong wind still blowing in from the north. I had taken the precaution of wearing full metal jacket waterproofs and needed every inch of them. It was even lighter rain when we stepped out later. I do not think this rain band is trying very hard. At least it is unlikely that we will be flooded in the shop in the morning, he said casting caution to the not inconsiderable wind.

### April 23<sup>rd</sup> – Wednesday

We were fair near blown away when we ventured out first thing to take the air. Truly, we did not need to take the air; it was forced upon us. The wind had started in the west, which is where it was when we went out, but it slowly came around to the northwest during the day. Oddly, Land's End had it registered as due north but both Gwennap Head, windiest place in the universe, and St Ives had it in the northwest. Looking at the Lifeboat channel markers, so did we.

I completely forgot to mention yesterday that we had a rare occurrence of the 'cow' on Cowloe yesterday evening. This is a phenomenon where foam sticks to a vertical bit of rock at low water the shape of which is reminiscent of a cow. It is not how Cowloe got its name, however. As with many of the rocks around the bay it is most likely derived from a Cornish word – and, no, not one that means 'bunch of rocks that occasionally have a cow painted on them'. The vision is ephemeral and gone by the next tide. In twenty years, I have seen it maybe half a dozen times. I did find a photograph of it when I looked through my images yesterday and that was September 2018.

Your Diarist, dear reader, is very grateful for such events because we have now entered the doldrums. Hardly a customer darkens our doorstep, barely a pasty (sorry, MS) is sold and the fruit and vegetable fridge is merely a transitory holding place for produce until it is thrown away, rotten. By the end of the week, you will be wishing I was back at The Farm giving blow by blow accounts of building a greenhouse.

Indeed, I was quite wishing I was back at The Farm as well. I had successfully negotiated the morning by using up much of it engaged in a blistering session at the gymnasium. I am struggling to attain even lower quartile timings on the rowing machine, which is most frustrating. It would seem peculiar that my fitness is suddenly ebbing away, although I suppose it is feasible. My own theory is altitude. The new gymnasium is probably three metres lower than the hut with a tin roof and therefore the air is more dense. That will be the reason, I am convinced of it.

I fear my erroneous ways have been rumbled by our waste collection company. The cardboard that I put out for collection was still there late in the afternoon. I pay for a weekly collection of general waste and a fortnightly collection of recycling. Last year, the same truck turned up and collected both, so most weeks I would put out both general waste and the cardboard and both would go into the same truck. No one said anything about my cardboard recycling being collected weekly and I justified the deception to myself by assessing that the amount of cardboard over two weeks would probably amount to one collection anyway.

The company caught me out this year by sending separate trucks for waste and recycling, which otherwise seemed a very sensible development. I got away with it until now this year because the general waste driver would take the cardboard as well. If the recycling lorry turned up later and there was nothing to collect, so be it. Last week, I left the cardboard inside having been told that the recycling driver would always arrive after we were open. I was nearly caught out then because he arrived earlier but saw him just in time.

This week, however, I was properly caught out. Making sure I did not miss the driver this week, I left the cardboard out but to one side. The general waste driver emptied our general waste bin but left the cardboard. I think it is because it was not our recycling week, the recycling truck never turned up leaving me with four boxes of

cardboard. Had I left the cardboard on top of the general waste bin, I think the general waste man would have taken it. I had only moved it to one side because it was windy. I will have to box cleverer next week and in the meantime suffer with an excess of cardboard.

See, dear reader, did I not say you would be wishing I was back at The Farm.

Having almost recovered from my bitter disappointment of not having my cardboard taken away, I went about progressing the postcard plan. I had shown the Missus the photographs I had downloaded and put aside for her approval. She dismissed two thirds of the ones I had selected, which I felt was possibly a little over-zealous. However, fifteen postcards was not a bad number to work from and far better than the 42 I had started with.

I then started to trawl through another cache of photographs taken in the days of cameras that you had to copy the pictures off onto offline storage. If the ones online were several cohorts worth, the ones on file were legion. I did not get through them all. In truth, I was looking for one particular photograph taken at the height of the first big storm in 2008. The Missus had very fortuitously turned to see a mountainous tower of spray heading around 150 feet in the air and snapped it. It was the same wave than one local photographer caught from the top of the hill and had it syndicated around the world before the following breakfast. He has dined off that photograph ever since.

We too made a fast buck by turning the Missus' picture into a postcard, the stock of which expired last year. She was rightly proud of her contribution and I was keen that we repeat the experience especially since it sold so well – it had taken a while to sell through because at the time we needed to have 1,000 printed. It took a while to find it despite having filed the photographs in date ordered folders. Much of that time was consumed gazing at pictures I had not seen in a while. Oh, those halcyon days.

I just have one horizon to level on one of the images and then I can send them off. We will have to wait until our supplier has enough business to meet the 5,000 print run minimum order but after that, it should not take too long. Since we will be probably ordering in the region of 3,000 ourselves, it will hopefully not be long at all, although I just missed one print run by a few days. We can afford to be patient.

