

DIARY 2026

July 1st – Wednesday

Well, that is a relief and one less thing to be concerned about.

I spent my rest time last night reading the latest missive from the DRS (collecting plastic bottles) people. With every episode, more detail is added to the story. Up until the last issue of news, small stores could be exempted from the scheme if they were in the high street and a bigger store nearby was included. Things were a little less clear about rural stores and we almost certainly would have no one nearby taking one for the team.

The latest newsletter expanded the definitions of exemption which now automatically excludes all stores smaller than 100 square metres. Then, the next band is urban stores between 100 square metres and 199 square metres can apply to be considered for exemption. Now, quite what the difference is, I am struggling to determine, but rural stores of less than 200 square metres can also apply. Cor, if you had an urban store at 199.5 square metres you would either be very miffed or off buying some bricks to close off half a square metre of your shop.

I was not certain, but I thought that we were below or just above 100 square metres of floor space. I checked with the Government's business rates valuation pages where it details our business rates calculation. Hallelujah, we are 98.2 square metres and automatically exempt from this utter lunacy. I am very pleased that our size is officially recorded because come the time, we can point at the official record and tell the DRS people to go away – very politely, of course.

It does beg the question, however, of how people buying and paying deposits on their soft drinks, will reclaim their money. I really cannot see them taking their empty bottles to Penzance based on my observations that they sometimes find it difficult to take them 10 metres to the nearest litter bin. I know that I am naturally sceptical, but I cannot see the process working except in closed environments. The DRS people ran a pilot at the Wimbledon Championships Qualifying Competition in Roehampton. That is precisely the closed environment I am suggesting where it will work. The purchases are consumed, and the return machines are there, on hand. No one but the very committed are going to carry their empties around until they find a return point.

Well, there is half The Diary for the day, and we have not got around to life in The Cove yet.

For the first time in more than a week I managed to get to the gymnasium. Life has conspired to prevent me for the previous week or more, so I was very much looking forward to getting a blistering session in before attempting the north face of the day

in the shop. We were, as this week is seeming to prove, very quiet in the morning. I could probably have slipped away for an hour and no one would have noticed but I dutifully waited for the Missus to relieve me, just in case.

As the Missus was going shopping as soon as I returned, I took the girls out for a spin. Since BB's operation, I have been taking them both around on the lead. This morning, however, both pulled me down the slipway and despite putting up a reasonable fight, I caved and decided to let them off the lead with serious misgivings about doing so for the injured party. I had thought that her stitches would provide some control as it would be uncomfortable to be too energetic. How wrong could I be. She took off like a rocket and was still bolting around the beach when I got down there to try and slow her down. You would think she had been incarcerated for a week. In the end, I had to put her back on the lead and told her not to grass me up to the Missus.

By the time I got back to the shop the afternoon trade was starting to move. The cloud cover that we had endured all morning, slowly cleared to half a sky of blue and gave us some sunshine. This jacked up the enthusiasm no end and we saw some buoyant business all during the afternoon as indeed we have on all the other days of this week so far.

The swell that I said was not there yesterday showed its hand in the evening with a deep rolling ground sea. It came again in the middle of the afternoon today with the tide on the push and beckoned a few surfers out into the bay. Again, with westerly or southwesterly breezes, the surf was not up to much, but it was better than it being flat calm which it looks like we are heading towards again by the end of the week.

Talking of calm, The Cove emptied out at shortly before five o'clock. Apparently, there was some sporting event most people wanted to dash off and watch. I was left to my own devices until, undeterred by a must see football match, enough people broke away to give us a five minutes to closing rush.

Just before they started to arrive, I received a telephone call which I should have just left alone but I had to leave closing the curtains and go around the counter to see what the number was, so I reasoned it would not take long to get rid of whoever it was.

Most customers now telephone from a mobile telephone and this was a landline, so I expected some salesperson or similar but instead got someone from the Performing Rights people. I have, in the past, had scam callers claiming to be the PRS so I very reasonably asked the very pleasant person to find some way of verifying who he was – although, given the number, I was reasonably sure it was genuine. It was at this moment that the rush started.

I asked very pleasantly our very pleasant man to go away but he persisted. I put down the telephone and served my customers with him bleating in my ear (my false

ears are connected to the telephone, which is very handy – usually). I asked him again to desist but he kept telling me that it would only take a minute. I should have just put the telephone down on him, which at least would have stopped me getting cross with him, but it felt rude to do so and my telephone etiquette is exemplary – well, it was until I got cross with him and it all ended badly.

I had told him to send me a message with his questions. He sent me a message that merely gave their working hours, which was no help at all since I did not intend to call them. I have recently answered some questions from the Valuation Office via its website, so I cannot see why the PRS cannot do the same. I sent them a reply because I did owe the very pleasant man an apology for being cross with him. I suggested he call again in November – when I will be in the middle of a field.

I closed the shop with the tumbleweed rolling down the deserted street – not a soul in sight. It was still quiet later when I took the girls around. Maybe we lost.

July 2nd – Thursday

It was a very disappointing sight looking from the window first thing: the mist was back. The wind had gone to the northwest again, which gave us all the trouble before. Radio Pasty and other commentators had told me that it would clear in the afternoon, but it was still hanging about at gone one o'clock. There was a fair amount of mizzle with the low cloud, too. That came and went and in between, it seemed awfully warm although the breeze took the edge off it a bit.

We were a little busier a little earlier today. Our visitors still shunned the early morning but closing in on the middle of the day, we started to see, couples mainly, buying going home presents. At one point there was a bit of a crowd developing across the road on the benches, but it came to nothing in the end. I think that many people were trying to guess whether the mist would clear or not before deciding what they would do today. It would seem that in the end, they all beggared off somewhere else.

One of our neighbours from a way up the hill discovered our Sea Sisters canned pilchards and hake as she made one of her random visits. She told me that they were visiting friends abroad next week and wanted something different to take as gifts. I had been very surprised how quickly these premium cans of fish had sold, given the price. I think that I have explained before, expensive they may be, but the quality is exemplary and very much value for money as a special treat.

The display had been thinning out quite quickly and I had been planning to order some more over the last few days. Our neighbour's purchase of three, pushed me to place the order immediately after she left. I had a reply almost immediately. The only stock they had was for one of the pilchards and a cuttlefish, which I did not think would sell all that well. The rest was Norfolk whelks which was pushing the boundaries of local produce a little too far.

Reluctantly, I decided against buying just the one line as I think that the tins work well as a range. I did ask if we could have a conversation about their production cycle so that I could plan when we might purchase replacements, but I think, given the timing, it will have to wait until next year. I had a reply to my query a little later in the afternoon and was given one of the founding partners' telephone numbers. I will pick the best time and give her a call.

A little way into the afternoon, our new railing arrived. This was a surprise. It was a surprise on two counts. First, it arrived far more quickly than I might have imagined because I was almost certain that it was custom made; the length of it was not a standard size. The biggest surprise, however, was the weight and construction of the thing.

It rather exceeded my expectations and was something probably more likely seen attached to brick-built outhouses or perhaps outside military establishments aimed at deterring enemy tanks. During ordering, I had at the last moment shortened the run to make an allowance for the elliptical feet. Even so, I now feared that due to their chunkiness, it would not fit. I put the feet in place and measured again and, in theory, it just about works. We also appear to have an extra handrail, which I cannot quite fathom, there being two lengths for the legs but two extra poles of handrail length. Ah, I just fathomed it. We have a mid-height rail as well - for small people.

The expected afternoon rush never happened. This, of course, was a huge disappointment because the morning quiet, though not as quiet as previous days, *did* happen. It means that we will have far too many pasties (sorry, MS) for the weekend. We perambulated slowly through the rest of the afternoon until I had made my sandwich ahead of Lifeboat training in the evening. Then we got busy.

Having been quiet all afternoon until that point, it took me more than an hour to eat my sandwich. I just about finished before I had to close up and head over to the Lifeboat station.

The day had transformed after my last complaint about the mist not clearing. The skies were cloudless and the sun was truly in command. I should really have worn my Top Gun aviator sunglasses as I drove the Tooktrak down to a fairly busy beach. There were some young ladies gathered on the old slipway to my right as I drove down, waiting on a bit of wall jumping as soon as I was out of the way. There was not a great deal of room to position the boat as the tide was almost fully in and we waited there until the big boat launched.

There was still enough swell in the bay to push a bit of water over the Harbour wall, much to the delight of the aforementioned young ladies. There were some kayaks afloat in the Harbour as well, messing about, so the swell was not severe. It was enough, however, for our young lady helm to complain that her knees had taken a battering during their hour and a half training. I am surprised that the Institution has

not issued some mandate on how to knee to avoid the long-term effects as they are usually quite hot on such things.

We hung about in the crew room and discussed matters of great import while drinking cups of tea and consuming flapjacks that our sole lady member of the very excellent Shore Crew thought to provide. She is a prolific baker and nearly always brings a cake of some sort on a Thursday when she attends. Some ungrateful bounder did suggest that the flapjacks were a little lacklustre as they had no chocolate in them. I will have words with myself later.

We were called to the boat hall by an enthusiastic member of the team who thought to ring the bell when he saw the big boat come back into the bay. It had only arrived to continue its exercise plan and we had to wait another half an hour in the sunshine until it had finished.

I saw the Inshore boat heading back to the Harbour and went to attend to the Tooktrak. I was in the throes of my preparations when the same crew member who had prematurely rung the attendance bell asked that the Inshore return to the bay so that he could photograph both boats doing a 'fly-past'. He is not only an avid and accomplished photographer but also the pseudo-official station photographer and also is used by the Institute on occasion to attend and photograph events. It added another half an hour to our proceedings which, of course, we did not mind at all [it says here].

While I attended to bringing the Inshore boat back onto the trailer with a rolling swell not making the job any easier, the big boat was coming back onto the slipway. I had a very clear view and can attest to the fact that it was indeed a textbook recovery up the shop slip. The rest of the procedure, I had to assume because I was engaged in taking the Inshore boat up the Harbour slipway for a wash down and putting away.

We returned to assist with the big boat's recovery when we had finished and saw to the securing of the boat and the turning on the cradle to make the boat ready for its next service. We are, after all, a very fastidious, very excellent Shore Crew.

July 3rd – Friday

We started the day as we hoped it would go on, in terms of the weather, at least. There was a geet big shiny sun rising over Escalls or somewhere like that and reflecting brightly off the sea. It was perfectly temperate, although I had worn a jacket when I took the girls around first thing expecting at least a bit of a chill in the breeze. There was none.

Despite the upturn in the weather, the start of the business day was just lacklustre as the day before. If that was a disappointment, at least the newspapers turned up in time and in good order. I still have not heard from the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company, but it is clear that they have made an effort even if they are unwilling to

talk to me about it. There was only a bread delivery after that, and I did not even have to top up the soft drinks fridge. It is one of the few advantages of not having any customers buying things.

There is help at hand, however – the Scottish are coming. The shop was overrun with two small boys, their mum and grandmother. I am sure that there must have been more of them. It certainly seemed like there was. They spent an inordinate amount of time choosing some gifts and sweets before coming to the till. Just as they were about to leave, grandmother noted that they were still missing their buckets and spades, the whole purpose of coming into the shop in the first place.

I was roundly disabused of any hope that I might have had that we put a dent in our pasty numbers (sorry, MS) today. I had based my weekend order on actually selling some yesterday and today. Unless we get very busy over the weekend, which I would say is unlikely, quite a lot of the stock will be going into the freezer.

At least we had a delivery. I was expecting a consignment of plastic postal bags last night. The Doing Parcels Dreadfully company had told me that the delivery would arrive after we closed last night. There was no parcel left when I looked after returning from the Lifeboat station when we finished. I met another driver today when they had a second attempt at delivering it, this time more successfully. He told me that the previous driver had got as far as the Lifeboat station and could not find THE OLD BOATHOUSE despite it being in foot high, chrome lettering across the front of the building. I suggested that perhaps he should seek a different career, one that did not involve observation.

I had time to make observations of my own. We have a big, spring tide, low water beach to gaze down upon. The top end had a line of camps, surprisingly large in number, which might explain where some of my customers had gone. There was then a large expanse of unoccupied sand before the sea that was pleasantly populated with a number of swimmers and surfers in roughly equal numbers. Some of the latter were out the back with a good number of, presumably, less experienced, closer into shore.

The inner shore was dotted with light colour under the water or exposed sandbars right across the beach. It was probably causing a few unwelcome currents and prompted the Lifeguards to put the jet ski out on patrol. There was still a bit of swell and even at low water it was generating some very surfable waves. I could tell because people were surfing on them. It seems that it was those sandbars doing all the heavy lifting because as the tide pushed in, the waves diminished.

Towards the later part of the afternoon, cloud cover rolled in. Some of the young Boat Crew had decided on a barbeque on the beach and were a bit disappointed as the weather deteriorated a bit. They carried on regardless and were still down there when I took the girls around last thing. They had on iron brazier type thing raised a

couple of feet off the sand that was blazing away, even then. There were around a dozen, families included, down there enjoying the late evening.

We left them to it. After a hard day at the tin stope, I was after my bed. While we might have had few customers, I had to apply myself to make sure the store room had enough space for the cash and carry delivery tomorrow. Then, late in the shop day we had an extended five minutes to closing rush, presumably as all those beach dwellers realised they needed things for their tea. Actually, some realised they needed gifts to take home including some posh mugs. It all saved the day, making the till look respectable at the last gasp.

I am not sure I care for these last minute reprieves; it upsets the equilibrium no end.

July 4th – Saturday

The cloud from yesterday afternoon persisted into today. I believe that it had rained quite heavily during the night and the street was still wet first thing. It did not affect our early morning walk which was early because I had to get ahead of the posse before the cash and carry delivery arrived.

I was down in the shop early and eager. My aim was to get the ordinary deliveries out of the way so that I could concentrate on the big one. It turned out that this was somewhat tricky as the ordinary deliveries had not yet arrived, so I was stuck with topping up the beer and soft drinks fridges instead. Naturally, the newspapers arrived halfway through the cash and carry delivery, but they just had to wait until we were finished. At least they were all present and correct this week.

It was not a very big order this week. I had only called it in because we had run out of cider so the rest was just window dressing so that I could make minimum order. It was probably just as well because I had called in some extra water at the end of the week, and it was piled up at the end of the store room. I had also ordered an abundance of cider. There is too much for the cupboard so I will have to put up with a small pile of cases in front of the freezer for a week or two.

The other natural development of having a store room full of groceries to unpack and put away was that we started to see customers in some numbers. I had managed to put as much of the beer away as would fit in the cupboard and managed to sneak in a breakfast, which is more than I did yesterday. It was very soon after that the customer visits started to come thick and fast. I was able to shift one pack of groceries at a time between visits but by the middle of the afternoon, I had to give up entirely because the pasties (sorry, MS) needed more attention than I could give them doing the delivery as well.

I had concerns about the number of pasties we had after the poor showing of the last couple of days. The action today went some way to redressing the balance, but I

think we would have to have an unusually bumper day tomorrow if we were to sell them all. I took the decision that I would need to freeze some while they were still fresh and hope that I had not frozen too many.

Classic cars are not top of my list of interests, but it can be pleasing to see them coast by. There are occasional classic car rallies that start off in The Cove or more likely Land's End during the year. Sometimes we get to see an old Rolls Royce or a string of Triumph Staggs, which I think was one of the latest. Currently we have a gentleman staying who is a regular visitor but it was only this year that he mentioned that he had driven down from Liverpool in a 'classic'.

The busyness of the day had evaporated, and we were rolling into the last hour of opening when a bright red Triumph Vitesse pulled up outside. It was immaculate and purred quietly as its straight six, two litre engine turned over. I did not see who it was at first, but he waved to me and I went and had a chat. My, what a motor car with its walnut veneer dashboard and clear round dials and its ever so small bench seat in the back currently occupied by a big shaggy dog.

Back when we were boys, my pal had inherited a Triumph Herald and he would have given my right arm for a Vitesse – if he had given his, it would have severely limited his ability to drive it. I had a Cortina 1600 with dickie steering, but that is another story. They were our first cars (although I had a mini traveller before the Cortina which is best not mentioned at all) and seeing the Vitesse rather transported me back there for a while. I had quite forgotten how awful being eighteen years of age was.

We had a proper five minutes to closing rush and, right at the end, a lady who engaged me in conversation about the lack of St Ives tour bus. She, with everybody else I have spoken with about it, agreed that it was a tragic loss. No one can comprehend how it could possibly have made a loss as it was always busy in season. The service remove is a detriment to the holiday trade and the businesses from The Cove to St Ives.

The chat put me well back on my attempt to close the shop roughly on time and I was beset with more customers and potential customers as I tried to haul in the outside display. One of the last visitors was a very pleasant man who had taken a tumble on the path and required some first aid that he said his wife was happy to administer, he just needed plasters and the such like. Fortunately, we have a reasonably well stocked first aid kit and I was able to supply dressings, sterile wipes and a bandage.

Just as I was about to close the door and finish the till for the day, one of the Boat Crew stopped by and alerted me to an incident in progress well to the southwest of us. A fishing boat was on fire and had issued a 'pan pan' to warn of its predicament. There was a possibility that we might launch but the Coastguard deemed St Mary's to be closer and launched them instead.

As things developed, St Mary's Harbour Master told the Coastguard that the stricken vessel could not be brought back there as they had no means to salvage it. It would have to go to Newlyn or back to France, where it came from. As it happened, the crew abandoned boat as the fire took hold and St Mary's Lifeboat recovered them and took them back to St Mary's. Apparently, St Mary's have the facilities to salvage unboated French fishermen.

Later, another vessel called in a sighting of a burning fishing boat. I was quite surprised by the length of the subsequent enquiry – how big is the boat, where is the boat, is there a name on the hull, any sign of people on board – when it was in the same location as the earlier vessel. I understand that the Coastguard needed to be sure, but that seemed a little over the top.

