

DIARY 2025

September 1st – Monday

On the bright side, ABH and I avoided getting wet when we stepped outside first thing. It was a tad blustery, and the sea was still having a blue fit, well, a bit more grey than blue, really. The beach was strewn with oar weed at the higher reaches of the tide which were rather higher than I expected but the tide jumped today, and the tides will get bigger each day through the week.

There were a series of short sharp showers after we got safe home and it had clearly been raining at some point through the night. I almost got caught out when I stepped outside to have a chat with the bread man. The shower lasted seconds but the raindrops were huge.

I had expected a quiet start to the day, and I was not disappointed. It should not be surprising to find that with spare time on my hands, nature steps in to restore the balance. I discovered a message on my smart mobile telephone to tell me that my credit card had been blocked due to suspicious activity on my account and could I urgently call the company to sort it out. So, I did.

Initially, I was told that there was a twelve minutes wait but if I chose, I could ask the company to call me. Provided that they called back inside a reasonable time, this seemed preferable, so I chose the option and waited. With time pressing and having other things to do, I cancelled the call back with a mind to call back later.

After completing some chores, I thought that I had best call the credit card company back. This time the expected wait had gone from 12 minutes to 24 minutes and I was not given the option to set up a call back. I waited thirty minutes after which I was long past my time to head off to the gymnasium, so again, I abandoned my quest to talk with someone at the company and resolved to try later.

My gymnasium session, blistering of course, was much more successful than I had anticipated. I had rather expected to ease myself back into a 5,000 metre row a little at a time and maybe get there by the end of the week. I made no special plan but went at the row as I would normally and found that I made the 5,000 metres with no especial effort at all. I could put it down to two days of shorter hours and less intensive shopkeeping or just that I have the body of an athlete. I cannot help wondering if the later is the case, when he might want it back again.

There was not a huge amount of beach to cavort on when we went down just shortly after high water, but at least there was some. There was certainly enough to run around on when we were joined first by a bigger dog who was friendly but not keen to play. This does not bother ABH because if the other dog moves, he is playing. Even more luckily, we were joined by a second dog who was more than keen to give

chase and be chased in turn and the two of them had a grand old time. All too soon it was time to go, but it was a most welcome interlude especially for ABH.

The shop was in the doldrums for the rest of the day. This will be the weekday normal for days that do not have exceptionally good weather. The morning was blighted with infrequent showers which prompted sudden floods of customers in the shop. When it was not raining, which was most of the time, the sun was shining in a blue sky. Quite why this did not foster a day abounding with happy visitors keen to spend their shillings was probably all down to the red flagged beach and a keen nor'westerly.

The downturn allowed me time to call the credit card company again. When I had come back from the gymnasium, wait time was 61 minutes, so I waited a bit and called again when it reached twenty minutes again. Naturally, when I initiated the call, we were quiet in the shop. As we approached the likely breakthrough time, a shower blew through and we were busy with customers for ten minutes putting me on tenterhooks for the entire time. Fortunately, when I did get through to an agent, the shop had emptied.

I shall spare you too much of the detail, dear reader, but the agent asked if I had spent £1.99 in a particular store, which I had not. This clearly set off alarm bells, the launching of various International Rescue craft and the Batman torch being lit. It also meant that my credit card would crumble to dust should I attempt to use it. The outlook for my card looked gloomy.

Very recently, I had made an online purchase from the store that the agent referenced. It seemed too coincidental that it should also have thrown up an error, so I looked at the order and noted that I had been sent a refund because one of the items I had ordered was not available. The £1.99 was a credit, not a debit – the eejit. I spent the rest of the afternoon trying to call back again to find an agent who could tell the difference. I got there in the end but the whole episode had taken seven hours, on and off.

Having now had our credit card released from captivity, I could proceed to peruse the catalogue pages of various garden and allotment suppliers in search of a suitable petrol tiller. The Missus needs one, she tells me, to till the soil in the outside growing areas up on The Farm and who am I to argue against such a demand.

Apparently, there is a difference between a tiller, rotovator and cultivator and I did look it up once and promptly forgot it again. It seems, however, to make absolutely begger all difference to what pops up on the screen whichever word you search on. We had started by looking at battery powered ones after some success with the brush cutter we purchased earlier in the year. The Missus has had poor experiences with recoil start machines and the recoil start strimmer we still have is a prime example.

It did not take me long to determine that while a battery powered brush cutter quite happily cuts the mustard, as one might hope, the battery powered tiller/rotovator/cultivators probably do not. With enough batteries, which will set the buyer back something like £100 each, you might coax an hour of use out of the machine. As I inadvertently compared the examples to petrol tillers, it became obvious that the Missus would have to overcome her aversion to recoil start machines as the petrol tillers were the only suitable machines for the job.

All that remains, which makes it sound a simple process, is to determine the most appropriate petrol tiller to purchase. In this regard, I have only just begun.

We did have customers here and there, now and again through the day; it was not a complete waste of time opening. I am very glad that I resisted the urge to order more pasties (sorry, MS) as the ones I had ordered were sufficient and, in fact, we could have done with a few less. The surplus is not a problem, and we shall iron out the numbers as the week continues. I do not think it will be very long before we are missing days out. I suspect that with more stable weather and a kinder forecast, we would be much busier, so I shall keep my options open for now.

By some strange coincidence, the order that I had placed on the Internet that had caused me so much grief today, arrived earlier than expected. The delivery lady had a second parcel, the address on which she did not recognise and asked for assistance. Instead of a house address it had a 'plot number' and a name I was unfamiliar with. I looked up the postcode on the Internet and discovered that the pointer was unequivocally pointing at the cemetery. I shared this with the driver and told her I hoped that the package did not need to be signed for.

Obtusely, on a day with very few customers and at a time when the street was largely empty, we had a five minutes to closing rush. This is most certainly the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers having a jolly jape at my expense. I still managed to close on time and, unsurprisingly, there was little in the way of ordering to be done.

Settling back into the routine, I prepared for an after tea stroll around the block. The sky looked clear enough and with the Missus working at the table blocking my way to the computer, I decided to cast caution to the infrequent showers that had been coming through and go out without checking the rain radar. We got as far as the Lifeboat station when the raindrops started to fall upon us. They were similar in size to the ones in the morning, bleddy huge, so we rapidly retreated to the dryness off the flat just as one of the heaviest showers of the day ran through The Cove.

It was over in minutes and when we stepped out again, my rain jacket that I added to my attire was entirely superfluous. The street was drying as we went around despite the rain being very heavy. Earlier in the day I had met with a friend from St Just who had visited The Cove. Members of his family were with him. They had been flooded out of their basement flat in Plymouth. They had to break the lock off their door because the weight of water behind the door was so heavy when they opened it,

they were taken off their feet by the flood that ensued. He told me that they had been moved to a top floor flat temporarily. I suggested that they had better be careful the sky did not fall in.

September 2nd – Tuesday

It was dark out when I first got up. It is getting darker by the day, or I am getting up earlier. I could not tell from the wet on the windows whether it was still raining or no, only that it had been and quite recently. It did not matter much as ABH seemed particularly disinclined to get out of bed this morning, so I did my administrative chores and waited.

Then I waited some more and then some more after that. Time was pressing, so I went and gave her a poke and she still was not bothered to shift, so I went down to get the shop display out to the front and while I was there fell into conversation with the newspaper man. That must have been enough to get her little inquisitive radar going and she was in the living room waiting for me when I went back up.

At least it was light when we went out. It was the sort of day you might expect in the middle of winter – grey, blustery and overcast, except that it was quite temperate. It stayed blustery for the rest of the day, and it took until the afternoon before our visitors realised that it would get no better today and came out in numbers.

The weather had improved in marked steps during the morning – if you discount the breeze. Mid morning saw a big patch of blue sky developing and by the middle of the day it had developed. The sea state calmed dramatically from yesterday's brashness and the Lifeguards had opened the beach to all and sundry. It seemed that now going into the water was allowed, no one wanted to do it; it was only cool when it was prohibited.

Somehow, I found myself busy during the morning. It was not customers, that is for sure, and the few deliveries we had did not employ me for long, either. By the time I came to try remember in the afternoon, it took me a while to recall exactly what it was that had me so enthralled. It was only looking at the latest joyous note from the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company that I remembered I had spent some time doing the newspaper tokens to send off.

The latest message concerned the query I sent the last time I received my credit from the tokens that I had sent back at the start of July. I asked why they had sent me less money than I had claimed. I had reawoken the beast by sending a reminder message to them that they still have not resolved the query. Yesterday, they asked me to send a copy of the claim paperwork through, which I duly did and today they sent me a note thanking me for my patiences (sic) and could I bear with them as

they had raised the issue with credit query team – again. I sent back a tongue buried in cheek note that said I had been bearing with them since the middle of July and I am sure another month or two would not make any difference.

The other thing that had taken my time was recording our sales figures for the quarter just ended. We will need to submit our VAT figures to the accountant so that they can do what they do to send the return to the Government. While we had been fairly pedestrian during the first quarter of the year, it was only two months this year, the summer quarter had been very buoyant. It was no surprise that it had been better than last year because last year was pants, but this year was also in line with the year before that, which was reassuring. It meant that not only had the weather improved, but bookings were recovering, perhaps.

The last thing that I had intended to do was to book an appointment with the new optician that does ears. My contact in the NHS at Truro had told me that I had been referred to the new company and that I should expect a call from them. Having not received the call, I thought that I would push the matter myself and called the new company to see if I could book an appointment.

The very pleasant lady at the new company searched her system and told me that my name was not on it. She suggested that I speak with the referral team at the hospital in Truro and kindly gave me the number. Since I had nothing better to do, I placed the call and spoke with another very pleasant lady. It seems that the referral team had not heard of me either, so it will be back to the lady who told me I had been passed on but clearly not. This is getting a little frustrating now that I am able to make time to have an appointment.

Our afternoon was pleasantly busy in the new improved weather we were having. The busyness ran into the last knockings of the day and yet another five minute to closing rush. Somewhere in there I needed to have some tea because, the sea state that had recovered nicely was due to deteriorate again by tomorrow. The weather window had given the opportunity for a Lifeboat launch and the man in charge thought it a jolly wheeze of an idea to grab it with both hands.

We launched early, at half past six o'clock, hence the rush to finish in the shop on time. The sea state was indeed slight to moderate and the launch uneventful – apart from the event when the boat runs down the slip and into the water. Both boats launched and we on the shore were spread very thin on this occasion. We also had to multi-task later to cover the recovery of both boats which we had to do sequentially with a bit of an overlap.

To complicate matters still, the Missus had her very important meeting of the Management Team in the crew room. Most importantly, this meant that we could not get a cup of tea, so I took ABH around the block instead to take my mind off it. I had to drop ABH at the meeting too when I came back since there was no one home and she knew where the Missus was. It is the worse possible situation: if the Missus goes

shopping she merely sulks; if the Missus goes somewhere local, ABH spends her time climbing the walls and whinging.

There was not a great deal of waiting to do after that as the boats returned to meet low water and the best conditions. We shared an Inshore crew member for the big boat as we were that short of numbers. I went down to the toe of the slip with the trainee head launcher who is due to pass out next week. I was therefore right on scene to acknowledge a textbook recovery with a bit of marked swell just after low water. As soon as it was feasible, the extra crew went off to help with the Inshore boat and the two of us finished off putting the boat away. We are, after all, a very flexible, very excellent Shore Crew.

September 3rd – Wednesday

It must have rained some in the night because the sand at the bottom of the slipways was deeply scarred by runoff. Come to think, it was much the same the morning before, but I do not think that the rain was as heavy then. There were a few lighter showers passing through now and again during the morning and it took a while before we saw even a hint of the brightness we were told was coming.

The poor weather meant a poor start to the day. I was busy enough to start with because there were invoices to complete before the Missus went into town to deliver them to the accountant. She had input the majority, some 450 invoices, and separated the statements and put them all in date order. That left me with the invoices that we had amassed, some half dozen or so, since she finished and all the small receipts.

The electrician turned up mid morning to fix the flood light on the front of the shop. I had bought two new ones, unfortunately in grey when the others are black. It is the same make and model as the last one but when we came to swap them over, it required a different size Allen key for the new and old. I thought that the thing about cheap, mass production was that you kept everything standard. In truth, it was a job we should have been capable of doing ourselves but I do not do heights, and the Missus does not do electrics.

We also wanted the electrician to fix two electric points in the flat. They were not reconnected during the building works last year and we did not notice until winter. It was another three o'clock in the morning epiphany that reminded me that the loft was in such a state, that we would not be able to clear it in time for him to get up there, which he would need to. I called him and we agreed he would do the inside work at a later date.

Free of any further appointments and with nary a customer in sight, I decided I had best start on the cash and carry order. This is more a top up and replacement order than filling the shelves in expectation of future sales. The likelihood, if I get this order

right, is that we can stave off another order for three weeks. That would neatly give us two more deliveries to closing at the end of October. Game on, I thought.

Naturally, picking up my pen and clipboard in order to rush through the cash and carry order was only likely to have one outcome: an increase of customers that would prevent me doing the cash and carry order – and so it was.

When I looked at the end of the day, it was the worst day trading we has endured since spring and was hardly worth getting out of bed for. I know that it was hardly the best looking day but it was dry for most of it and if it were not for a robust northwesterly banging in, I am sure our visitors might have stayed around a while longer. I did have one old soul who tried her best to swell our coffers. She came to the counter with a few bits to start with then disappeared into the shop again. Five minutes later, she was back at the till with something else, then once more after that. I asked if she was sure she did not want to go around once more because I was sure she must have missed a few things.

The afternoon was a fine balance of serving frequent but sporadic customer visits with processing a fairly prodigious fish order. At the weekend we had quite a few enquiries about the lack of fish in the freezer. I had calmed the frenzy temporarily by ordering in some fish from our St Ives supplier where I get smoked fish and scallops, mainly because the combination meets their high minimum order value. They are expensive and do not do the portion sizes we like but, as a stop gap, they suited for a one off order. Actually, I noticed that the order we just placed with our regular supplier was much pricier than I anticipated. I might give them a call tomorrow to see if they can tell me what increase it this time around, just out of interest.

It took around three hours to vacuum pack and label all the fish portions – around fifty packets. It did not help that having labelled the pollack, the smallest quantity, I went on to label the hake, the biggest quantity, without changing the label name and had to do them all again. Still, we now have sufficient fish to last us until the end of the season. All I have to do now is get a move on with the cash and carry order and I can relax – sort of.

Mother was with us for tea and while the Missus took her home, I took ABH around the block. I think that the breeze must have abated a little towards the end of the day as I do not recall being knocked about by it. There were a fair few in the car park given the quietness of the day. The sunset had some potential to be a worthwhile view as it dropped through stormy looking clouds, but I do not think it amounted to much in the end. I did not stop to find out and it was dark when I went out again at last knockings. Felt like summer had long gone by then.

September 4th – Thursday

It was a Russian roulette of a day. The showers were frequent and random. ABH and I were out twice in the morning - the first time because she insisted on going out in the dark, the second so we could have a romp on the beach – and we missed the rain both times without looking. I think had I had a geek at the rain radar I would have wrapped up in full metal jacket waterproofs to go out; some of those showers were heavy.

There is less and less to do in the shop ahead of opening now. I am still getting down reasonably early as I appear to be getting up at the same time. This morning, I made the mistake of deciding to sweep the store room.

I had started only meaning to sweep the store room that had onions skins and crumbs on the floor. I swept the doings out into the shop where I noticed that the food aisle was a tad sandy. It had been annoying me for some time, so I started at the end by the big fridges. Noticing that the end bit was a bit sandy too I thought to do that as well, after all, it is only a small area. Of course, it would not take too much longer to do the end of the gift aisle as well where sand and fluff had accumulated from a myriad of small feet surveying the toys.

I was just starting when the bread man knocked at the door, so I headed up the gift aisle to answer it and left the broom at the top. When I came back to retrieve the broom, it seemed churlish not to sweep ahead of myself as I returned down the gift aisle. Having done that and worked my way up the food aisle that only left the middle aisle. Begger it.

Just as we opened, a salesman from our main beachware company arrived on our doorstep. We had arranged this as the most likely time we could conduct our business without disrupting our customers too much. That said he arrived with two enormous suitcases which might have accommodated all of the company's thousands of lines. Unsurprisingly, he had samples of nearly everything in the novelty part of the catalogue and more besides.

We commandeered the front corner of the shop where we could spread out on top of the ice cream freezer. It meant that customers wanting newspapers had to circumnavigate the postcards and go around the back. Naturally, more people wanted newspapers this morning than any other morning during the week. We also had a stream of walkers come through seeking vitals for their walking day. One such couple hailed from somewhere across the Atlantic – that is a long way to come for a walk. The very pleasant gentleman admitted to reading The Diary before he visited, which was very brave and also earns him a mention. The International Correspondent, our friend from not so frozen Vermont, very far west of Camborne, had suggested that The Diary needs a reference section where those unfamiliar with The Diary's use of strange words, occasional local dialect and frequent utter nonsense can go to seek help. I feel that they probably need more than just a reference section, but it is a very good idea and, one day, I shall get around to it.

Sorry, I digress. Now, where was I? Ah, yes, what I was most anxious to discuss with our beachware salesman was the custom items that the company started doing a few years ago. We have to buy a serious volume of goods but in doing so we can have "Sennen Cove" emblazoned on them. These items are very popular especially with the rather large and expanding contingent who have named their offspring Sennen. The parents are at pains to tell me that they are buying an item for their child for that reason and occasionally I am minded to ask if their middle name is 'Cove' otherwise the item is only partially personalised. This year is the first year that a parent told me, unbidden too, that their elder child was Sennen and the younger, Cove. I was most impressed that they had gone to such lengths but shudder to think of the arguments that occur because a toy could belong to either child.

The upshot of spending more than an hour with the salesman, who might have been earning a few bob before he went back to school, was that we added a few more custom lines to our already wide selection in the shop. We missed out last year because the company forgot to tell us of the deadline for ordering, which is next week for this year. We need to check the stock of a few lines before we commit to numbers and the Missus said she will do the count when she went up in the afternoon.