Unsurprisingly, there were no orders for tomorrow other than for pasties. Even then, with sales in single figures, that order was down to the bare bones. I have had to design a spreadsheet for such days so that I can see whether what we have ordered makes up the minimum for delivery. We barely scraped through.

During the morning, we had some light drizzle, but the rest of the day dried out nicely. It also brightened from the fairly dull and overcast skies we had first thing and by the time I took ABH out after tea, it was quite bright in a sunsetty sort of way. The sea, however, was misbehaving all day with quite a bit of swell blown into a frenzy by

the punchy northwest wind. It ruined any sea sports for the day and even though the wind dropped out to near nothing by the end of the day, the sea continued being naughty for a while after. It is not really surprising that after twenty years here I can effectively block out the sound of the sea. When I listened, it was making quite some racket and must have been deafening to the uninitiated.

It was chilli in the wind first thing, but generally the temperature has begun to climb. Evening walks are not only with a woolly jacket and my hat is now for mornings only. Spring has definitely sprung and preparing for summer. Bring it on.

## April 24<sup>th</sup> – Thursday

While yesterday started off poor and became bright, today did the reverse. ABH and I enjoyed some blue skies first thing when we headed for the weed strewn beach. The tides are changing, so the weed has moved about a bit and some of the dried weed has been lifted out. The Harbour tractor did some of its own weed moving to get the fishing boats out this morning.

We did not tarry as I wanted to get the postcard preparation finished before I went down to the shop. The photograph tweaking software is on the upstairs computer and it is easier to use with a mouse. I managed to get the work done but noticed another when I was just about to send them off. I had to dash upstairs with the shop open to do that one as well. The likelihood of anyone noticing that I had done so was extremely remote – dashed upstairs with the shop open, I mean. Having horizons that are not horizontal makes a mockery of word.

I added numbers of the existing postcards we needed and the fridge magnets as well. I knew that the supplier would have no stock of some of the titles I ordered but these can be added to the list for the printers. Hopefully, this will bring us close enough to the minimum print run so that we will not have to wait too long. The whole order was large and expensive. Having initially done the numbers, I reviewed them upwards which will probably run the stock for two or three years. Postcards, unlike gifts, are not something people expect to change regularly.

There was little in the way of breeze when I first came down to the shop. This too was the reverse of yesterday because as the day progressed, the wind increased. Maintaining the trend of this being a mirror image day to the one before it, the wind came in from the southeast. Due to the strange local phenomenon – we have several – this blows at me through the first electric sliding door in The Cove which faces a couple of scats off due north. Happily, it was not too cold and even allowing for wind chill, it was a balmy ten degrees. Nevertheless, it sent me scampering for my woolly jacket halfway through the morning, which then made me too warm an hour later when I had to take it off. It was on again an hour after that, which was starting to get irritating.



We saw a few more people milling about today. I have no idea what drives the changes at this time of the year. Yesterday, it was nowhere near as busy on the street and the weather was no less inviting. It is possibly how the day starts out. If it looks tricky, they decide to go to St Ives. If it looks fine, stay here, although randomly that also means St Ives. St Ives was busy, I hear.

Having completed the postcard business, I was once again at a loose end. This was very quickly resolved when a customer arrived in the middle of the afternoon after a notebook. I directed her very precisely to the spot where they are kept but she returned saying that she could not find them. Given that she went off looking in the right direction and the right height, I assumed that we had sold out, but I checked anyway and we had.

I had been toying with the idea of a stationery order for a week or so and this gave me the incentive to actually go and do something about it. It normally takes a little while to do because I have to check what we have across quite a range of products. It then takes me a little while to find the products in the online catalogue and order them. It takes even longer if particular items are out of stock, and I have to find an alternative. This time around I found myself disappointed that the supplier no longer does wrapping paper, and I could not find anything other than black shoe laces when boot laces are required. They also did not have short, coloured pencils or any sort of pencil sharpener. Most of these items were not just out of stock, they had ceased to hold them at all. We will struggle to find another supplier for, say, gift wrap and even if we do, it is unlikely we would be able to purchase just that for a reasonable price without buying more than we need.

To cap it all, because these items were unavailable, we were short of a carriage paid minimum order. The only way around it was to trawl through long lists of their stock to try and find something we needed to make up the difference. This took the best part of an hour between customers and taking a break because I could no longer discern a difference between the images on the screen.

I very occasionally like to burst the bubble many people have that Tesmorburys is a cheap place to go and shop. It is not. There are some bulk items they do well and cheaply but largely it is just a convenient place to shop and spend more money than you need to and for poor quality goods and service. Today I give you eggs.

Our supplier regretfully told us that they would have to increase the wholesale price of their eggs by ten pence a dozen. Concerned that this would make our eggs comparatively dear against people's expectations, I had a look at the price of eggs at Tesmorburys which they very kindly display on the Internet. I was quite shocked to note that their eggs of similar size and quality were 60 pence, yes, you read that right, 60 pence more than ours and that is after I put them up. Only their very cheapest, own brand eggs, transported halfway across the country were the same price as our current price. To rub salt into the wounds, Tesmorburys will purchase

these eggs at a far lower price than we buy hours and the only word for it is profiteering.