The girls dragged me around the block for our last walk out. The car park was more populated than any of the evenings last week and there were a few people still milling about. I had noticed on Friday night that it was busier in the evening than it had been during the day – I was tempted to reopen. It all points to hopefully a bigger influx for the coming week. All we need now is the weather.

July 5th – Sunday

Another disappointing start to the day with an absence of sunshine and an overwhelming presence of impenetrable cloud. I am beginning to think the Walker Brothers were right, the sun ain't gonna shine anymore. It is entirely possible that our customers thought so too because they failed to turn up in anything like droves for the entirety of the morning.

While I would have much rather been serving customers, the pause did give me the opportunity to trawl our CCTV for footage of me paying the beer delivery man. The company has once again questioned whether we parted with the requisite funds on receipt of the last order. The paperwork arrived on Saturday, so I have not had the opportunity to speak with the accounts department. On the last occasion this happened, the very pleasant lady in accounts indirectly accused me of dishonesty by not accepting my word that we had paid. I had to provide CCTV footage to prove that I had.

We may not have to provide any proof this time; I made it perfectly clear how I felt about it last time. However, should we be compelled to do so, it takes a bit of time to extract the relevant clip from the extended footage. I set to with it fairly early on and since I had not used the software for a while, it took a little time to understand what I was doing wrong when it would not save the bits I wanted or took an age doing so. I think that it took most of the morning and now I am in two minds as to whether I would prefer not to need it or face battle with the company accountant and have the proof to defend myself. I will call on Monday.

My finishing tinkering with videos coincided quite nicely with an increase in the number of visitors frequenting the shop. Our end of The Cove went from quiet to busy in the blink of an eye which makes you wonder what it is that drive people to all turn up at the same time – possibly the bus, but I think that unlikely. We are up to the task of coping with such sudden changes in operation and I was very grateful to be able to stop playing with video editing to be brutally honest.

Generally, our sales are pretty straightforward; I do not often have to work very hard at it. Can I have a Cornish pasty (sorry, MS), I would like to buy this bucket and spade do not require much grumpy shopkeeper input other than, no, you are not having brown sauce with your pasty. Occasionally, however, we have to convince a customer that a particular wetsuit size is better than another or which gin would a mother-in-law best be suited to. While this can take longer to service a customer's need than a straightforward transaction, it can add a level of interest and make the closed deal feel like an achievement.

Today, I had to delve deep in my pocket of experience in pursuit of a sale of a recipe book. Not only did I need to draw on some long-forgotten skill, I also had to penetrate a language barrier as the lady customer in question was Italian. Fortunately, her English was far better than my Italian, so we managed with me having to find the occasional synonym for items like butter. I did try and refrain from just saying it more loudly.

The lady had brought a Cornish recipe book to the counter and had explained that the recipe for Cornish pasties therein, failed to explain how to make shortcrust pastry. I ventured that the writer probably made the assumption that anyone making Cornish pasties these days would be using frozen, ready-made pastry. Quite rightly, the suggestion was met with derision; the lady wanted to make her own shortcrust pastry from scratch.

Now, it has been a while since I was making award winning pasties. For the reader who thinks that I may be frivolous in this claim, I did once win an award for making an award-winning pasty and, yes, I made the shortcrust pastry by hand – the proper way. I used to make them once a year but as the years advanced, I became more idle and should we fancy a pasty, we eat one from our frozen stock. So, this being the case, I had to look up the ratio of fat to flour before I proceeded. I had thought that she might know the rudiments thereafter, but she was at a total loss. I found myself giving a step by step account of how to make the pastry – how do you explain the crumbling of the fat and flour together by hand - while a queue slowly formed up behind the lady inquisitor. We now have half a dozen visitors instructed on the art of pastry making. Oh, and I sold the recipe book, to boot.

It was the sort of day that I could spend a little time with some customers. We had been deathly quiet during the morning and although it picked up in the afternoon, it was hardly what you might call busy. The crowds that had turned up had proven to be a bit of a disappointment when it came to parting with their hard-earned. We did

have some notable spends but yesterday was at least twice as busy as gloomy Sunday.

I had not looked at a forecast but there were plenty of people who had expected sunshine in the afternoon here. Instead, we had a stream of customers telling us just how lovely it was in Penzance. There were just as many who said that the rest of the week would be blazing sunshine and tropical heat. I do not know where they got those ideas from, but I will believe them when the sun is in my eyes.

As the afternoon wound down – it did not take much winding down – I concentrated on the orders for Monday morning. On Saturday, we had been comprehensively cleaned out of our bread stock, the last remnants going in the morning, and the grocery shelves had taken a battering too. The only thing left relatively untouched was the milk, of which we have plenty left. During the earlier part of the afternoon, I had started the farm shop cash and carry order but had to abandon it because we got busy. I finished it off in the latter part of the afternoon and ordered plenty of bread for the morning, which we obviously will not need.

There was a fair amount of beach activity while we sat around the table for our tea in the evening. There was also mist creeping down from the cliff tops around Cape Cornwall which thickened and spread as the evening went on. It had not reached our bit of The Cove by the time I retired to bed which was shortly after the Missus came back from The Farm. She had spent the most of afternoon up there but had forgotten to take the pump batteries that let her water the growing areas. She took the girls who do not seem at all fed up with spending half their time up there, after all, there is plenty to explore even if the Missus has at last made the main gate escape proof.

The Farm visit reminded me that we have yet to find someone to repair the flail mower. I meant to ask our hedge cutting man back weeks ago when I noticed that the lane was overgrown. As the days get longer, there seems to be less time to do things. I doubt that I will have much time without a real concerted effort to get them done before the end of the season. Here we go again.

July 6th – Monday

Do I look like a baker? Does the smell of freshly baked bread waft from the shop doorway and into the street accosting passers by and compelling them hence. Do I look a pasty (sorry, MS) white, covered from head to toe in fine powder of flour. Is the word BAKERY lit up in bright neon above the first electric sliding door in The Cove.

I think that all the above questions can be answered in the negative most of the time. Therefore, please tell me why, on a fairly frequent basis do I get asked if our baked breads are freshly baked, like just a few minutes before they find themselves to our shelves.

This morning, I was asked if the croissants, delivered this morning, were the 'freshest we had'. It was a poorly phrased question. If they were the only croissants in the shop and ten days old, they would indeed be the freshest in the shop. Pedantry aside, I took the question to mean – well, I am not sure what I took it to mean. Did they look old and tired, was it a suggestion that I might have fresher still locked away somewhere or was I planning to bake another batch in a few minutes that the customer would happily wait for to ensure that they were as fresh as they could possibly be.

The croissants arrive loose and hence do not have a date on them, so I should start to label them, perhaps. This will still not help the questions about the bread being straight from the oven, but customers will be able to decide whether it meets their rigorous definitions of fresh.

If I looked straight up, there was the suggestion that the sky was blue and free of cloud. Looking ahead, there was plenty of cloud, so much in fact that I could not see the beach. The fog came and went and at one point around half past seven o'clock, almost went completely. Moments later it was back again, just as thick as it had been before.

I had a call first thing from Trevedra campsite and the very pleasant lady there told me that she had her head in the clouds, too. Then I spoke with a builder who lives in the estate at the top of the hill who told me that it was cloud free there. It is a strange and fickle beast, our fog and very hard to fathom at all. I fielded questions all morning and into the afternoon about whether the mist would clear or not. With the wind in the northwest again, I favoured it hanging around for a bit which meant it promptly eased out in the early afternoon.

Then it came back again ... and went again ... then came back. There was no idea whether it was coming or going but it did provide some entertainment and a talking point. In between coverings, the beach looked resplendent under a blue sky washed with high cirrus clouds. There were plenty of people down there, too, and many in the water doing various things that largely did not include surfing. The swell has completely smoothed out now and the sea was like glass. However, we started selling parasols again.

Earlier in the day, when I took the girls down the Harbour beach, the mist was doing an admirable job of damping out any sound other than that of the lapping waves. It really was quite surreal as that was the only sound no matter how hard I strained my unenhanced ears. It was quite splendid being there amongst all that silence and watching the girls root about. I could have enjoyed it a lot longer had a not a shop to go and open.

We had an opening rush when I did throw aside the first electric sliding door in The Cove. That was quite a surprise but the sun was trying its hardest to break through.

The busyness went on for the best part of an hour before I was suddenly thrown into quietness. I took the opportunity to call the drinks people who had sent me the statement and the purportedly unpaid invoice. I did not get to speak with the accounting lady as she was talking with someone and let her telephone divert to customer service.

The very pleasant lady I spoke with there put me on hold while she tried to connect me to the now free lady in accounts. As luck would have it, I was pipped at the post by another telephone caller. The very pleasant lady on the customer service desk told me that the lady in accounts had said that the matter was in hand and that I should not worry about it. Had I been able to speak with her in person, I might have asked why then had she sent me a statement and the offending invoice and caused me to go trawling my CCTV – unnecessarily, it now seems.

There is still the matter that we have not been sent any invoices since we started again this year. I will give it a day or two before I try again and see if we can resolve that issue as well.

I was even less successful trying to make contact with the canned fish people. I left a message and told them I would call back. It was going to be quite an involved call and it would be no good trying to conduct it while I was in the shop. I called again when I came back from the gymnasium. Although I got through this time, it was not the owner who I had been advised to contact. We had a meaningful conversation anyway and the very pleasant lady I spoke with told me that she was sure we could work it out if I wrote instead. I will try that later when I have some time to write it all down.

We had a lull in hostilities in the shop after the initial opening salvos. By the time I got back to the shop it was busy again and remained so for much of the rest of the day. As I noted, there were plenty of people on the beach. There were also plenty promenading and taking up table space across the road as they shopped, rested and ate breakfasts and snacks. I was kept gainfully employed for the remainder of the day up until around four o'clock when it went quiet again. I suspect that the forecast had not detailed the fog here, hence the crowds. I always said that those forecasters were good sorts.

We cannot have been the only ones in the Cove who were busy today. About the middle of the afternoon I had a couple arrive asking for pasties. They had started at the kiosk at The Beach and worked their way through the likely venues until they got to us. Apparently, we were the last pasties in town. I am surprised we were not cleaned out but perhaps not all the beach dwellers were as tenacious as the two I met.

I wrapped up the shop hours with just a small five minutes to closing rush to deal with. I had been busy with other matters so had to stay behind to complete the orders. Yesterday, I was surprised that while we had been wiped clean of bread and

the greengrocery had taken a battering, the dairy had been largely untouched. Our customers made amends today and had a good go at the milk and cheese.

After tea, I had a go at writing to the fish canning people. I think I got my concerns across. I suspect it likely we will have to buy stock during the winter and guess at the volumes we need. The cans are high price and high quality and my guess is that the peak sales will be outside school holidays, largely May to end July and again in September; they are not family fare, really. I await their response.

As we closed the day, the mist was fighting back again. I thought it might as the temperature dropped a bit. It was wrapping itself around Cape Cornwall in a rather artist manner when I closed the shop, but it was working its way along the cliffs when I was heading to bed. My guess is we will not see the bay again until the middle of the day again tomorrow.

July 7th – Tuesday

I ran into a wall of fog as soon as I opened the door first thing. I am glad it was soft.

The fog was a good deal thicker than it was yesterday at the same time. It had all day yesterday and all of the night to practise being thick, I suppose. It was the same enveloping silence on the beach while we were there but this time there was no lapping of waves on the shore today. The girls had a paddle.

A couple of the morning deliveries were late arriving that made packing things and getting them on the shelf a little fraught while I waited for the pasties to arrive (sorry, MS). As I feared, these arrived while I was in the middle of bagging the tomatoes and I had to hurriedly clear the top of the freezer I was working on. Earlier, I had to close the first electric sliding door in The Cove on a premature customer while I salted away the milk and rushing back to open it again only to find they had moved on.

We did not have the early rush of yesterday. I suspect that our visitors having fallen for the bright day forecast once were not going to be fooled again. I think, too, that the upper cloud cover was thicker today as it was not so bright and did not look so full of potential. Just to trick us all, the fog cleared quite quickly leaving a heavy haze in the bay and blue out to the east. Out to the west, the fog merely lifted and hung about in the air.

It took a while for our visitors to cop on to the improving weather. It seemed that it got busier in line with the slow improvements in the weather until, by the middle of the afternoon, we were very busy indeed and the sunshine was pummelling the wide expanse of bright sand. The inevitable camp sprung up along the high tide line; they would not be disturbed as the tide was not due back until long after they had gone home.

We would have been busy in the shop regardless, but just to make it interesting, the Missus decided to unload the truck just as we were getting into our stride for the day. There was a lot to unload, as well. She had gone around the shop with an A4 pad while I was at the gymnasium and made an extensive list of all the things that were missing off the shelves. She returned with the truck brimming with goodies yesterday evening but elected to leave it until today to unload it all – just as we were getting busy.

It is rather more than just unloading. Much of it needs to be priced and the aqua shoes need to be unwrapped and the hangers attached. Labels need to be cut off, and the resulting rubbish bagged and loaded into the bin. Between us we need to get it out onto the shelves and since we were getting busier all the while, this took some time.

The Missus finished her bit going on two o'clock and left me for The Farm with a geet pile of shoes and gifts to put out. As I was a little preoccupied at the till, this took until almost the close of play. Just to add to the jeopardy, the farm shop cash and carry turned up, so I had to break that down, priced the goods and put them out as well.

All the while we were entertaining a healthy flow of customers. They were buying many things, but pasties were not one of them. We had cleared out our order on Monday, so I ordered the same again. The poor sales were not apparent until after the deadline, so we will have a glut of them tomorrow. I certainly did not have time to worry about it during the afternoon as I was far too busy serving customers and clearing the store room between them.

There came a point when I had to stop and concentrate on the orders for tomorrow and ensuring all the cardboard I was generating was boxed away so that I could put it out for collection tomorrow. At least I had the right day this time. Last week I was a day early for some reason.

I was told that it was hot on the beach during the afternoon. I cannot say that I was feeling it in the shop or out the front on the occasion that I ventured that far. I did have the fan on, but that is more habit than anything else. Even when I took the girls around last thing, the air seemed comfortably cool, and they insisted on walking all the way around. They had come back early from The Farm as the Missus said it was getting too hot for them up there. They did seem quite subdued when they returned.

They were even more subdued later when the Missus went across the road for her very special meeting. If she goes off shopping, they are merely quiet. When she goes across the road, they know she is there and are utterly restless, starting at every likely sound of her coming back or at the window staring at the Lifeboat station door.

They had double helpings tonight. First the meeting across the road and later, she went off to Land's End to see a drone show. Land's End Attraction are running drone shows alongside the fireworks they have on a Tuesday and Thursday night during the holidays – I presume not exactly at the same time. It is the latest night sky entertainment and very possibly will eventually supplant fireworks altogether. The very clever companies have dozens or sometimes hundreds of lit up drones, changing colour and forming shapes and patterns in the sky all computer controlled.

The Missus went up to see the trials as she has it on mind to perhaps run a show in aid of the Institute on bonfire night – all very cutting edge. She will have us delivering pasties to the beach by drone before the end of next year, I expect. Ooh, now there is an idea.

July 8th – Wednesday

Our fog has not gone yet. It spent the day hanging around in the northwest like a spectre at the feast, just ready to roll back in and spoil the party.

There was indeed a party mood going on in The Cove. The bit of sky that mattered was clear of cloud and stretched blue all the way out to the fog bank. This let in an awful lot of sunshine and our visitors, sensing victory over the elements, descended on the us like a plague of those little crabs you see racing over beaches in those nature films. We were inundated from shortly into the morning at roughly the same time I ran off for my blistering session at the gymnasium.

The shop was a hive of industry when I returned, so I left the Missus to it and went off to prepare myself for my public. By the time I came back down from making myself ready, we were in the tail end of the big beach rush. That is not to say that I got away scot free, we still had a reasonably steady flow of customers, it was just not as busy as the morning rush.

Unfortunately, it is not the best week for beach days, the high water is in the middle of the day and although the tide line does not push people off the beach, it is still a bit of a press at the top by the dunes. It was not much good for the surfers either, as there was hardly a wave to be mentioned and no hint of white water along the base of the cliffs all the way to Cape Cornwall.

I am sure this made it a little more comfortable for the dive boats out in the bay. One arrived earlier in the week presumably to recommence work on the international cables. Today, the single boat that we have had since the weekend was joined by three others, all the same as the ones that were here a month or two ago. Occasionally, a small rib raced in to the Harbour to drop someone off or pick someone off but there is very little action otherwise to observe. Today must have been a throw everything at it day, because they all left in the late afternoon.

There was a moment at around half past one o'clock when I thought that it all might come to grief. The fog bank started to move toward us. Happily, it remained at height and broke up as it went over the top of the bay. When I looked a little later, there was still a fog bank out to the northwest, but it was much smaller and less threatening than before. It looked like a bit had broken off and floated over us that cause all the alarm. Phew, that was a close one.

The rest of the afternoon was a fine afternoon; an afternoon you could take home to your parents. We had a reasonably steady flow of customers and, at this time of year, many of them are from the near continent. I think the Germans were in the majority with Italians coming a close second. It is rather good that they speak English because even the French I took at school, I was never particularly good at. I do not have a great aptitude to learn foreign tongues, which would have been exceedingly useful had I known. Still, I managed to decipher requests for a dry bag for a mobile telephone and a bandana from foreign people whose English language was not quite as good as some but still better than my foreign.

I suspect that even those people were better at communication than our general waste and recycling provider. By and large we do not get many problems with the general waste service, but the cardboard collection is fraught. At the end of May I threatened to terminate the cardboard collection part of the deal because it was so hit and miss. I agreed with the very pleasant man I took to task to give it a go for the rest of the season now that he was aware of the problems. He provided me with a list of dates – the collections are bi-weekly – which took me an hour to find in my inbox last night.