I should not be so rude about our salesman's appearance; he was a particularly pleasant man whose youth I am clearly jealous of. He was also particularly amiable with no pretence or clever sales speak. I sincerely hope he does not go on any Dale Carnegie type sales course, as he will be utterly ruined. I once did a cultural change course which taught me 'people do business with people they like'. It is very true. It is also true that there is nothing more likely to turn me off than a sharp suited salesman, full of smarm 'reaching out' to me with all the catchphrases he has learnt.

Since the state of the weather was not all that important to me while I was in the shop, I had not bothered to investigate further. It was only after the fourth or fifth shower, each of them apparently getting heavier, that I could see that something was afoot. The forecast had it that the rain would go away in the afternoon but as far as I could see, the showers were lined up to the northwest for a good few hours yet and I had only looked at the end of the morning.

It was hard to tell if the showers were the root cause of our morning quietness. We picked up business as the day wore on, but it was a long time coming. The visitors we had early on were the rugged type, dressed for the two different sorts of weather we were having. There was no point in being wrapped up permanently because between the showers it was reasonably warm. While wind had not diminished, it had gone around a little more to the west so that it was not so noticeable in The Cove.

The weather picked up a little in the afternoon and the showers that the rain radar had shown were still there, seemed to all miss us. By the end of the shop day, the showers had cleared off the line a bit and we had blue skies that would have

been much more useful a few hours earlier. The improvement sent a few more people our way but it was sporadic and precious few of them.

We had cleverly had a Lifeboat launch earlier in the week to avoid the sea state that had been building up all day. Our visiting coxswain had organised a paper navigation exercise for the Boat Crew and ordinarily, we on the shore would have had little to do. However, one of our keen new members, showed an interest in coming along too, so we organised taking the Tooltrak out for a play. It does not take long to get a grip of and after having a play on the beach, our new member took it up the slip for a wash down and was able to reverse it up and into the shed at the top of the RNLI car park.

One of the Boat Crew was keen to see the only other thing that the Very Excellent Shore Crew can do on a wet play session, which is changing the starter motor on the winch. We all piled into the winch room to let him have a go at it and so interesting was it that the rest of the Boat Crew and two coxswains joined in at the end as well. What can be, and is usually quite a dull session, turned out to be quite an event. I think I will settle for that at the end of a long and sometime tedious day.

September 5th – Friday

I had a very busy morning. I am not entirely sure what I did but I was busy doing it and the tragedy is, I have absolutely nothing to show for it.

At least there was no floor sweeping to be done. Well, there is. I missed the very front of the shop where the till is. It had crossed my mind to beat seven bells out of the rug that collects any amount of sand but, as I said, I had a very busy morning and no time to be beating rugs no matter how much better that makes me feel.

Still, we opened on time and the first customers through the first electric sliding door in The Cove wanted a pasty (sorry, MS). For the first time this week, the pasties had not arrived before eight o'clock and given that I had been getting the pasty volumes bang on every day this week, we had nothing to offer. I could have floated the idea of a cheese pasty – we had cheese pasties – but they had already been disappointed enough and I did not want to push it.

The Missus had done the stock count yesterday, so I was able to complete the list of the custom goods we had elected to order. There is only one remaining item, a bangle that I asked if they could do a mock-up of. I think that the leather tab is too small to have The Cove written on it, but our man said his experts could send me a picture of what it looked like. Once that is agreed, we will have a mountain of stuff with The Cove written on it which in all likelihood will last a couple of years or possibly more. I hope so because it is also a mountain of money we have to find to pay for it.

Today, I managed to get away to the gymnasium. I missed Wednesday because the electrician was coming, so it was important not to miss today as well. It was a blistering session, but I still cannot get back to where I was on the rowing and am now consistently 30 seconds out on the full 5,000 metres. I am not going to lose any more sleep over it, but it is irksome, nevertheless.

I took ABH down to the Harbour beach after I came back. We met up with a regular visitor and friend who had been here all week and was waiting for a taxi to the railway station. She remarked upon the fact that after a week's worth of unsettled weather, today was looking good just as she was about to go home.

She was not wrong, we had wide expanses of blue sky mixed with equally wide expanses of cloudy sky, so we were being eased into our good day gradually. There was some warmth, too, and the pesky wind we had endured all week dropped out a bit but went northerly. Well, you just cannot have it all.

We certainly had an appalling week. We have not had sales figures like that since the start of the year and in September, we can usually expect some buoyancy in trade right through to the end of the month. My theory is that our visitors are back to booking at short notice based on the weather they see on their weather apps. As the forecasters like to paint bad weather as 'the end of the world if you are lucky', I think that our visitors are holding back waiting on better. The fact that the weather will never be as bad as it is forecast does not really matter. The damage is done.

Not caring too much of a jot about the weather were a bunch of surfers enjoying the first decent set of waves in a week. A good couple of hours ahead of high water there must have been twenty or so lined up to take their turn of some head height waves breaking a little way off and halfway across the beach.

Having a good geek at their antics were a great flock of what looked like terns. They were spread out across the other half of the bay a bit further out from the surfers. I had not seen the terns here in any great numbers for a while, so I assumed that they must be returners.

Aye thang yew. I'm here all week.

Business faded away a bit in the later part of the afternoon. It had been relatively busy for a time during the afternoon but when the café next door closed, everyone appeared to go with them. There was a bit of a five minutes to closing dry run around an hour before we closed that saw a brief revival. It was during this that I fell into conversation with one of the holiday let owners come to enjoy his property for a while. We talked about the produce from The Farm as he had bought one of our cucumbers. I recounted what the Missus had said about it being too hot in the greenhouse for some item or other and joked that next year we would be growing bananas.

The very next customer in line told me that growing bananas was perfectly feasible as he himself grew them at his small holding in Suffolk, I think he said. Apparently, they did not even need a greenhouse and all that was required was to protect them from the cold if the temperature dipped below freezing for more than four days in a row. He also said that he sold the plants for £20 - £30. I have not yet shared this with the Missus but Cornish bananas, here we come.

Again, there were several cars still in the Harbour car park when we went around the block after tea. If they had come for a sunset, I think that they might have been disappointed. It was bright enough at that time but there was too much cloud about for a decent show at the end of the day. ABH and I were not bothered by it at all and enjoyed a pleasant stroll around in decent weather without being bashed about in a breeze.

Cash and carry delivery tomorrow – boo. Might be the penultimate one of the year – hurray.

September 6th – Saturday

I thought that it was not too bad when we visited the beach first thing. Admittedly, it had taken a while to get there as ABH was not overly enthusiastic about getting out of bed. Fair play, to her; I was not ringing the bells about it myself. The main complaint later was the east wind that was quite punchy, but I do not recall feeling it on our beach visit. I spoke with a kayaker later who told me that the wind had started in the northeast and was less severe, which might explain it. It had not been forecast and had caused them some problems.

The big event of the day was the delivery of the cash and carry order. There was a lot less of it than last time and the driver and I took care of shipping it into the shop in very short order. There was still enough to keep me busy all day, but I was only picking at it here and there between customers.

You may have gathered from the last sentence that we had some customers today. It is true, we did. We also had some buying of woolly hats against the extreme conditions – it remained a bit breezy all day – and enough pasties (sorry, MS) to make me consider baking some from the freezer. It was only when I opened the freezer that I remembered that we had an abundance of cooked pasties I put in there last week. Well, it was less remembering and more seeing them lying there in bags of four where I left them. Obviously, I now did not have to commit time to cooking pasties and was able to devote more time to clearing the delivery. So, instead I sent a message off to our local interest book supplier.

Back in the middle of August – I actually thought that it was longer ago than that, which is why I was bothered to do anything about it at all – I had a message from the supplier telling me I had an outstanding invoice from the start of the year and please

could I attend to it. I had a good look around, but I could not find the invoice. We also paid a monstrous amount of money at the start of the year, and I wondered if I might have wrapped up a couple of invoices into one payment. I sent a reply asking that very question and asked for a copy of the invoice and a statement covering the period in question. I had not heard anything back.

I think I had passed by some of the books on the shelf this morning that reminded me of the outstanding issue. Frankly, I am a tad disappointed in the service we have had from the company in the last couple of years. This year after no consultation at all, we had a bunch of books dumped on us half of which I do not have room to display. They are piled up on a bottom shelf and if I have sold half a dozen of them, I will consider ourselves lucky.

After a while which included a period of focussing my willpower, I returned to the cash and carry goods. My attention was diverted periodically by the arrival of a customer or two, although I would have preferred to be diverted much more often. Radio Pasty had bigged up the weekend as a short period of high pressure giving dry weather and loveliness. There were a few, precious few, sunny spells which, try as they might, could not take the edge off the blasting easterly. On top of it all, we now have a weather front passing through The Cove tomorrow morning bringing with it a guts of rain. What joy.

Just when we could have sat back with the hump of the season over with and drifted into the end of shop opening, we decided to get a painter in. He used to be on the very excellent Shore Crew and is a very excellent painter and decorators by all accounts. After our building works, the outside of the shop could do with a lick of paint – to be honest, it would have needed a lick of paint without the building work. Since he was going to be here, we asked him to do a bit of extra inside.

The woodwork around the new Velux windows needs a coat or two as does the kitchen door that the Missus abandoned halfway through. In fairness, she got a lot further than she did last time. She had painted half the door frames after the work we had done to reconfigure the rooms in the flat. They had stayed that way for nine years. The kitchen door was abandoned only a year ago, and that was after she had finished three other doors first.

One of the stipulations of doing the outside work was that some of the walls need to be pressure washed. There is a build-up of lichen on the north facing surfaces, or some green stuff called something else that needs to be washed off before the painting starts. The painter suggested he get someone in to do it, which I thought to be a capital idea until the Missus told me that she would do it.

I thought at the time it might have been a bit of a tall order, but she was adamant. We now have to haul the petrol pressure washer that has not been used in near eighteen months back from The Farm and wash the building down before the end of next week. I can see no trouble with that at all.

Despite the less than agreeable weather, we had a much improved day of business today. The previous week had been dire and having had the chance to compare, about in line with the quiet after Easter. This is unheard of, and various theories have been tabled by other business owners who I have asked, none of them particularly definitive. Since there is begger all I can do about it, we will just have to wait and see and hope that we do not get many surprise weather fronts thrown at us like the one apparently tomorrow.

In the meanwhile, I found it particularly mild when I took ABH for a spin after tea. The cloud had increased through the afternoon and there were no expectant crowds waiting for a sunset today. There still were people milling about, some heading off for an evening stroll up the cliff. I should considering doing so myself before the light fades too much and the weather is not so amenable because that seems a particularly pleasant way to run down the end of the day.

September 7th – Sunday

It is remarkable how one's hopes and dreams change and diminish over time. My greatest wish this morning was that I had remembered to refill my water bottle in the shop before it had started to rain properly.

I should not complain too much. ABH and I got around the short block before the rain set in, well, sort of. It had started to mizzle by the time I went down to get the bottle of milk that the Missus reminded me that I should bring up last night when I closed the shop. Since I was down there it seemed reasonable to get the outside display done, especially as I feared that the rain would have set in properly had I left it until later.

We would have been alright as it happened. My actions of getting the display out had, as I had sort of expected, got ABH out of bed and rather forced me out earlier than I had planned. I had planned to have the cup of tea I had made when I remembered that I had forgotten to bring the milk up. Instead, I had to let it go cold while I took her out just as the mizzle was trying to turn into rain. It had failed but I had taken a rain jacket anyway and ABH's fur was damp but not wet enough for a rub down.

Anticipating problems starting the pressure washer and looking to capitalise on the long trip we have to take tomorrow, I asked the Missus to order in a siphon so that we could empty the tank of old petrol. We will purchase some premium petrol tomorrow when we inevitably have to fuel up on our journey. Since the powers dictated that normal petrol be downgraded in octane, some equipment such as the Inshore Lifeboat engine does not work properly. I suspect that the engine on the pressure washer would suffer equally. It will also be needed for the new petrol tiller when it arrives. The next problem will be what to do, legally, with the old petrol.

I have often suspected it, but until today had no evidence to put before the court. It is my submission that the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers can read my very thoughts straight from my noddle. I mean, it is not as if they have to ferret very thoroughly as there are precious few to look for. The thought that they picked on this morning was the one that I had concerning the rain and my breakfast. It was the passing idea that with the rain hacking down outside, at least I would be able to eat my breakfast in peace. I am reasonably certain that had I not thought it that the people coming in for newspapers and the string of early walkers, keen for a long browse of our shelves, just simply would not have arrived.

Eventually, I stirred myself enough to make a start on the remainder of the cash and carry order. Having no customers in the shop – I had finished my breakfast – was the ideal time to do it as none would be in the aisle that I needed to go down to restock a shelf or two. It was the ideal time to do the restocking, obviously, until I started, then ... Hordes of dripping customers parading up and down the food aisle for hours. Alright, there were two more than I was expecting, but they took their time.

One of the last things that I put out were some chocolate bars. Usually, I paid no attention to the price because in all the years we have had the shop, the price that we checked at the start of the year has remained unchanged. I was quite alarmed by the price increase this year that had jumped, on average, twenty percent or more from the previous year. I do not know what made me check the price of the bar I was putting out as I really had not expected a change after the big rise earlier in the year. I am glad I did because the price had risen again, this time by nearly eight percent.

I quickly checked the other bars in our range and noted that all of them with one exception, Bounty bars, had risen a similar amount. I do not know how long ago the price increased and I am just hoping it was not before the start of the summer. There are two things to note from the increase: people will still purchase the bars in abundance and secondly, based on this evidence, the imposition of any fat tax on high sugar goods will make absolutely no difference at all.

We had to wait until into the afternoon for the sun to break out and, even then, our visitors were not inclined to come out. If I had imagined we would have a bit more of the minor improvement we had yesterday, I was gravely mistaken. The wind had gone around to the northwest and dropped significantly which I thought might be welcome, but the temperature dropped rapidly from first thing this morning and it stayed cooler for the rest of the day.

Even with the few numbers we had, there were challenges.

Hungry visitor.: “Do you have any sausage rolls?”

Grumpy shopkeeper.: “Yes, indeed we do.”

Hungry visitor.: “Are they vegetarian?”

Grumpy shopkeeper.: “No, they are sausage rolls ... with sausage in them!”

Yes, they could have been vegetarian sausages – I struggle with the psychology of that; if you are a vegetarian, why do you want to eat something that looks like meat? Surely in a place that is not vegetarian only, the default state of a sausage is one with meat, I would suggest. I am certainly not averse to supplier such a thing if they were a market for it but the lady in question was the first who had asked.

Anyway, it became immaterial because there was no one around to buy one even if we did them. The reason for this large absence of people soon became apparent. One of the few visitors we had told me as a passing gesture that the rain was coming back again at three o'clock. I must have missed this soupçon on Radio Pasty, or they were withholding it for a surprise later. I immediately had a look at the forecasts. The Meteorological Office had showers commencing at four o'clock and the BBC at three o'clock, so it commenced raining at two o'clock just to spite everyone.

I had a little geek at the rain radar and there were a few showers much further out but nothing that would bother us for a while. It was enough, however, to put off the casual visitor and explained why our visitors did not come flocking back for the afternoon. It was most disappointing, and the sun shone for most of it without a hint of rain.

Of course, it would not have been right had the rain not been sitting off Scilly just waiting on me taking ABH around the block after tea. There was a big line of showers, but I must suspect there was a Cornish Moses standing on top of Pedn-men-du waving his staff about. The showers parted north and south as they approached, the closest coming across Cape Cornwall to the north.

There will be no Diary tomorrow. We will be away deep to wave our hankies at the Aged Parent as she shuffles off somewhere new and possibly distant. Partially as a mark of respect, although I am sure she would not have minded a bit of Diary in her honour, but also due to the lack of opportunity to pen anything sensible – which would be unheard of. We will be driving for seven hours and waving our hankies while we are not. Apologies.

September 9th – Tuesday

We were on the road for nine hours yesterday. The only one complaining about it was my dickie knee. Things, otherwise, went well.

I spent the first part of the morning today understanding why we do not close the shop routinely during the season. Food dates run closer to their extremities when we are quieter and today, there were casualties.

I had done the newspapers before we left yesterday morning. They had arrived early enough for me to fill out the returns and tie the papers into a single bundle. Fortunately, there are no magazines on a Monday, so I was saved that complication.

All the ordering that I would have needed to do by various deadlines in the day, I had done the day before. How very organised of me.

While on the subject of the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company, I note that last week was the first week post main season that we broken even on newspaper sales.

It had just started to spot with rain when I eventually got around to taking ABH out for her morning walk. Once again, I had not bothered to look at a weather forecast and failed to spot the band of rain moving in from the west. Happily, it did not bother us too much and we were home before it got any heavier. It was not particularly heavy, even at its worst and was very short lived – just for the period that I had to do things outside the shop, which was handy.

There was an initial rush in the shop as those staying in The Cove and those heading off on walks came in to collect newspapers, breakfast goods and snacks for journeys. It was most encouraging. It lasted as long as a very short thing and then became deader than a dead thing that had been dead for a very long time. None of it was helped along by a glowering sky, grey as a three week old vest and the air damp as a glassblowers handkerchief. Some happy soul told me rain was coming back by the middle of the day, which it sort of did. I consulted both the Meteorological Office and completing BBC weather forecasts and amused myself into the afternoon by betting on which of them was going to be correct.

Understandably, we were not overrun with customers for most of the day, however we did have some notable spends from those who did turn up, which was helpful. The sunshine that one of the forecasts alluded to was noticeably absent and there was some heavier rain at one point a little into the afternoon. At least the shower resulted in a minor rush into the shop even if it did not result in a similar number of purchases. I shall have to consider charging for shelter at such times.

Quite against all expectations, we had a shopping frenzy come on at around half past three o'clock that went on for at least half an hour. The weather worsened after that and all we saw was people in wet weather gear wondering by. Most of those were walking dogs and had to be out in it.

Also not minding terribly much were a few surfers in some reasonable surf at the end of the afternoon. The spring tides are large in September to go with a large moon that had reached full on Sunday and has been hanging around being bright since. At low water today there were precious few waves, the tide being out so far. The surf school out in the late morning had to make do with anything the finger of sand running out from mid-beach could drum up in the form of a wave.

The main excitement of the day was the arrival of the tiller the Missus requested and we agonised over choosing. It is quite a compact device and came in a not overly heavy box. I decided that it was probably best to unbox it and put it in the truck that was conveniently parked outside for Mother's convenience. It meant that the

cardboard could be disposed of in tomorrow's collection, trusting that we would not have to return the machine for any reason.