Laying to rest such disturbing notions I repaired to the Lifeboat station for an early launch of both boats. I had to have my tea in the shop before we went and in true tradition, the second I unwrapped my first roll, the customers started to stream in. They were followed by our leaflet lady who just loves to have a chat which ended only when I had to start closing up the shop.

We launched both boats into a much calmer sea than we had yesterday. We had swapped the moderate to rough sea for slight to moderate and grey skies instead. I had elected to take the role of head launcher on the Inshore launch today, as it was on my training system currency roles to fulfil. I am sure in some busier stations having a head launcher on the Inshore launch is quite handy to direct hordes of volunteer bankspeople. Here, particularly off season, the role involves standing around scratching one's behind while wearing an orange high visibility jacket to everyone else's yellow one.

My choice turned out to be unfortunate because when the boats returned later, the Inshore arrived half an hour after the big boat. We were still cleaning and washing down when the others were attending a debriefing. Turning such disadvantage around, I was able to observe in some detail that the big boat was brought up the long slip in what was very clearly a textbook recovery. We are, after all, a very sanguine, very excellent Shore Crew.

## April 25<sup>th</sup> – Friday

The morning, for the best part was grey, misty and miserable. So was the grumpy shopkeeper for that matter. However, that was an improvement from earlier when it was wet as well, and so too was the grumpy shopkeeper.

I had thrown myself upon the day without first checking through the window which sort of day I was throwing myself into. It turned out to be a little mizzly and sufficient to make my woollen jacket damp through. It also turned out that I was lucky because the light mizzle that I could not even see from the doorway, turned nasty less than an hour later and came in heavily.

Happily, it stopped raining long enough for me to get to a blistering session in the temporary gymnasium and to take ABH down to the beach. We discovered last night with the Inshore boat that there is still an abundance of weed about in the Harbour. It was much more apparent today with the tide out a bit more. There was a thick carpet of it blocking off the route to the sea. Well, it would have blocked it off had ABH not insisted on wading through it because it was just so necessary to wander about on the shingle on the other side. This meant that I too had to wade through it to get to the shingle on the other side just as ABH decided that it was, in fact, better on the original side. The weed is very slippery.

On account of better all else happening, I will tell you all about maple syrup from Vermont. The excuse for doing so is our correspondent from frozen Vermont very far west of Camborne has filed another report telling me all about it, although I looked up some additional information myself. Vermont produced 3.1 million gallons of the stuff last year, more maple syrup than anywhere else in the US. US gallons may be smaller than UK gallons, but that is still an awful lot of maple syrup and represents 15 percent of what Canada produces, which is where you generally first think of when maple syrup comes up in conversation. Alright, it probably does not come up in conversation or at least not very often but should it do so, Vermont is the last place you think of - unless you are from Vermont, or perhaps the USA in general.

Our correspondent tells me that Vermonters use maple syrup as a sugar substitute, they make candy, erm, sweets out of it and also drizzle it on snow and eat it. That seems reasonable as they seem to have rather a lot of snow as well. Our correspondent must have maple syrup producing trees locally because she details how once the sap was collected in buckets strapped to the tree but in modern times, hoses are used. These are strung between trees posing a bit of a problem to a horse and rider that suddenly comes across them. I watched a film on the computer about it and the forest looked impenetrable with blue hoses everywhere.

Frozen Vermont may well be very far west of Camborne, but it is not very far from Cornwall. I came across Cornwall in Canada by accident because when I bring up the BBC weather website for Cornwall, it shows me the weather in Cornwall, Canada. This alarmed me greatly because I thought that we were expecting temperatures in minus double figures and heavy snow until I realised the issue.

My interest piqued regarding Canada's Cornwall as I penned this very passage in today's Diary, I ventured a peek at the Diary's atlas and, almost as I expected, Canada also has its very own Camborne. It is on the banks of Lake Ontario which puts Vermont not so far to the east of it. I am going to have to review the whole concept of our correspondent's moniker.

Back to mundane reality and things got a little frantic in the shop towards the end of the day. We have our cash and carry delivery tomorrow and the store room needed to be cleared of the waste cardboard that was not taken away and various other items that had amassed over the week. Yes, I am fully aware that I could have done it earlier and saved the franticness but where is the excitement in that. Anyway, I was not expecting the soap delivery that arrived shortly ahead of the stationery order both of which arrived in the late afternoon. Neither could just be shoved into the store and be in the way, although I gave up on the soap order at the end and found a corner for it. I worked my way through the stationery order and got most of it out on the shelves. There were only a few items of overstock and these fitted nicely into the stationery box. I just managed to finish off the stationery before it was time to start clearing up for closing.

I had to work quickly to get the delivery cleared but I had little else to do with precious few customers out and about. The rain had come back in varying degrees of intensity and been with us the remainder of the day. It was still going when I took ABH around after tea with the in-laws who had come back for a farewell nosh. The Missus had dissected some lobsters for the event and had broached a pot of our crab meat as well. The lobsters were actually supposed to be a present for a family member who had not been well. We will send a letter along the lines of, "We got you a couple of lobsters as a get well soon present. They were delicious."