Today was cardboard collection day, which is why I needed to find the schedule, and I had put three boxes of cardboard out for collection. I noted that the general waste man took the cardboard which normally means he is aware of a problem with the recycling collection that follows on. It floated around my mind for the rest of the day that perhaps I should cancel the recycling element of the contract after all. I can see no point in paying for a service I am not getting.

It is getting a bit busy to mess around with suppliers, so although it irked me, I decided to let it run. The cardboard had been picked up, after all, and I would have had to pay had it been picked up by a different lorry. I put it to rest in my head until I had a message late in the day telling me that my recycling collection had been rescheduled for tomorrow. It came as a message that I could not reply to, so I had to compose a fresh message, find my contract number so I could include it and send it to the general messages address.

The lateness of the notification meant that my response would sit idle until tomorrow's working day, which would be too late to head the rescheduled collection off at the pass. It was almost not worth doing but at least I could make my point about the untimeliness of the notification to me.

On reflection, perhaps I should view my recycling charge as a type of insurance premium. At least one side or other of the service should pick it up, even if it is not the right one.

We coasted into the end of the day. The Missus had been up to The Farm but had come back early so that she could take BB to the veterinary doctor to be signed off, which she was. She can now misbehave officially.

The Missus alerted me to various items that we have either run out of or are in short supply up at the store. The supplier informed me that parasols, that we are having a particularly good year with, had run out but they were expecting a delivery of at the end of this week. I should place my order for them sooner rather than later to ensure our part of it. We have other things we need too, and I spent an hour in the evening compiling the first pass of an order while the Missus went back up to The Farm again.

I have taken to carrying around a photograph of the Missus so that I can recognise her if we meet.

July 9th – Thursday

Well, that put damper on the day. It was a day that would go down in infamy and cover the much malign council in shame.

I will get this out of the way as briefly as I can and go off and find someone's stuffed cat to kick. It had been a particularly busy morning, so I was not best pleased anyway to see a representative of the much maligned council waiting in the queue. She was brief and I was briefer. She told me that the benches that we had on the opposite side of the street, there freely for the benefit of passers by and customers alike, required a 'pavement licence' for which we must pay richly.

The Missus arrived during the announcement and we had words. We expressed our disappointment that the tables we had provided the general public for free for more than twenty years were now subject to a punitive charge. There is no escaping it, we either pay up, get rid of the tables or face twenty years in stir. Personally, I would do the time and I do not like throwing away good money but I think that the nearest one is east of Camborne.

I looked the new registration up when I had a moment and the robbing beggars want £250 for just the application, which we do not get back if they turn us down. The total charge for 'up to' two years is £500 including the application fee. There is a complicated form to complete, measurements to be taken and a notice placed where the seating is to be arranged so that the public have the opportunity to object. So, for £250, I have to do all the work and they get to read a form and make a decision.

Sadly, the event left a bit of a dark cloud hanging over proceedings which, for such a pleasant rip gribbler of a day was wholly unfortunate.

The girls and I were down on the beach before the sun had come over the cliff this morning. One of them had decided an earlier start for me was a good idea. Actually, I agreed because for some reason, I just cannot get myself downstairs to start before half past seven o'clock. It happened again today, and I was up at half past five o'clock. I have a bit to do before I can come downstairs, but it just seems to take an inordinate amount of time.

Happily, there was not too much topping up of the soft drinks fridge required. The beer fridge was another matter. We have not quite yet got to the stage where I am topping it up during the day as we go along – I suspect I only have to wait for the weekend for that to happen. The stock was, nevertheless, still pretty dented.

I should really have got the beachware order away last night. I reckon that new delivery of parasols will be short-lived and we would need to get in early if we wanted a piece of the action. However, I like to leave it a while because, inevitably, there will be things we think of that we missed first time around. Today it was eight pole windbreaks and hats. We had done rather well on the wide brimmed shower proof hats and the straw fedoras, which I suppose should not have been a major surprise. The weather has definitely upset the status quo of our normal volumes of sales of such things and that is definitely not a complaint. We just need to be adaptable and fleet of foot at that.

We also had a much better day on the pasties (sorry, MS). Of course we did, because today is the day I need to determine the volumes for the weekend. It just would not be right and proper not to be left with an unexpected surfeit or to be cleared out after the order deadline. For once we were selling pasties in the middle of the day, just when you would expect people to want something to eat. Up until now, we have had some sales in the morning and a geet rush in the middle of the afternoon, which I will never understand.

By two o'clock most of our potential customers had left for the beach, many carrying parasols or various items of beach entertainment bought in the shop. Above the high tide line of the beach was pretty busy from the middle of the morning. Even then with an hour or so before high water, it was a bit of a press. The sea, that is a study of calm serenity at the upper reaches of the tide, was devoid of all but the most desperate for a bit of a splash on a board. As the tide recedes, what little swell there is finds the several sandbars across the beach and a few rideable waves appear which would account for the sudden proliferation of boards in the water three hours after the passing of high water.

My respite from the pressing needs of our customers was very short lived. After a very short hiatus normal service was resumed and we were pretty much constantly busy right the way through until four o'clock when it all went slack again. In the

meanwhile, it had been the longest continuously busy day that we had enjoyed since half term and set me up nicely for a spot of Lifeboat training.

The day had warmed considerably since I had stepped out first thing in the morning. I do not get out much, else. I had a hint of it when I brought the display in from out the front. The cooling breeze of the last couple of days had dropped completely and I was not even sure where the replacement warm air was coming from. The local weather stations all had something different: Gwennap Head not a very windy place in the universe at all, southeast; St Ives – northwesterly; and good old Land's End still stuck at northerly. The weather forecast websites had it in the northeast, which is what I settle for when I wrote the service report later at the station.

There was quite a crowd gathered for the launch. It was not quite the crowd we would get on a school holiday, but it was a respectable bunch, nevertheless. We had got busier this week, and my theory was that folk are here to escape the uncomfortably high temperatures up country. I tested this on visitors to the shop and half a dozen of them agreed it was the reason they had booked last minute to come down. It is encouraging, perhaps, because the man on Radio Past this morning told us that we could expect such things in the years to come.

What puzzles me most is that for years people have been flocking abroad to get holidays in the hot sunshine of foreign parts. As soon as we get it over here, they cannot wait to get away from it.

Both boats launched with appreciative oohs and aahs from the crowds. I could not hear it over the noise of the Lifeboat engines, of course, but I am sure that there were some. We followed this by a setting up of the long slip in anticipation and one of our newest members went and practised some turns on the Tooltrak once the Harbour beach had cleared. Some of us gather in the relative cool at the front of the station while the rest of us slouched in the crew room and its big high tech fan which gave some relief. I wondered if the Institute could stretch to waterproof shorts instead of full length leggings and perhaps half height wellies.

The Inshore boat returned first and we watched from above as that was brought in and washed down. Soon enough the big boat rounded Pedn-men-du and myself and an oppo headed to the bottom of the slip to make final preparations. Without that there would have been no textbook recovery that I can attest to, being the man on the point, and we brought the boat up in ideal sunny and calm conditions. There was some washing down to be done before we strapped the boat down and made ready for the next service. We are, after all, a very attentive, very excellent Shore Crew.

July 10th – Friday

It was still relatively temperate first thing when I took the girls down to the Harbour beach. That did not last long. When I went down to the shop around an hour and a

half later, it was warming up nicely. We even had a fairly robust and very warm easterly to go with it. I might have to re-classify the definition of rip gribbler if this carries on.

We finally ran out of parasols in the middle of the morning – probably along with everyone else. The number we started the season with, in an ordinary year, such as the ones we have enjoyed previously, would have been more than enough. We had added to that with our first order, so we were already ahead on stock. Our order is in for a delivery next week which should ensure that the weather for the rest of the summer takes an immediate dive.

I do not recall if I mentioned that the dive boats are back. The resident boat has definitely gone but these are day boats coming and going each day. They are actually sea-going RIBs and are quite sizeable. I thought that it ironic that they came from Lancaster which is quite a few miles inland. Then I looked it up. Lancaster has a history of ship building back to the 18th century, so that told me. I am fielding quite a few questions about what they are doing and have lost count of the number of times I have explained the international cable connection.

The jury is still out on whether we persist with the tables across the road. That is a lot of moola, and the application form seeks the ins and outs of a hen's bottom. I have questions but the lady who found it requisite to come and visit us on a big outing jolly, only works a few days a week. I left two messages for her. One I think that I may have answered, which was why the licence fee only covered "up to" two years.

A question on the form asks when we would like the licence period to start and finish. We would like the licence period to commence on the day the application is approved and last for two years. There is no indication how long the approval process takes. If we give a start date that precedes the approval date, we are wasting part of our licence period. Given that we are talking about the much maligned council, it would not surprise me in the least that they take months to consider our application, all the while eroding the value of our annual fee.

While I am on the subject of the much maligned council, I had a call from our most agreeable much maligned council councillor yesterday. I had written regarding the disappearance of one of our litter bins at this end of The Cove. He apologised for not writing back but he had been on holiday. He sympathised with our plight and agreed that the removal of the bin was a complete nonsense. He added that the person in charge of its removal would not agree and would need some persuading.

He suggested that I send a version of my letter to him to the parish council and ask them to join the fight. He too would speak with them. If all else fails, we send the boys around. To add to my argument, the bin was brim full this morning. By the time the truck came along, it was overflowing. It took them twice as long to empty it and had to spend time chasing the litter down the street where it had spilled out.

We were busy again today but not quite as busy as yesterday. There were some quiet gaps, but by and large the flow was reasonably constant. I was quite puzzled that towards the end of the day we started to see familiar faces arriving. It took me quite a while to realise that we at the end of the week and these were new arrivals for the coming week. I will put my discombobulation down to the heat and the flies. The bleddy flies are common house flies. They appear to have evolved after years of swotting and fly paper into having teeth with which they can fight back. We humans will have to escalate.

While we were busy all though the day, our customers saw fit to save their biggest volumes until the last giving us a very busy five minutes to closing rush. These are very possibly new arrivals but the majority, I had not seen before, so it was hard to tell. Once again, I had sorted out the orders for tomorrow early, so they were out of the way when the rush started. We already had a soft drinks delivery earlier in the day, but I had to make another for tomorrow. When I topped up in the morning, we had gone through two cases of small bottles of water in a day; I would not have enough for the weekend at that rate. I also called in some more big bottles.

The Missus left me in the evening for crazy golf with the boys from the Lifeboat station. It is one of her duties as Station Events Manager, which she takes very seriously. The role is really about events for fund-raising but she has extended it to include events for the crew. These are financed from your donations in the shop, thank you very much. Tonight was crazy golf thanks to a deal she had negotiated with Land's End Attraction and Sunday is Barbeque on the Beach day.

I have started telling people that the Missus and I cannot attend events together because we are, in fact, one in the same person.

It also meant that I had to make my own tea. I had planned to have a salad but ended up with a fish finger sandwich. I wish that I has stuck with the salad because for the first time, the flat was already unbearably warm without the oven adding heat to it. The girls were flaked out for most of the evening which was probably more to do with the absence of the Missus than the heat – or maybe some of both. I took them down to the beach last thing so that they could have a dip. Perhaps I should have too.

July 11th – Saturday

My wake-up time is now officially twenty minutes past five o'clock according to the girls. That is all right with me at the moment because things are getting busier in the shop and there is more to do before we open. I even managed to get downstairs early without being bogged down in administration on the computer. It did require about an hour's work last night, however, to manage it.

We had an enjoyable run down to the Harbour beach, too. We met up with a Newlyn fisherman whose boat I once went out on to see what commercial day fishing was all about. We tarried and had a chat while his two dogs went for a swim and our two just sat and looked at them. It certainly was not overly warm yet, but I thought that they might like a dip, first thing. Apparently, I was better company.

It was not that much of a slow start but within an hour or so of opening, we were flying. Naturally, with blue skies and rising temperatures a big beach day was on the cards, and the holidaying visitors were joined by families from the locality making it even bigger. We were inundated with requests for parasols that, sadly, we could not fulfil but we sold windbreaks against the sharp easterly that was still blowing today. The parasols were slowly replaced by beach tents when the realisation struck that all day on the beach without some sort of shelter from the sun would not be feasible.

By the middle of the day the upper beach was crowded with little camps all the way along to the Lifeguard huts and a little beyond. With high tide still a couple of hours off and getting bigger by the day, they would be sore pressed by the middle of the afternoon. The sea was flat again which did not stop a small army of surfboard and bodyboarders from hanging about in the shallows and pretending.

The milk arrived a little while after we were open. Luckily, it was before we ready got going for the day and I had time to put it out without undue pressure. It was when I was coming back up the grocery aisle that I noticed some glaring gaps on the shelves. I had been preoccupied with the beer and soft drinks fridges each day but had not really paid much attention to the shelves in between.

It was enough to spur me into action to collect some of the overstock from the store room and put it out. It was while I was doing this that I realised that the gaps on the shelves were bigger than I thought. I had not even got halfway through it when it started to get busy and stopped me in my tracks, but it was enough to prompt me to think that we should do a cash and carry order for next weekend. I think that I may have come to that conclusion anyway because the weekend after is the start of our extended hours and thus the school holidays. I was unable to resume my shelf filling until the early part of the afternoon, but by then I was already thinking about which items needed to go on the cash and carry order.

The Missus had remarked on Friday that the incoming pasty numbers (sorry, MS) for the weekend looked a bit thin. I agreed that it did indeed, but I had reduced the numbers on the basis that the volume of sales had decreased as the temperature outside increased. My guess was that we would probably struggle to sell what I had ordered but we also had quite a number in the freezer from the previous weekend. By the latter part of the day, I was feeling smug. Pasty sales had indeed been slow, and we were on track to have enough for Sunday as well. I have now, of course, held myself hostage to fortune for the coming day or so.

Forget having a pavement licence for our tables across the street, our newspaper box outside the shop has attracted the bottoms of various visitors during the course of the day. We are in shade for most of the day on our side, which is of great benefit to me, particularly. With an easterly breeze blowing through the doorway, I have been relatively comfortable during the day. I had to deliver a parcel to the Lifeboat station shop in the middle of the afternoon which permitted me to understand the attraction. It was significantly more comfortable in the shade.

Towards the latter part of the afternoon, business became noticeably quieter with sporadic runs of mayhem. There were local families down on the Harbour beach which involved small wet people making sweetie runs. Our beer stock had been dented earlier in the day, and I had managed some small topping up. Towards the end of the afternoon, beer was once again the main feature, but I think this was more watching football preparation than beach dining. We were comprehensively cleaned out, and I will have to shift myself in the morning to replace both lost beer and all the water we sold from the soft drinks fridge.

The Missus had spent the entire day in our kitchen preparing for the crew barbeque on the beach tomorrow afternoon. We are clearly expecting the crews from all the other stations around the UK coast because there is enough food for them, their families and most of the visitors to The Cove for a fortnight after. She had spent the last two days shopping for it, and we had deliveries from our chilled and frozen food supplier.

When I finished in the shop and after completing the first order for Sunday milk delivery this year, I met the Missus heading off to The Farm on my way upstairs. There are tables and equipment up there that she needed and she also needed to water. The girls had not had a proper run all day, either. I offered to go up with her to lend a hand, but she would have none of it.

She was back well ahead of me taking the girls out for their last spin of the evening. The temperature had dropped quite suddenly at the end of the day, although it was still very warm, and it was comfortable taking a stroll. There was still quite a crowd wandering about and watching the last of the sun sink into the cloud on the horizon in a blood orange ball. We can do it all again tomorrow.

July 12th – Sunday

Gee whizz, I was busy this morning, and that was before we opened. All the big water had gone from the soft drinks fridge, 48 bottles of it. Other than the fruit juices, the other soft drinks were not that badly impacted which thankfully saved me time to spend on the beer fridge. There, I think if we have another big day, we will run out of lager. This comes from the cash and carry which I intend to order from next week but until Saturday we have no alternative supplier.

With this in mind and because it was not that busy first thing, I set to with making the order list. As you may recall, dear reader, this involves being in and out of the store room topping up the shelves where possible from the overstock. If there is no overstock or very little it goes on the list. It is a little more complex than that, consideration is placed on knowing the likely popularity of the item – in other words, a guess on how much we will sell.

Things were going very well, and I had managed to compile a list filling one A4 page. We started to get busy then and I had to curtail my efforts in favour of serving customers. It is also problematic topping up shelves when the customers are arranged down the aisle you want to get at. I had every intention of getting back to it when things quietened down – they just did not quieten down. Well, not for some while.

The day had started out much the same as the previous two. The breeze that we had from the evening before was a little more robust than it had been but it was cool for the first time in a couple of days, so who was bothered. Even before I had come down to the shop, some cloud had blotted out the sun and it persisted for a while, which after the last couple of days was either a disappointment or a blessing, depending on your point of view.

What was probably not so welcome was a line of showers that ran in from the east in the middle of the morning. They were heavy, too, and followed up with some rumblings of thunder. It was breezy before the showers arrived but after they had gone through, the wind felt obliged to step into the gaps left behind and ramped up to 35 or 40 miles per hour or 48 mile per hour on Gwennap Head, restoring its position as windiest place in the universe.

The wind persisted for the rest of the afternoon, scuppering the plans for the crew barbeque on the beach. Given that all the food had been prepared along with all the rest of the effort involved, the Missus was not going to just roll over. The barbeque itself was moved up to the RNLI car park in the shelter of the cottage there. The Missus rolled her new carriage – think those trailers people use to cart their goods to the beach – up there at around half past two o'clock loaded with plates, cutlery, charcoal, tables any anything related that you might be able to imagine. She came back a short while later for the burgers and sausages and that was the last I saw of her before I went up after the shop closed.

