

## DIARY 2021/22

July 31<sup>st</sup> – Saturday

It was still a little grey first thing with the bleddy hound down on the beach. However, it was dry and perfectly mild with hardly a hint of breeze about that I could feel, at least. Yesterday when I stood at the corner by the Lifeboat station, it was howling about my legs.

It was a slow start as half our contingent left for home and the new half were yet to arrive. Those who had arrived early in the morning or last night were slow off the mark anyway, I imagine. It left me reasonably free to take in the pasty delivery without a big queue developing and to finish off the topping up of the shelves that I started before the shop opened.

I had promised myself that I must set aside time before I went down to the shop to order stamps. I had been trying to remember to do it for the best part of a week and now we had run out, it was urgent. When a matter has been left so long it becomes urgent, the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers perk up and take note. Clearly it is no fun whatever to throw marbles under the feet of a grumpy shopkeeper who had plenty of time to brush them out of the way and carry on. It is only fun when the grumpy shopkeeper is pressed for time thinks that everything will run smoothly.

Therefore, it was a huge jolly jape for the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers to ensure that my credit card was blocked when I placed the order. It is even more fun when the process for getting hold of someone at the credit card company is long and convoluted. For additional value, the man who eventually comes on the telephone to help, promises that the matter is resolved and puts the phone down. The grumpy shopkeeper then discovers that the matter is not resolved, the card is still blocked and he has run out of time to call the company back.

The stamps were eventually ordered when I went up for a spot of croust, but it took twenty minutes on the telephone and the authority of a manager to clear it.

The grey of the day was replaced with sunshine at some point. I must confess that I was not paying attention. I seem to remember hearing on Radio Pasty earlier that some of us might be unlucky enough to have a shower of rain but when I looked at the rain radar in the middle of the day, there was not a rain cloud in sight. I think that the Missus was quite satisfied with the downpours of the last few days that have refilled her water containers up at The Farm. We might yet have Boathouse Farm cucumbers in our shop fridge.

For a change-over day there was a good showing on the beach in the afternoon. At least one surf school had commandeered the soft break to the south of the swimming area. There must have been around thirty brightly coloured boards all tightly packed together. I often wondered if they have language lessons at the same

time so that they can all be cool dudes together, hanging ten and wiping out. Judging from the number of beach type games we sold there were some shenanigans happening on the sand too. Being warm and dry for the most part was good enough, it seems, and a light shower of rain at six o'clock did not appear to bother anyone very much.

We had a more vital afternoon of it than the morning but even that failed to make much of a dent in our beer fridge contents. It has rather made a mockery of the huge beer order I did at the start of the week and the stack in the store room of excess beer has hardly shifted. It will go by and by, but the risk is that I will not order more and demand will soar again. Oh, what a dilemma.

We coasted towards closing time with a bit of a five minutes to closing rush. There was not a great deal of bottling up to be done and that can be sorted out in the morning. Time for an evening in, I think.

July 30<sup>th</sup> – Friday

I was rudely awoken by my pager going off urging me to launch the Lifeboat that was, at the time, in the Isles of Scilly. It is likely that it went off when someone at Falmouth Coastguard pressed the wrong button while asking the already deployed Lifeboat to attend a further emergency.

I only found out from Radio Pasty's regular visit to the Coastguard that our boat had been called to assist with at least 22 incidents in the archipelago where multiple yachts were being displaced from their moorings requiring crew to be taken off in smart order. The Island's Lifeboat, the Coastguard helicopter and Island agencies were all involved in the mass rescue.

Our boat was eventually released at nine o'clock, ten hours after launch. She arrived back in the bay an hour later lumping through the heavy sea. It was almost as heavy on the short slip that we set up as close to the boat's arrival as possible to ensure the shortest cable length and the best placing for the leading line pick-up arm. This requires some hapless eejit to step down as close to the tide line as possible. This is alright when the tide line is fair static but when it is moving eight or ten feet in either direction it is slightly more tricky. By carefully timing the waves with expert precision I was able to arrange it so that I was fixing the base and extending the arm only when the biggest waves were hitting the slipway. Fortunately, a big burly compatriot had a hold of my collar, lest I be washed away.

Everything was in place for a very delicately balanced procedure, which through excellent planning resulted in a textbook recovery up the short slip. I was immensely proud of the team who without request or order, set to cleaning up the deck which would normally be done by the Boat Crew. To cap that, the Missus had organised the Sennen Cove Café next door to prepare bacon rolls for all the crew paid for by the counter collection and your donations to it. Thank you very much.

I hurried back to regain my rightful position behind the counter in the shop. We were busy at times but a change over day and sporadic showers that were blowing through The Cove softened the business drive. Once again, we did well on pasties. I was quite surprised yesterday to be left with none at all despite the weather. Today there would be no running out as I had ordered in an abundance preparing for the weekend.

There was an extended period of dry during the afternoon that occasioned a mass invasion of the beach. I rather think that this was the swansong for many holidaymakers who were keen to enjoy one last fleeting moment of beach going before they went home. Their revelling was somewhat unkindly interrupted by a particularly heavy suite of showers that came near the end of the day. It sent a stream of wet people off the beach and flooded the shop – with people, not water – with tea time purchases.