It is remarkable that I had not been put off the seafood for tea. The wind in the wrong direction coupled with the incessant rain had conspired to bring the smell of rotting weed across the front of the shop all afternoon. It was quite intense on the beach earlier and is reminiscent of rotting seafood. I am pretty resilient to such things when it comes to eating, thankfully.

It was still raining, and more heavily, when I took ABH out for a last spin. We spun very quickly and called it a day. The world, his wife, three chickens and a goat all said that tomorrow will be glorious. I will look out of the window tomorrow – if I remember before I step out – and decide if they are right then.

## April 26<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

They lied, darn their eyes. All those people who told me what a glorious day today would be, lied through their teeth to me. It did not matter because I did not believe a word of it anyway, but it introduced a glimmer of hope that would not have been there otherwise.

At least it was not properly wet first thing and ABH and I got away with just a damp visit to the Harbour beach where we were very nearly chased off by a reluctant ebbing tide. The swell had increased overnight and even a couple of hours after high water, it was flogging over the end of the wall and the waves were running up the beach at us. It is fortunate that ABH is fleet of foot, else she would have been caught out when she ill-advisedly got too close to the tide line.

I was up early and did not have to rely on ABH to wake me, either. It was cash and carry delivery morning and I wanted to greet them on my terms and not theirs. I have various duties to perform in the course of the morning before the shop opens. Getting even an expected delivery when I am unprepared can throw a lemming up the drainpipe. As it was, they were much later than their normal time and in the intervening hour or so, I received two other deliveries that I managed to deal with while I was waiting. The delivery arrived with enough time to bring it all in and have fifteen minutes to clear the shop before we opened.

Most of the stock being delivered was replacements for the stock we had sold during Easter. We rarely buy new items unless there seems to be a good demand for it and

anything else needs to be really slow selling before we drop it completely. This rarely happens during the season. The one new thing that arrived with this order, was the new breed of vapes.

At the end of last year, we had been told that the single use disposal vapes were to be banned from January. We therefore went all out to clear the stock before we closed at the end of October and were successful. The Government then decided to extend the deadline until the end of June but for us it was too late and little point in renewing our disposable stock. Since we reopened, I have been looking for replacement vapes that are compliant with the new law. There are several rules but basically, the unit must have a battery that is rechargeable and be refillable with vape fluid. There are other details that I will not trouble you with dear reader as the ones I have mentioned are the relevant ones for the purposed of my story.

I had held off buying compliant vapes because I had not got the first clue what I was looking at. Given that we can only purchase vapes from our cash and carry this was a good place to go and ask, I thought. I was informed that the ElfBar that they sell is a compliant model. It has a base unit and a capsule or pod that is inserted into the unit. I did make the mistake of thinking that it had five of these pods in the pack which was a reasonable assumption given the recommended retail price is over £12.

It was not until they arrived today that I noted that there was only one pod in the pack that made the ensemble very expensive indeed. I was also concerned that with only one pod per pack, I would need some spare pods of different flavours. I went to our supplier's website only to find that they did not carry them. I sought information from the wider Internet but again could find no reference to the refill pods. Eventually, I found the manufacturer website and even in their online shop, these pods were not listed. There was not even a reference to them.

I had to conclude that the manufacturer has basically produced a compliant but single use vape. It ticks the boxes in that it is rechargeable and it is technically refillable, if they ever produce a refill for it. The Government says only that refills "should be separately available", so unless pressed, I guess the manufacturer can get away with it. As I cast around the Internet for information, I noted that most stores including the manufacturer have reduced the price to something more sensible. I have followed suit because even I could not warrant selling a single use vape at the price suggested.

Despite everyone's assurances yesterday that we would have fine weather today, it took until late afternoon before there was even the slightest suggestion of brightness. The mizzle had lasted most of the morning, but the afternoon had all been dry. We were busier than I imagined too, and I discovered quickly that our pasty order (sorry, MS) would be woefully short. I had anticipated this and had decided to rely on our frozen stock but by the time it was clear that we would run out, it was too late to bake the frozen ones. We did not do too badly and only missed one order telephoned in that we could not meet.

The Missus had headed to The Farm halfway through the morning. She missed yesterday with her family here but had been up most days during the week. There has been much planting going on with around 120 lettuces of various sorts planted in the raised beds now in regimented lines. The planting was staggered to attempt to have leaves ready for picking in a rolling cycle. Today, was a day for working in the store up there, sorting out the big beachware deliveries we had in the last month or so. The boxes had been unceremoniously dumped waiting on this very day to be organised.

Part of the organisation was to bring a selection of goodies down to the shop after she had finished. We did not have a great deal missing and consequently not a lot to bring down. There was enough, however, to fill the recently cleared store room and give me something to do tomorrow, although I cleared much of it before we closed.