The description on the shop's website had told us that transport wheels that the Missus had insisted upon, were an optional extra and at no small price, either. They came in a separate box that I had opened first. Imagine then my surprise when I opened the main box to discover another set of transport wheels that came with the unit. The description of the unit was copied from the original manufacturer's website, so the deception was inadvertent, but I have written to the shop from which we purchased it to seek their advice.

A big shower of rain had preceded the arrival of the tiller, and I had to wait for it to stop before I loaded the truck. It had emptied the street and finished any hope of a five minute to closing rush despite the rain having finished by then. The grey and dour late afternoon had coincided with a worsening of the sea state and by the time we closed, waves were dashing over the Harbour wall.

As with most days when waves are dashing over the Harbour, the usual suspects run down in their wetsuits to be dashed off the wall with the dashing waves. As it now seems necessary to call in an emergency for such activity, we were called to alert an hour later when the waves had start to pound a bit over the wall. The usual suspects in this case were a group of young hellers who, on a school night, should have been home for tea.

At our regular very important operations meeting at the station later, these matters were discussed in earnest. A member of the Falmouth Coastguard team was present on this occasion, and a strategy was discussed on how it may be dealt with. Once, such activity would broadly be seen youthful high jinks and a blind eye turned but times have changed, and a robust response is required.

There were plenty of youngsters still playing in the swirling waters when ABH and I passed by at eight o'clock. Even more were on the slipway, watching. At least they were not jumping off the wall and were in the relative safety of the shallows, even churning as they were, and more people seemed to be turning up. We left them to it and took our turn around the block before the rain came back.

September 10th – Wednesday

The dire weather forecast for today, once again, never happened. It was pretty grim during the morning, and it rained a bit here and there but mainly it was light drizzle. By one o'clock, the sun was splitting the hedges. Sadly, the forecast had done its job and everyone beggered off to St Ives for the day.

ABH and I were lucky enough to miss any heavy rain first thing. In fact, it was not raining at all when we stepped out and I felt a bit foolish in my raincoat. Alright, I felt

additionally foolish in my raincoat. It did start to spot a bit while we were out, but nothing that I would have felt worthy of a rain jacket.

It is dark enough at the time we step out now to have the outside floodlights on. Today, it was more of a courtesy for our waste collection man who empties the big 660 litre bin. He is a good man and locks it again after he is finished. I had to box a bit clever on Monday with our domestic bin and distribute our waste to other bins close by. Had we left ours unlocked for the whole day we would have returned to find it full of litter despite a big notice on top asking people not to and a bin less than ten metres across the road. I had no choice but to leave our neighbour's bin out from the mews behind us. It was full and I had to leave it open. It did have litter in when we returned. This will now stay there for a while because our bins rarely get tipped; the operatives just lift out the black bags the much maligned council insist we use.

Radio Pasty carried a bit of a good news story this morning and what is more remarkable is that involved the much maligned council. Someone in those ivory towers in Truro actually had a good idea that they would put blood pressure measuring machines into libraries for the public to borrow. It would have been an even better idea had the same much maligned council not closed half the libraries in the Duchy a few years back as a cost saving measure. Our nearest library is in St Just, which had been earmarked for closure at one point. Of course, we cannot get to St Just unless we have a car, which is enough to give us high pressure before we set out.

A fair few people were milling about in the street when I came back from my blistering session in the gymnasium. It gave me additional reason for cheer having wiped 15 seconds off the 30 seconds I had put onto my previously worst time on the rowing machine. I dragged myself back to the shop and spent a little time serving customers while the Missus was distracted before I took ABH down to the beach. The tide prevents us from our morning run around down there at the moment but there was plenty of room in the late morning.

By the time I came back to the shop again after our walk, the crowds had disappeared and we spent a few hours with just handfuls of people coming and going. Business improved in the later afternoon, and we enjoyed a five minutes to closing rush from five o'clock onwards. Once again, the till told that we had been busier than it looked but given that it had looked like a scene from the morning after in *The Day of the Triffids*, that was not a good deal to be excited about.

What was exciting was the sea. You could hear it banging and thumping its way to high water from a few hours before. Waves were hurling themselves over the Harbour wall well before the big tide reached its peak but fortunately, there were no small boys hurling themselves over with them. It is remotely possible that even the most harebrained of them would have seen the danger in it today.

As ABH and I passed by the scene had attracted quite a gathering on the upper reaches of the slip and at the top of the western slip that was regularly being washed by waves about a third of the way up its length. A bong, half a 40 gallon plastic oil drum that the fishermen use for ropes, was adrift in the Harbour waters that were a boiling mess. The bong, half full of water, demonstrated the potential dangers of going anywhere near it as it bounced and crashed off the old concrete slipway to the east of the Harbour. It was quite a sight.

Once of the fishermen was on scene keeping an eye. I am sure it was he who would have explained things to two swimsuit clad characters who dashed across the car park planning on diving in. We were keeping well back, along with most other sane people. It was the roughest I had seen it in a while and worthy of a watch and nothing else.

September 11th – Thursday

One of today's pleasant surprises was a letter from the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company telling me that from next year it will charge an additional six pounds to deliver my newspapers per week. This will make selling them even less viable than this year and will almost certainly result in me stopping doing so at the end of the summer.

The charge is based on our retail sales value. If I were being charitable, which would be a stretch, I might say that with increased volume, there was more weight for the truck to carry and therefore more fuel consumed, perhaps. What is actually the case is that the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company dress up a half-baked excuse to charge us as much as it can.

The charging is done in bands and provided I can stay on average below £400 per week, I will not move into the next band up which will cost me roughly a third as much for delivery per week. My only saving grace is that the company agrees it will cap my increases at £6. I am also combatting the price of newspapers. As the price of newspapers increases, so too will our charge. The Times and Sun increased by 12.5 percent, an increase we saw no benefit from.

Clearly, today was not my day. The other pleasant surprise was being fooled by the clear and magnificent blue sky awaiting ABH and I as we set out from home on an unexpected walk around the block. ABH decides which way to go on days we cannot go down to the Harbour and today, being one of those days, she elected to go right at The Roundhouse instead of left. Not halfway across the Harbour car park affords the walker a clear view out to the west across the pounding sea. On this occasion, it was also a clear view of a shower moving quickly in our direction and immediately brought to mind that Motown classic, 'Nowhere to run, nowhere to hide'.

The shower, that was only relatively heavy, caught up with us as we walked back along Coastguard Row. It was kinder than having it come at you in the face, which

the robust northwesterly would have done going the other way. We had already had a taste of that as the waves thumping up the footings of Pedn-men-du and smoking over the top, offered their spray to the wind and that quickly found us. The shower, heralded by a clear rainbow, petered out by the time we reached the Lifeboat station again.

With showers still running into The Cove now and again and no end of them in sight, the painter we have commissioned to paint the building - right after he had finished my portrait sitting on a 'oss with a hound beside me - cannot carry out his job. He can, and will, arrive on Friday to do the inside bits and is arriving at eight o'clock. Before he can paint the outside, apart from the rain having to stop, we have committed to pressure wash the walls that need it. To that end, I was despatched to The Farm to drag the petrol pressure washer out of the toolshed and heft it into the truck. Before we can use it, we felt it sensible to remove the old fuel inside the tank that by now would be worthless and we had ordered a siphon for the job. We had also purchased some premium petrol on our way back from up country on Monday which would be the best to refill it.

It was quite splendid being set free to head up to The Farm for the first time since before the main season started. The showers that had been reasonably frequent during the morning seemed to have decided to drop elsewhere by the time I went, and I was blessed with blue skies and brightness and a continuing robust northwesterly. Rather than scat up my sartorial rags, I slipped into DIYman overalls, the all new blue ones, which had the dual benefit of saving me from the wind.

The pressure washer was not too deeply buried in the toolshed, and I had it out in a trice. Since I was there and dressed appropriately, I decided it might be worth turning the engine over to see if it would fire. The recoil start dislodged after a bit of resistance, but I could not get a spark out of it after several attempts. I checked the oil, which needed topping up and then checked the fuel. The tank was completely dry having either been exhausted on its previous use or evaporated after a couple of years of being unused. I supposed that it was too late to cancel the siphon.

All too soon my little bit of freedom in the open air was over. Before I left, I had a quick geek in the greenhouse. It looked remarkably ordered when I expected it to be a bit more jungle-like, similar to how it was in the polytunnel. There is more room in the greenhouse, for sure, but I also think that the Missus has endeavoured to keep it tidy as well. Sadly, I will have to wait some before I get up there when the shop shuts this year. There are some projects in the pipeline which I hope to get to in the new year even if I have to limp around them on crutches after my dickie knee is undickied.

The day followed what seems to be a common theme in these unsettled weather times. We were busier in the afternoon, after a brief rush first thing in the morning. The weather also improved in the afternoon but was still beset with more frequent

showers than yesterday and that wind that cooled us down. Even in the shop, it was starting to get cooler than it has been all summer.

Our visitors have been in mixed attire all week, except the walkers who have been in full metal jacket waterproofs throughout. Today, everyone was clad in something warm and in the last week we have sold woolly hats and hooded sweatshirts to beat the band. One regular visitor, attended on occasion by a large entourage of very large children – alright, some of them are partners of children, I think – has been wearing one of those over-large coats that sometimes have Super Dry written on them, which by all accounts are so expensive that you would hope that they were not only super dry but gave you a massage and a cup of tea to go with it. I was surprised when she told me her coat was only partially waterproof but there again, she had not parted with a limb to own it.

I understood the need for a bit of wrapping up when I took ABH out after tea. We avoided the rain, but it was still blustery and cooler than we had been used to. We met up with the ladies from the corner who had a small dog with them. ABH seemed to have no issues with this one and was rather keen to play. This evolved into tripping up the ladies who had it on a lead, which was embarrassing. She had some practise earlier when she nearly did the same to the bus driver walking back to his bus from the car park in the morning.

The wet may or may not have returned before we took our last trip out but at least we missed it if it did. One of the fishermen I met earlier in the day told me that the boats were to be taken out of the Harbour completely for Monday. A large swell is expected and I read later, high winds too. This poor weather is clearly not finished with us yet.

September 12th – Friday

For those customers seeking a grumpy shopkeeper who can at least hear a basic question put to him about what is in a Cornish pasty (sorry, MS) or upon which shelf we keep the sugar, I am afraid they will have to wait a little longer – or perhaps, shout. It seems my pleas to be transferred to an optician that does ears who has a modicum of competence and is capable of providing a simple service that results in me having a pair of working hearing aids has fallen on, erm, deaf ears.

The very pleasant lady at the NHS department responsible for such things sent me a message this morning with a contact name in the company which I am trying desperately to escape the clutches of. I had hoped that the telephone number I was given by-passed the call centre interactive voice response system, but I was sadly disappointed. I spoke with another very pleasant lady who, after some waiting time, managed to transfer me to my named contact.

The other thing that I had hoped for, or more rather expected, was the named contact was fully up to speed on the history of my complaint and the resolution being enacted. Unhappily, she knew my name, the intent that I wished to transfer and a whole bunch of empty platitudes that did nothing to endear me to her or her company. I was told that senior management were 'working very hard' and that there were 'procedures to follow', which was somewhat devalued by 'this has never been done before'. 'These things take time', apparently to which I reminded her that her company had spent six weeks doing nothing and that perhaps they should stir themselves to make amends. This merely provoked a further set of empty sound bites that made it clear that any further conversation was just wasting our respective breaths and time.

I deferred to the very pleasant lady in the NHS again. Unless she had a clever plan, I really have no idea where I go next.

To add to the pleasures of the day, it was raining when I first looked out of the window onto a dark world and a dark, wet street. Thankfully, ABH was in no mood to go out and, indeed, not even inclined to get out of bed. By the time she was a bit more amenable, it was light and had stopped raining for a bit. We restricted our perambulation to the short block, which was a splendid idea since she wanted to sniff each individual blade of grass and plant stalk there and back.

For the last week or so I have been unlocking the viewing gallery on the Lifeboat station. The mechanic who usually does it is on paternity leave. As there was no Lifeboat training last night, a gang of them repaired to the OS for a bit of wetting the baby's head. Unfortunately, I had a prior appointment polishing our pet armadillo and could not attend. Anyway, before I digress further, I went across the road to perform my duty just after I had unlocked the shop to perform my duties there. I must assume that there is just one particularly malevolent small god of grumpy shopkeepers on duty today because I endured the world's shortest shower of rain as I went over. It was finished by the time I started coming back and all I did was open the door, switch on the light and put out the collecting tin.

It tried to get me again later. I had just gone upstairs to get a cup of tea and bring ABH down so that the Missus could take her up to The Farm. The only thing that saved me was I stopped for a chat with the painter. When I looked around, one of the heaviest showers of the week was cascading down against the windows. Again, it was over in short order, but it had dumped a lot of water in that time.

Our painter arrived at eight o'clock this morning, all keen and eager. Unfortunately, so too did the newspaper man and the greengrocery van. I needed to speak with both and direct the painter, so I was torn as to which to do first. Happily, the painter went and had a geek at the stirred up sea and left me to deal with the two deliveries. After I had finished, I showed him upstairs and when I went up again a few minutes later, he had already made a start.

I went up again in the middle of the afternoon and he had almost finished. The Velux window surrounds and the kitchen door all look immaculate. He also repaired a hole in the kitchen ceiling that our builder had made when he was doing that part of the roof. He was going to repair it, but it got forgotten amid all the other finishing off works. Our painter also, unbidden, filled in the gap around the doorframes, a job that had gone begging for 16 years. Good man.

The showers that were more frequent than any of the days this week worked for and against us today. If there were people about when it rained, and at times during the day there were a few, we benefited from the rush into shelter. Mainly, though, the rain kept the number of visitors down and by the later part of the afternoon, the street was largely deserted and stayed that way.

For a day of transient custom, we went through some number of pasties. We had nearly run out last week, so I ordered an additional volume this week but with the concern that the weather forecast did not look as inviting this week. By the end of the afternoon, we had gone through nearly half the number I had planned for the weekend, and we have used all the excess pasties from the freezer. If the forecast weather does not frighten people off on Sunday, we might be in a spot of bother.

In the end, I had to call a halt to it but by then anyone who had wanted a pasty had bought one. I had spent the day serving customers in ones and twos, there were some notable spends among those, so it was not all bad news. Then, at four o'clock we had, if it had happened a little later in the day, what looked suspiciously like a five minutes to closing rush. Not only that but the more customers than we had all day put together all came to the till at exactly the same time. In the vanguard was a lady with a diverse range of items, many of which needed to be wrapped and bagged which took some time while others queued up behind. It has seemed that this week we have done most of our business in the last two hours of opening. I am tempted, oh am I tempted.

When the Missus came back from The Farm sporting a cucumber of prodigious size and quality, I took the opportunity to attend to the premium fuel that we had purchased. It is common knowledge that modern petrol degrades very quickly and the petrol we use for the lawnmower, pressure washer and new tiller, will have to sit about for quite some time. The problem is the ethanol in the fuel that absorbs water until it does not and then it separates from the petrol and causes problems particularly in equipment like that I have just mentioned. To help make the petrol last a bit longer there are additives available and highly recommended. The Missus ordered some in, so as soon as she arrived and I had no customers, I added the requisite amount of the solution to our premium petrol.

We are now set to fuel up the pressure washer – we even had some spare oil at The Farm which it needs – and the tiller and do, erm, pressure washing and tilling. While we do not have to wait to do the pressure washing, we will have to wait until the weather improves before calling our painter back. He told me that he has lost a

serious amount of business due to the wet weather because he cannot work outside. Hopefully, it will not be so long between the pressure washing and the rain stopping that the green has come back again.

The showers that had blown through The Cove all day with increased frequency had caught mostly everyone who had dared to venture out. I hosted a continuous arrival into the shop of drenched people in various forms of dress, either dripping with water or clinging to them. The showers were so frequent and so sudden that even I got caught a couple of times simply heading upstairs.

I had not stopped to think about it until today when I inadvertently caught a glimpse of a long range weather forecast and the weather we are having is set to last. I suspected that the jet stream had slipped to the south of us and when I checked, it had. As long as it sits where it is we can expect a conveyer belt of low pressure systems heading at us across the Atlantic. Something to look forward to, then.

September 13th – Saturday

ABH caught me unawares this morning just as I had settled with a cup of tea. Actually, she had woken me up an hour before but then refused to settle for some time. Not long after, it was time for me to get up, which unsettled her again, so it was all my fault, obviously.

Since the computer was in front of me at the time, I quickly checked to see if we would be getting wet when I took her out momentarily. The answer to that was, most probably, but not as wet as we might have got had the big red bit been lined up to come over us. I settled for putting on a light rain jacket and hoping for the best.

It did rain on us as expected but at least it was not a downpour like we had earlier in the morning. It had disturbed ABH who had been quietly sleeping, snuggled up to my neck and was the precursor to being out so early in the first place. The rain commenced soon after we stepped out. Being anxious to be back home before it set in more heavily, it took me a minute to accept that no amount of willing ABH to hurry up was going to get her to stop sniffing random spots on the tarmac and every flower and blade of grass on the journey. Mercifully, I escaped with a wet jacket and nothing worse. My shorts and shoes somehow remained relatively dry.

That was the last of the rain for the day. There were showers out to the west, but they all missed us. After a dark and shady start, the sun broke through and gave us a bright but breezy day, the best we have had for a while. The wind was coming in from the west and judging by the attire I was seeing in the street it was doing a good job of keeping down the temperature. I do not get out much. The good weather brought us good customers – the ones that walk around in large numbers and like spending money. Ansum, it was.

The streets might have been thronging and alive with visitors, but it seems pasties (sorry, MS) were not order of the day. This might have been a good thing for my fragile stock, but it was a little disappointing, nevertheless. I now do not know whether I should cook some for tomorrow or wait to see how poor the weather is. It is a terrible dilemma but fortunately, grumpy shopkeepers are used to dealing with such complex and intricate issues. It is like rocket science but for pasties.