I am told that it was a rip-roaring success. Many people turned up including invited guests who has helped with raising funds for the crew fund. A special mention must go to the man who runs the quiz at the F&L. He rotates the fund dispersal between the crew fund and other local necessities and we are very grateful.

All the food went, which surprised me greatly and bears witness to the proportion of youthful gannets we now have on the crew. Even the enormous fruit cocktail disappeared in a trice. The feedback afterwards was that the car park was the

preferable location and was more comfortable. A new era of crew barbeque in the car park is born, although it does not have the same alliterative ring to it as barbeque on the beach.

That persistent wind really was fearsome and the main feature of the day. I found some benefit as it refreshed the air in the shop without being too much of a menace to the grumpy shopkeeper behind the counter. It also kept our yacht in the bay, a regular summer visitor. He had arrived late yesterday and anchored up overnight, setting a mizzen for keeping the bow into the wind. He left this morning shortly after the rain came through but was back less than half an hour later. The wind must have been even more fearsome around the corner, so he will spend another night in the bay.

I looked at the synoptic chart later and our yacht friend may well be here for another night yet as that wind is set to continue. I suspect our visitors, many of whom found it amusing today, might well tire of it during the day tomorrow.

Much as they tired of pasties (sorry, MS). As I suspected, sales were weak again today and we just about would have managed on what I had ordered. I broken into a dozen from the freezer because it looked a bit close early enough in the afternoon, but I will throw half of those away tomorrow, which on the grand scale of things is not too bad.

I joined Mother after I finished my orders and closed the shop. She had mounted a mainly lonely dog sitting service while I shopped and the Missus barbequed. It seemed only polite to join her while we had the remaining slim pickings from the barbeque and some salad that the Missus had ring-fenced for us. Afterwards, I took her home.

It was the first time I had left The Cove since being taken up to The Farm to help with earth moving, and that does not really count. This felt like escaping from a high security facility and terribly illicit – not that I would know what it felt like to escape from such an institution, honest guv. If I had expected hedgerow of many colours and bursting with life, I would have been most disappointed as everything was a shade of green, I think. Still, it was good to get away and we only met a few other travellers on the route.

By the time I got back, I joined the clearing up of the barbeque where everyone joined in to help. It took a tenth of the time that the preparations took, although the boys did the setting up of the site and the arrangement of tables – which I note, at the close of play, are still in the car park. Perhaps we can use it as a dry run for not having them at all. Just a thought.

July 13th – Monday

Another week and another chance to wind up the much maligned council. I had sent our Licensing Compliance Officer – for it was she who came to call on us – a slew of questions regarding applying for a pavement licence. It would appear that she is too grand to answer questions from mere oiks such as myself and told be to direct my questions to the Licensing Team, although she did say we could not wait until September when I would have more time to complete the unnecessarily complex application.

It would have taken her less time to answer the questions than write to me telling me to ask someone else, but no matter. I duly cut and pasted my questions into a new message and sent it off when I had a moment in the day. I received an immediate automated response that informed me that the Licensing Team are very busy people and may take up to ten days to answer my questions. Given that the bin team took 20 days and still have not answered, I might be onto a winner.

The battle of the forms. I reckon I can think up sufficient questions to put off having to apply until at least the new year: do they want the drawings in pencil or pen; on graph paper or plain; what is the maximum width of a table; what if the tables are moved half an inch to the left; can I paint the tables a different colour. I am sure there are loads more.

Now that we have the unpleasantries out of the way, I can tell you that our howling easterly was still with us again and had not let up overnight – apart from the times when I was asleep when it could quite easily have dropped out and I would not have noticed.

It had filled the bay with white horses all galloping westward and for much of the morning there were not many people about to see them. The street had been remarkably quiet, and the beach too was empty of all but the most hardy during the morning. It had been the same story yesterday. I do not know if people had found alternative beaches or whether they had elected to something completely different with their time.

While they might have done something different with their time, I did something different, too. I went to the gymnasium, although I suppose that is the same as I usually do but it is different from grumpy shopkeeping. My, it was warm in the gymnasium, and my blistering session was a tad more blistering because of it.

Today, I took the girls out for a spin before I got ready for the shop. It gave me the opportunity to cool off before I did so, even though it was exceedingly warm in the sunshine down on the Harbour beach. It was very sparsely populated, and I thought it reasonable to release the hounds which went well to start with until BB found some very small children to go and like. While she is very diminutive, she is not quite as diminutive as some small children and therefore she can be intimidating. We are trying to wean her off small children, but it is very much a work in progress. She had to go back on the lead after that.

Despite the wind, it was still beach weather, sort of, with clear blue skies with just a hint of high cloud to shade off the sun now and again. It must have turned a few heads and by the end of the afternoon, there was quite a gathering on the beach again. The same cannot be said of the sea, which remained as flat as a dish apart from the choppy waves that the wind was picking up.

We were sporadically busy throughout the later morning and all through the afternoon until about four o'clock. The gaps allowed me to put the finishing touches to the cash and carry order. The Missus said that she would key it for me, which usually means there will be a raft of additions that I was not expecting. It will be a mammoth order compared to our previous ones as it will encompass the start of the summer school holidays – or should that be the school summer holidays.

I also made a start on another stationery order. The whole reason for doing so is that we have run out of Savlon Bite and Sting, which was quite effective for, erm, bites and stings and, at this time of the year, had been quite popular until we ran out. The stationery company also has a section for all sorts of medical type things as well as stationery. It also does household and pet supplies which makes it a very useful resource, although I do have to be careful with pricing sometimes. I did not get very far with this order as I got busied out.

At five o'clock, just as I was getting ready to go into our closing sequence, it occurred to me that something had changed. So used had I got to the constant battering of the wind that I had to concentrate on it to discover that it had dropped out completely. It was most noticeable when I stepped outside, of course, as I was not nearly bowled over. In the shop, it had been quite useful: not being overly annoying while I was stood at the counter but helpfully cooling and it did a good job of exchanging the stagnant hot air in the shop generated by the fridges and freezers. I will miss it for that.

There was more cloud around in the late evening giving a bit more colour to the sunset. We avoided the beach for our last walk as there was already a dog down there and I did not want to be overly long. The sunset had attracted a couple of groups of younger people most of whom were sitting along the length of the Harbour wall, like a line of birds on a telegraph wire waiting to fly off for the winter. I did not wait for the sunset or, indeed, to see if the group did fly off.

Perhaps I should take the time to indulge in such fancies – watching, not trying to fly off somewhere – but frankly, my bed was calling. We are about to get very busy, I suspect and I need to be ready for it.

July 14th – Tuesday

How is this for a cockeyed, over engineering of a simple process.

Yesterday, I had ordered four cases of 1.5 litre bottles of water from our supplier of such things. They duly invoiced for the correct items but somehow managed to deliver four cases of 500 millilitre bottles. It was a tad inconvenient, but not the end of the world, a simple telephone call and the supplier had arranged to collect the wrong cases and deliver the correct ones. Very simple.

Far too simple it seems. The thing to do if you are smart and efficient business is then to charge the customer again for the new, correct delivery of four cases of 1.5 litre bottles. Then, when the customer, in utter confusion calls up to query the apparent error, commit ten minutes of customer service time to explain that this is the process and a credit note will be raised for four 1.5 litre bottles when the four 500 millilitre bottles have been safely taken back into stock.

The episode has left me spiritless and crestfallen. I was more amused than irritated by the actual event, but I had thought things might have moved on. I spent years of my life designing business processes for large corporations to be effective and cost efficient as possible. To realise after all this time that I had been doing it wrong all along is almost more that a sensitive grumpy shopkeeper can bear.

While I am still reeling from the daftness of it all, I may as well compound it by revealing that of late, our pasties (sorry, MS) have been arriving in sealed cardboard boxes. They have been warm, soggy and because they have been packing in tight, misshapen. I could not imagine that the company, whose record on delivery in open crates covered with baking sheets had been exemplary to date, had made the change of their own volition.

And so it proved to be. The much maligned council stipulated that the pasties needed to be sealed in against the elements and thus, in one fell swoop fixed a problem that did not exist, increased the process carbon footprint by using cardboard boxes and simultaneously increased the costs of both businesses. Since the soggy problem was caused by boxing warm pasties, the company now puts them in a cooler for an hour before despatch thus making it even less carbon friendly. The much maligned council are definitely on a stupidity drive.

I consoled myself by topping up the sunglasses stand. I had promised myself that I would do so this morning after noticing that it was denuded and lacking choice and appeal a few days ago. I had wanted to do it sooner, but other priorities intervened.

I find that happens quite a lot. I will head to the store room with single minded authority to collect, say, fudge to top up the gift fudge section. I might even collect the fudge and transport it to the appropriate shelf but on the way there, or on the way back, I will spot a gap left for more urgent product that demands my attention. Days later, I remember that I had not finished with the fudge. So far just this week, I topped up the preserves while meaning to do the biscuits, stopped to place an order

for artisan gin while stocking up the Pringles and filled the battery display while attempting to do the stationery order. One day I shall be organised, I am sure.

The wind that had dropped out quite suddenly at five o'clock yesterday was still absent first thing this morning. Our yacht, anchored now two days in the bay, must have seen its opportunity and made off before the wind changed its mind. Very oddly, it did just that as I descended the steps to set up the shop at around seven o'clock. Again, the wind went from nothing to noticeable breeze in the blink of an eye but at least this time the blow was a little more reasonable.

Despite Radio Pasty insisting that the cloud feature was temporary, it persisted for most of the day. It had been building up at sunrise, so we did have a fleeting moment when the sun was in full reign and brightness shone about. What a wonderful moment that was and one to cherish for the entire dull and warm rest of the day. Alright, the sun did burst through a bit in the later afternoon, but it was absent for most of the important part of the day.

We had long runs of busyness and, equally, long runs when I managed to get things done. The orders, obviously, and also dug down into the ice cream freezer to fish out the overstock. There are some gaps, but I think that it might be worth waiting until next week before placing an order when there will hopefully be enough gaps to make it more worthwhile.

Pasty sales seemed to be going very well in the middle of the day, but the demand sputtered and finally went out completely. This was obviously after I had placed the order for tomorrow when we will have far too many. I do not fret too much about it any more – it will ever be thus.

We coasted through the later afternoon with sporadic customer visits. It was mainly snacks and drinks as they peeled off the beach. At half past five o'clock, high water was a bit late for pushing the beach dwellers off and into the arms of the grumpy shopkeeper, thought. We could have done with it being half an hour earlier, I thought. There looked to be quite a few down there, too, although when I looked again, they were already being harassed by the tide. I was probably still thinking this when we were hit with an extended five minutes to closing rush that had me pinned behind the counter.

It was a cunning move. Somehow, our visitors had arranged that enough of them remain behind on the beach to make it look like they were staying there. A sizeable splinter group then used the cover of the open street to mount their surprise, extended five minutes to closing rush on an unsuspecting grumpy shopkeeper. I tell, you, I am wise to it now and I shall be watching.

I went across the road after tea for my Very Important Lifeboat Operations meeting. The Missus had her Even More Important (she says) Management Team Meeting last week. We managed to stretch our meeting out to almost half an hour, we had so

many important things to discuss, after which we all ran away as quickly as possible before someone remembered that they had some Any Other Business.

In the meanwhile, the Missus ran off to The Farm with the girls negating my last walk with them later in the evening. She had been up there most of the afternoon, too. It is cooler at The Farm in the late evening, and she can get things done more easily. She was not back until after bedtime o'clock. There is no point in heading to bed ahead of their arrival; the girls are no respecters of my rest time. I shall no doubt be weary in the morning.

July 15th – Wednesday

Well, that made my day. Who would have thought that a pair of flamingo slippers on a small child's feet would put a smile on a grumpy shopkeeper's face. She was probably no older than three years old and the slippers were twice the size of her feet. The heads nodded as she walked. I was in stitches for ages after. Later, I was so glad I had that to hang on to.

I can pinpoint exactly where it started to go awry, it was when I called the Missus at gymnasium o'clock to reminder her to come and relive me at the till and she failed to answer. She did not answer again when I called a few minutes later which is when I remembered that she had an appointment. I should have readied myself for the shop, not the gymnasium first thing and now it was too late; all revved up and nowhere to go. If that was the sum total of wrongness in the day, I think I could have swallowed that, but it was not. It was not by a very wide margin.

It is possible that I have mentioned before that we have a problem with the flail mower at The Farm. It is a job that has been outstanding for a long time and, indeed, I contacted a fixer recommended to us before Easter and again a month later, never to hear from him again. The need to use the flail is getting quite urgent and the Missus tapped up her farmer friend at a neighbouring farm who promised to have a look-see if we could get it to his farm. That was all well and good, but the flail is currently not attached to the tractor, the trailer is and the Missus had already said she would prefer me to do the swap. It was on the to-do list.

Given that I had not yet made myself beautiful for my public (it only takes a minute or two), the Missus suggested that it was an ideal opportunity to go and do the thing when she came back from her appointment. I could not help but agreed as I was keen to get the task out of the way before the fight started when the school holidays started. Within the normal parameters of operation, it was a job that would take no more than half an hour.

We had already started to get busy when the Missus called me back from my initial attempts to contact her about the gymnasium and told me of the plan. It was not going to be the ideal day to go gallivanting off to The Farm but, then again, none of the days before September were likely to be. So, an hour or so later, when she had

returned from the appointment in town, the Missus packed me off with the girls in the direction of The Farm.

I was not all that keen to take the girls, what with the expectation of driving the tractor about the field, but the Missus said that they would be fine in the cabin for a while. I duly headed off but halfway up the hill, the Missus telephoned to tell me our large beachware order had just turned up and I should come back so that some of it could be taken up to The Farm. It seemed a reasonably request, if untimely, so I turned around at the top of the hill and returned to base.

Managing to get parked up behind the delivery van, I helped unload the last fifteen boxes and then commenced loading the big, heavy windbreaks into the back of the truck. Unsurprisingly, we had been selling windbreaks for most of the week and I had to quickly add some stock onto the tail end of our order. I managed to get all of those, the metal spades and some new parasols into the truck and make ready to resume my run up to The Farm.

Now, I not only had the tractor trailer to change but I also need to unload the new stock. Luckily, the windbreaks are all lodged against the side of the barn, just inside the doors, which made the unloading straightforward, if heavy, work. The remaining items I stacked outside the store room for the Missus to put away.

At last, I was free to go and have a look at the trailer and that was just about as far as I got. The jack that supports the trailer in the absence of the tractor holding it up, had completely parted company with its moorings. One bolt had sheared off a while back when we forgot to raise it while moving. The other bolt had now fallen out but, when I came to screw it back in again, discovered that the thread was stripped. I was hoping that it was just the bolt, if the thread had gone in the hole as well, we were well and truly knackered.

My only recourse now, other than finding a replacement bolt, was to prop the trailer up on rocks or bricks and take it from there. I would have had a go but for the fact I had put the girls in the truck out of harm's way as they refused to go into the cabin – that took another fifteen precious minutes. Even with the windows open, the truck was going to be far too hot for the length of time it would take me to prop up the trailer. In truth, it was far too hot anyway, which was why I was dubious about taking them in the first place.

I did try a few times to see if I could wind the bolt into the hole on the trailer, but for the aforementioned reasons, I did not persist too long and decided to give up. The girls were very grateful when we got moving again.

They do like to hang out of the window as we traverse the lane. How neither of them has not been socked in the eye by a passing branch, I do not know as the brush either side is hanging over into the path. When we drove up, I marvelled at the sheer number of butterflies that appeared in a huge flutter as we drove along. I note that

the most common collective noun for butterflies is kaleidoscope, but I can spell flutter.

When we reached The Cove there was a marked absence of butterflies by any name. There was, however, an abundance of visitors, many of whom doubled as customers in the shop. The Missus had been busy throughout my absence and now it was my turn – after I had, at last, completed my ablutions.

The busyness in the shop meant that the remaining boxes from the beachware delivery stayed where they were in the shop – along with the deliveries from the stationery company and the bags I ordered from the packaging company. There were also invoices to pay and remittance advices to send. All these type of things I normally deal with piecemeal during the day. Today, had been compressed into a time half the length of normal because I had been distracted on what had turned out to be a fool's errand.

As a consequence, instead of relaxing with my book after tea, I went and sat at the computer for the rest of the evening doing the cash and carry order and the other things I had missed during the day.

This included responding to the much maligned council who had replied to my two simple questions I had asked about the pavement licence by sending me a stock online pamphlet which failed to answer any questions at all. The licensing is already an untimely intrusion on my limited time at present without them playing silly beggars and not answering simple questions. I was tempted to parcel it off to our very helpful and supportive much maligned council councillor, but I will save that for the inevitable round three.

The Missus headed to the beach with the girls to take them enforced swimming. Well, BB needs some enforcement, but ABH takes herself in. I would have loved to have gone down and watched, and I might even have been convinced into a paddle. When the Missus returned some time later, she finished the cash and carry order for me while I went to bed. It was the kindest thing to do. Once upon a time they would have locked me in the library with my service revolver.

July 16th – Thursday

The benefit of having a day like yesterday is that, on the balance of probabilities, we were unlikely to have one as bad today – he said, now expecting the sky to fall in at any moment.

The day certainly looked the part, although it took a little while to get there. When I stepped out first thing to take the girls around the block, there was still a bit of cloud about, and the air was pleasantly cool. I think that the air stayed relatively cool into the late morning but the air in the shop, by comparison, was thick and oppressive.

Not even our very smart fan could make it feel very much better behind the counter. You may take it, then, that the strong winds had dropped out today.

The fire brigade may have wished that it had dropped out earlier. Late yesterday afternoon, a customer asked what the fire on top of the cliff opposite was. It would appear that it had only just started as I had not noticed it previously and at that time there was just a single black column. Later, it was white and a lot more of it. Our visitors clearly take our role as information point very seriously. Several enquirers were most put out that I did not know how the fire started, how big it was and where precisely it started. I did learn later that it was on Gurland Farm, some scrub land there, and St Just Fire Brigade attended.