In the last hour before we closed, the glorious day that I had been assured of miraculously appeared. It was accompanied by a clear influx of visitors who dropped by the shop for a quick peek to see what we had. Some of them even bought things which was encouraging. The last customer of the day told me that the last time she was here her family enjoyed, 'the best cheese pasties ever', to which I responded that we still had three left in the warmer. Clearly tempted, she bought the lot and cleared the cabinet. We do like it when a plan comes together.

We had clear skies and a setting sun in our eyes when we walked around after tea. I was not going to bother because up to the point I put my feet up and reached for my book, she was sparko on her seat across the room. The second I opened the book, she sprang to life – the minx.

Even with a light fleece on I was over-dressed and very warm as we walked around. I was very grateful I had elected to wear my little boy trousers else I would have been most uncomfortable. There were a few cars coming and going, sitting in the Harbour car park to watch the solid swell that has emerged during the day pound over the Harbour wall. It was for that reason alone I had directed ABH around the block rather than down to the beach.

Later, I found that the head torch I was wearing was entirely superfluous as there was still enough light to see by at nine o'clock. The sky above was that deep hued blue that goes in increasing deeper gradients to the darkness to the east. Jupiter sat alone, high up in the middle of it like some jewel on a vast velvet cushion. What a pretty evening.

## April 27<sup>th</sup> – Sunday

The day commenced as it left yesterday, which was good of it. Some cumulus cloud drifting in from the south and east spoiled it a bit later in the morning, but it was still

pretty to look at. The sea state had not moderated overnight and was still providing some good surfing fortified by a south easterly breeze.

Our customer visits were a bit more consistent during the day today. Most appeared to be walkers passing through picking up snacks and postcards. We are seeing some foreign travellers, but it is a little early to say whether there are more of less than last year. Those that are here are a little more circumspect about sending home postcards which is, I imagine, much to do with the £3.20 stamp they must buy in order to do so. I can understand the justification for the high price of domestic stamps but the eye-watering increase in international post is, I believe, gratuitous.

Since we were not that busy and had useable periods in between customers, I carried on clearly bits in the store room. I had to work through the stock that the Missus had brought down late yesterday first as it was in the way. This did not take long and then I was able to get at the rest of the grocery order. When I had cleared a hole through that, I was able to reach the soap that had arrived Friday and I had secreted into a corner of the store room. We have two fewer types as the supplier's supplier has ceased to do those fragrances. Obviously, they were the ones that were good sellers for us but presumably not many others.

It did not take long. I had three complaints about the lack of bus service to St Just and up the north coast before the middle of the day. It was a shame because I had put it to the back of my mind. It is likely to cause greater consternation as the year progresses. The lack of service had put paid to the common and popular practise of bussing out to a location and walking back or vice versa. Quite how that meets the much malign council's objective of 'promoting healthy lifestyles' is a mystery.

The spring tide this time around is quite a big one. The Tribbens at the wall end dries out quite a bit and the big beach is, well, big at low water. The rock field in front of The Beach car park looked a little more accentuated than previously in the wide expanse. A closer look revealed that this was mainly due to the presence of weed wrapping around the rocks making them look black and oily. I thought that the field had been extended down the beach again, but it was only weed lying along the point where the flat beach meets the incline at the back.

For all the day's loveliness and the proliferation of people milling about, we were much quieter than yesterday. It was clearly just a day for sitting about, drinking coffee and eating cake and later drinking beer. The people we saw in the shop were mainly browsers who had been passing by. Otherwise, it was postcards and pop. I found the day to be excruciatingly tedious and was forced to drink tea and eat cake. It fostered so little enthusiasm that the things that needed doing on the store room would still be waiting tomorrow because I spent the day gazing out of the window and scratching my behind.

There was next to no ordering to be done at the end of the day, and I retired to my tea with some relief. In the hour before we closed, I managed to fillet and vacuum

pack a pollack that a neighbour insisted I take off his hands. It was an 'ansum beast as well. It was evident that my filleting skills needed as much honing as the knife I was using but I did a half decent job and pin boned them as well. It is probably a crime to freeze a fish that fresh, so I will cook it and have it for breakfast.

I was surprised that they went out because the deep rolling swell was deep and rolling come high water. Our neighbour is a seasoned mariner, so he would have ensured that there was not much risk involved, just a measure of discomfort I would assume. We watched the waves thunder and crash on the rocks just below us as we had our tea.

I made sure that I was not overdressed this time when I took ABH around the block afterwards. It was pleasantly mild and with little wind to cool us off. We met with friends and neighbours at the corner of Coastguard Row and stopped for a chat. It really was quite splendid standing there with the sun warming us and lighting up the abundance of flora of all sorts running away up the cliff. First thing in the morning, at the other end of the Row, the aroma of tri-cornered garlic inescapably infused the air. It prompted an almost unconscious urge to breathe deeply to take it in. Towards the evening, it was rather less dominant.

Oh, to be in Cornwall, now that April's here.

Sorry, Rob.