If nothing else, I did actually achieve something today. During the season, we throw hangers that come off shorts, hooded sweatshirts and anything else under the counter. Periodically, when I can stand the mess no longer, I pull all the hangers out and put them in the store room, usually on a shelf. When I can stand that pile no longer, I hail them into an empty box where they stay waiting on something to happen to them. We had accumulated two such boxes in the store room which were in the way wherever I moved them to. They needed sorting out.

We have a mish mash of hanger types ranging from the rarely used to the completely useless. I was determined to thin the hangers out and get rid of those we no longer use or have no use at all. The first thing to do, of course, is to purchase some more hangers. While this sounds a completely barmy solution to an over-abundance of hangers, it does actually make sense. Honest, guv.

The hangers I ordered will serve the purpose of hanging shorts and bikinis. Currently, the bikinis arrive on brittle plastic hangers that are barely fit for purpose. I needed something more robust, compact and multipurpose, which I found after just brief search. I know that they are the very item because the Missus has some upstairs and I tried out my theory before I placed the order.

Thus comforted in the knowledge that suitable multiuse hangers were on the way, I felt much better about being ruthless in my casting out hangers that were no longer going to be useful. It took a little while to sort all the hangers out and to put the useful ones back in their respective boxes. At the end I was able to put two boxes of useless – to us – hangers outside for our visitors and neighbours to pick over and to tidy away the ones left in the store room. I can also look forward to a day when all the bikinis are on hangers that do not crack when you look at them and hold the two parts together as a pair that do not need refitting on the hanger every day.

You lucky, lucky people. There are not many Diarists that can wring four paragraphs out of a hanger.

The street largely emptied after four o'clock and there was no five minutes to closing rush. We had a few bigger grocery purchases from some new arrivals for the week ahead, which was quite pleasing and some visits from some long time visitors and friends. It is the sign that the outside world is still there, which is very comforting for someone who rarely goes further than the top of the hill.

The weather forecasters have promised the end of the world at the end of the weekend, it seems, so I shall be seeking further confirmation regarding its existence beyond my borders come Monday.

September 14th – Sunday

What a fortunate pair we were, ABH and I, as we stepped out into the dry of the morning. A few spots of rain fell upon us as we cavorted on the beach, but it was only a prelude to some proper stuff coming along shortly and hardly bothered us at all. Where I got a little damp was opening the Lifeboat station viewing gallery when I went down to get the shop ready. It was raining a bit harder by then.

The rain set in before I opened the first electric sliding door in The Cove to the masses who had clearly elected to be somewhere else. Amazingly, we had some customers, those staying nearby and after newspapers and breakfast goods. It probably amounted to the most we saw at any one time until the rain cleared off.

During the early part of the morning the rain was not particularly heavy, but it was continuous until the middle of the day. We then had some respite waiting for the next lot to come in with wind attached or maybe the wind was later. It was hard to tell. In the meanwhile, I spotted a report by the Kernow Weather Team that made it clear that this was not a named storm as some newspapers had suggested a day or so ago; it was merely a rather naughty low pressure system. A warm front would pass us first with some rain followed by a cold front with some heavier rain.

One couple from the morning rush told me that there were basking sharks in the bay and that they were close in. They sounded very confident of their observation and having no reason to doubt them, but exceedingly surprised that basking sharks were back after such a long absence, went out to have a look. There were indeed three 'dorsal fins' sitting proud in the water, otherwise identified as seals, snout up having a rest. My, we all had a little chortle about that.

The master plan for the day, at least for the Missus, was to do the pressure washing. It was, of course, reliant upon getting the petrol driven pressure washer to start after topping up the oil and filling it with petrol. I had recommended doing it today while it was raining as there would be no one around to get caught in the spray. It was a first class idea. It was a shame, then, that the Missus did not get around to it until into the afternoon when the rain had stopped, and our world had woken up.

There were already visitors gathering on the café's tables on the opposite side of the road when the Missus returned from The Farm and a spot of watering and with Mother in the back. It took no more than me putting on my gloves and a jacket and opening the back of the truck to start a flow of customers into the shop. At one point, I managed to secure sufficient time to top the oil up but even that had to be done in two movements. I gave up on getting fuel into it.

I had to wait for the Missus to come down and cover me at the till before I was able to get out to do the refuelling. She wanted to start at the back of the building, which would save me from the hammering noise for a while. So, I dragged the machine up there making sure the fuel was not leaking out. We have not used the pressure washer for at least two years, so I was not expecting an easy time of it, but it started first time. We will not talk about the twenty times I had pulled the cord before I realised that the 'on' switch was switched to 'off', but it was good practise, I am sure.

Our dry spell between weather fronts was lasting a lot longer than I anticipated, so I took a quick peek at the rain radar to work out what was going on. It appeared that the main bulk of the rain associated with the cold front had piled up the north coast skirting us by a whisker. The rain did catch up with us in the later part of the afternoon, but we got away light while the heavy stuff was just arriving at Exeter. It did not save us, though. The parting shot of one customer was he was off to watch the football – I assumed there was a match on rather than some enjoyment derived from looking at a patchwork sphere in the corner of his living room. There must have been other attractions, too, because we were largely deprived of any custom from soon after the rain started.

It was probably just as well because our happy jet washer had made her way around to the front of the shop, pushing mayhem and a pavement full of detritus ahead of her. She had gone to the expense of purchasing a pair of waterproof overalls, overalls with a bid and legs far too long for her. If she had also purchased an oversized pair of Wellingtons as well, she could have joined a circus. By the time she emerged around the corner of the shop she was covered head to toe in flecks of paint, clag of all sorts and was dripping wet. I would have taken a photograph to share with you dear reader, but she had a pressure washer in her hand and daft I may be, but stupid ... oh, alright. To quote Satre, hell hath no fury like a woman with a jet washer in her hand having her picture taken.

At four o'clock the rain ran off to the east and the sun broke through. The cloud cleared completely, and it was hard to imagine that not an hour before, the skies had been grey and full of rain. Although we still had to wait for the wind to come through, the cataclysmic rain we had been warned of just did not arrive, which was a shame because it would have washed away the detritus from the pressure washing and saved us a bit of petrol. One thing that struck me over the course of the effort was the number of comments I received telling me what a shameless cur I was for letting the Missus do all the hard work. Equal rights seem to be all very well until a woman is being equal, and then it is her husband's fault.

Whatever the case, the work had put most of our potential customers off trying to get in. I had closed the first electric sliding door in The Cove so that we did not get flooded which, of course, meant that we were closed. Besides that, the Missus was quite oblivious to people approaching and very few were brave enough to run the gauntlet. I concerned myself with doing the closing orders early and shut the shop on

time, got upstairs early to find that tea was late because the Missus had been doing the pressure washing instead.

I took ABH around after our later tea to find that the wind had indeed ramped up a little. The Harbour car park had a few cars parked up with people watching as the sun dropped into a bank of cloud in the west. It had the potential to be a pretty sunset at the end of a rubbish day, but we did not tarry to find out. I stopped to tie down our wheelie bin that the Missus had unleashed when she washed behind it and the commercial bin. Later, I put the tie on the lid of our newspaper box. It was unlikely to be affected as the wind was due in the southwest followed by it veering westerly.

One thing is for sure; our painter will not be coming back to cover up the chunks of missing paint on our shop walls until the weather is much improved. It will probably need another wash down by then.

September 15th – Monday

I had a quick geek at the weather stations during the day to keep tabs on the windspeed. By the middle of the afternoon as it receded, I noted that Land's End had not seen much more than 50 miles per hour and St Ives just a little more, which given that the wind was southwesterly, then westerly, was interesting. Gwennap Head, windiest place in the universe, had registered close on 70 miles per hour but as I tell anyone who will listen, I believe that to be anomalous.

It was blowing a fair bit down on the Harbour beach when we went down first thing. The sea had not got into its stride at that time, and I gauged it to be safe for a run around, even near the waves which were a long way down the beach. There was just enough light to see what we were doing but as she tends now to get up before light – or light is later than her getting up time - I take a headtorch just in case.

The wind did not give us too much of a problem in The Cove. We were mainly sheltered from it unless you were at the far end of the beach. I think if you were on the top of the hill or along the south coast, you would have felt it but even then, it was hardly severe. The Missus would have been buffeted a bit as she came back from Land's End. On a whim, she had decided to take the bus up there with ABH and walk back. It very nearly finished before it began, when she was close to missing the bus but made it with seconds to spare. She returned around an hour later looking remarkably unscathed.

The morning in the shop had been fairly quiet, which seems to be the way in this post-holiday world. There was some coming and going as the newspaper and breakfast goods contingent collected their requirements then a big empty space where more customers should really be. Looking at it kindly, it allowed the Missus an easy ride while I slunk off for a blistering session at the gymnasium.

She was still doing her knitting, or whatever it is she does when there are few customers, when I came back. I left her to it while I fetched ABH and took her around the block. Neap tides or no, there was precious little space on the Harbour beach and the waves were far too boisterous to be running a small errand ABH near them. It was gratifying, therefore, to see that the Harbour car park was near full, with people being sensible and watching the dancing high water waves from a safe distance.

It was probably the most exposed to the robust, by that time, westerly breeze I at least was likely to get today. ABH did not seem overly impressed either by the fact that she was being dragged around the block, the gusting wind in her face, or very possibly, all three. Whatever the circumstance, we were home again in short order with only cursory grass and plant sniffing. It might have been that she was still traumatised from our last walk last night.

We walked up between the houses at the bottom bit of Stone Chair Lane. There are two cats that hang around the street corners there, looking menacing. If they had flick knives, it would not surprise me in the least. ABH is still not entirely sure what they are, or indeed what to do with them. Occasionally, she will bark in the hope they run away but, when face to face, they will stare each other out to see who breaks first. There have never been fisticuffs.

Last night, as we walked up the lane, minding our own business, the two cats came belting down the hill and out of the night at us. One went right and the other left, a classic pincher movement. Clearly, cats have no understanding of a classic pincher movement because one found itself momentarily trapped in front of ABH. ABH advanced to have a closer look and the two faced off in a death stare – well, the cat had a death stare and ABH looked a tad bemused and puzzled. The other cat, clearly seeing its pal in difficulty, very quickly begged off home. Honour amongst thieves, eh?

This, being a family Diary, dear reader, no cats or ABHs were harmed in the writing of those paragraphs – other than a possible traumatising or two.

We had better luck on both after tea walks today. This first was close to a repeat of the one the day before. The sun had managed to find more of a gap in the clouds on the horizon tonight. As the waves were exploding at the footings of Pedn-men-du, it afforded the opportunity for budding scenic photographers to get the shot of their lives.

Our last walk of the evening was purely perfunctory. It is proper dark by that time now, although we have the streetlight and the powerful floodlight atop the side door to the Lifeboat station. By the time we get to the Roundhouse, I need my headtorch to see what is going on. It was still breezy, but most of the power had gone out of it. The storm that never was.

September 16th – Tuesday

We had our busiest day since the schools went back yesterday. Judging by the numbers of people wandering about and the frequency of visits to the shop, we were heading that way again today by the early afternoon. Yesterday had weather warnings wrapped around it and today had nothing much to commend it. How anyone is supposed to run a business around those dynamics is beyond me. It is not quite so bad for us, but the café next door buys in groceries fresh every day. They had to strip our whole milk later in the day.

ABH was a tad under the weather this morning. She came with me down to the Harbour beach but as soon as we got back, she went back to bed again. She will normally have a couple of chew sticks then comes to me with a toy urging me away from my screen for a game. Today, she left her treats and was still curled up when I went downstairs. There is no such thing as a free ride in this household unless you are death's door and have both legs in a sling. She was whisked off to The Farm where, no doubt, if she was bigger, she would be strapped to a plough and made to do a full day's work.

I certainly had no time for concern. We were busy almost from the start. Of course, it was far busier into the afternoon, but it gave me time to warm up. I had ordered an excess of pasties (sorry, MS) yesterday with the grand plan of not placing a further order for tomorrow. It had been done very much on the fly and without much thought, so it was never going to work anyway. Slamming the last nail in the coffin of my flawed masterplan were a proliferation of customers wanting a pasty and a small bulk order to start them off. We will be having pasties tomorrow and on the strength of the sales today, I am now wondering if we will have enough.

I have pointed it out before that we often have couples in where one will have a pasty and the other, demur. Today we had three such incidents, the last being a family where dad had a pasty on his own. A minute later the daughter came in for her and mum and a minute or two after that, the family matriarch came in for one. Eating pasties is clearly infectious.

I have already indicated that the weather today was nothing to write home about – unless you are buying a postcard and have nothing else innocuous to put down. It had started out grey and ended up that way as well. The breeze that was still evident in the morning calmed significantly as the day wore on. So too did the sea state that was attracting wave watchers yesterday but was spotted with a few surfers by the afternoon today as the Lifeguards released their stranglehold on the red flagged beach. The anticipated four metre swell forecast for yesterday never happened. The sea state was rough and the waves large, but the boats pulled up to the top of the Harbour were never in any danger of getting their bottoms wet.

After all the happy and pleasant customers of the day, the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers saved me a special one for the last knockings. The man, clearly

thinking that we were Tesmorburys demanded a near 30 percent discount on the branded gin he wanted to purchase. He claimed every other store was selling it at a lower price. I apologised profusely that we were not one of those shops and suggested politely that go to one of them instead. It was one of those times when I am glad that people do not have subtitles as mine would have said something quite different. He did not, of course, but it was still an unpleasant episode at the end of the day and quite unnecessary.

On the bright side, I have found a replacement flag pole holder to replace the broken one on the left side of the shop front – that is the right side if you are outside. It was lurking behind the pasty warmer, of course it was and should have been the first place I looked. I will have to replace it while I still have legs to stand on but my tools are up at The Farm. A special effort is required, I feel, or it will remain undone until next season.

ABH was still not herself when I returned upstairs at the end of a long day. She had taken herself to bed and was buried under the covers. I managed to get her out for an after tea walk without any kicking and screaming but we only got as far as the Roundhouse before she wanted to come back again. Hopefully, she will be reset after a good night's sleep. I felt the same and took myself off to bed early for a change.

September 17th – Wednesday

The news today was full of the visit to the UK by President Trump of the USA. Even Radio Pasty got onboard by telling us that the visit to Windsor castle would be unprecedented in its splendour. I rather thought that it would be quite the opposite and that was the whole point of it.

I hope he had better weather than we were having this morning. It was very mizzly. No wonder that ABH was not keen on coming out for a walk. She still did not seem quite right but was active enough to wake me up at ten minutes to five o'clock this morning. Usually, she will wait for me to come back to bed and settle before she jumps off in a clear signal that she wants to go out. This morning, she just renewed her assault, rested long enough for me to slip into a doze, then start again. I got up; she went back to sleep.

Before we eventually made for the beach, I had cause to go down to unleash the wheelie bin from the commercial bin. I had left it tied on because the breeze was still in flux and although we are not exactly at Gwennap Head, windiest place in the universe, it still had potential to scat over the bin. I stepped out in a bit of a hurry because I saw the bin lorry arrive. It reverses up an adjacent drive, so I knew I had some time but went out in a t-shirt, nevertheless.

I had expected to be chilled and dampened, in no particular order, but the wind that felt it was coming from the west – it was, in fact, coming from the southwest but swirling - was relatively mild and the mizzle had stopped mizzling for a moment. Having released the bin, I hung around to bring the shop display out as well, which was handy given that I had to wait for madam to make herself ready to go out.

While today looked not that much worse than yesterday – alright, it was quite a bit worse than yesterday - and only had a bit of damp swirling in the air periodically, it did not inspire a big rush of visitors to The Cove. It had not helped that the weather forecast had it down for rain all day, instead of low cloud and a bit damp. The sea state, too, had diminished even more from yesterday, so there were somewhat fewer crashing waves to gawp at which would have made a difference to some. In fact, if I were to not polish the pansy at all, I would say that in business terms, it was bleddy awful.

Lucky then, that some greetings cards arrived in the post that kept me occupied for half an hour pricing them and putting them out. The hangers that I spoke of at length a day or two ago also came by courier and I amused myself by rehangng several of the bikinis that had come adrift on their original hangers. It was not exactly my idea of a good time, but it beat going stir crazy behind the counter doing not a great deal. We now have several well hung bikinis to sport.

It all became ludicrously tedious in the latter half of the afternoon. The weather closed in, and it got a bit wetter. I cannot remember whether Cape Cornwall had been blotted out all day or it had just disappeared in the fog later on. It was brought to my attention by a visitor asking if he was able to get to Mousehole from Cape to which he intended to walk tomorrow. It was a welcome distraction for five minutes. Early in the conversation when I had misconstrued his purpose, I tried to explain he should join the Coast Path to Cape at the black huts of Carn keys. It was at that moment that I realised the fog had thickened because you could not actually see Carn Keys, which was no great help across a language divide.

At some point in the early afternoon after I had returned from my blistering session at the gymnasium and a further walk on the beach with ABH, the Missus made off towards town and some serious shopping. She was gone hours. She returns with several heavy bags of shopping that it is my job to heave upstairs. It is a good job that I go to the gymnasium, but I should inform her not to go on the same day as I have already lifted my quota for the day.

The rest of the day was purely marking time until the shop closed as there were precious few people coming and going to keep me amused.

I am pleased to report that ABH was in better humour by our after tea walk time. She was happy to walk the big block and sniff at this and that. Just before we went to bed we did our chase around the living room and play with one of her toys, which is usually the order of events at the start of the day. No matter: she is back.

It was the Missus who went to bed early tonight. She has a long drive ahead of her tomorrow up to Barnstaple with Mother to collect the new pup.

September 18th – Thursday

Yes, I am sorry, dear reader. That was hugely cruel to drop a bombshell on you at the end of yesterday's Diary without so much as a ... to be continued. Let me tell you more.

The new puppy is another girl, Maltese terrier and miniature poodle cross, the same breed as ABH but a lighter colour – at the moment. She is to be called May, after Mayon although I preferred Mae after the older version of the name, Maen. In any event it will not matter much because you will know her, dear reader, as YABH – Yet Another Bleddy Hound.

The Missus and I have for some time worried about ABH's status as an only dog. We had no such issue with the bleddy hound. She grew up with neighbours' dogs who would regularly visit, and she was amongst them from the moment she arrived. She would also chase a ball on the beach for hours without any need of interaction with others of her sort.