It must be a trend because roughly the same time today, someone pointed out a column of white smoke piling into the air above Gwenver. The direction put it roughly in the area of Nanquidno Downs to the west of the airport, not far from the one the day before. Later, someone postulated that it was the original fire rekindled. It seemed likely, but the direction looked different. I would say the change in wind direction had much to do with that.

I think we were busy today; it felt like we were busy. It was one of those days when it was very hard to tell. I think we had a lot of small visits across most of the day instead of big rushes every so often. There were enough gaps between customers for me to finish off the rest of yesterday's deliveries including the box of stationery. I was quite anxious to do that one particularly because the box did not look big enough to contain everything I ordered. Surprisingly it was. I had clearly ordered a lot of small things.

There was a moment earlier on when I was able to step out and have a chat with our friend, ex-Head Launcher. He drops by most days and most days recently I have been unable to break away from the counter. We had a chat about all things that happen in our world, and I ended by telling him about flamingo slippers. Oddly, I found it just as amusing in the telling as I did in the seeing them. I am going to have to see if they do them in a size nine.

It had been an absolutely glorious day. So good was it that it would have been churlish not to round it off with some Lifeboat training. Naturally, because I needed to get away from the shop in a timely manner, we had a proper five minutes to closing run that kept me behind after school. Mercifully, there was only a dairy order to do which, on the other hand, means I will have to call them in for Saturday morning when the big cash and carry delivery is due. Begger.

I did make the Lifeboat muster on time. It was a good turnout, although we could have done with a couple more on the shore. I had nominated myself as Inshore head launcher, mainly because it was my turn. It meant I had the opportunity to reprise my role as 'mover of people' on the slipway.

The tide, and a large one it was too, had pressed everyone up onto the slipway and it was crowded from one side to the other. The crowds were pleasantly compliant with my request to 'get out of the bleddy way' – spoken in polite Cornish, of course. It also helps to have a geet orange lump of RIB and Tooltrak bearing down behind me. It was tight, nevertheless, and some folk think moving an inch to one side is 'getting out of the bleddy way'. The boat launched from the shallows and then the Tooktrak parked in a sliver of slipway between the punts and the wharf.

I suppose that it did not help to have the big boat out on its slipway during our operations, distracting those whose attention we were seeking. It is as always a spectacular sight and we really could not blame them.

We Inshore launchers repaired to the boathouse to help with the short slip setup for recovery. It was during that we discovered that the big boat training would be deferred as the Coastguard helicopter requested an exercise. That resulted in some spectacular footage from a couple of crew on the big boat, one of whom is a professional cameraman. Hopefully, the station will be able to share that to the public domain, somehow because it is well worth a watch.

What with observing that from afar and other diversions, it left precious little time for tea and discussions of matters of great import and before we knew it, the boat was on the way back.

The Harbour was just as full of water as when we launched and almost just as full of revellers. The Inshore boat came back shortly after, and we had a bit of job getting the attention of the water revellers to 'get out of the bleddy way'. Our Tooltrak driver nearly wore out the horn on the vehicle trying to convince unconcerned youngsters that they should be concerned. We then had to clear adults from the eastern side of the slipway so that the Inshore could be pushed up the slope for a washdown.

Fortunately, there was enough time to observe the big boat coming back from inside the boathouse, so I can attest that it was indeed a textbook recovery up the short slip at high water. By the time we came back from putting the Inshore away, the rest of the job was done and the big boat was secured and ready for its next service. We are, after all, a very forthright, very excellent Shore Crew.

July 17th – Friday

Just because I am paranoid, does not mean that they are not out to get me. Hot on the heels of the much maligned council's actions of removing half the waste bins in The Cove, forcing us to pay through the nose and complete complex applications to have tables where the public might take some rest, and forcing one our suppliers into a process that increases both our costs and damages the environment, the Government has decided to join in, too.

I am kept informed regarding the cut and thrust of convenience stores by a publication unsurprisingly called Convenience Store. Over the years this venerable organ has informed me of aspects of legislation and other changes that may affect my grumpy shopkeeping. They were the first, along with Computer Weekly, to cast doubts on the Post Office Horizon system, too. Today, it had another revelation.

It seems that far from the Government being in headless paralysis, it is still able to come up with smart ideas to tie business up in knots and cost them even more money just to get through the day. My newspaper tells me that the Government intends to ban the sale of 'energy' drinks to the under 16s.

From April next year, if the legislation goes through, we will have to start age checking a whole new range of customers. It is hard enough guessing some of the ages for the 18 year old age group and we employ the suggested 'if you look under 25 years of age' policy of checking. At least 18 year olds generally have some method of identification, such as a passport or, more often, a driving licence. Sixteen year olds will need something new, which may well be the underlying reason for the change – digital ID by the back door.

We are already facing the horrific smoking ban for those born after, whatever year it is, and we will have to ID an increasing age group as these people get older. Heaven knows how we will manage that.

All told, it is just another burden on business which seems wholly unnecessary. The British Soft Drinks Association, said just that. The action was unsupported by robust evidence of over-consumption or health risk and besides, the industry was pretty much policing itself through responsible retailing – well, most of us, anyway. There are some retailers who will sell anything to anyone for a quick buck, ahem.

Talking of which, a lady came into the shop and asked for Golden Virginia 'mellow', a loose leaf tobacco product. I told her that its proper name was Golden Virginia Yellow, but they call it 'mellow yellow' and quite rightly, in my opinion.

Oh, please yourselves.

If you wanted a name for it, I would suggest that today might possibly be grouped under the loose collective of, rip gribblers. There was a good deal of cloud around first thing, but when I emerged from the gymnasium in the late morning, the day was ablaze under a largely cloudless sky. I immediately took the girls down to the Harbour beach for them to dip into the lazily slapping waves, such as they were, down at the far end of the beach. It was closing in on midday, and it was warm down there then.

The spring tides this week are some of the biggest of the year. There was a huge expanse of big beach available for those who chose it and the sandbars are still there, dotted across the width of the beach. The long finger of sand that points out

from the middle of the beach, reaches out probably as far as the chip shop, although it is difficult to be accurate given the angle I am viewing from. It is a very long walk from the camps at the head of the beach and just for some floating about on a board or paddling in the shallows. There are no waves to speak of; the sea resembling a plate of glass right across the bay with scarcely a ripple as far out as Brisons and Cape Cornwall.

Shortly after I returned to the shop, the Missus went off to collect Mother. Mother had already ordained that it was too hot for the girls up at The Farm, and I believe she had a point. It was not as hot when I went up on Monday, and they spent their time sheltering under the truck before I put them in it. The plan was that the Missus would go up by herself but three hours later the truck was still outside, so I suspect a change of plan.

In the meanwhile, we had gone from busier than I expected for a change-over day to very quiet in the later middle stages of the afternoon. Earlier, we had driven through rather more pasties (sorry, MS) than I anticipated leaving me to worry whether we would now have enough for the weekend. It was a little early to worry; I do not usually get that feeling until at least Saturday afternoon, so we must have gone through quiet a number. I have decided that we will run out of sausage rolls because I simply did not order enough.

Business faded a bit in the latter half of the day but revived enough to give us a five minutes to closing rush. It had given me time earlier to assist a lady who had walked from St Just with the expectation of being able to get a bus back. In truth, she should have checked before setting out but after trying four cab companies there was nothing available to take her hence. I left a message with one of the cab companies which failed to elicit a reply some ten or fifteen minutes later, which I thought I little remiss. At the last, our lady was getting quite upset. I advised that perhaps she go down to the OS or the Surf Lodge for a coffee and relax for an hour, then try again. There really is no option around here but to own a car.

I had thought to get ahead of the posse before we closed and did the grocery orders ahead of my usual time. Naturally, someone came and bought all our tomatoes soon after sending off the order. That will teach me.

After tea, while the sofa beckoned, I thought that I had better get ahead with the pavement licence application. The lady respondent at the much maligned council had, after a sharp letter from me, found it in herself to answer my very reasonable questions nicely – after I copied in her boss. I could almost feel the seething resentment dripping off the screen.

I had no excuse to delay further and after agreeing with the Missus that we would proceed, pulled the paperwork that the much maligned council had requested. One document that they had asked for was proof of our public liability. Quite remarkably, I was able to put my hand on the exact document very easily. Since it contained rather

a lot of personal and financial information that the much maligned council had no business knowing, I set about redacting it – although I used black. I also took a copy of the very neat pencil drawing I had made – I used a ruler and everything - of the area where our tables are. I think we are ready to go. I will wait until Monday because first, I was far too tired to do it tonight and secondly, I needed to reread the application form to make sure I had not made any mistakes.

I eventually managed to get half an hour on the sofa while I waited for the Missus to return from The Farm. When she did not, I went to bed only to be jumped on by the girls half an hour after that.

Cash and carry tomorrow, I must be in tip top condition and now will be knackered and sleepy.

July 18th – Saturday

It is a good job that I did a lot of preparation last night and girded my loins with, erm, extra girding for the only easy thing about the morning was taking the girls for a spin first thing. Then it was straight into it.

Just before we returned to the flat, I noted the state of the litter bin opposite the shop. This, as predicted, was overflowing last night and I had taken a photograph that I sent off to our esteemed local much maligned council councillor. In the morning it was even worse with litter all around it and some blown down the street. Another local hero, post his own picture to the much maligned council and copied me in. He is a bit more, erm, forthright than me.

ABH was a tad tardy waking me up but without her I would have slept on for most of the morning, I reckon. The time did not make much difference since I was ahead anyway after working last night and I was downstairs before seven o'clock. It was important to get the soft drinks fridge sorted out ahead of the delivery as I would not be able to reach the stock after. I was halfway through the newspapers when the cash and carry arrived, so I did well.

I never fail to be amazed at the efficiency of the unloading and carrying in process. There is no messing around either on my part or that of the driver. We simple lift as many boxes as we are capable of and carry them in. Then go back for more. The piling up in the store room also needs no discussion, both of us know how to load things in piles such that the lower ones are not crushed nor does the pile topple over. It is over almost in the blink of an eye despite this being one of the largest orders of the year.

We had almost finished when the dairy turned up. This was still ahead of opening hours, so I was able to get the milk away too without issue and since I had ordered so little, I still had time before we opened to put beer in the fridge that had arrived

with the cash and carry delivery. Talk about just in time delivery; we had sold the last beer last thing last night.

The shop day started as it meant to go on: busy. During the early part of the day, I was able to duck into the store room and clear some boxes between customers but around the middle of the day the opportunities became fewer and shorter and eventually, I had to give up.

Much of the busyness was driven by pasty buying (sorry, MS). This went rather against my expectations which were that it was a change-over day, and was likely to be hot and therefore, pasties probably off the menu as they had been all week. This was very much not the case. While the pasty action was not intense - no large orders - it was long lived and we were selling ones and twos from early morning to quite late in the afternoon. It was not until the latter part of the day that demand tailed off, and we were left with around a dozen for tomorrow. Before we closed, I extracted another 20 from the freezer that we were lucky to have, and we still have some frozen uncooked.

I think that part of it was a large influx of visitors. I half expected it because there are some schools up country that break up earlier, but it really did not feature in a big way in my planning. The arrivals increased in volume as the day continued and although we had a lot of people checking us out for future visits, we also had a lot of familiar faces dropping in for provisions and beachware. Our new parasols were shifting alarmingly quickly.

We hit a bit of a lull around three o'clock, which is just as well because my pager went off. A catamaran had got itself stuck on the reef that runs from Brisons to Cot Valley and had issued a mayday. The reef is visible by the white water that churns around it and at low water, which is where we were, it is visible above water in places. At a push, the Lifeboat can get through on spring high water, but the Coxswain must know where to safely pass.

We executed a quick launch with the available crew and were on scene very shortly after and given that the Lifeboat could not get near the casualty, the Inshore boat launched a little while later. Even that was a tricky launch since there was very little water in the Harbour to launch into.

It took some while to extricate the catamaran from its predicament and involved two Boat Crew getting on board and cutting the anchor cable so that it could be pulled free. The Lifeboat towed it into safer waters while an assessment was carried out to ascertain whether the catamaran had sustained any damage. There was some concern that there was some water in the hull, but it was not certain it came from damage. In the end it was decided to bring to two crew back to the station for their safety and the Lifeboat tow the catamaran back to Penzance where it had a berth.

I had returned to the shop where the Missus has taken my place in the interim. There I monitored the situation and when it became clear that the boat would not immediately be back, I handed over to others on the team to wait it out while I oversaw progress remotely.

I also saw a great pall of smoke atop Gwenver again. The heath fire that started on Wednesday and had rekindled on Thursday was back today and this time with a vengeance. The smoke column was immense. Thanks to the freshening northerly winds, the smoke was blowing just east of us but later in the day, we could smell it as it drifted our way, too.

The freshening wind also affected the sea state and there was a bit of swell kicking in. The dive boat back for more work today, were dipping and bucking visibly and eventually decided to leave. It also caused a few issues with the ongoing rescue and the decanting the catamaran crew into the Inshore boat to bring them back to the station. We were definitely feeling the draft on shore as well and the air in the shop was starting to cool down with it.

I had made a decent dent in the cash and carry delivery but the store room still looked very full. I had to make a bit of an effort to clear the stock on the chest freezer late in the day as I needed to get at the pasties. There was, however, still much to do and the Missus, bless her, volunteered to spend the evening doing what she does best and cleared the store room in a couple of hours.

My assessment of the Lifeboat tow around to Penzance had the boat back in the bay at eight o'clock. Many of the crew who had attended the shout and a few who had turned up later, stayed around to finish the job. I went over after tea to see what was what and they had enough of a crew without me, so I retired. I had other work which would help free me for other things tomorrow, so that was most convenient.

I watched as the boat charged into the bay through Tribbens and go astern into the Harbour, temporarily stalling the antics of the youngsters on the Harbour wall. I can just about see the operations from my computer seat and can attest that it was, indeed, a textbook recovery up the short slip at near high water. We are, after all, a very supportive, very excellent Shore Crew.

July 19th – Sunday

Smoke still lingered in the hollow of Gwenver first thing. You could smell it in the air. The strong breeze that had increased during the day yesterday had blown out and all was still. The oily smooth of the sea had been shaken up by the wind yesterday and had not returned this morning; there were ripples and a bit of swell.

BB likes me to throw stones into the sea for her. It is hard to see what enjoyment she gets from it, but she jumps around as if to catch them and sometimes, if I get it

wrong, she does. Initially, I had thought that she would chase them into the water but unless they land right at the edge where she can paw them, she simply turns back and waits for the next. This morning she found the spine of, probably, a pollack in the margin of the water and took an interest. While there was little flesh on it, I would prefer that she did not think it was a good plaything, so I chucked it as far as I could into the sea, which was not very far at all. She paused for a moment then decided that it was worth diving in and swimming for. She recovered it, the clever minx. If we want her to go swimming again, we must be sure to have a fish spine about our person.

There were a few people who fell though the first electric sliding door in The Cove when I opened it, but after that we were quiet for a little while. I suspect the poor lambs were resting after their long journeys to get here. I must confess to feeling a bit bruised and battered myself; it was a bit of a day yesterday. I still got up at half past five o'clock, though – just saying.

We did not have to wait long for the happy hordes to descend and after that we were comfortably busy, although not manically so – although we did have moments. It afforded me the opportunity to finish off the bits of delivery that the Missus had left for me to do – they needed price checking first. If I had thought that we could now settle into a summer holiday season routine of busyness, uninterrupted by the vagaries of doom and disaster, I was very much mistaken.

At quarter past ten o'clock, the first electric sliding door in The Cove mysteriously and very slowly slid shut. It took me a moment to recognise that this is a signal that power to it had been cut. I think that it took that moment because the lights were still on, which confused the behoobie out of me. It was not until I looked down the shop that I noticed that the big illuminated fridges at the far end were no longer illuminated that I realised that it was just the ring main that had gone.

I also realised at that moment that ring main circuits do not just pop off for no reason and in all likelihood one of the fridges had a fault. It could, of course have been some totally innocuous piece of equipment that we had no desperate use of but, I guess, deep down, I knew it would be the most critical item in the room. It was probably this darkly underlying thought that drove me to test each item on the circuit starting with the most innocuous and ending with the most critical. It was for that very reason that it took longer that it would have done had I started the other way around. And, yes, it was the dairy fridge – about as critical as you can get in this weather.

Fortunately, there were only a few people in the shop at the time and they were most understanding and accommodating, waiting patiently while I carried out the tests. It was equally helpful that after I had identified the problem unit and served the customers who had patiently waited, that it was quiet for a time afterwards. This allowed me time to call the engineer who kindly conveyed that it was most likely the compressor, which was something that he could not fix until Monday when he could get the parts. He said that he would come out to have a look anyway so that he

could appreciate the look of terror in my eye when he told me that it was, indeed, the compressor.

I had also called the Missus. After a short while she came down and took charge of moving the critical items from the dairy fridge to the soft drinks fridge. The displaced soft drinks were moved to the defunct dairy fridge along with the ambient products that we keep there for convenience and presentation. Until the dairy fridge is fixed, I would have to be careful just how much dairy I order.

Business slowed down just after the middle of the day. It was only this that allowed us to survive so long with pasties (sorry, MS) in the warmer. I knew that we would be short and run out and I think we did well to hold out until nearly two o'clock. I was informed yesterday that The Beach kiosk ran out yesterday. It has been taken over by the Surf Lodge people this year, so it is understandable that they misjudged the volume of sales. I have no such excuse. I also expect to have to fine tune the numbers during the week. Watch this space for more exciting pasty revelations.