## April 28<sup>th</sup> – Monday

Since it is so very quiet at the moment, I decided to surprise my local surgery by asking them if I could turn up for my 'birthday bloods' before they started sending text messages, calling and sending the boys around after me. On some previous years, I have left it too late and had to put it off until October before going and my text inbox is full of admonishment and warnings of dire consequences.

Pre-empting the chase was one reason for calling. The other was that I noticed when I went to see my foot lady that the surgery is offering free medicals to those attaining certain ages. In a few weeks, I shall be one of those ages, so I thought to combine my bloods visit with the medical, which seemed sensible. I called in the middle of the morning to miss the early congestion and spoke with a very pleasant lady who answered the telephone after only a brief wait. Explaining my time saving plan, she immediately pointed out that I had not yet attained the age required for the free medical. I pointed out in return that it was only a few weeks before I did attain that crucial age but she was adamant that I could not make the appointment for even one day ahead of my birthday. It was the roots.

Poppycock and balderdash, I told her in my head. I do not know if she had been told that was a rule or was just being cautious and did not want to ask. My problem was



that it will start getting busy halfway through May which is why I booked the birthday bloods early. To prove that I could be just as awkward and childish I told her that I would not bother with my free medical. If I am to expire early because of lack of attention, I shall make sure I do it on their doorstep. That will teach them.

It occurred to me after I slammed the telephone down gently that I could book my medical in for this time next year when I would still be of the appropriate age. They will know not to mess with me. Knowing my luck, they will have run out of medicals by then.

Our 'heatwave' seems to be going well, sort of. The sunshine element of the 'heatwave' got a nice big tick in the box, although there seemed to be some milky and thin cloud cover to the north. The 'heat' bit of heatwave found itself on a bit of a sticky wicket thanks to a bolshie east wind running in at 25 miles per hour and bringing the barely mild temperature down by three degrees. I am sure if you found yourself some shelter from it and in direct view of the sun, it was very pleasant indeed.

The sea that was still running high first thing when we stepped out, moderated through the day. As the tide pushed back in again there was some very surfable waves about and only a few people to take advantage of them. At high water, the waves were no longer coming over the Harbour wall and the bay looked much kinder.

Earlier, taking advantage of the low tide, Falmouth Divers were back maintaining the Lifeboat channel markers again. They came around in a little tin boat that reminded me of childhood baths. There was just enough water in the Harbour to launch it courtesy of the Harbour tractor. They were using the Harbour painter line as well that runs the length of the beach and it was elevated to head height. I had intended to take ABH down there after I came back from the gymnasium but halfway down the slipway, I changed my mind as it looked a bit busy down there. We walked around the block instead which did not seem to upset the little girl too much.

I am becoming accustomed to our quiet days bit by bit. Somehow, I managed to find things to do to occupy myself. What they were, I could not tell you, but I do not think that whatever they were pushed the world forward any. We had a visit from a representative of a cash and carry in Barnstaple, which I had never heard of. Apparently, it is a town in Devon. I had never heard of the company either, but I wish we had a couple of years ago when we were having trouble finding a cash and carry that would deliver to us. The company had only recently started servicing beyond Penzance having previously thought that the last eight miles were eight too far. Desperation, possibly, changed their minds and the representative was here to tell me all about it.

I took some time to study their submission later in the day in some detail. As the representative had said, they were cheaper than our current supplier and could

probably replace it for the breadth of our stock. The only disadvantage would be that a visit to the depot in an emergency would not be feasible. I considered that we might use them to supply some of our needs but with a 25 case minimum order, I would have to carefully pick and choose which items we would get from them and which from our existing cash and carry. This would make the process overly complicated, so we will demur on this occasion. It is good to know that they are there should anything happen with our existing relationship.

As noted, it was a very quiet day with some notable sales. It would have been hardly worth getting up for were it not for a small group of French people from France who turned up close to closing. Not only were they an amiable bunch and provided with some amicable discussion when we could understand each other, but they also spent nigh on £200 on posh gin and groceries including much local produce. Nom de plume and entente cordiale, I say.

## April 29<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday

ABH had me up early this morning. This was alright by me because I had already decided that I needed to be in the shop a little earlier than usual because I had been woefully lax about keeping the drinks fridge stocked. I had, however, anticipated being at this juncture and had ordered a good stock of soft drinks in before Easter. It had just taken little longer than I expected to get to this point.

It was one glorious day in the offing when we stepped out for our initial walk of the day. That nagging easterly wind was still with us bending the Lifeboat channel markers over to 45 degrees at low water. It was high water when we passed by the head of the Harbour in the morning, so we walked up to Coastguard Row instead where it was a little more sheltered.

It took me until opening time to finish my restocking and then there was the dairy delivery to do. I had forgotten about it until I opened the newspaper box for some other reason. Obviously, I need not have hurried because we were quiet for most of the morning. We did see some busyness at the end of the morning and through to the afternoon, but it was most sedate.

This was probably a good thing. Early in the afternoon I was approached by a young lady who I knew from her working with the Sennen Surf School during various summers here. She asked if she could ask me a few questions regarding the changes to tourism since the dreaded lurgi, so I assumed it was some college project she was doing. Instead, she floored me by saying that she was writing an article for the Financial Times.