ABH is a different potpourri of bananas. She has not had the benefit of neighbouring dogs and will not chase a ball except down the corridor at home and even then, will not bring it back. She does, however, have a tremendous time running about with other dogs on the beach and up at The Farm – the ones she has not frightened off with rabid barking. In the case of The Farm, she has even taken herself off after them when they have left to move on, requiring us to make The Farm gate escape proof.

We have had concerns, of course: have we left it too late; will she get on with a pal at home; will her nose be so far out of joint the damage is irreparable; will I survive the lifestyle shock. On balance, the Missus thought it was the right thing to do, while I was still weighing the facts in the balance. The 'don't worry, I am just asking for information' she said before I went to the gymnasium on Monday became a 'get your wallet' when I came back. I shall face the coming trauma the same way that I have all the others, by drinking heavily and kicking the cat – metaphorically speaking, of course as we do not have a cat and the local ones run away too quickly.

Talking of trauma, our card payment machine was not working this morning. It came up with an error message as soon as I woke it up which was thankfully a while before we opened. It was clear that there was a wider issue because after half an hour, the support line I was calling still had not been answered. In the meanwhile, and with time before opening running out, I extracted our backup machine out of the store room and set it up.

As I expected, a very harassed call agent answered the telephone. The first thing I said was it looked like he already had a bit of a day of it, so he knew I was not going to bite his head off. I have been where this very pleasant man was and having an angry voice to answer is not very helpful. He explained it was a global issue and that they had no idea of the cause and therefore how long it would take to fix. It was just a case of waiting. I did add that it would have been useful to have a message on the telephone and on the website stating that it was a known problem. He agreed but told me his team had not had time to do it.

I decided not to argue; he had enough on his plate. My argument and advice would have been to take one person off the telephones to add the messages. This would initially have made one person less to answer the telephones and the queue longer. As soon as it was done, the queue probably would have halved and the pressure relieved to concentrate on the solution – supposing it was the same team, which our man had already intimated that it was. I was in the industry for 35 years and helpdesks were my specialisation at the end of it. I was providing such advice 25 years ago. I was a tad disappointed that the same mistakes are being made today.

Look at that, eight paragraphs in and not one mention of the weather. Let me make immediate amends. The most important element was that the wind had diminished. It had not diminished by much, but it had gone southerly and was almost absent in The Cove because of it. The flip side of that was that the wind was still warm and heavily laden with moisture and so, we were still shrouded in mist all day. It was, however, free from the heavy mizzle we had yesterday although you could still detect the moisture in the air.

The sea state had continued to calm with just enough in the way of waves for some moderate surfing and stand up paddle boarding. It also provided for the suggestion that we would launch the Lifeboat later on for training if there was no further change to the condition of the swell. The weather remained unchanged for the rest of the day.

I do not often do it, and now I probably will not again for a long while, but I thought to have a geek at the weather forecasts for the weekend ahead of ordering the pasties (sorry, MS) for the same period. I had heard the forecaster on Radio Pasty saying it would be dry all weekend but when I looked at the BBC website, it told me to expect rain all day on Saturday and Sunday. The Meteorological Office had put its money on sunny spells. Is it any wonder I ignore them all.

With the vast improvement in the weather, ahem, we were much busier than we had been yesterday. We were more able with the increase a little later in the afternoon when the main card payment machine sprung back into life. There was much going home present buying but I also sensed that many were trippers and our pasty sales flourished. I wondered if yesterday had been a visit St Ives day because a few of our customers had mentioned it. They had also said that it had been sunny in St Ives and a few others that in Penzance the sun was splitting the hedges. This always

happens when we are fog bound here and I suspect, after twenty years of hearing it, that I am being had on.

I was just closing up the shop and about to head across the road when the Missus turned up with two hounds on board. The new one, YABH, was secreted inside the carry case we had for ABH when she was small. It did not stop her escaping either and YABH soon worked her head out of the top. I was had a brief moment to have a geek and introduction before I had to head across the road.

The decision to launch the boats was taken late but even so there was a good turnout. I am finding that I am spending more and more time in administration than I am involved with the doing, so I put myself on head launcher duty for the Inshore boat which would give me more time to organise. There were plenty of others to take care of everything else and we all got on with it.

It is the new training regime and system that is taking up much of the time. Overall, it is the right thing and forces some order and control into crew training. Also, for the first time Shore Crew are included, although the implementation needs some fine tuning. There are four PPE units, for example, covering launch and recovery for each boat at low and high water even though the PPE is the same for each. There has been some progress in that as head launcher, we are now also covered for 'shore crew' roles at the same time. I will reserve comment regarding the computer system that supports it lest I get into trouble.

My administration activity, along with covering some training units for a new recruit, took most of the time between launch and recovery. We stopped to watch the fireworks as both boats covered training units for launching flares, including parachute and hand held distress flares. Rocket distress flares are excluded. We were required to inform the Coastguard at the start and end of the training. It would have been interesting to see how many 999 or reports there were from shore. Other vessels would have largely ignored the flares as they were not distress ones.

The Inshore boat returned first and two of us concerned ourselves with that while everyone else covered the big boat. I did not witness it myself. but reliable reports had it that the team conducted a textbook recovery up the long slip in moderate sea conditions. We are, after all, a very dispersed, very excellent Shore Crew.

I then returned home to have my toes and ankles bitten by very sharp teeth and an ABH who was not yet wholly on board with the idea of a second centre of attention to share her burden. We had not settled on how sleeping arrangements might be set. We will discover in the morning if what we went with worked or not.

September 19th – Friday

Well, we survived the night, relatively unscathed. In truth, the new girl did rather well, and we are viewing the fact that ABH had not yet bitten her head off as positive. There have been grumblings and growlings but, on balance, the two girls seem to be knocking along nicely more in the vein of tolerance than budding sisterhood. It is a work in progress, we hope.

ABH was up earlier than planned and I had to take her out before it was properly light. I thought that we had got away without waking YABH or the Missus but just as I was about to get her into the harness by the front door, she must have heard something and went rushing back into the bedroom. There was barking and that was the end of that. I still managed to get her out, but we left a trail of destruction in our wake.

I had no idea what to expect of the weather today but even in the half light of the pre-dawn I could tell that the mist had gone. It remained grey all day but, in The Cove at least, there was hardly any breeze at all. The wind was in the south again, but it must have lost the moisture after two days of dropping it on us. Interestingly, Land's End weather station had the wind in the northwest, which fooled me for a while and made me check a couple of other sources. Since Land's End also had the temperature at -68 degrees, I think, or perhaps hope, they have a problem with their equipment.

I certainly was not expecting a change-over day bubble. After the poor business performance we have had of late it seemed a most unlikely occurrence, but we had enjoyed a mostly busy week this week. It seems that there were perhaps more people staying in the Cove than at first appeared. The improved weather helped and there were many small groups sat on the various benches opposite. They started a pasty rush (sorry, MS) that ran on for some time and made me wonder if I had ordered enough for the weekend again.

The Missus had an early appointment and left both girls with me. There was nothing for it as we could not leave both upstairs by themselves and it seems that ABH did not want to be left out today and came downstairs too. Things went well until the milk arrived. I took YABH down to the fridges, leaving ABH tethered at the counter. YABH was clearly not best pleased to be zipped into her bag so soon after getting out of it this morning and started screeching. ABH, not happy about being excluded, started barking at the other end of the shop. I left the little one zipped up in the bag on the floor behind the counter while I priced the rest of the dairy, which still did not find approval, and then ran to the end of the shop leaving them both to it while I filled the fridge. More screeching.

YABH had just settled again when the pasties arrived. This time I left her on the counter while I shipped the pasties into the store room fridge. As soon as I disappeared from the view, the screeching started again. I had tried leaving the top open so that she could stick her head out but twice I found her sniffing about on the counter. It was utter mayhem for a while but happily the chef next door, who must be

some sort of dog whisperer, turned up for a geek and amused her and ABH while I finished off the pasties.

Happily, the Missus was not too much longer after that and came back with Mother who ABH adores and YABH has taken too equally. She has spent much of her time here with ABH perched on her shoulder. Now she can even the load by having YABH on the other one. She is quite lucky in this regard. YABH has taken to attaching herself to the straps of my sandals by her teeth, if I am lucky. If I am not, it is my toes. She alternates feet as I try, without success, to navigate my way to the kitchen in a rush to make tea and get back downstairs.

Even after the change-over bubble had deflated, we were busy enough for the rest of the day. The leavers had left but we still apparently had trippers and later, arrivals for the coming week. There was even some good surfing to be had judging by some of the clean runs into the beach I saw. The swell had run down a little more on yesterday, but it was clean even if it was banging up Aire Point towards the end of the afternoon.

We wound down quietly to a finish in the shop. The five minutes to closing rushes seem to have diminished away altogether. Those who do turn up late now tend to be after logs for wood burners rather than barbeque coals and burgers. The last minute beers and wines transcend the seasons and we were cleaned out of one line of local beers. Then at the last minutes of shop opening, an older lady appeared at the counter and asked if I minded if she purchased a couple of hooded sweatshirts. I felt that it might have been seen as terribly rude to refuse, so I graciously let her. There appears to be some life in the old dog yet.

Talking of which, when I retired to the flat for the evening, there had clearly been some transformation, a signing of some sort of accord. ABH and YABH were engaged in some very playful romping about. The little one was making decent progress, too, getting a few lunges and ear biting in. She was getting the worst of it though due to her size and inability to stand up when even nudged gently, but she was definitely rolling with the punches.

Both called a truce while we had our tea, and I took ABH around for an after tea walk. The car park had a good dozen cars there but with a big bank of cloud out to the west, there was no sunset to watch, and the place was deserted. Other than the two girls on my lap waiting for the Missus to come back from dropping Mother home, it was the last of the ceasefire until bedtime. The two girls ran and rolled all through the evening. There are still ABH lines that cannot be crossed and receive sharp rebuke but nothing more serious than that. It seems after one day, some understanding has been reached. Phew.

I have also come to the conclusion that I do not like the term YABH, however true and in natural line it is. When I was trying to take photographs that the other reader had asked that I post, the little girl would not stand still long enough and most of the

pictures were just blurs of her moving somewhere else. I think we will settle on BB, the Blonde Blur, and see how that runs.

September 20th – Saturday

Oh my, I think we have created a monster.

ABH was up earlier than I anticipated this morning, which was not helpful because, outside, the rain was coming down in buckets full. Of course, ABH did not know that until we got outside at which point she decided that she did not want to be outside and took me home. I dried her off and she returned to bed, so I left her to it.

It was only a short time later that she emerged again and although there was not a peep out of BB, I thought that she could not possibly still be asleep after all the commotion, so decided to go and check upon her. I knew that the moment I did so I would have the two of them to deal with. I also reasoned that after last night they would probably amuse each other while I finished my administration at my desk. Obviously, that did not exactly go well, and I found myself adjudicating over ABH who was very keen to continue from where she was last night, using BB as a football, and BB who wanted to chill a bit having just woken up.

Leaving it just long enough for decency, I left the pair with the Missus who I had to wake up to give her the news and made a swift exit to start in the shop. Even then, I had to break away just before closing to take ABH out to finish what we had started early but without the rain.

The rain had cleared up before I started downstairs, but it had clearly done enough to keep most people inside for a good while after we opened. I was not expecting anyone, so when I emerged from the store room, emerged in my own thoughts, seeing ex-head launcher sitting on the dog bed by the window scared the behobies out of me. It was probably how Scrouge felt when he saw Bob Marley for the first time. I roundly admonished him for creeping up on a grumpy shopkeeper like that.

It was the only socialising I did for much of the morning because shortly after he left, the rain return, and quite heavily at first. It successfully kept our customers at bay, and we only saw a few who were walking dogs or walking by. It was definitely not our finest hours. One of the forecasts I glanced at yesterday must have been right but certainly not the one that said the day would brighten up in the afternoon. Actually, come to think, they said it would brighten in the afternoon but not necessarily that the rain would stop. It did, in fact, brighten occasionally in the afternoon but kept raining.

By this time in the proceedings, I would at least have had some plans for the winter I might be pursuing: some new shelving; a Farm project to investigate; or a new bit of kit to research. With my knee replacement hopefully beckoning – I will not know until the result of my pre-operation tests are complete in the middle of October – I can make no plans at all. It left me rather at a loss, so for the first time in a number of

years, I read a newspaper. I cannot say that it will be something I shall be doing again in the near future. Despite picking the most innocuous one on the shelf, I still found it unenlightening.

I have explained before why I cannot read a book to pass such dull times – it raises the potential to resent the customer who interrupts me. Similarly, if I do find something of interest to do, I will immediately see a surge in customers to prevent me from doing it. Trying to do something of interest on purpose to promote the appearance of customers, does not work. So it was when a lady we had not seen for a few years turned up and it would have been pleasant to stop and have a chat. Naturally, the visit heralded a minor rush of customer visits for the duration of her stay preventing any likelihood of catching up at all.

Nevertheless, the flow of customers was most welcome as it was the busiest that we had been all day. At the tail end of it, we welcomed visitors from America for whom I organised a taxi to take them up to Land's End Hostel. While they were waiting, we had a friendly chat, and they bought some cards and mementos and asked if this was Land's End.

Just shortly before they arrived, the rain had stopped, and the skies cleared. It had the feeling about it of being terribly temporary which might have had something to do with the sharp drop in temperature and an increase in windspeed. The windspeed was more noticeable because it had moved to the northwest and had brought the sea state from relatively calm to choppy in just a few hours. Earlier in the day, I had watched some surfers out there enjoying some decent waves. By the end of the afternoon, the only sportsperson out there was a windsurfer being thumped about.

Toward the end of the day, with a few people now coming and going in the shop now that the weather had improved, I met with someone a little concerned about our circular frizzbies. There had been an article on Radio Pasty about such things, that if they found their way into the water, they might cause an issue with seals sticking their heads through them. Clearly, for me there is an economic issue: I cannot afford to throw the volume we had away and besides, that would then cause an environmental issue because they are made of plastic.

Our lady, late in the day, pulled all our stock from the shelf and called me hither. She asked how much it would cost for me to remove them from the shelf, to which I kindly replied that I would be happy to make a deal for the volume she was holding. She informed me, which I already knew about the seals. I mentioned that they would still be safely used away from the beach but she rightly pointed out that since we were here, it was more likely they would be used on the beach. Anyway, I must have presented the wrong kind of grumpy shopkeeper and she left, a grumpy customer.

Had she stayed long enough, I would have argued that these rings had been around for ten years. If her cohort had spread the word two years earlier, I would not have purchased them in the first place. It is a bit unfair to expect me to cover the cost of

taking them off the shelf completely when they should at least share the burden of failing to communicate earlier.

It is the second time this year I have been berated for selling something someone disagreed with. At least the lady this time around had the decency to bring her complaint to my face instead of waiting to go home and write me a message. It is just a shame she did not stop to resolve her issue fully.

Still, there is nothing like a five minutes to closing rush to restore a grumpy shopkeeper and tonight we had a very healthy one. I was rushed off my feet (it is a relative term, commensurate with doing nothing all day) for at least half an hour as people collected groceries and going home presents. One of the customers, told me that the weather would improve next week, although there would be a drop in temperature. Then, someone else informed me that bookings had taken a tumble for the coming weeks. It is always good to have someone who takes care to ensure that I am not too uplifted at the end of a day.

So, onward and ... well, onward.

September 21st – Sunday

We start today with news that we have said a final farewell to a friend and neighbour in The Cove. He had been unwell for a time. Our thoughts are with his wife, who has remained so strong throughout.

The day responded in sombre mood, chilly to start with showers, some quite heavy, blowing through on a strong northeasterly. The wind was not quite so strong when I had taken ABH down to a sliver of beach first thing, nor was it quite so chilly. We had been pushed off by the tide that was advancing far more quickly than I had thought, probably with the help of that nor'easterly. We did not tarry long.

It has taken just a couple of days for a routine of some sort to start to emerge. ABH is getting up earlier and we take a first walk out followed by getting BB out of her zip-up bag for a morning constitutional. Next week, after we manage to get her second injections completed, she will be coming out with us. Depending on the timing, the first excursion may not be on the beach because of the tide, which will be a shame. I am looking forward to her reaction to touching sand for the first time. I readily remember the wonder ABH had, as she buried her nose into it.

I had one customer before ten o'clock and a clear run at breakfast, which was no fun at all. Even after that, the visits we had were sparsely dotted across several more hours. This was not a day to venture out, at least on the north coast. We had not been used to temperatures feeling this low since the beginning of the year. In fact, the ambient temperature, according to St Ives weather station was 13 degrees but the wind chill had brought it down to eight. At Land's End it was still -68 and with

windchill -96. You see, things are not always greener on the other side of the, erm, cliff.

We busied up in the afternoon just as I decided to refresh the farm shop cash and carry products on our shelves, or no longer on our shelves as it stood. We have exactly six weeks left of opening, and this might be the last order before then. It not only required a look to see what we needed but also the shelf life of each product. There was no point in buying things that did not survive beyond at least January next year as there would be a high likelihood of it being thrown away before it could be sold. With customers coming and going, the job took a while.

I will also have to start the main cash and carry list tomorrow. Originally, I had thought that we would have this one and one three weeks on from it but having had a quick look at the dates, I think that this will be last of the season. This will mean getting it right, so no pressure at all then.

By the middle of the afternoon, I cannot deny that the incessant wind blowing through the doorway was beginning to get my goat. There was no point in closing the first electric sliding door in The Cove because everyone would have thought we were closed. If I had set it to automatic, our pasty sign (sorry, MS) that was waving about in the wind, would have had the door opening and closing constantly, which would have been more irritating than the wind. I found that if I cowered in the corner by the pasty warmer, I could avoid the breeze and stay relatively warm. That worked well without customers, which is obviously when it started to get busy.

While we think we have our work cut out for us trying to train a young pup with the other trying hard to untrain her, there are others with steeper challenges. Some young people came in during the later afternoon with a spaniel type dog in tow. They spent a little while and at one point I had cause to approach where they were on behalf of another customer. The dog came towards me and promptly rolled over in a clear invitation to scratch its tummy. I bent over to oblige only to notice the coat it was wearing urged the reader not to distract the dog as it was training to be an assistance animal.

It made me laugh out loud but I apologised to the young lady holding the lead. She told me not to worry. It baffled me as to what sort of assistance dog it might be training to be – assisting people with an urgent need to pet a dog realise their ambition, perhaps.