The refrigeration engineer arrived at around half past one o'clock and set to work immediately. It took him a long time, which in my view was a good thing because he would have diagnosed the compressor immediately. Eventually, he discovered that the LED light down one side of the fridge had water in it that that shorted the circuit.

We had this very problem shortly after the fridge arrived a few years back. I had fixed it by placing the finger of a rubber glove over the top of the light tube which had worked for all those years until now. The whole unit is a poorly made £2,500 lump of scrap metal: it struggles to maintain a low enough temperature and does not cool evenly; the doors do not work properly and can either fail to close themselves or fall out of the runners when opened; and the electrics are a mess - the automatic door open cut-off had to be cut off because it shorted too often. Not only is it too expensive to replace, it is so large, the whole shop needs to be rearranged to get it in and out – even if we could get one that was any good.

At least it was now working. I had left the bulb to dry out and will replace it with suitable waterproofing when I do. The Missus, very fortuitously, had just returned from The Farm and a short while later returned to the shop to change everything back again.

It was a day when we desperately needed such refrigeration, too. It was glorious and getting hotter as the day went on. The beach was a picture of loveliness, with the encampments stretching all across The Valley a couple of tiers deep. The sea was no less crowded, but I did not have much time to see if the surf was any good – probably not. As the afternoon drew on, the colours softened and it looked utterly splendid.

A couple of wily customers had booked pasties on Friday for today and, miraculously, I had remembered and ring-fenced them. One of the ladies had a track

record of misfortune with me. Two years ago she had booked the pasties for near closing time on a Sunday only to arrive to find the shop closed for a Lifeboat shout. Without fuss, she waited on a bench across the road. Not only was I so preoccupied that I forgot her, I did not notice her waiting. Half an hour after closing, I suddenly remembered. She was very good about it but it has become a running joke since.

For today, she made the same order. I had just heated her pasty in the oven when one of the Boat Crew stopped by to say there was a yacht in trouble up near Pendeen. The situation was being monitored. Thankfully, it came to nothing but could have easily been a repeat of two years before, although I doubt very much that I would have forgotten her this time.

In what has become a regular occurrence, the Missus took the girls with her when she took Mother home and returned via The Farm. I did some work that would save me time in the morning, including making the application for the pavement licence, and had half an hour reading before retiring. I set the whole thing on repeat tomorrow with the exception of the fridge breaking down.

July 20th – Monday

With all that pillorying of our visitors being late up - I overslept this morning. That will teach me. Actually, it was ABH who overslept and left it to BB to wake me up. Clearly, she cannot tell the time yet.

It was not too much of a problem. It is a gymnasium day, and my ablutions are left until after I return, saving me at least three minutes. Three and a half if I skip behind my ears. There was also less of a dairy order to worry about and, oddly, the soft drinks fridge did not need the attention that it usually demands. The beer fridge was another matter altogether. I had finished all the applicable tasks and had time to do the greengrocery when it turned up.

The pasty delivery (sorry, MS) was fashionably late. He had to go to St Ives, which had taken all the time because it was already busy there. He was spitting feathers because he had to go back because three of the businesses there were not around to accept the order. That is a bit off. If you have placed the order, you make arrangements to be there when it turns up. It raises costs for everyone.

I was definitely in when the frozen order arrived. Happily, it was very early, and I had time between customers to stow it away and put what I could out on display. We were missing two items that we had wanted: a repeat of the dog ice cream that proved very popular – except for our two who turned up the noses; and the 'feast' product.

The feast ice cream has been around for a very long time, which might be the reason why the makers have decided to change it. Perhaps if I had been more attentive to the product news in the retail press, I might have been ahead of the posse on this.

Instead, it was a customer, last week, who became most excited because we had some left. It was she who told me that the feast in its original form was no longer available and the new type, which is completely different – and therefore how can they still call it a feast – is not half as good, in her opinion.

We, as ever down here, are clearly behind the curve and the new stock has not yet reached our Westcountry supplier. We will have to manage without feast ice creams - or dog ice cream - in any guise until the next order, I expect.

The day was a busy one, there was no doubt about that. The sunshine that shone mainly all day, was doing its bit and in the early morning, I found it very warm standing outside the shop in its direct glare, so I did not do that again. It was also very bright first thing and I was happy that the blinds were closed. I do recall some cloud blotting out the brightness a little later in the day, but it did not last long.

These days are proper beach days and while I was at the gymnasium, the Missus started to see the wave of beach goers gathering their supplies for a day down on the sand. The crowd on the beach ended up not quite as many as there were yesterday, but it was a respectable number of camps down there that petered out before The Valley today.

I caught the tail end of the beach rush and thereafter we saw a decline in the number of shoppers coming through. We entered the twilight zone where most of our visitors were on the beach or doing whatever they had planned for the day. We saw a fairly frequent trail of customers coming in for drinks and snacks, but they chose their times carefully. They waited until I had thought I might get away with a bit of topping up the greetings card, the surf jewellery and, later in the day, doing some ball inflating. Each time I had waited a few minutes to make sure the coast was clear then, as soon as I started, a customer would come in. I did get some things done but it was one very small thing at a time, and it took ages.

The Missus did an earlier run up to The Farm but returned in the early afternoon as it was getting a brae bit hot up there for the girls. She came back with a few stock items that I had called for including some footballs that I had discovered we did not have in the store room when I came to inflate some.

She spent some of yesterday shampooing the carpets in the flat. It seemed a very odd time to do it, just as we were about to go flat out but there is some logic to it. During the season, I am in the shop all day so there is only one person to get in the way. I do occasionally need to go through the flat but overall, the footfall is less than it would be during the winter. The carpet also dries more quickly. The other reasons are that the Missus had reached the end of her endurance with dirty carpet and she is obtuse.

Our shop day ended in the traditional high season manner, with a genuine five minutes to closing rush. We had been busy on and off as the shop day drew to a

close and the till at the end of the day had a big grin on its face – or that might just have been the reflection in the shiny bit at the top.

There was no going up to The Farm in the evening, so it was down to me to take the girls out for a last spin. We are truly in the high season summer now because it was busy on the street and down in the Harbour there were still people cavorting and splashing about in the water. The Harbour wall was lined with sunset watchers and there were two small sailing craft down at the bottom of the western slip.

It is time to strap in as it is all about to kick off from another six weeks – shortly after the weather breaks.

July 21st – Tuesday

There was another glorious day in the offing as I took the girls down to the beach this morning. BB is getting braver with the water and taking herself in, mainly on the pretext of looking for stones. There was an abundance of stones, but I am presuming there were particular stones involved here. There was a bit of a breeze in play, much reduced from last night, that had all the paperwork on my desk – of which there was as much of an abundance as stones on the beach – scattered about the living room.

I was up on time this morning. In fact, I was ahead of on time. I had set my alarm but detest setting an alarm for getting up. I am invariably up before it goes off and then have to remember to turn it off, which is a fag because I forget to turn it back on again. If I have forgotten to turn it off, it will then sound when I am least able to turn the bleddy thing off because I left it somewhere I cannot reach it. Also, when I do awake before it goes off, I lie there fixated on the passage of time, alert and poised for its tone. When it has gone off, I relax and want to go back to sleep. Still, it is better than oversleeping, I suppose.

The day followed the same profile as the day before with a mass migration to the beach stopping for provisions and beachware on the way. I would say we were busier than yesterday and that certainly applied to pasties (sorry, MS). I had ramped up my order by a good margin and by the middle of the afternoon I was thinking, it probably was going to be short. It was not; we still had a ten percent surplus. I had toyed with the idea of reducing the order for tomorrow but was glad I changed my mind at the last minute. However, Wednesday is traditionally St Ives or elsewhere day, so I may still regret it.

Our farm cash and carry delivery, again the biggest so far, arrived at one of the busiest times of the day – of course it did. I managed to help bring some of it in between customers then spent the rest of the afternoon pricing and putting out. The drinks will have to wait until tomorrow morning as it is not feasible to restock those while we have customers coming and going, particularly as the drinks are at the far end of the shop.

The mass migration to the beach was demonstrated by the increased number of little camps strung out all along the high water line which is dropping away daily. The camps today extended across the mouth of The Valley and there were revellers and walkers dotted all over the beach. At last, there were a few more waves for the surfers to enjoy, albeit centred on the sandbars scattered across the beach. Early in the afternoon, the main surfing area on top of the long sandbar was crowded to the point of it looking like an invasion – heading the wrong way. There must have been a couple of schools enjoying mass surfing lessons given the amount of yellow surf school boards on show.

I could not tell you how long that lasted as I had very little time to observe it. While business had been sporadic during the afternoon, the gaps between customers were not that long and it had seemed quite relentless. I do confess to being a tad weary by the end of the day and the synapses were not firing in quite the right order.

It did not please me greatly, therefore, to have a note from the much maligned council telling me that my application for a pavement licence was invalid. Apparently, I had not completed one of the sections to their satisfaction. It appears, when I looked in detail, that I had not answered some of their questions that they had not asked on the form. I set it aside to deal with after we closed.

I had already received a call earlier in the day from the licensing team telling me that they could not see on the evidence I had provided regarding the public liability insurance. It was a five page document on which I had redacted – in black – every value except the public liability cover, which made the only two numbers on the entire document rather obvious. The caller told me she could not find them.

Opening the document on my computer screen, I guided the lady line by line on each page until, at the bottom of page three, I led her to the required, unredacted numbers. “Oh yes,” said she, “I see them now”. I fear my £250 application fee could have been better spent.

Later, I went through the additional assurances the team wanted. Did we understand that we had to ensure litter was cleared up (there would be less risk of that had they not removed one of our bins), how would we ensure no disturbance for our neighbours and how would we curb anti-social behaviour. It was a tiresome exercise in the use of weasel words such as a politician might use to assure the general public of their worthiness. The tables would be constantly monitored by a team of highly trained professional table monitors using all the resources available employing reasonable endeavours to meet the variable demands in line with environmental concerns and constraints within the framework of public service and health and safety considerations – or something like that.

After I sent that off, I paid a few bills just to calm my shattered nerves and settle my equilibrium.

I had waited until the Missus had gone off to The Farm; Mother had ordained that it was too hot for the girls earlier. The other reader noted that the Missus and I seem to knock along well working together, which is sometimes difficult. I reported that we worked well together me being in the shop all day and she being at The Farm. In the evening, to ease the pain of separation, I drink heavily of the medicinal spirit made of anise, wormwood and fennel. It is a well-established fact the absinthe makes the heart grow fonder.

Aye, thang yew. I'm 'ere all week.

July 22nd – Wednesday

The much maligned council, licensing team are the Diary writer's gift that just keeps giving. *We are going to accept your application* (begrudgingly, if you read between the lines) *We trust that you have already displayed your 'site notice'*. Most kind, I am sure. It crossed my mind to suggest that it might have been a little premature to put up a site notice ahead of our application being accepted. I thought it best not to, on reflection. Let us not rock the boat at this stage.

Another issue was the supposition that I knew what a site notice was and how it should be worded. Fortunately, the message contained a link to a template of one that I could modify. Unfortunately, the link offered an Error 404, not found, so I was no better off. I suggested that they might point me at a working link. I await developments and in the meantime my site notice remains unposted.

Other than that, we started out reasonably well. We had cloud cover, and the northerly breeze was a tad cool after what we have been used to. I had my hooded sweatshirt on and had to pull up the hood after a while. How quickly we forget.

Despite Radio Pasty's protestations that we would have sunshine, we had to wait until well into the afternoon for it. I did not get a chance to look at the beach, so I cannot tell you whether it was more or less crowded than yesterday. The fact that I did not have time to look was not necessarily indicative of how busy we were, but we did see some intense action during the morning.

Thankfully, for some of it, I was at the gymnasium executing a particularly blistering session; I must remember to open the door to let some air in. I was in need of cooling down when I got back and achieved this by spending a few minutes making contact with the Clean Cornwall organisation. I confess that I have not yet looked at their remit, purpose or effectiveness but a chance conversation with a lady who used to be on the Parish Council, steered me in their direction.

We had a conversation about the removal of the bin and the fact that the remaining one became full and overflowed. I wanted to forward the same message that I had

sent the much maligned council councillor but for some reason it had disappeared from my inbox and sent folders. The same had happened with the responses from the much maligned council when I contacted them. The mystery caused me to start from scratch and therefore took me much longer than I anticipated. I was much cooler at the end of it, though.

The shop was still busy when I went down, and I believe it stayed that way into the afternoon. My expectation that everyone would run off to St Ives was either incorrect or there are so many people here that half of them going to St Ives made no difference. I had shortened the pasty order (sorry, MS) for tomorrow on the basis of my theory which now looked shot down in flames. We were not quite so busy as the day before on pasties but a two o'clock Lifeboat shout probably saved my pasty bacon because I had to close the shop for a while.

Both boats were tasked to Nanjizal where a dog had gone over the cliff, and the owner had clambered down to try and extricate it. The Inshore boat was probably only needed but the big boat goes to manage communications because radio contact there is fraught. We launched the Inshore first as we were a bit thin on the ground. I had once again gone ahead of the Tooltrak and trailer to shout at people. Someone will twig soon that the shouting is not really necessary and I only do it because it is fun.

It was not that much fun when my radio announced that the big boat was launching and I had to run up the slipway to get there to execute the launch.

Once we had established what the shout was for, we made the assessment that the boats would not be very long. Taking the initiative, we set up the long slip for the return and set about waiting while listening to the radio scanner. It seemed that I would have time to open the shop for a few minutes and, at least, to put up my sign in the window explaining my absence which I forgot to do earlier. One regular customer collared me coming out of the boathouse for pasties. I just about managed to serve her before the Coastguard announced that the boat was coming back.

Everything was ready for the boat when it returned to the bay. There was a bit of rise and fall on the slipway but not enough to wet our boots if we were careful. The cable length could not have been more spot on, and we executed what was clearly a textbook recovery up the long slip. We did what we could to make rest of the recovery as swift as possible so that the dog could be whisked off to the veterinary doctor as soon as the boat was secured. We are, after all, a very thoughtful, very excellent Shore Crew.

I tarried to ensure that the Inshore boat was washed down having despatched two very excellent Shore Crew to the recovery task as soon as they were not needed on the big boat. I closed up after that and attended a brief debrief before returning to the shop where a tsunami of eager customers awaited me. I have no idea what time I

came back, it must have been around half past three o'clock. We remained busy then for more than an hour while the pent up shopping frenzy diminished.

Just before the shout, we had two deliveries that put some big boxes in awkward places in the shop. Two of the biggest were our new dining table chairs – the legs on the two remaining old ones eventually gave up the ghost. Quite fortuitously, the Missus returned not long later and she dealt with those. I took the other delivery, Cornish biscuits for cheese, and managed to get them out on the shelf between customers. This just left the scallops that had arrived while I was at the gymnasium along with the smoked fish. Those would have to wait until I had cleared some of the other morning deliveries of soft drinks and big water bottles. Between them all, I could hardly move in the store room.

I eventually cleared enough room on the top of the freezer to weigh and vacuum pack the scallops at going on five o'clock. Happily, all our customers stayed away for the duration of packing them and only started coming back when I had done all the glove work. The vacuum packing does not require the use of any gloves and I was able to do that piecemeal between customer visits.

Our five minutes to closing rushes are now apparently obligatory and my have to do with the coincidence of high water. All bets will be off from Friday when we extend our hours by an hour in the evening, heaven help me. It does not sound like much, but it seems to make an enormous difference. The absence of customers we have between four and five o'clock will now be between five and six o'clock. It is one of the seven mysteries of grumpy shopkeeping that will never be explained. Another of the seven mysteries is what the other five are.

July 23rd – Thursday

Little did I know that when I stepped out and down to the Harbour beach this morning with the girls, it would be the last time during the day that my feet would touch the ground. My, was I pressed today.

They gave me a gentle start, but when the first pasty order (sorry, MS) of the day was seven pasties, I sort of knew what was coming. It took me until two o'clock in the afternoon to catch up on the pasty front. Until then I was firing pasties into the oven in a continuous flow and just about keeping pace with demand. Earlier, I had taken a gamble on there being around twenty left at the end of the day and based my weekend order on that. Oddly, when I came to place the order, I chickened out and added another ten. Just as well, it seems.

I had managed to cram a breakfast during the slow start but after that the gloves were off. Despite that, I had set myself the task of making a list of the key items that we would inevitably need at the weekend. We would both be sore pressed tomorrow and at the weekend the Missus would be engaged with the fundraising at the St

Buryan rally. I had no doubt that we would be trounced at the weekend with the majority of schools going on holiday. We had already witnessed a far busier week than we anticipated with just some of the schools up country going a week early.

Heaven knows what made today better than any other day for bashing the grumpy shopkeeper. Maybe because it was the last day for many before they went home. There was certainly nothing wrong with the weather, although the blazing sunshine of late was a little tempered by some high cirrus cloud and a haze in the air. The breeze that had plagued us over the last couple of days, petered out at some point during the night and almost instantly, the air was much warmer.

The hazy sunshine clearly did not bother our beach goers as there were more down there today than at any point during the week. We are in neap tides so the crowd at the top by the dunes were in no danger of being squeezed out by the middle of the day high tide. As the tide diminished in the middle of the afternoon, there were enough small waves to draw a small army of boarders of many sorts to the water.

The Cove, as you might imagine, is a hot bed of nature in the raw. We have various gulls and birds of the air, fishes in the sea and various lively critters in the rockpools. The latter has for years been a source of entertainment and education for the small children who like to ferret about with a net, bucket and crab line. We sell an abundance of such things each year to the inquisitive little youngsters who turn up at the shop with their pennies in their hot and sandy hands.

One such child turned up in the late afternoon with her parents and a bright pink net that she intended to purchase. By way of conversation, I asked the young lady what interesting creature she was hoping to spot in the many rockpools that she might be exploring as the tide receded. 'It is for the dead flies and moth in our hot tub', I was told in no uncertain terms. My, how times change.