I had a brief fight with my conscience, which acquiesced almost immediately – my conscience having the backbone of a whelk. I was mainly concerned that once my thoughts had been published in such an iconic and widely read journal as the

Financial Times, it might throw an unbearable shadow over my more ironic publication and possibly alienate the readership - all both of them - that I had spent years cultivating.

It is entirely possible that after forty minutes of expounding my views in response to the young lady's questions, she may have regretted asking me in the first place. I pulled no punches and at the end made sure she knew how to spell much maligned council and ensured that any reference made about me would go by the name, grumpy shopkeeper. I was honoured to be asked to share my views but had no wish to be subject to the Cornish nationalist version of a fatwa. I am still banned from St Ives, after all.

She told me that she would let me know in advance of the article's publication so that I could first, read it and secondly, go into hiding, although depending on how much of what I said is published, those two made me in reverse order. I did ask that she held back publishing until after 19<sup>th</sup> May as we would not have newspapers until after that date and I might miss it completely.

I spent the rest of the day between customers staring at the beach that had decided wear its Sunday best today. Down at low tide, the beach sprawled, dotted with a few walkers and water users here and there. I spotted a couple of dogs running about making full use of every inch they could reach. One pair, impatient at having to wait for their masters to get kayaks ready, bolted into the water like hairy torpedoes. The water showed off various hues of blue and turquoise – someone told me – and pushing onto high water eased itself over the rocks and remaining weed almost by stealth. High pressure is in charge and most of the waves have been flattened out. The only movement on the water was driven by the wind that was every bit as blowy as it was yesterday and very probably more.

What the wind was also, was warm. Well, warmer than yesterday. I was told that out and about it was a warm day and that in the shelter from the wind, it was baking. I could not attest to that, other than the Missus returning from The Farm vaguely cooked, but several customers told me what I was missing. If that wind would kindly desist, I might take the hint and slip into little boy trousers myself.

I did so for my walk around the block with ABH and that wind was indeed more refreshing than chilling. There were only a few cars in the car park lined up against the sea wall presumably in advance of the sunset. The sea with few waves was not all that interesting unless you like the illusion that it is rapidly moving westward in the wind. It was making a bit of fuss over at North Rocks where it was crashing and leaping in plumes of white into the air.

We made it around the block in very good time and only met one person to chat with. That was the Lifeboat mechanic. The Lifeboat had been placed out on the slipway for most of the afternoon and I received a reasonably constant stream of enquires as to why. I had responded with the reasonable guess that it was there while work went on

inside. It was correct. The winches are getting new hydraulic filters – no, me neither. By the time the tenth person had asked, I was suggesting that all Lifeboats need to be aired at regular intervals to stop internal gases building up and that the flags had been washed and were hanging out to dry in the wind.

Oh, come on. You would not deny me a grumpy shopkeeper a little harmless entertainment to pass a slow day, surely, dear reader.

## April 30<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday

I had an excitement filled morning: a day release from The Cove, or rather just the morning.

What a day I had to enjoy it with, or is that in. The sun was shining right from the very outset of the day and our easterly wind, just as warm as it had been the day before, had diminished somewhat. The Missus would stand in for me in my absence, so I rallied around to get the shop ready for her to take over. I had only remembered the dairy order last night when I told her what to expect and completely forgot about the bread and pasties (sorry, MS). As luck would have it, I managed to clear both before I went off on my adventure leaving only the dairy to do and thus meeting the expectations I had set. I must remember to set greater expectations next time so she can do the lot.

I always allow plenty of time to get to appointments as I cannot abide to be late or to have to rush in order to be on time. So, when I found myself behind the only bus that travels north from the village, I was not concerned. I only found out about this bus last year. It runs from Penzance to St Just the long way around through St Buryan, down the back lane and emerging at the eastern edge of the village. It runs twice a day, once out, once back and is there to take children from the outlying villages to Cape School. Given that it was two-thirds of the way through its journey, it looked pretty empty. I would be concerned that the much maligned council would be eyeing it up for saving a few quid by cancelling it altogether.

The driver in front managed to get past just before the airport straight and I followed suit. I arrived in St Just in plenty of time for my bloods appointment that I had booked for early o'clock to beat the rush. It is this that serves as excitement in my grumpy shopkeeper world. I gave it a few minutes and waited in the truck to make sure I arrived just five minutes before my appointment, after all, I did not want to look too keen.

As it was, I had to wait twenty minutes, which was unusual. I asked again at reception to make sure that I was not waiting for an appointment that was not going to happen. The receptionist assured me all was in order but the nurse that I was seeing had a problem with the patient before me that had caused the delay. I did

think that she was seeing me next, so her day was not about to get any better but decided I best keep quiet.

Usually, I remember to ask for a prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test to be added to the range of normal tests but had forgotten, so I asked the nurse. She went out of the room and returned moments later with a pamphlet. She then took time to explain that the PSA test was not very accurate and that regardless of any symptoms, I should seek regular examinations, maybe once a year. She said that the risk increased with age and that having the examinations were a very good idea and a much better idea than relying on the PSA test.