The Missus had deserted us for the entirety of the afternoon and planned to do so again in the evening. At Minack Theatre, she had their season closing bash, the Last Night of the Proms with much waving of flags of St Piran, no doubt. She and a dedicated team were there taking RNLI collecting buckets around for both the matinee and evening performances. She had taken both ABH and BB with her for which she should be rewarded or sectioned as that is not something I would have been able to cope with happily.

She returned in the later afternoon to finish off making tea that I had earlier, under instruction, put in the oven. I had been told to put it in at four o'clock. Of course, having spent the hour before almost devoid of customers, we suddenly got busy at the appointed time and dinner was fifteen minutes late in going in. We had several flurries like that throughout the afternoon, many inexplicably coinciding with heavy showers of rain. I should note that we have had better days and today we coasted in towards closing with no five minutes to closing rush to bolster our spirits.

At the suggestion of the Missus, I put BB in her travel bag to take her around the block for our after tea walk. I thought it a grand idea to leave a hole open at one end so that she could stick her head out and look around. This came to utter grief when we stopped momentarily for ABH to sniff at something at which point, not wishing to be left out, BB launched herself out of the bag. It was a particularly hard lesson in life that the tarmac is unyielding and hurts if fallen upon from height and that small, young pups do not bounce well. I checked her over and concluded that hopefully it was just a lesson learned, and no lasting harm done.

ABH goes into a sulk when the Missus is absent, so play was put on hold until she, mercifully, got home earlier than expected. Let battle commence.

September 22nd – Monday

The doctors I have spoken with about the effects of weather change on rheumatic joints have all been somewhat sceptical or at least non-committal about it. They have told me that some patients seem affected, but others are not. I thought that their stance was due to the lack of concrete data but when I looked it up, there have been proper studies made about it.

At the end of last year, my dickie knee was at the dickiest it had been all year. In fact, up until that time and all that standing behind our counter, I had so little issue with it I was in two minds about progressing with its replacement. It was not until on a visit to the Aged Parent and I had walked up Sherborne high street a few times a day that the knee gave me any respite at all. I concluded that, despite regular gymnasium visits, I had given the dickie knee insufficient exercise of the right sort which is why it had given me trouble. I progressed the rest of the winter without another peep from it.

Until now, that is. Today, it decided to give me absolute grief. It was a sneaky little jab every time I moved my knee in a particular way. I am sure it would be extremely amusing to advise me not to move it in that way and had that been possible, I would agree not to. First, it was easy to forget about because it only occurred when I made the movement and, secondly it was such a natural movement it was almost impossible to avoid.

It is hard not to attribute the onset to the weather. Yesterday marked a sharp drop in temperature and at the same time, the barometric pressure increased, both of which are cited as triggers for rheumatic pain.

The limping, falling over and wincing that it brought aside, it was a spectacularly pretty looking day. I had seen it in its infancy heralded by Jupiter and Venus in a clear, dark sky that looked like a blue gradient chart. It was then I had noticed just how chilly it was and that my knee was not working properly – sorry, have I already mentioned that my knee was dickie today?

I am sure that I saw a forecast that suggested we would need to wait until Tuesday for our sunshine but since I was not paying much attention, I may have been mistaken. Either way, it was most welcome, especially after yesterday and was helped by the northeasterly breeze becoming a little more moderate. The beach looked resplendent under the bright sunshine, if a little empty, but later our lone windsurfer hit the waves again, such as they were.

We had started out quite quiet but as the day progressed, we picked up quite a gathering in The Cove. From the early afternoon we became quite busy with a reasonably steady flow of customers through until the later afternoon. I mentioned that I had not paid much attention to the weather and found that we were quickly running short of pasties (sorry, MS). Even early on it became apparent that it was very likely we would run out, so I increased the volume for tomorrow. It was busier than I had thought, and we ran out by half past two o'clock, which was rather naughty. Fortunately, it does not happen very often. I could have baked off some frozen ones but on this occasion, I decided to leave it.

Being as it was such a lovely day, I decided to take my dickie knee - sorry, did I mention that my knee was dickie today - to the doctor in St Just so that I could have my ears looked into. There has been some progression in this regard where the other reader's contact in the alternative company has pleaded my case with the top man in the company I am trying to escape. While things have apparently been settled and I avidly await confirmation in written form, I am still continuing on the alternate route of being re-referred via my GP. Part of that is ensuring that my ears are squeaky clean, which I am now assured they are. If my letter of recommendation arrives first, I can cancel the GP referral.

I knew that I should have not tempted providence by setting foot inside the surgery's doors. While I was there, I was recognised as a person newly introduced to the world of statins and apparent was due a blood test to ensure that they are doing what they should be doing or, indeed, not doing what they should not. I am to book a blood letting with all due haste, I was informed, or presumably face the wrath of matron. I shall have to pull my finger out. The hospital also wants my blood in a fortnight, ahead of my dickie knee operation; if I leave my blood letting too long, I will not have any left to give them.

The till at the end of the day proved that, once again, I am unable to tell busy from quiet on the business front. It was particularly poor performance. It may have looked busy at time but I suspect that it was a lot of small value purchases, postcards and sweets – and of course, running out of pasties which otherwise would have made our fortune. I have written in the margin of the till print out, must try harder.

On the bright side, at around three o'clock, the instances of dickie knee misbehaviour – did I mention that my dickie knee was misbehaving today – stopped completely. It had not particularly warmed up in the shop, in fact, quite the reverse which made me consider an early termination of little boy trousers, and the barometric pressure had not suddenly dropped. It is therefore a mystery why the dickie knee dickiness suddenly went away and equally why it came back a while later. Mercifully, the frequency and severity had decreased, and I am a little more cautious about how I step out. I am sure it will pass.

We avoided an after tea walk around the block for no other reason than ABH did not seem keen. The Missus had taken both girls up to see a friend at the top of the hill and they had tripped to St Just and stopped at the airport café on the way back. An afternoon in the ladies' company had clearly worn them out. It had certainly done for me, and I was not even there. I shall sleep well tonight; I am certain of it.

September 23rd – Tuesday

My certainty was not ill placed; I slept well last night. It was the getting up that was a problem.

I am letting my get up time drift a bit this last week or so but even then, it is still dark when I get up. I have set a timer for the outside lights so that the newspaper man and the greengrocer delivery driver can see what they are doing if they get here early. It does not turn off automatically and I have to remember to turn it off. Fortunately, the flood lights are so bright they are obvious even when it is full daylight, else they might stay on all day.

There can be just as much to do downstairs of a morning as there is in high summer. The difference being that it is not every day. I can get away with doing half one day and half another for the shelf topping up. I might have to make a special effort here and there if I am planning a delivery as I had been yesterday, so that I knew what was needed on the order. Otherwise, I can afford to be lax as there is enough on the shelf for the current demand without topping up. It promotes bone idleness, and you know what, dear reader, I do not care.

Again, we were prevented from heading to the beach for our early morning walk. The tide was swirling against the stones on the slipway, and the fishing fleet were just launching into the slight glow of the morning. Later, I saw they grouped here and there across the bay and, usually, when they are fishing like that they are after squid.

I had a chat later when one of them came in for a pasty (sorry, MS) on his way home, and sure enough it was the squid they were chasing. He said that they had a good morning at it, too.

We have no squid pasties, but I would not put it past someone to make one, but our traditional pasties sold out again earlier than I expected, and I had ordered more for today. Again, I foresaw the end before it happened but clearly not soon enough. I missed the end of the delivered pasties and the readiness of the baking ones by 45 minutes, darn it. I have order still more for tomorrow but based on today's evidence, it still will not be enough. Despite the gap, which is usually terminal, we sold the baked ones as well.

I am cautious about saying that we were busier than yesterday after being caught out yesterday, but I was a little pressed on occasions today. The same as yesterday, most of the purchases were drinks and snacks and pasties, when we had some. This is not the way fortunes are made. It becomes even more stark when you realise that probably the two deliveries we had today cost more than we took over the counter. Out of spite, I put the beer prices up.

The Missus headed off to The Farm today, a sign of the week getting back to normal. She took the two girls and collected Mother on the way. We had run out of bags of lettuce at some point during the weekend and I requested more, although demand for them is severely limited now. There were a couple of cucumbers in the mix and courgettes than no one seems to want. There was also some rocket.

The Missus has discovered that we will need an outside bed for the rocket next year as she thinks it was too hot in the greenhouse. It will be a cold year next year and we will wish we had planted it inside. Just you wait and see. However, there is quite a bit and one of the regular visitors mentioned rocket pesto a while back. The Missus looked it up as we were having tea to see if she could make some. Each jar needs 100 grammes of rocket and she estimates that she managed to harvest 200 grammes. I do not think we will be pesto magnates this autumn, but she will give it a go as a proof of concept project.

Business tailed off towards the end of the day giving me time to pull in the outside display without interruption. I am surprised that we are selling enough greengrocery to require replenishment every other day but that is no complaint – unless I am complaining that it is not every day. In truth, most of the sales are groceries and small souvenirs as the profile of our visitors changes with the season. Our older visitors are happier to buy from small independent stores like ours while the younger ones with families seem more reliant upon Tesmorburys. Hopefully, they will learn.

I managed to get ABH out for a walk after tea. She is showing signs of contracting FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) and is less keen to leave BB behind. It is a struggle to get her out sometimes.

There were still plenty of cars in the car park as we went across it later. The sunset looked like it might have been a decent one. It also looked like dusk was coming on as the sun had dropped into some thick cloud on the horizon and set about half an hour early. The chill is setting in as well, but I am still clinging onto little boy trousers for now. Obtusely, I have succumbed to having the electric blanket on; I cannot abide getting into a cold bed.

September 24th – Wednesday

As a journalist, it is not very often that a hot story happens right on your doorstep and without any effort at all, your breakfast, dinner and tea is there for the taking. I would not know about that because I am not a journalist, but the box van parked at the top of the slipway provided me with several paragraphs of Diary without having to work very hard for it at all.

It was a curious thing seeing a box van parked at the head of the slipway and blocking the road to traffic. ABH was most put out that someone had the affront to make such an obvious change to her normal view. She took some encouraging to go around it.

Before our departure, we had somehow managed to wake the Missus. She also noticed the van when she checked our CCTV that points that way and called me to ask what was going on. I assured her that it did not look like anything nefarious, not at half past six o'clock in the morning. Had it been there at four o'clock, I might have agreed with her. I also came across a small group of people heading that way and not one of them had a ringed t-shirt or was wearing a mask around their eyes. I decided to watch and see.

It very quickly became apparent that they were launching some sort of craft because someone set an outboard motor up on a stand down by the tideline. The Harbour webcam is very good quality but even that in half light struggled a bit for definition. So, when I looked again and saw that they had placed a craft alongside the motor that looked a little like a bath tub on a couple of floatation pods, I reasoned that it must be some unmanned monitoring device.

With the resident mechanic on paternity leave, I have taken to opening the viewing gallery when I come down to prepare the shop. Using that as a ruse, I went and had a chat with one of the people involved who was standing at the top of the slip. I confessed immediately that I was only being nosey and asked what he might be doing with a bathtub on floats at this hour in the morning. For my honesty, he responded in kind and told me that it was indeed a bathtub on floats and the intention was to sail it, or whatever you do with bathtubs, to the Isles of Scilly.

Asking if it was for a charity, he told me that it was a YouTuber who makes silly films for people to look at and, because a lot of people look at his films, the advertising companies happily pay him a fortune for showing them on his channel. The amount

of money that this person makes must be significant because this was no venture on a shoestring. There were two support boats and a team of at least a dozen doing this and that. The equipment seemed to be professionally made and even the bathtub looked like it was a premium brand with gold taps.

I missed the moment of launch but caught up a few moments later as he made way around the Harbour wall, escorted by one of the support boats. Later, when I ventured to the beach with ABH after a blistering session at the gymnasium, I found the engine stand tucked up in the corner. It was in such a position that the next high water at near seven o'clock would swamp it. They either intended to come back as soon as they arrived, or they were not particularly bothered about losing the stand. Looking at the money they had thrown at the project, I suspect the latter could be true. Anyway, I hope he remembered to put the plug in.

The remainder of the day was spectacularly ordinary after that, notwithstanding the stunning weather. Our intrepid bather at least had a splendid day to take his journey, the sea state was calm to moderate with hardly any wind at all. We would not have felt the benefit of it anyway as it had drifted around to the southwest. The sun shone almost all day. There were some large cumulus clouds that blocked the sun away at some point, either in the late morning or middle of the day, I cannot remember which.

It was not the only thing that was blocked off, either. Someone had come to me yesterday and asked why the road to Porthcurno was closed. I was not aware that it was and when I checked the much maligned council website, it had no information. I discovered later that I was looking at the wrong bit. It was not only the road to Porthcurno closed but the whole stretch from Trethewey to beyond Treen. The new fibre cabling company, Wildanet, has been all over West Cornwall digging up the road.

Where once the GPO and then BT owned all the telephone infrastructure, the new policy is for each company to install its own in the new fibre world. If a new company moved into West Cornwall tomorrow, they would dig up the roads all over again to install their own cables. I was about to say that I am sure that there is some sort of oversight by a central body making sure there are no duplications but, frankly, I cannot see the much maligned council nor central Government being that efficient.

While the cable company tears up the streets around Porthcurno, the water company are doing the same at Kelynack, effectively blocking the road to St Just. There is a detour through Joppa, and Namphra but someone reported that the roads are so narrow up through there, it would be quicker to go to Penzance and back, especially if you meet something coming the other way.

The roadworks have caused mayhem for our services and deliveries. The pasty man (sorry, MS) was late this morning having had to backtrack to Penzance to get to St Just and the waste collection was late as well. When I spoke to the bin lorry driver, he told me he usually comes out this way first but wanted to get into Penzance early

today because Market Jew Street is being converted to pedestrian only. I will save that discussion for another day but the short of it was, I had to call the office to make sure the collection was on the way.

I called at nine o'clock. That seemed very early to report a missed collection but in reality, he was already three hours late for us. If I left it until midday to report the shortfall, it would have been too late for the depot to organise a replacement, should that have been necessary. Since I had already made an unnecessary fuss about the general waste collection, I felt disinclined to complain about the cardboard recycling that looked like it had been missed for a second week running. When I did call, which was around three o'clock, the depot did not answer, and it was too late to organise a replacement. To be fair, they do not often let us down. There was not much cardboard to collect, and the newspaper man will take it away tomorrow or the next day.

Our glorious day led to another relatively busy day in the shop. We had one or two notable going home purchases, both from ladies from the USA. We also seem to have an increased number of Dutch and German visitors at the moment. These visitors must be the more well off people from their country because while they flinch a bit at the price of an international stamp, they still continue to buy them for their postcards.

Talking of postcards, I am delighted to note that the vast majority of the sales have been of our new ones, our own photographs we had printed. This is a bit of a game changer because our postcards sales have increased. We do not keep specific records, but I have never had to order a resupply this late in the season. I have also ordered some fridge magnets in the best selling pictures and we will see how they do.

The Missus went off to The Farm in the late morning. She left BB behind in her carry bag because she was fast asleep at the time. I had misgivings, but I will be leaving the Missus in the same predicament when I go off to have my pre-operation test in Plymouth on Monday week. All was well while she slept but then she woke up. All other work stopped. If I opened the lid of the bag, she would try and climb out and if I closed it, which I had to do when customers needed serving, she would screech the place down. I spent the time without customers playing with her which meant that the cash and carry order will have to be done with some urgency tomorrow morning.

The Missus returned with a bag full of rocket. Rocket pesto is on the cards, I believe. She also came back with an over-large courgette. I cannot imagine that it is not until now that I realised that a marrow is a large courgette. Maybe I had just forgotten that soupçon. It is for a neighbour who asked for one, I am told. There was also a cucumber – that was huge as well. Do cucumbers become something else when they are grown up, I wonder.

I left such mysteries alone as I tried to catch up a bit during the afternoon. There was also another distraction when a representative of an energy drink company arrived in the shop. In the past they have promised supply of flavours we cannot get elsewhere and then I never see them again. I was somewhat miffed that our man turned up again with a flavour I would never see again and told him so. He was quite taken aback, then told me he was from an agency just paid to deliver free samples and point of sale material. I apologised for giving him grief and spent the rest of the afternoon feeling guilty.

There were a few people in the car park when we passed through, just finished watching the sunset that must have been eyesome today. It was also notably milder than it had been for the previous few days, and I found that I needed to remove my woolly hat. While it was reasonably light when we stepped out the door, the dusk comes on very quickly and I was grateful that I remembered my head torch for seeing into dark corners. Those dark corners will be getting darker more quickly now. Autumn has properly set in, it seems.

September 25th – Thursday

I must have had a small god of grumpy shopkeepers whisper in my ear last night because I awoke this morning with an inexplicable urge for a spot of masochism. I can think of no other reason why I would have pointlessly tortured myself by seeking out the advice of the weather forecasts to judge the volume of pasties (sorry, MS) I should order in for the weekend. So, it is either plus 30 pasties if it is sunny on Saturday or minus 30 pasties if it is rain all day. Ideal.

Returning to the shop with ABH after our early walk out, intending to put out the display on our return, we happened upon some of the crew from yesterday's bathtub launch. I asked if they were expecting their man back again today, but they said, no. They had all come back on the support boat later the same day. The YouTuber had given away the bathtub to someone on the Islands, which reinforced just how much money they expected to make from the venture. They had come back to collect the engine stand that they had left behind the day before. I took the opportunity to say just how professionally the project appeared to be planned. We have seen some real horrors in the past, so I thought it worth the comment.

Despite the glorious weather, we were still slow to start again. This was probably just as well because the cash and carry order took some serious concentration to get right. I was keen to avoid falling short on heavy things such as the beer and the water, in case I had to despatch the Missus to Hayle for top ups. Largely, we can extrapolate the stock used over the last three weeks for the coming five weeks. It is the half-term week that will throw a turnip in the wellie sock. The volumes of anything during that week can only be guessed at.

The spring tides this week are not the biggest but there is still a large expanse of beach to gaze out on during the main part of the day. It draws the eye, especially with it being largely empty. If I could recall the shape of the beach last time I took notice of it, I might have told you how it has changed since then. I rather suspect that there is much more sand at the back of the beach leading up to the dunes and it is all sand behind the reef near the OS slipway. The rock field is still there when the flat of the beach starts to ramp up at the back, but it is much smaller than previously and more easily crossed. While it is harder to see in detail, Gwenver beach seems to have benefitted greatly from the sand import and appears to slope up from the waterline to the dunes at the back. There are no longer any rocks at the back of the beach that I can see from the shop.