On the subject of rock pooling, earlier in the year some naturalist or conservationist was telling the Radio Pasty presenter that we should no longer sally forth with crab line and bucket because it is disturbing the pool eco-system and upsetting the little fishes. We wish him luck with his endeavour to change the coastal tradition of more than 100 years.

There were more deliveries during the afternoon though not as many or as big as yesterday. I eventually managed to clear them near the end of the shop day. The Missus came down at one point to bag the rocket and lettuce, which is still not growing as profusely as last year. Apparently, we are not alone in this. It seems that she misunderstood my request for restocking, thinking I meant the grocery shelves and not kit from The Farm. She had been up earlier but only to fill the truck with Lifeboat fundraising kit to take to St Buryan Rally. We are now snookered for getting bodyboards and the like for a day or two. We are considering a solution.

Given the press of customers, I failed to get enough time to have even a meagre bit of croust before Lifeboat training in the evening. Luckily, one of our newest members brought cake. Even then, there was little opportunity to consume it as the training tonight was all about passing out two of the very excellent Shore Crew on Tooltrack driving and winch operation. This involved two launches and recoveries in quick succession and no sitting around with tea and cake in between.

As you might imagine, with two bites of the cherry, we would be able to execute at least one of them in textbook style. Happily, we managed to bring the boat up the long slip twice using a textbook recovery. This included what to do when the head launcher of the day (not me, I hasten to add) carried out an emergency stop on the hard tow and the boat became stuck in the keelway. The procedure is to get the Boat Crew all out and hanging over the starboard side to rock the boat loose. Marvelous to watch. Ordinarily, we recommend emergency stops be practised only when the boat is on the rollers. We are, after all, a very avant-garde, very excellent Shore Crew.

July 24th – Friday

Alright, I will stop mentioning how run off my feet I was in the morning because I will very quickly run out of superlatives. Suffice to say that breakfast was exceedingly late and almost did not happen at all being knee deep in greengrocery and pasties (sorry, MS) for much of the morning.

Now that the pasties come in cardboard boxes, the one advantage is that I can take my time stocking the fridge. This permits me to pack them in neatly and much tighter than I might have done while under pressure to get rid of the big trays they used to come on. The number I had would normally have filled the fridge but somehow, I had managed to comfortably compress the volume into two thirds of it. I am still not overly happy with the amount of cardboard the new process generates but at least I have found one benefit.

After the initial rush that was not insignificant, we slowed to a steady crawl – after I had bolted my breakfast. This was perhaps convenient because we closed the shop at quarter past twelve o'clock.

Today we waved farewell to the grand lady of The Cove. I will leave that there and say no more.

I had expected to return at around half past two o'clock, but we were around half an hour late. Our end of The Cove was, by that time, mainly devoid of the activity that we had seen earlier. It confirmed my suspicion that yesterday was a last hoorah, and we were now in change-over suspension. It is also a fact that if we close for even a short period in the middle of the day, we never really recover the momentum afterwards. It was a bit of a shame since it was our first day open until seven o'clock.

There was certainly nothing about the day to deter anyone, quite the opposite in fact. Radio Pasty had laid it on thick about cloud spoiling the day later in the afternoon. Happily, no one had told the cloud and it stalwartly refused to play ball and stayed away right through to the end of the day. Similar to yesterday, there was a bit of high level cirrus cloud to put a bit of a filter on the strong sunshine but as I was out in it longer than I had been for at least the last five years, I can attest to it being strong enough, thank you very much. I looked like a Belisha beacon at the end of the day.

The sea is refusing to be wavy, still. The surfers had to make do with the wave breaks on the sandbars again. There was an onshore breeze, too, not as robust as the ones of recent days but enough to provide some welcome cooling. It was also enough for a few wing surfers who could do without waves for their clever hydrofoil boards as they whizzed across the bay at speed.

We slowly built-up speed ourselves as the rest of the afternoon and early evening came on. More people were arriving in The Cove and I was starting to see the arrivals. I was very aware that we were short of some items of beachware – bodyboards, parasols and a few shoe sizes – and by the end of the day, we were even shorter. I had prepared a list for the Missus, but she misconstrued my intent and the delivery was now out of reach of her usual comings and goings.

She will be at St Buryan Rally on Saturday and Sunday, so my only recourse was to head up after our first late closing of the summer season. I would have preferred to collapse on the sofa but visiting The Farm on a warm summer evening, with the sun low in the sky and the sounds of nature all around, it was not a bad alternative. I could happily have sat outside the cabin and had my tea as the sun set and the horseflies had theirs. Oh, perhaps not, then.

There were still a fair few people about when I took the girls on their last run. The summer holidays start here, I would say.

July 25th – Saturday

The cloud that Radio Pasty had warned of arrived during the night. It was big, fluffy cumulus cloud with holes in it, so we were not completely deprived of sunshine. Just some of it.

The sun was valiantly trying to break through that cloud out to the east when I took the girls down to the Harbour in the morning. I do not recall it being successful as it was cool enough down there to warrant a jacket. That might have had something to do with a big of a northwesterly breeze blowing in, even from the outset of the day. The ensemble set the mood for the day.

For once, I was down in the shop well ahead of seven o'clock. I had extra to do today, clearing the bodyboards, parasols and wets shoes from The Farm. The boards had to go first because they were in the way of doing everything else. I had brought extra because I did not want to have to make a repeat late run up to The Farm, but it meant finding somewhere to put them. The spares are now at the back of the store room but I will have to move them tomorrow morning when I do the drinks.

Through diligence and focus and complete efficiency, the whole workload would be easily fitted into the available time before opening. Unfortunately, we do not have anyone available who has diligence, focus and efficiency, so I blundered through it all and just about managed to do it all as the fridges woke up to tell me it was opening time. I had been helped in this endeavour by the lack of a greengrocery delivery and only a small milk order. It reminded me that I need to change the off times for the fridge timers as they currently go off too early in the new shop hours.

It was a very slow start to the day. It was not exactly blazing away during the later morning, either. There was an irregular flow of customers of all sorts, some new arrivals finding their way, some familiar faces dropping in to say hello and some more heading to the beach or coming back from the beach after finding they needed some game or pastime to enjoy while there. By the early afternoon I had come to the conclusion that it was disappointingly quiet and certainly not meeting my expectations of a major invasion.

Despite that we seemed to do rather well on pasties (sorry, MS). It was a major concern after buying an abundance that we would have an abundance left over – albeit a somewhat smaller one – especially after closing for a few hours yesterday. I had to wait until the early afternoon but after that we had a frequent demand for pasties and sausage rolls that put a respectable dent in the stock. Nevertheless, we will have to have some serious pasty eating tomorrow to clear it altogether.

During the quieter times during the afternoon, I set to restocking as many shelves as I could, and I even managed to place a couple of orders for where we were running low. During the season, I seldom have such an opportunity to be ahead of the posse on the less obvious items such as the preserves and chutneys and the local soaps. Not only did I manage to top up both, I got an order off for replacement stock, though quite where I will keep it will have to be considered when it gets here.

Earlier in the week, a lady told me that her son had painted a picture of the outside of the shop. We have many works of art hanging up in the shop where small children have given us a parting gift of a crayon or paint picture. There are even more in the drawer behind the counter as we cannot bear to part with any. I had expected much the same, a child's painting, but what she showed me on her mobile telephone was something altogether different, a slightly stylised painting of the shop. I told her how much I admired it and thanked her for showing me. I thought little more about it after that.

Just a little way into the afternoon today, the lady turned up at the counter again. She was leaving The Cove today but stopped by to deliver the painting in a smart frame. I asked the age of her son who had painted it expecting some child prodigy, but he was 19 years of age and at university doing a fine art degree. It is probably not to everyone's taste but in twenty years when the young man is famous, I shall be able to retire on the millions I get for one of his early works. The odds are not in my favour if I have to wait for him to shuffle off first.

The cloud that was letting in the sunshine earlier, closed ranks in the later afternoon and shut out the sun altogether. These clouds were sort of fluffy but had joined into a more seamless form and had dark bottoms. I got the sense that it was trying very hard to rain. Indeed, they seemed on the very cusp of it but just could not quite manage to wring any out.

The outcome the clouds did manage to achieve was to frighten everyone indoors in the evening. When I took the girls out later, there were very few people abroad. Just a couple of lads playing on the beach and a couple of small groups heading somewhere purposefully – probably the OS or the Surf Lodge. It was not the evening for appreciating skylines.

July 26th – Sunday

It was not the weather I would have chosen for the first weekend of the local school summer holidays. I should not be surprised; school holidays usually brings on an immediate crash in any good weather that might have been hitherto going on. This morning, the clouds were still hanging low and glowering from the previous evening and the breeze, now westerly,

Obtusely, we had much needed rain, although we much needed more than 0.01 inch of it to replenish the IBCs (come on now, think hard) up at The Farm. They are now just a third full and the only source of water up there.

The day brightened on and off as we neared the middle of the day and then decided not to bother any more. There were some teasing bits of blue out to the north, but the cloud overhead refused to budge. The crowd on the beach was commensurately downsized, although the shallows were packed with hopeful surfers.

Actually, the surfers were mostly surf school pupils let loose in some churned up water. The sea was the most mobile it had been for several weeks but really only thanks to the fierce westerly. All the waves heading towards high water were messy and blown out with no ground sea to form them. The rest of the bay was just choppy, grey and uninviting.

We had started the day quite slowly but ramped up more quickly than we had the day before. I was still fretting about the volume of pasties (sorry, MS) we had left when at one o'clock, The Cove went mad for the taste of one. To my shame, I lost

control of the situation after just two orders cleared out the warmer with none in the oven coming ready. I was ambushed, honest guv. Not helping was the necessity to cook off some frozen cheese pasties as we would not have enough. This had tied up the oven and prevented an ordered succession.

I only had room in the oven for twelve more pasties and when they were ready, they sold instantly, leaving another gap of twenty minutes. I only managed to get control back after the demand had waned and left me with a spare twelve in the oven I could not immediately use. It is a bit of a game, this pasty selling, you have to be right on it all of the time. Blink and you lose.

Before the fight started, I had wandered the aisles when the shop was empty, looking for shelves that needed filling. I cleared some empty toy display boxes where they had sold out and made a record for The Farm list. I also whizzed down the grocery aisle replacing missing items all of which contributed to taking my eye off the pasty ball.

My efforts then and earlier with our orders paid off. I had a couple of new visitors later in the day, who expressed surprise at the breadth of grocery stock that they could buy from us. They had been expecting to have to drive off somewhere or, wash my mouth out, call in a Tesmorburys order. Bet they would not be able to call in top quality local smoked mackerel and St Ives Smokehouse salmon, which has nearly sold out in a week.

I would say that we started to lose momentum at around half past two o'clock when the crowds started to thin out. An hour after that, the sun came out. I cannot say for certain that the two were unconnected. The beach now looked busy enough, but I suspect that was more to do with it being high water than the numbers increasing. It looked a bit lively on the shore break and there were far few bodies in the water than earlier. The Lifeguards had a swimming area marked but had not bothered with the black and white flags for surfers, probably because there were no surfable waves. There were surfers, though, bobbing hopefully a little off shore.

Since it was pretty quiet in the shop, I watched the action for a little longer, on and off. A couple of hours after high water, all that bobbing and waiting paid off and the sea got its act together and offered up a few surfable waves in front of The Beach car park.

The Missus was home earlier today from St Buryan Rally. That was two very long days up there. She had to detour to St Just on the way back for food for the girls and picked up a Chinese meal for us. It was the closest we had to proper food for two days and was most welcome. That extra hour really plays havoc with teatime: it is too late after to be having a proper meal and eating earlier in the shop is fraught and impractical. Still, it is only for six weeks after which Kate Moss [*Note to reader - delete and replace with more contemporary/relevant, stick thin supermodel for the joke to work*] will have to move over.

I dragged my weary bones around the short block with the girls last thing just as the last of the sun was sinking through some broken cloud formation on the horizon. It made it look like it was setting behind a Venetian blind but other than that was not in the least spectacular. The wind was still being pushy but has lost some of its menace. The sunny spells that we had been promised might have been possible had it been a few hours earlier, but although the cloud was game, the sun had given up waiting for it. Maybe tomorrow.

July 27th – Monday

There was due to be a Lifeboat exercise this morning. Falmouth fire boat had come around to Penzance for the purpose but due to some mix up on their side, the exercise was cancelled at the last minute. I had told a few people about it during Sunday, so I hoped that there were not too many small children disappointed by the turn of events – or rather lack of them. Happily, no one came to castigate me for false information during the morning, although they may have harboured dark thoughts in their small hearts.

Our naughty breeze dropped out at some point during the night. The cloud had closed ranks again and capped in the warmth from the ground leaving the air humid and very warm. It was quite uncomfortable. As the morning progressed, while the cloud remained over us, the day got brighter and better looking, uncannily matching the demeanour of the grumpy shopkeeper, as the cloud broke up from the west.

I cannot say that we were busy, mainly because we were not. We had a very slow start which allowed me to clear the deliveries followed by a mad half hour that had me pinned behind the counter. Everyone then cleared off and left me all alone in the world – for ages. I might have taken it personally had I not a few more deliveries to deal with. One of these is from our, predominantly, soft drinks supplier from which we have been unable to get the fastest selling can of soft drink we stock – Rio.

The product has been 'unavailable' on the company purchasing platform since last week. I also discovered that it was unavailable on an alternative supplier website which made me think that it was a product supply problem rather than just one supplier running out. I have persevered without the product, diligently checking on every order whether it was back in stock. Today, since I had to call the supplier regarding a different matter, I asked about the Rio situation. He thanked me for the call and told me that he had loads of stock and wondered why it was not selling. I will order it for tomorrow, now.

We had been pretty much coasting with some exceptions all day, and I had no great expectations for the remainder of the day. Our improving weather suddenly reversed course, the cloud got more cloudy and lowered to give us a dose of mizzle. Obtusely, we immediately became busy.

We had been through the pasty rush (sorry, MS) in the early afternoon, which I had this time been ready for. My succession planning was precise and there were no embarrassing gaps in supply. Job done, and I let the pasties roll into an observe and top up basis. If I was feeling self-satisfied, I should have known better because at three o'clock, just when I was least expecting it, we had a second rush, bigger and more intense than the first. Once again, I had to perform a bit of a tactical retreat before rallying and getting back to full production again.

It was certainly a weird sort of day. At the time of the resurgence, a lady told me that the surf in the shore break had suddenly picked up. This had brought the more experienced into play while everybody else ran for the hills. It is likely that it was this that drove the hungry hordes into our arms.

The surge of busyness did not last all that long, and I was careful not to overrun my pasty baking and be left with too many in the warmer. There was still a bit of pasty buying going on after that, but we slowly switched to teatime meals and treats for afterwards. While our day had seen both intensely busy short periods and long stretches with just sporadic but frequent visits, it had been fairly constant all day. We had seen the weather improving, then crashing. While the mizzle went quickly, the cloud stayed but overall, it did not seem to affect the numbers at all – it was poor all day. The end of day on the till, however, said we had been busy enough, thank you very much.

The Missus headed off to The Farm in the evening. I had prepared a three page list of goodies that we need for the shop. She will be away two evenings a week at Land's End preparing the base for RNLI collections there on drone lights nights and the truck will be full of gazebo, chairs and the like. They can be removed but this was my last chance to get restocked without having to empty the truck.

The twice weekly fireworks evenings have been replaced with drone displays due to the risk of fire. The land is tinder dry everywhere and the heathland around Land's End would be particularly prone to it like the three or four day fire at Gurland Farm last week.

The stock I requested from The Farm will take two trips to bring back, even with the truck empty, so we planned to do the first empty in the morning of things that can be put straight out and the Missus would go again tomorrow for the rest of it.

As it happened, our friendly moonlighting farmer who trims the sides of the lane decided tonight would be the night. It was not the best of nights to choose, but we are lucky to get him between harvests. At least the Missus was up there anyway, and we did not have to make a special visit. She did have to come down for the cash with which to pay him and as the truck was full by then, I took the opportunity to get the wetsuits out and get them on their hangers and out into the shop.

As usual we were relatively busy in the last hour of opening. I hesitate to call it a five minutes to closing rush because it was spread out and longer than that. It follows an hour of dead water that we normally get an hour earlier when we close at six o'clock. I once again question the benefit of the extended hour both for me and the customers, although it would be torture to close at six o'clock and watch the crowds wandering about into the evening – even if they have no intention of shopping.

The Missus arrived home shortly before nine o'clock with fewer new scratches down the side of the truck. Our man has a tractor hedge trimmer which is a bit too big for the lane, and it misses the last foot or two of hedge near the ground, but he was the only one who came up in our trawl for help. Nevertheless, it is an improvement. I will have to see how much a trimmer is for our tractor but given we are struggling to get the flail mower fixed, perhaps we will wait a bit.

Time now to focus on getting the kit out of the truck and think where it can be put before it goes out onto the shelves – you should see the store room. Oh, that reminds me, I have to do the cash and carry list as well starting tomorrow. Lummy.

July 28th – Tuesday

It was disappointingly grey and overcast morning given that Radio Pasty has been promoting sunny spells for the last couple of days but always tomorrow. It looked like it just might be one more day when tomorrow was the day.

That said, it was not all bad. We may not have had brilliant sunshine, but it was warm and oh so humid all day. On the downside, there was hardly a breath of breeze to take the edge off which also reduced the sea at low water to a mill pond – if mill ponds had sandbars that produced a few ridable waves.

Despite the less than perfect summer skies, the vast majority here present decided that it would be a beach day. There was a veritable city of beach tents, windbreaks and colourful towels and mats set out along the high water line on the big beach. Down in the water were a combination of surfers, body boarders, swimmers and paddlers. If that were not enough, alongside them in their own area, the surf schools plied their trade. Between the top and the bottom were the sand diggers, the castle makers and game players and the general perambulators. Yes, definitely a beach day.