I was very impressed that she had taken the time to explain and so very clearly as well. It almost seemed incidental that she was about to drain my arm of blood and she was very good at that too. I screamed very little compared to how much I normally scream.

Despite feeling the effects of extreme exsanguination, I made my way into the town square to avail myself of a couple of scotch eggs from the butcher there. Each of the two butchers in town have things that they do well. I would never buy hogs pudding from anyone but Mr Olds and scotch eggs from the butcher in the square, MacFaddens. That was all the shopping I needed to do in town and headed back for the truck before I made a spectacle of myself by fainting in the street.

The Missus had instructed me to call into our builders' merchants the other side of town for drill bit that she needed while I was out. It is a little off as she does not even have a pair of DIYwoman overalls and is bringing the profession into disrepute. She also requested that I stop off at the fuel merchants a little further along where they dump woodchips for free collection by the public. I did explain that I would probably be too weak from blood loss, but she insisted.

The last time the Missus went up there they had no new supply and the situation was the same when I arrived. There was, however, enough lying around but needed a bit of digging as it was compacted having been at the bottom of previous piles. What she had not told me was the number of buckets she had in the back of the truck. It took the best part of half an hour to scrape up enough woodchip to fill them all.

We seamlessly swapped roles when I returned to The Cove. The only difference a customer might have noticed was the person behind the counter was no longer, rosy cheeked but rather pale and wan. Actually, no one noticed a thing because at that time in the morning there were no customers.

The customers did arrive, temped by one of the most glorious days we have seen so far this year. It was warm too and even on the shadowy side of the street and standing behind a counter in a stiff breeze, I was far from chilled. In fact, the breeze was very welcome as I have not yet shifted from my mid-layer top to a short sleeve shirt. It was certainly the first day I had felt quite that warm in the shop.

I would be warmer yet when it came to loading the incinerator bin that the Missus had ordered into the truck. She had mooted the idea a few days ago having found what was roughly a 40 gallon drum with holes bored into it on the Internet. I did question the idea of buying an incinerator and was going to pour cold water on it, but the Missus was hot on the idea. She explained that we probably would not find another industrial tumble dryer drum, which we had used before and on balance, I think she was probably right. The old one had disintegrated after a reasonable tour of duty. I suggested that a new one would quickly burn through our funds, but she told me she had found a red hot deal for it. Even the courier was keen and delivered it a day before it was due. They must have been on fire to get it here so quickly. I was grateful that it had arrived. Buying things from certain sites on the Internet you can quite easily get your fingers burnt.

Alright, I have stopped now. The only termite in the yoghurt of a near perfect April day was that a customer who had availed themselves of the services of our online shop and purchased a hooded sweatshirt had written to tell me that it had not arrived. To make matters worse, it was a hooded sweatshirt that we had exhausted our stock of. I had placed an order to replace them, but it was scheduled to arrive in the next week or so. I offered the customer the choice of waiting or having a refund and they elected to wait. We will send the replacement via a tracked service.

I then proceeded to try and make a claim on the Post Office which had somehow lost the item and went to the Post Office website. From there I was directed to the Royal Mail website and a page that told me everything I wanted to know about claiming other than how I might actually make the claim. There were references to form P58 available at the post office but I rather thought that there must be some way of claiming online.

Starting by clicking on the most likely links and progressing to the more unlikely links on the page full of text, I eventually found the correct one. I could not possibly tell another enquirer which link it was, but it was not at all obvious. I proceeded to supply the three pages of information that the online form required. Happily, I had the Certificate of Posting with its reference, and I reprinted the invoice I supplied to the customer as proof of the value of the item both of which I uploaded to the form. Quite how a sender is supposed to provide proof of the value of an item that has not been recently purchased, I have no idea.

The form warned me that the total permissible compensation for my loss would not meet the value of the item. I was aware of this but considered that some recompense was better than none at all even if my cynicism suggested the latter was more likely to be the outcome.

During the process, I had to ask our customer's permission to provide his personal details that the claim form required. I also told him that if the hooded sweatshirt did eventually appear, he was most welcome to keep it and not worry about informing

us. It was not long after the last of our message exchanges that I had an invoice from our supplier which indicated that the new stock would arrive tomorrow. What a happy result that will be.

It was a slightly busier day than yesterday but in the final couple of hours of opening, the street emptied and we went quiet in the shop. Having completed the few chores that I had and looked about for orders to make, I twiddled a few thumbs until, at the last knockings we had a five minutes to closing rush. How very quaint, I thought.

Everyone today had told me how warm it was. After tea, I had the opportunity to find out for myself and indeed, it was most temperate even in the easterly breeze that had not given up all day. I hardly needed the jacket I was wearing. We stopped for a chat with a visitor on the way around and again with some of the Lifeboat crew who were loitering in the RNLI car park taking a beer in the remains of the sun.

As delightful ends of days go, this was definitely one of them.