The sand bars have changed a bit too. The finger of sand reaching out from the middle of the beach is still there but from the breaking waves it was clear that there was another sizeable sand bar just off Escalls Vean, or Little Gwenver. Judging from the colour of the water you could probably walk out 50 metres without getting your knees damp.

This was also our endeavour during the Lifeboat training launch that our Coxswain had arranged for our pleasure and delectation. It was exceptionally well attended, and we had some fundraising guests to take for a ride out as well. We were not overly blessed with numbers on the shore. We have to spread ourselves thin over two boat launches, obtusely needing more for the small boat than the large one.

Happily, we had two new recruits to help us. Worryingly, neither of these two local youths had been born when the Missus and I arrived to take on the shop. I tried very hard not to think of that when we took them through the various procedures and safety rules along with two other more seasoned trainee members on the shore.

I have mentioned before, but I am more and more tied up with paperwork during the boats' absences. Tonight was no exception, and I left some of the training to other experienced crew while I took to pen and paper. It is remarkable how that passes the time and before I knew it, the Inshore boat was calling in for recovery.

Thankfully, the launches and recovery were staggered allowing us to use all our people for the launch and recovery of the big boat. The eagerness and enthusiasm of the trainees was not enough to cover some of the experience needed during the operation. I was immensely pleased, however, to see the experienced crew 'buddy up' to shadow the new people in each aspect of the job without prior discussion or advice. It ensured that we conducted what was clearly a textbook recovery up the short slip just an hour after high water, with a moderate swell on the toe. We are, after all, a very cohesive, very excellent Shore Crew.

September 26th – Friday

It was a tad sharp this morning stepping out. I had not quite expected it. I took ABH out when I came back from the Lifeboat station last night and found it particularly mild. It felt like someone had put The Cove in the freezer overnight.

Neither of the girls seemed very inclined to get out of bed early. Neither did I earlier, but some of us have to. I went down to drag the shop display outside which usually gets some attention but when I went back up, both were still in bed. It took some wiles and encouragement to get ABH out, but BB was still snuggled up when we got back again. I then had to drag her out, although she was quite compliant. She has not yet mastered the high drama kicking and screaming ABH had perfected.

With the squid season in full swing, it seemed churlish not to take advantage of it and we ordered in half a dozen from a local trusted source. He told us we had some luck as earlier in the week the squid were four pounds a kilogram more expensive. What I had forgotten about was the range of sizes and when pressed I had to settle on medium without really knowing what that meant. Happily, they are a good size, so large must be enormous.

Being so fresh and less than one food mile away, they are still moving about a bit, their big eyes staring accusingly. When I have the opportunity, I put a bag over their heads so they cannot see me. I do not believe in the afterlife like that but there is no point in taking unnecessary risks. The Missus will clean and freeze them ... or, and I have only just remembered, they would probably go very well with the rocket pesto she made yesterday.

The good news keeps rolling in, too. I had a call from the referrals team at Truro hospital yesterday regarding progress on my false ears. To recap, after a poor experience at Company Bad in the high street, I had been trying to switch to Company Good. Despite some help at a high level in Company Good, Company Bad has been dragging its feet and to circumvent the possibility of total failure in negotiation, I had gone back to the GP to be referred in the traditional manner.

The very pleasant lady on the telephone reported that she was pleased to let me know that the referral process had been completed and that she could now book me an appointment with Company Bad. When was I free? Had you been privy to the conversation, dear reader, you would have heard an elongated scream followed by the sound of heavy footsteps running away.

I did not try and explain but simply asked if I could possibly be referred to Company Good instead. Apparently, there are no appointments for the foreseeable future at Company Good. Oh, very dear.

Customer.: "You don't have stamps for abroad, do you."

Grumpy Shopkeeper.: "I cannot imagine what sort of cad and boulder misinformed you thus, dear lady, but I can assure you we have international stamps in an adequate sufficiency."

Customer.: “Oh, but this postcard is going to Poland!”

Grumpy Shopkeeper.: “!”

The cold of the morning might have put a few people off which might explain the absence of a change-over bubble today. In fact, it was a lacklustre performance all around throughout the day. There was all sorts of mayhem down on the Harbour beach with the fishing boats when I took ABH around in the middle of the morning but although the car park was quite busy with cars, there were not many people about. I can only imagine that they park and run off to Land's End.

While our perambulating visitors were shunning us today, the surfer were having a, erm, field day. The bay looked flat calm for most of the time but somewhere underlying it was a three feet swell and an offshore breeze. I had a little watch as the tide rolled in during the late afternoon and there were a good many clean waves piling in from 100 metres out. Oddly, there were more surfers out there earlier in the day when it did not look half so good. I am sure they know best.

We did not make a huge dent in our pasty supply (sorry, MS) like we had for the last two Fridays. This has upset the pluk-o-trak harvester – applecarts are so passé - before the weekend has even started. With the weather forecasters still uncertain – sorry, the weather forecasters are certain, but the outcomes are far from it – we shall just have to watch and see. I suspect that we are looking at a freezer full of pasties before the end of day tomorrow.

Later in the afternoon, just to keep me amused, we had another, ‘*the people in the Lifeboat shop have sent me*’ referrals. It seems their faith in me being able to perform any task or answer any question remains inviolate. Today, we had a lady who wished to celebrate her 86th birthday in The Cove, swimming in our warm and welcoming waters because it reminded her of her native South Africa. I have heard this before that the bay has certain similarities.

Sorry, dear reader, to call a hiatus at this point because I just had to look up where South Africa got its name. I mean, yes, it is fairly obvious that it is because of where it is geographically, but it is like calling China, Very Big Country or Italy, Finger of Land Hanging off the Bottom of Europe. It must have taken a singular lack of imagination to bestow upon the country for perpetuity such a name. Mind, it should be no wonder being from the same people that called the land we live in the United Kingdom, especially when for most of its time it was not particularly united. I have never worked out if it was irony or hope.

Sorry, I digress. Now, where was I? Ah, yes, a lady of advanced years walks into the shop having been led to believe that we could solve the very mysteries of the Universe. Today's challenge was to find her some cheap accommodation in The Cove for the coming week. Of course, finding accommodation in The Cove is one thing, and given that 80 percent of the properties are to let, an easy thing at that. The difficulty would be fining one available at short notice in a week set to be fair. The

sting in the tail was the price. While some of the properties are more reasonably priced than others, none could possibly be regarded as cheap.

Since the project would take some time to complete and require some undivided attention, I handed it over to the Missus. The lady, quite understanding, said she would be back tomorrow and left her telephone number so that I might pass on the results of our search.

As it happened, the Missus finished the search just moments before the lady returned telling me that making the enquiries and a subsequent purchase of an ice cream had made her miss her bus. The next one, via Land's End was due at any moment, so I handed her the list that the Missus had drawn up and told her that we would leave the matter in her hands. The Missus had pointed out the most reasonable at the top of the list and the miraculous fact that it was available, too. The lady took a quick glance and announced immediately that it was beyond her means.

I had not enquired as to her level of expectation before commencing on the project, as it seemed rude to do so. By providing a list of accommodation at the lower end of the scale, we hoped to avoid the problem, but she told me as she headed for the bus stop.

Today was not her lucky day. The next bus she could take back to Penzance was running 40 minutes late. I discovered this because the next customers had asked. Seeking not to disappoint the original lady further, I went down to the bus stop to let her know that her bus was coming and not to be concerned. It only occurred to me when I got back that the customers who had enquired about the arrival of the bus could have conveyed the message to her. It was near the end of the day and any semi-efficient thought processes had long since deserted me.

I could not fathom at all why the bus was late. I had first spotted it on the tracker not long after leaving Penzance and it was late then. I thought that it might be the roadworks in the Market Jew Street that caused it but surely every bus would be late if it was. If I were to be kind, I might have said it was rush hour, but even then the same would apply to every bus at that time. Having tortured myself with weather forecasts and pasty orders yesterday, I decided not to think about it any further lest I could some internal damage.

We petered out to a halt at the end of the day after a day of nothing particularly special apart from the weather that was glorious again. I did fancy that it had gone a bit dull in the latter part of the afternoon, but I was not really paying attention. The skies were clear enough when I took ABH around after tea – we had some of that squid as a side dish and perhaps because it was not looking at me, I did not feel guilty at all. As we crossed the car park the remnants of the sunset looked quite pretty hanging about on the western horizon. Rain coming – maybe, at some point.

September 27th – Saturday

For some time, I have been looking for a better stand for our surf jewellery. The work of art that I created a few years ago to display them needs to be bigger and the prongs longer so that I can fit a full bag of each type out without having to create a spares bag.

The replacement stands that I have seen are all too low to the ground which would render the lower slats impractical. I could put a shorter one on a cut down version of the table the existing one sits on, but I was rather looking for a simpler solution. More recently, I have stepped up the search for a new stand and yesterday I found almost the thing. It does have slats that go all the way to the bottom, but it is tall enough to not use those for jewellery and still have an expanded capacity. I am sure that I could find something to fill the bottom with – maps, perhaps.

I am not going to find the perfect solution and the unit I have seen ticks most of the requirement boxes. The problem that now remains is what to do with the existing unit as I am neither going to throw it away or consign it to rot up at The Farm. I had thought to make a platform for it and place it above the aqua shoes to replace the several and inadequate stands for keyrings there already. I discussed the matter with the Missus last night over tea and she noted that the old display unit is too tall for where I want to put it. I never considered it, and she is right, of course. I will need to think again, and in the meanwhile, the new unit is on hold.

By the middle of the day, I had the impression that we had been undone by the appallingly inaccurate weather forecasts for the day. All of them were wrong, which is some feat since all of them were different. Mainly, we had been led to expect some rain during the day. The jury was still out whether that would be in the morning, the afternoon or all day. We did get a sprinkling a little while into the morning then another late in the day as a weather front passed over us. The remainder of the day was dry and relatively warm, if somewhat grey from the medium height cloud that we had most of the day.

What we did not have was a whole lot of visitors. These I imagine would have looked at one forecast or another and decided to go elsewhere. Adding grist to the mill, it was also a change-over day all of which made it an exceptionally quiet day from start to finish. Add to that the Women's Rugby Final, the snooker and golf and the whole world was set against us.

With nothing better to do, I went through the store room looking for anything that needed to be put out on a shelf. There were a few boxes of fifty pence sweet bags, most of which we already had out in the stand, some local preserves and chutneys but not the strawberry which was the most urgently required. I will have to consider an order which I would prefer not to do this close to the end of the season. I also filled the postcard fudge box shelf and discovered the same thing.

Each time I order the fudge boxes I agonise over how many boxes of each type and size I should buy so that they all run out roughly at the same time. When I perused the shelf today, it seems that I had managed to order precisely the right balance for which I felt very pleased indeed. Putting out some fudge and biscuit boxes I noted that a further order would be required to see us through until the end of the season. Clearly, having found the perfect combination of boxes, all I had to do was repeat the last order. That is not entirely true; I also had to remember what the last order was.

After a while, even the project of clearing the store room became a tedious chore. What I should have been doing is clearing the store room of the cash and carry order that would normally have been delivered today. I had a call late yesterday telling me that the driver had called in sick and we would most probably get our delivery tomorrow. We are not sure what time but the delivery on Monday coincides with their weekly consignment to the Isles of Scilly ferry. The truck will come on to us after meeting the boat in Penzance. I know that the pasty man (sorry, MS) does the same thing, and he is normally here before half past eight o'clock on a Monday. No doubt they will come at the same time.

Out in the bay, the surfing was top notch again. Even at dead low water, three feet waves were rolling in from a good way off the beach and there were around a dozen surfers out there to use them. It looked a bit more boisterous out by North Rocks but with perfect waves suitable for all levels of experience closer to home, no one was taking up the challenge. Disappointingly, the rock field at the bottom of the slope on the beach seems to have widened. It will stop all surfing in the shore break higher in the tide.

The rain came in from the second front at around four o'clock. It was moving much more slowly that I imagined and stayed with us longer than I hoped. We had a flurry of pasty buying just as it started and, no surprise, hardly a whiff of a customer after. The weather front itself stretched from beyond the tip of Scotland to the Channel south of us and slowly made its way east. It was mainly gone by five o'clock leaving behind a legacy of low cloud and mizzle.

One of our few visitors arriving in the rain was a very pleasant man who had visited us earlier in the day. He was staying briefly at the OS but making the most of his time here, travelled about the area by bus. He reminded me greatly of 'Lofty' from the television series, 'It Ain't Half Hot, Mum' but hailed from the USA. He said he admired the bus drivers here, having been one himself, for how they handled the narrow roads of West Cornwall after visiting everywhere he could within the constraints of the bus timetable.

He had walked back from Land's End just as the rain started with a large paper carried bag that, by the time he arrived at the shop, had fair near disintegrated. Luckily, there was a grumpy shopkeeper on hand to sell him a voluminous valise in the form of an Old Boathouse tote bag. He said he was also looking for a rain jacket

because he left his in Copenhagen. He seemed the most unlikely character to being doing a grand tour, but we wish him the very best of luck on his travels.

Just after he left, I had another needy soul turn up asking if we had jump leads for the vehicle he was trying to start. We have not had to dig out our power pack at all this year, so it was as well it got an outing today. It has not been used in so long that it had dropped a notch on the power reserve display, but I thought that it would still have enough to start an ordinary car. Our man was back very shortly after I let him take it away, announcing it was a success. I was about to plug it in down in the shop but noticed that the charging cable was missing. I could not remember if it was still in the bag when I sent it out, but I guess that is too late now. We have a spare cable in the flat, so I plugged it in there.

It was a tad more chilly after the front had passed – a cold front will do that for you – and I wished that I had my fleece with me for the outside work. With the street wet, a chill in the air and not a soul on the street, it might easily have been mistaken for winter in The Cove. I had neglected to order logs in a timely manner, and we were bereft for the weekend. Either no one turned up for this coming week or they are hardy souls because no one came rushing in for firewood during the closing hours.

ABH had not long gone out for a walk, so we dismissed the after tea walk as unnecessary and left it until last thing. The two girls are playing – I was about to say, ‘nicely’ but with teeth and paws flying everywhere and the growling and snarling that accompanies it, does not seem to do the carnage justice. They are both exhausted several times during the day and sleep well during the night, so our the master plan seems to be working. After a rest, they are back at it again, so we can only assume that they actually enjoy it.

It is still a frustration that we cannot take BB outside for walks nor let her loose at The Farm. We had thought that her second vaccination was due imminently, but it transpires we must wait until mid October. This is a great disappointment, particularly for me, as I will have very limited time to get her into a routine before I am, hopefully, incapacitated by a man with a sharp knife and bone saw.

On that happy note, dear reader, I shall wish you sweet dreams and whoops of elation regarding a grand sporting achievement. I only hope the Women’s Rugby went well, too.

September 28th – Sunday

Over the years, we have some interesting experiences that have been somewhat out of the ordinary and more than occasionally met with people whose grip on reality has perhaps been shaken loose along life’s rocky path. The latter, in the main, seem to be happy in their own way and bumble through life inexplicably without falling off the edge. They are harmless enough, but you probably would not want them flying the

aeroplane you are in or, in some cases, meeting them after dark when you have not got a handy cudgel with you.

Our first visitor today probably ticked one of more of the boxes above. I would not have been so disconcerted had the chap in question been after a guide to walk to Land's End or where to go fishing or when swimming off the beach was best. No, this one was after someone who could tell him where best to throw himself off a cliff – attached to a rope, which was a relief.

He had arrived in The Cove with all the appropriate gear – well, he had a rope slung over his shoulder – but with no idea where to go, the best places to climb or descend nor the best routes up and down the cliff. He had the blissfully naïve expectation that there would be a suitably experienced and knowledgeable person just waiting here to guide him.

I think what made the matter even more incredible was that his level of expectation had absolutely no basis whatever and he had not troubled himself to do any research or preparation at all. The fact that he had turned up at a popular climbing spot seemed to be entirely based on good fortune and he could just as easily have arrived at Great Yarmouth with the same request. We used to sell guidebooks on the local climbs. I am rather glad we no longer do just in case he entrusted his safety to five minutes reading of an appropriate page.

Just before any smart eye points it out, our man would have had better luck at Great Yarmouth as the Marine Centre there has a climbing wall or two. He would still have had to pre-book, though.

If that was not weird enough for a Sunday morning at the end of September, one of our regular visitors came and shared her plans for the forthcoming evening with me. Not that this itself was especially weird; it is what she was going to see. She is one of the group of local ladies, a swimming group, who occasionally meet for breakfast here and were sitting opposite the shop this morning. She told me that the party had intended to go and see the phosphorescence in the water at Grebe Beach. This I had never heard of and required me to ask her to repeat herself a couple of times in case I had misheard.

It intrigued me so that I had to look it up. Grebe Beach near Falmouth is apparently famed for its bio-luminescence in the water that is best seen on moonless nights from late spring to early autumn. It is caused by plankton, most likely *Noctiluca Scintillans*, that react to movements in the water and are known as sea sparkles – aw, bless. They also have been seen at Kynance Cove and Pednvouder Beach, which is now closed to the public, so unless you have very sharp eyesight, you will not see it from there.

Things were going swimmingly during the morning. The sun had decided to come out to scorn the weather forecasters and the day started to warm up quite nicely. The

breeze, such as it was, came in from the west today. I have no idea where it was coming from yesterday, but I knew that it was not bothering us too much. Two customers first thing had told me that it was giving them grief as they tried to play golf in Mullion. They did not know where it was coming from either.

The Missus had intended to pressure wash our roof garden today. The astroturf that had been laid ten years ago at least and, I recall, featured heavily in The Diary at the time, was getting slippery and it was likely our painter, who is turning up on Tuesday, would need access to it. We would rather he not break a leg before he finished the job. Do not listen to anyone who tells you that astroturf is awful stuff that does not look natural. We have more weeds growing across the roof than we have up at The Farm, so there.