I took advantage of the morning before we became busy to start the cash and carry order. Even with a day like yesterday, I imagined that it would take at least two days to complete it. Once I had factored in the large list of goodies that the Missus was bringing back from The Farm, it could possibly take three days. Best I get ahead. Surprisingly, I managed to get all the non-food items done which is about a third of the list. I had also topped up most of the food shelves with spare stock, so I had a good idea of what was missing and what to order. Then I was stopped in my tracks.

It is entirely possible that Radio Pasty and its forecasters bamboozled people into believing this sunny spells nonsense from the outset of the day and this resulted in a bumper day. Whatever it was, it brought customers in abundance and then some. Having been bamboozled myself with pasty demand (sorry, MS) over the last couple of days, I was top of my game today and way ready for the rush when it came and, indeed, when it continued on and off until well into the afternoon. By three o'clock it was looking likely that I had not ordered enough but, at the close of play, I had two Cornish pasties left.

The Missus had appointments to attend to and afterwards, went into town. We had run out of food for the girls and ourselves and fuel for the truck. We were still in the grip of our busyness when she returned and started unloading the rest of the quick to put out stock that she had picked up the day before. It was indeed quick to put out when I had time between customers to do so. It therefore took an elapsed time far longer than the sum of its parts.

Having finished with that, the Missus went back up to The Farm for the stock that would need dressing and pricing when she got back. Happily, there was not quite so much of this, but it still took some time because I was even busier with customers than I was previously. By picking at it piecemeal it all got put out and hopefully it will give us some breathing space for a day or two. It would be good to think that I will be able to keep on top of it now. Yes, it would be very good indeed to think that.

At three o'clock precisely – alright, it might have been a few seconds either side – the skies cleared and we had a sunny spell, which was nice. It was even nicer when it turned out to be a very long sunny spell, lasting all the way until the end of the day. The warmth kicked in and our pseudo beach day became a real one – cue the ceremonial emptying of our drinks fridges. It was a late surge, and I had no time to be back-filling during the onslaught. There will be much topping up in the morning and much reviewing my ordering expectations.

I am certainly keeping on top of the big bottled water supply that is coming from our local supplier instead of the cash and carry. That had a sausage thrown into the fruit salad when the company introduced a £50 minimum order. That has not yet affected us as we have been so busy all our orders have been well in excess of that. It will require a little more finesse when the season is over and demand drops.

None of our regular orders have thus far been minor, either. I am ordering daily greengrocery, soft drinks and, now, ice and dairy. The supply of ice appears to be fragile, but the demand certainly is not. I emptied half of our supply during the latter part of the day and have ordered more for tomorrow. The day before, I supplier did not have any. It made me wonder how resilient our bottled water supply was since it is South West sourced.

The Missus headed off to Land's End to set up the RNLI stand and shake a few buckets ahead of drone display in the evening at five o'clock. She will do this Tuesday and Thursday through the rest of August. I was not expecting her back until well into the evening, but she came back shortly after I had gone to bed. Apparently, Land's End goes into lock-down during the show to minimise of upward gazing visitors being run over by moving traffic. Therefore, the RNLI crew escaped before it started and they got stuck.

We were back to busy again when I took the girls around last thing – my last thing, that is. Our end of The Cove was still buzzing with activity, although the beach itself was quiet. People were arranged along the wall to watch the sunset that did not appear to be magnificent, and the car park was alive with people wandering about. We left them to it, which seemed for the best.

July 29th – Wednesday

Having enjoyed our sunny spell yesterday we were plunged back into overcast greyness. In fairness, it was still quite bright and very humid. First thing, I even had a bit of blinding sunshine when the sun slipped under the cloud cover as it climbed up the eastern sky. That did not last long, and I doubt that many people were around to appreciate it.

The sun has been tardier in rising of late, I have noticed. This morning it was still quite dull when my alarm went off and the girls are less inclined to act ahead of it now. I have not noticed the sun setting earlier but there again, I have not really been paying attention.

What did get my attention quite early on in the day was an official letter from the much maligned council. The sender must have got up especially early to send it as it arrived five minutes before normal office hours. I guessed that it held some information of great import and I guessed correctly.

"Dear Grumpy Shopkeeper,

Further to your application for a pavement licence, we think it is fair to tell you that it was all a bit of a jolly jape. You see the bit of highway you are on does not fall under section 115(1) of the Highways Act and therefore you do not need a pavement licence and never have.

I know it is a bit much to take in but here at the much maligned council we have not stopped laughing since you made your application and sent us all that money. Quite how our licensing officer who came to see you kept a straight face, we will never know.

Yes, we managed to string it out for a couple of weeks, sending you duff information and then, sometimes no information at all to your requests. We imagined the frustration and irritation on your face and me and the team had a right giggle at that. Still, all good things come to an end, and we had to fess up.

By the way, you can take down the fake site notice now, which I am sure a few passing people in the know would have wet themselves laughing at.

No hard feelings, hey.

Yours sincerely"

Well, I might have paraphrased a little, but I am sure you get the idea. I missed out all the copious grovelling words of apology and the regrets of inconvenience. No, wait a minute, there were no words of regret or apology, grovelling or otherwise. My mistake.

It took me until well into the afternoon to cease my seething. Had the licensing officer completed even the most rudimentary due diligence, she would have realised that our big of road is excluded. It amounted to demanding money with menaces, since we were threatened with a fine if we did not apply. The rest was just utter incompetence and unprofessional performance.

I will not let the matter rest there. I will issue a formal complaint and copy in our much maligned council councillor who is very much on-side for such things. At the very least I will demand an apology in writing from a senior officer for the amount of wasted time and resources we have committed and the grievous waste of public money by the council. The utter, utter eejits.

It had crossed my mind that natural justice would prevail and award us a very busy day to compensate. Clearly, there is no justice in this world either natural or otherwise because we had a very slow day – until near the end. Quite why was one of those questions like, why does toast always land butter side down or why does it always rain when you have just watered the garden. The fact remained that business never really got off the ground today and as a consequence, the day dragged by.

The enforced relaxation of work at the till allowed me to complete the cash and carry order – well, almost. The Missus had completed it last time and added some crisps and snacks. I was not sure what her intentions were for some of them because they had not all made it onto the shelves. As I had intended to make my first appearance at the gymnasium in a week, I let her finish off the list again this week and by the time I came back, the list was ready to input.

Even with the doors to the gymnasium open this week, it was a truly blistering session. I curtailed the circuit a little short and will continue to do so for the rest of the busy part of the season. I cooled off afterwards by taking the girls around the block.

The Missus might ordinarily have taken them off to The Farm straight after I came back but she is off to a show tonight at Truro. It was a birthday present for her friend no longer present, but she decided to go anyway.

I took the girls through the Harbour car park and around the block. BB still has not broken her habit of jumping up on small children and there were some on the Harbour beach, so I thought best to avoid it. The car park was nearly full, which gave me a fleeting moment of wonder later as to where all the people were when I saw how quiet it was in the shop. They were certainly not down Coastguard Row where we passed without meeting a soul.

When I say the day was quiet, it is in the context of our high season. There is a still a reasonably constant flow of customers coming and going but there are few pressing rushes. There were no pasty dramas (sorry, MS), although we were busy around the middle of the day, but the overall sales made me regret upping the number for tomorrow. So far during the week we had been too close for comfort to running out without actually doing so. Exactly the right number is another way of putting it and I screwed it up by increasing the volume. Never mind; one day I shall learn.

We hit our peak performance during the last three hours of opening while I was trying to input the cash and carry order. I think that the tide had much to do with it as we push into springs and the tide is higher on the beach in the later afternoon. We closed the day only a little behind yesterday when it seemed much busier. It is very deceiving.

The Missus had made me some tea before she left, and I made the mistake of putting it into the downstairs oven to eat before I came up. Teatime is only a loose concept during these weeks. It is easier to eat after we close, but I find it too close to bedtime. Trying to eat downstairs is fraught and not more so than this evening when my hot dinner was cold and we were close to closing when I got around to having a morsel of it. It does not bother me overly – it is expected and hot meals should be avoided. In fact, eating at all is a bit of a fag which unfortunately I cannot do without.

I had to do without walking the girls last thing, which felt odd. The Missus had lodged them with Mother when she went off to the big city in the middle of the afternoon. Still, it gave me time to finish the cash and carry and compose the first draft of my letter to the much maligned council. It was very much a cathartic exercise, much like kicking a stuffed cat that was so much the better for being enjoyed with a large malt whisky. I highly recommend it.

July 30th – Thursday

We seemed to have a repeat of the morning that we had yesterday. The overcast skies first thing and a blast of bright sunshine as I went downstairs to start in the shop. I had to take the girls around the block for the first morning in a while because

the tide had almost completely commandeered the beach. There was not a soul around at near six o'clock.

I noted that the car park was predominantly empty and wondered where those staying in The Cove were parking these days. I know that as many as possible were crammed into the private area at the end of the car park, but that would surely not account for all our visiting residents.

The cold front that passed over The Cove in the middle of the morning was wholly unexpected. It was largely unexpected because I do not look at the forecasts and even then, I would not have been aware that it came with a parcel of rain. It started as a light drizzle but developed into a heavy drizzle that lasted about half an hour. It will not have done very much for the ground, but we might have gained an inch or two in our IBCs up at The Farm.

The humidity in the air was still palpable in the morning but after the front went through, we were instantly transported to autumn. Somehow our visitors were also instantly ready for this eventuality as they were wandering about with hoods up and rain jackets on. There were, however, a marked decrease in the numbers from getting busier to very few in a matter of a few minutes.

While there were fewer customers coming into the shop and some of those were prepared for the weather, others were not. We did a roaring, but short, trade in hooded sweatshirts which was very pleasing even though it demonstrated that we are running out of sizes for some colours and designs. It is unlikely that I will have time to do a stock so that I can place an order. Even if I was able to, the lead time would mean that we did not have a delivery until after the season anyway.

We had to wait until into the afternoon for a bit of sunshine to break through. It improved the vista no end, but I do not think that it did much for the temperature. That took a nosedive when the cold front passed and only recovered a bit towards the end of the afternoon. The wind did the opposite and went from not a lot to a great deal, around 25 miles per hour from the northwest, in the blink of an eye. There were a lot of people walking about in those outsize dry robes for most of the day.

There was a contingent, about half the size of the peak during the hotter days of the week, who made a determined stand to carry on beach dwelling for the day. This resulted in some healthy windbreaks sales. I must admit, on reflection, that the passing cold front had done us no harm at all. I am not sure that we would elect to have one over, say, a pleasantly warm sunny day, but as a cheap alternative, it has its merits.

The improvement in the weather brought more people out and business picked up from about the middle of the afternoon, similar to yesterday. What was different about today was the number of going home presents being purchased which, at first, surprised me because I did not realise it was that time again and, I had rather

thought that people would be staying for two weeks. What I failed to appreciate was that many of the people leaving had indeed been here for two weeks having arrived in the vanguard a week before the local schools broke up.

Busyness slowed down into the evening allowing me almost to have my tea uninterrupted. The Missus had visited a Japanese restaurant in Truro ahead of the show she was going to see as she has a particular liking of ramen noodle things. I did say not to bring anything back for me as first, I do not have much of a liking for ramen noodles and secondly, the menu was so vast it would have taken me a week to go through it. Deciding to completely ignore me, she returned with something called a 'poke bowl' that contained salmon sashimi, hiyashi wakame and takuan pickle – no, me neither – along with edamame beans, avocado and salad. That was what I had for tea and I can tell you, dear reader, it was bleddy 'ansum.

It took the edge off not being able to attend the Lifeboat exercise planned for the evening. I watched the boat launch away at around quarter to seven o'clock and, later, I watched it come back again. It had made a pass along the front to entertain the many people watching. When the boat launched, the railings were lined with watchers and the shop fell silent. As the boat hit the water the watching gentlemen tossed their top hats in the air – well, they would have done, I am sure if they were wearing them and, indeed, if they were gentlemen.

I spoke with a compatriot later as I walked the girls last thing. He was taking pictures of the sunset and hoping to catch the illusive 'green flash'. He told me that they had difficulty launching the Inshore boat because there were so many observers on the Harbour slip at high water, they would not immediately clear the way. He advised that we stagger the launches for the rest of the summer so that we can throw as many people as possible at the issue.

He also told me that the big boat had avoided running over revellers in the Harbour as it returned to station, which was no mean feat being so many of them still at that hour. It was brought back two hours after high water in what was clearly a textbook recovery up the short slip. We are, after all, a very attentive, very excellent Shore Crew.

July 31st – Friday

For once, the day started as it meant to go on with bright sunshine that did not go and hide behind a cover of cloud two minutes after it had risen. It was positively chilly in a very pleasant way, however, as the girls and I took the tour of the Harbour car park and Coastguard Row. When we went again a few hours later, there was not a hint of chill to be had anywhere.

When we headed back to the flat, I stopped by at the litter bin across the street. For the second time in three days, it was overflowing. I had ignored the previous

occasion save for taking a photograph for posterity but this time I thought I would report it. I had hoped, along with a few other like-minded people, that if we bombard the much maligned council, they might do something about it which is a ridiculous notion, but I have many.

I used the appropriate form on the much maligned council website and uploaded a picture of today's overflowing and the previous occasion. I had not expected much from it but an hour later, when I was in the shop doing my morning chores, a van pulled up by the bin. The driver took some photographs of his own, recorded some details on his mobile telephone and emptied at least half the content of the bin into a refuse sack he had with him. He was there about twenty minutes all told.

Later, not long after the shop opened, I had a call from our much maligned council councillor on the matter of the pavement licence and my carefully crafted letter of annoyance I had copied him in on. Before we finished, I told him about the bin. He told me that this subject was irritating him as well as the pavement licence fiasco. He had been informed that to ease the problem his much maligned council colleague had increased the number of collections. It seems that the esteemed member would prefer to pursue a less economic solution than admit he was wrong taking out our second bin.

Talking of ridiculous fixes for problems that did not exist, our pasties (sorry, MS) have been coming in boxes since the much maligned council ruled that they must. Most recently, they have been coming in small boxes because our pasty supplier ran out of the big ones. This has been an annoyance for the last few days but today, our biggest pasty delivery yet, it was a right royal pain in the rear end. There were fourteen boxes of pasties in all, and it took more than half an hour to unload and carefully pack them into the fridge. Each box needed to be broken down and stowed as I went along. Apparently, we are back to bigger boxes from next week, which will be most helpful.

I was grateful, therefore, that we had a slow start to the day. It was, however, starting to busy up when I arrived at the last few boxes and I had to keep going back to it between customer visits that were becoming more frequent. We were still having a moderate flow of business when the Missus came down to allow me to go off for my blistering session at the gymnasium.

While my session has been foreshortened, it is still pretty intense, and I definitely knew I had been when I got back to the shop about an hour later. Our moderate flow of customers had increased, and the Missus was running in the region of full tilt with customers queuing at the till. I stayed to help out by putting on more pasties and wrapping gifts as they came to the till. I had to wait for a break in the traffic before I headed up to my ablutions.

It was just as busy when I came back to the shop after walking the girls around for the second time in the day. At least I could make sense of the number of cars parked

in the Harbour car park today. It was late morning but there were still a few free spaces. I doubt that they lasted long.

It was busy too when I came back and slowly escalated through the day. It was relentless with little time to slip into the store room to clear some of the deliveries that had come in while I was at the gymnasium. I had congratulated myself in the morning of getting the store room to the point that the removal of a few boxes would leave it clear for the cash and carry delivery. When I looked again, it was lined with cases of drink and full to the gunnels. Time to start again. Only one problem: no time.

This was the rush I was expecting last weekend but never happened. I had not really thought about it again but settled into the routine and comfort of it. It was not until into the afternoon with no let up in the onslaught and the starting to see new and familiar faces that I realised the change-over had happened without me noticing and that The Cove was probably full to brimming.

I am sure that the sunshine helped tremendously. The beach was back to as busy as I had seen it all week, but I did not have time to analyse it. I remember seeing the beach at roughly low water with the sandbars providing some rideable waves for the small army of surfers out there. Mostly, though, my gaze was focused on the square foot of counter in front of me where customers would put things for me to recognise and key numbers into the till. Those numbers were significant by the end of the day, almost matching our busiest day at half term – and it is only Friday.

The Missus headed off to The Farm with the girls in the early evening. Ostensibly, she went up to water the produce, but I slipped her a list of things we were missing in the shop. This was primarily bodyboards, of which I had placed an order at the start of the year matching last year's stock. Last year, we still had some left at the end of the season, so I was entirely surprised when she told me we had almost run out. I will have to place an emergency order on Monday and hope we have enough for a week before it arrives.

We did have a last rush, but it was not a five minutes to closing one. It was very manic, however. Do not ask when it was, I have absolutely no idea other than it was late in the day. My fingers were no more than a blur on the till keypad and the cacophony of dings, bleeps and ker-chings were like a symphony orchestra at work. All the while I managed some cheery grumpy shopkeeper banter and gentle ribbing of the happy band of customers passing before me.

Also late in the day was the delivery of our 50 pence sweets. It is very much a just in time delivery as the stands are looking particularly thin. I could have done without it on the eve of the big cash and carry delivery, but the Missus very kindly said that she would clear it after we closed. I will start early tomorrow so that I can clear the drinks ahead of the delivery. It will be a very busy start to the day.

The Cove was still alive with visitors at many activities as we ventured into the evening for our last walk out. The sun had gone already, and I was not that late out but it had left a pretty line of red across the entire northwest horizon dressed with a line of cumulus cloud. I imagine the sunset itself was worth looking at a little earlier.

I stopped to do some of the work I would have done in the morning on the computer including some big grocery orders. Based on today's performance, I am now concerned that the cash and carry order might be short of a few things. Too late.