To facilitate such a venture, she had loaded the pressure washer back into the truck on Friday where it had stayed until today. She had gone off to collect Mother in the late morning and decided to have a cup of coffee before starting in earnest on her return. While she was doing that and because it was only moderately busy at the time, I thought it worthwhile extracting the pressure washer from the truck, which I duly did. I then assessed how exactly we were going to get it onto the roof, because it is a heavy begger and there is no easy access to the roof. The only way of doing it was to lift it from the top of the stairs as it would not fit through the front door and onto the roof through the access window, which had been first choice until I measured it.

I had just removed the pressure hose to make the unit easier to handle and had put that onto the roof in readiness when my Lifeboat pager went off.

The boat was tasked to a casualty on a fishing vessel who had cut himself quite badly. With no one knowing the extent of the bleed, the Coastguard helicopter was sent ahead of us. We followed on as belt and braces in case the helicopter could not take the casualty off. The fishing boat was located at the top of the TSS around 12 nautical miles off and it would take 25 minutes for the Lifeboat to get there.

On shore, we knew we had at least an hour – unless the boat was stood down before it got there – so we dispersed and waited to see what happened. We had just enough in the team to cover recovery and one more on the way. Since we were temporarily at a loose end, I casually mentioned the fact that the Missus and I, on our own and without assistance from burly strong people, such as themselves, perhaps, had to lift the heavy pressure washed onto the roof. I cannot imagine what prompted them to volunteer to assist us, but I was suddenly overwhelmed with offers to help. The machine was lifted with ease into position on the roof and I was to very quickly regret that it had been.

While I was still in my Lifeboat yellows and my hands bearing the grime of honest Lifeboat launching, I thought that I would give the engine a bit of a turnover despite knowing that it had no fuel in the tank. The real purpose of this was to test whether I

could pull the recoil cord from the odd angle the machine had been placed in. The answer to that was, yes, I could as long as I did not mind the cord snapping in two while I did so.

I have never had to change the cord of a recoil start engine before. I imagined that it would be user doable and did not need to go to a main dealer for specialist replacement. A quick look at the Internet demonstrated that there were some videos there that I could look at and learn and thankfully, the pressure washer was designed that the cover and recoil unit could relatively easily be removed. I even had some nylon cord of the approximate size required, which given the circumstances was downright miraculous. What I did not have a whole heap of at that moment was time.

The Lifeboat had been stood down five minutes from the fishing vessel as the casualty had been uplifted by helicopter. He was taken to Newquay where a land ambulance would transfer him to Truro. We took that as a sign that the injury was not as severe as it could have been. It left us half an hour to get the slipway ready for the boat to come back and given that we had a sufficient number of hands by this time, we did it in plenty of time. I took one of the trainees that we had on board on Thursday down to the toe of the slip with me. It is not an onerous or difficult job, but we like to immerse the new people in all aspects of the role as soon as possible. It is best that they can throw themselves into it without thinking that any of the tasks are out of reach or reserved for more experienced people.

To prove my point, we executed what was clearly a textbook recovery up the long slip in moderate conditions. We are, after all, a very inclusive, very excellent Shore Crew.

Back at the ranch, the pressure washer and its broken cord still awaited me. As I mentioned earlier, it was relatively easy to dismantle to get at the recoil mechanism once I had found the correct socket sizes. I found a very helpful video on the computer that showed me how to replace the cord on a similar unit and discovered that the principles were much the same on the unit we had. It took a while to do because while I was away playing Lifeboat, we had become properly busy in the shop.

Slowly, one step at a time, I managed to replace the cord and fit it back onto the machine. Quite what I had done wrong, I do not know, but the cord, after a couple of test tries, now hangs out of the machine loosely where before it returned snugly against the casing. The important factor however is that I can start the machine with it just as simply as before, which was a great relief. The cord will go again, I am sure. The cord passes through a wire eye inside the machine which, unless the angle the strike is precise, will rub against it and cause wear. I think we have a little time before it goes again but it is bound to be long enough so that I forget how to fix it.

Talking of fading memories, our South African swimmer was back again today. The Missus had served her while I was at the Lifeboat station and had found her to be, how shall we say this, very particular. At first, she was looking for a very cheap bikini. The prices of our swimming clothes are very reasonable, I think, as we have no named fashion brands but even then, they did not meet the strict budget our lady had set herself. She settled for our least expensive towel instead, although how that permitted her to swim discretely, I would rather not know.

I was not long back to the shop when I discovered that it was my turn to serve her. She had returned asking for a plastic bag. The 10 pence mandatory charge disconcerted her greatly, after all, she had just purchased a “very expensive” towel from us. I repeated that we were constrained by law and had to make the charge and explained that it was to discourage people using them. She asked, did I not think that was an outrage, to which I added a little fuel to the fire by telling her that it was. Ten pence was not going to discourage anyone and that it should be at least a pound.

She duly paid up then asked about our sausage rolls. ‘What was in them’, she demanded. It is very difficult to explain what is in a sausage roll without sounding trite, but I risked it anyway and told her it was sausage. ‘Was it vegetarian’, she asked and because it was not, we settled on a cheese pasty (sorry, MS).

Our lady was back five minutes later with a complaint. She had asked for a sausage roll and I had given her a pasty. There was a lengthier conversation than was completely warranted while I offered to change it for her but that the sausage roll was not vegetarian and she asked me why would she want that then. She left with the pasty, but not happily, I fear.

The remainder of the day turned much brighter for us. The Missus finished most of the roof and now it looks good as new. It seems that it is not the only thing that is looking good. Two days running I have had customers tell me that I do not seem to have aged over the years they have known me. I tell them that it is the blameless life I lead, and the purity of heart. There is probably no need to explain the midnight ritual sacrifices to the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers on moonless nights up on the moors or the bathing naked among the sea sparkles on the last nights of autumn. Unfortunately, I have had to change my plans tonight, I hear a bunch of ladies are heading to my favourite spot.

September 29th – Monday

I have two apologies to make before we get to the meat of today, which given the nature of one of the apologies might possibly have been an unfortunate choice of metaphor. First, I should say that it was a mighty tome of an entry, some 2250 words which may well have exhausted your resources, dear reader, not to mention your attention span. The second, was for mentioning my unclothed adonis-like frame

before breakfast time which may have brought on an untimely swoon or two. I shall endeavour to be more discrete in future.

Gosh, I am almost out of breath just trying to remember all the things I was trying to do this morning. Looking back, it should not have taken half the time that it did and, after all of it, there was no need for the hurry at all.

The cash and carry people had suggested that the driver might come on to us after a drop at the ferry terminal in Penzance. Since I had no idea what time the ferry left or when goods needed to be loaded by, I thought to expect the cash and carry delivery from seven o'clock in the morning. I had dragged myself out of bed early for the event especially as I had to deal with the recycling and food waste collection today. Because I needed to get along a bit sharpish, ABH decided to stay in bed when taking her around early would have been more helpful.

I went down to prepare the outside display in her absence and got caught up with the newspaper man. We do enjoy a good chat about this and that, but this morning really was not the day for it. Obviously, because it was not the morning for it, our conversation went on longer than normal. By the time I got upstairs ABH was waiting for me, making it look like I was the one keeping her waiting.

We went on to have a run on the beach for the first time in a little while. Quite apart from the tide being unkind to us, we have been much earlier and the fishing boats were being launched and it was dark. Today, there were a couple of local lads waiting for someone to launch their punt with the Harbour tractor. Fortunately, we were coming back up the slipway when the tractor started moving.

I took ABH back home only to discover that it was time to get a move on in the shop. I had deliberately avoided placing additional orders for today but there was still bottling up and the newspapers to do. The only one I did call in was pasties (sorry, MS) and even that I kept to the barest minimum. It was much later than expected which had the advantage that I was able to have a spot of breakfast but as I put the last pastry in the fridge, the cash and carry lorry turned up.

It was halfway through the morning by this time and ordinarily, we would have had a coach load of people standing by to dive into the shop as soon as the first case was picked up. Today, we had an uninterrupted run at it and unloaded the three cages in no time at all. Our usual driver prefers to get the heavy stuff out of the way first off, and I appreciate that too. The driver today left it until last which meant that all the water, nine cases of it, is at the top end of the store room and in the way. I will have to ship it to the rear before long but will need to clear a space first.

We remained quiet for the rest of the day. I cannot blame the forecast this time because it was better than the actual weather. The forecast had us as full on sunshine but the best we could manage was eight parts cloud and bright on occasion. This persisted through until the latter part of the afternoon when the cloud

thinned to high level cirrus and let some sunshine in. The temperature, however, did us proud and we gained four degrees from a chilly start. By the end of the afternoon, I had to remove my mid-layer that I had migrated to from a short-sleeved shirt because I was so warm. At Land's End it is still -68 degrees.

Whether it was the heat or the flies we will never know, but there must be something in the air causing it.

Lady customer.: "Have you any doggie ice cream?"

Grumpy shopkeeper.: "No, Lady, we do not."

Lady customer.: "Oh. Have you anything else?"

Grumpy shopkeeper.: "Yes, we have dog treats on the shelf here in the middle aisle."

Lady customer.: "No, I meant ice cream."

Grumpy shopkeeper.: [Checks memory. Is reasonably certain he actually said, 'no doggie ice cream' out loud – but probably worth saying again, just in case] "No, we do not have doggie ice cream."

Lady customer.: "Oh, thought you might have something like that."

Grumpy shopkeeper.: [Makes mental note to check what things might be similar to doggie ice cream that actually are not.]

I had plenty of time to clear most of delivery before I found it far too tedious to continue. I am sorry, dear reader, did I say tedious. I obviously meant far too arduous to continue and to find something far less arduous instead.

This turned out to be ordering some batteries. It is a bit of an odd time to be doing it so close to closing but they are unlikely to go off and I have been meaning to do it for a while. It meant taking the existing stock down from the shelf to see what was there but some of the cash and carry stock was in the way. So distracted was I thinking about the batteries that I cleared the remaining cash and carry stock, shifting to the end of the store. After I placed the battery order, I went back into the store room and recall being surprised that I had finished the cash and carry work. I think my head needs a rest.

We ground on towards the end of the day when the Missus decided that it would be a grand plan to finish the pressure washing of the roof. I was dubious, as the painter is coming early tomorrow and we did not want to mess up the walls or make them wet. The Missus had spent the afternoon on the roof garden – a term similar to calling our field, The Farm – clearing the detritus and plant pots full of dead sticks. The Missus may be able to grow lettuce like a professional but for plants in pots, she has the kiss of death. Anyway, she made a right mess of the roof that she had spent an hour cleaning on Sunday, and it will need doing again.

In the meanwhile, she proceeded with the plan to pressure wash the front end of the garden near the street, narrowly missing my head as I held open the commercial bin for her to throw heavy things into from above. I left her to the washing and after half an hour, the noise of the machine stopped. She had run out of petrol and time. I

went and had a look and was confronted by a scene of devastation with the walls up the steps, and the steps themselves, soaking wet and covered in mire. So too was the Missus, but that is another story.

We resolved to leave it until after tea. After tea it was dark and we did not imagine the neighbours, such as there are some this week, would be overly delighted by the noise of the motor going into the night. I took the petrol back to the truck and came back and hosed down the walls and steps. In fairness, the Missus said she would do it but since I was there, I beat her to it. We just hope it has dried sufficiently by the morning for the walls to be painted.

We still need to clear the big tree mallow from the wall at the back and the rest of the weeds. On reflection, we would have been better off leaving the roof and doing that. We might be pressed in the morning - again.

September 30th – Tuesday

It seems that I am destined to have to jump through hoops of ever increasing challenge to get my false ears back. I cannot remember when the referrals team at Truro telephoned me to say I had been referred but Company Good had no appointments. Whenever it was, it was too long ago for my liking and things generally do not happen unless you yourself make them.

With this in mind, I called Company Good at their local office and told them that I had recently been referred and could I please have an appointment. I was immediately heartened when I was told that an entry for me existed on their system – it did not a week or two ago when I asked – but was immediately deflated again when the very pleasant lady told me that I had not yet been referred. They did, she said, have a message from Company Bad telling them that I had been released. Hoorah! But on the other hand, she could not proceed on that basis alone. Boo!

During the conversation there was much rustling of paper at the very pleasant lady's end – my hearing was already improving just speaking with her. Moments later, and having conferred with someone else in the room, she told me that I was, however, on the 'task list'. Hoorah! I think. Quite what the difference is between being on the task list and being referred, I have no idea. None that would prevent an appointment being booked, I hoped.

There was more rustling of paper and more conferring and would I able to attend an appointment at Falmouth or Truro – not likely – because appointments at Penzance were thin on the ground. The problem at Penzance, she told me, was that the room was very noisy. They were in the process of soundproofing it, but it would not be ready until November. I explained that I could not attend an appointment further afield because of the shop and that waiting beyond the end of October was not going to be practical because of likelihood of my dickie knee getting in the way.

I told the lady that the noisy room would not be an issue: if necessary, they could do the assessment on the street as long as it resulted in getting some sort of functional device that would facilitate better hearing. Suddenly, an appointment was available in Penzance on 16th October, which was right at the end of my RNLI casualty care course. Another was 23rd October, which, while later than I hoped would be alright but then, out of the blue was an appointment on 11th October. Hoorah!

We had been supremely quiet during the morning, not a soul about. Even the lady who had asked for a gluten free pasty and a frozen cheese pasty for nine o'clock, did not arrive until near ten o'clock. That, of course, did not prevent me having to abandon my call to the optician that does ears twice before I got through.

I had also planned to set our mini chainsaw on the tree mallow against the back wall of the shop. It is a sturdy item with inch thick stalks and stands a couple of feet high. It was in decline but that did not make it any easier to deal with. I had thought we would have got around to its demise earlier since the chainsaw has been in the truck since Friday, but I only got around to it today. I took it out before we opened with the idea of doing it then but could not find the battery.

It was not until well after we opened, I did after all have other things to do, that I got around to asking the Missus where the batteries were to. It meant another trip to the truck which meant another customer arriving at the precise time I was heading out of the first electric sliding door in The Cove. Armed with battery, chainsaw and a clear street opportunity to go and do the deed, a quick press of the start button demonstrated that the chainsaw was not working.

The spindle worked marvellously when I took it apart and removed the chain. It was when the chain was attached the problem manifested, which was a fairly fundamental problem. It took much cleaning and applying of grease and oil, much fitting and removing the chain too before I managed to get it working. All of the remedial work would have been completed much more quickly had customers not started appearing the moment I had the smallest amount of dirty grease on my surgical gloves. Do not misunderstand me, dear reader; I am very happy to see customers at any time during shop opening hours. It is just that during our quiet times, they only arrive at the shop when I have decided that there are no customers to be seen and I start something else.

Eventually, I managed to get myself and the chainsaw up to the back with enough time to take the worst offending branches off the bush. I would have gone down to the main trunk but could not get the angle on the saw to do it. While it not being the ideal solution, I think I will have to pour some old diesel into the stop of the cut stalk to try and kill it off, else it will come back with a vengeance next year.

Adding to my morning of disruption, our refrigeration company called to ask if they could service the units they look after here – this morning. It was actually very

convenient because we were so quiet, but they did not know that and a little more notice would have been appreciated, even if it was a day.

I thought they were calling about a letter that they had circulated earlier in the morning. I was in two minds about opening it because the headline was 'data breach'. Given the subject matter, it might have been better to send the message as part of the text rather than as an attachment. The file type was .pdf and therefore probably low risk, so I opened it anyway. It describes the data breach, which happily did not affect me. It added that two of the company's email addresses had also been compromised and we should be wary of anything sent from either of them. When the very pleasant lady called about the service, I suggested as politely as I could that it probably might have been best not to send a letter about compromised email addresses and data breaches from both the email addresses that had been compromised.

Some years ago, the Missus and I undertook the North Coast 500 as a bit of a holiday at the end of the season. It is a marketed route around the northern coast of Scotland and is exceedingly eyesome. Businesses on the route pay a membership fee to advertise on the website and the whole venture has been hugely successful.

A little while later, I was invited to a meeting at Geevor Tin Mine to discuss the setting up of another marketing venture framing the area as the Tin Coast. I am not entirely sure how successful it is, but it is a similar idea to the North Coast 500 but only for the area along the north coast here to St Ives. At the time I suggested some parallels and a similar route here might work well.

Wind forward to today and I am starting to see emails and trade feeds mentioning the South West 660, a route from Lyme Regis in the south around to Watchet in the north. The creators are obviously on a marketing push, which after three or four years of its existence I am only just beginning to hear about it. The idea seems sound enough, although I do not think that it will help us directly, but bigger places like Geevor, may do well out of it especially now the bus service no longer serves them.

The Missus spent some of the day up at The Farm. I had asked if she could do me a wetsuit count because our supplier is looking for orders for next year. They are clearly looking to not carry as much stock next year, which is probably very good business practise but a pain in the bottom for us. I need to do some work guessing how much of what we need for next year and commit to the volumes. It was only after she came back that I realised it was shoes as well. Deep joy.

Our painter started early this morning. By the end of the day, he had finished half the wall on the east side of the shop. He intends to start on some of the front in the morning while it is still quiet and few customers are coming and going. The Missus checked with him first and decided to finish the roof garden with the pressure

washer. That is a convenient end to it as I might be able to convince a couple of burly Lifeboat types to help me take it down from the roof tomorrow evening.

Our training exercise has been brought forward a day courtesy of a couple of hurricanes off in the Atlantic and heading our way. They will not be hurricanes when they get here but they had already start to exert their influence.

I mentioned a couple of days ago that the surf has been particularly good on occasion this week. A swell of around three feet has presented itself during low water and given the surfers a bit of a treat. Today, in the push to high water, the swell height suddenly changed. It was quiet ferocious for a while with waves at least twice the height of earlier in the tide or the days before. With the small number of surfers out there, this was surfing for the more experienced and it was not long before a sizeable rip ran up the middle of the bay. Later, after high water, the waves calmed some and we spent out teatime watching a legion of surfers able to pick their spot from right across the beach using waves of different height and strength to suit their abilities.

The light is closing in fast during the evenings now. By the time I took ABH around the block, it was very much the darker end of dusk. I did not need the head torch I took with me, but it will not be long before I do. There was not even the dimmest remnant of sunset on the horizon but at least it was moderately temperate. The car park was as sparsely populated as I had seen it this end of the season. The end is nigh, I fear.