Talking of tea time. I know you just love to hear about the sumptuous feasts that the Missus prepares using fresh ingredients from the smorgasbord of available Cornish foods such as the geet lumps of hake we had this particular evening. Tonight it came adorned with some new potatoes fresh from the ground. The Missus had noticed, while patrolling The Farm with the bleddy hound, that some of our own potatoes had been unearthed. It was a small harvest, and quite insufficient for production I am afraid, but it made a delightful addition to our meal for Mother and me with our hake. The Missus missed out; the Missus hates fish.

July 29<sup>th</sup> – Thursday

There was a lovely weather forecast on Radio Pasty this morning. Just to summarise, it said that if you were camping, due to some rather breezy conditions coming in overnight, you were probably not going to have a tent in the morning. On the bright side, it was still going to be terribly mild for you.

For most of the day the weather was reasonable. It was not until after five o'clock that we started to see some proper rain move in across us. It very much stopped play, but we have resigned ourselves to enjoy the calm and quiet. The run up to this was pretty much a relentless line of shoppers buying a whole host of things from going home gifts to kitchen supplies for the evening. It was a merry bunch despite the impending poor weather and, in truth, we have not suffered too much at all this year during the busy season.

We had taken some fish orders over the previous couple of days, so it seemed reasonable to take the opportunity to bolster the freezer supplies at the same time. I ordered in not quite as much hake as I did last time but the haddock constrained itself by not being available in great store. I will always call in scallops on these restocks and this time I remembered to order in some fish mix. The result was an

order that took me all of the afternoon to vacuum pack and price, done between customer visits.

It is always disappointing when a customer fails to collect fish that they have ordered. Not so much that it was not picked up but that the customer missed out on such a treat that they probably would not be able to get at home. We can always relabel the fish and place it with our freezer supplies, so it is not wasted.

The weather closed in and the rain improved its game by the last hour or so of opening. Our customer numbers dwindled to ones or twos and a few small children who would rather get wet than miss out on their after tea sweets and treats. It gave me enough time to complete the last of the fish order, clean up and celebrate that there was not much bottling up to do and therefore we could have the evening resting instead of working.

I have said before that those small gods of shopkeepers cannot abide a bit of smugness and therefore my pager went off at eleven o'clock to launch the big boat. The wind had started to learn how to blow by this time and it was incredibly blustery on the slipway as I surveyed it for damage and detritus, pre launch. The sea had started to misbehave too, and this was not going to be a comfortable journey for the crew when they left the shelter of the bay.

It was also slow progress. The boat had been tasked to assist in the Isle of Scilly as there were a number of yachts sheltering from the storm there and, we believe one was in trouble. The Islands' Lifeboat had suffered a one engine failure and required help to sort the problems. It was going to be a long night.

July 28<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday

Crikey! That was some mangled up, topsy turvey, crazy day and one that probably should not have been half as busy as it was.

It was pretty breezy when I first set out in the morning. I was in two minds whether to put the flags out but decided to take the risk since it was apparently blowing in from the west, which is generally not a damaging direction. A light shower passing through insisted that I should take a rain jacket down to the beach with the bleddy hound, just in case. I did not tell her; she would only fret.

We escaped unscathed but the shower was a warning shot for the rest of the morning. Right through to the middle of the day we had occasional squally showers pass through The Cove, some of them quite heavy. I have often watched the gulls, while settled on the water, be displaced as successive waves cut across their flock. It was like watching the visitors today all settled on the benches opposite us. As each shower came in, they would scatter to some hidden location before returning a

minute or so after the shower had passed. It was most entertaining while standing in the dry of the shop.

Our morning was not one of the busiest but it was certainly no slouch, either. The afternoon however had many moments of madness interrupted by the occasional delivery and followed by further moments of mayhem. There was a pasty feeding frenzy at one point when most of our pasties were sold. Fortunately, I was able to keep a rolling stock available from the oven to feed the hungry masses and for once, I had plenty to draw from.

Why is it that customers feel the need to pile their arms high with items balanced precariously one atop the other when there are perfectly good baskets available? It reminded me of the children's game show, Crackerjack, years ago when children had to do precisely that or lose the bounty.

The highlight of my day followed the ill-advised shopping experience of a couple of teenaged lads, who decided arms were more manly than baskets. One came to the till to announce that he had dropped a cream carton, all 268 millilitres of it in the middle of the food aisle. Of all the items that can be spilt, this was probably one of the worst and required me to shut the shop while I cleaned it up and rinsed out the mop, several times, with the hose outside. To add to my misery, it was busy and I had an increasing crowd of people waiting to get in when I had finished. Through it all, three young girls browsed around the shop completely oblivious to the door being closed and me rushing to and fro with buckets of water.

The afternoon went completely crazy. Our five minutes to closing rush started two hours ahead of closing and would have extended beyond it had I not been too tired and teasy to lock the door. The Missus returned from The Farm with a truck load of stock, which we found nigh on impossible to ship into the shop for all the people coming and going at the counter. It still sits undistributed in the store room as I tidy up this page first thing the next morning.

Once again, the Missus returned to the shop in the evening to sort the soft drinks out. I had already stayed behind school to fill up the beer fridge that had again been emptied during our frenzied last few hours opening. I try not to remind myself that this is only the first week of holiday. Oh, what jollity we will have.

July 27<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday

It was a day of two distinct halves. The morning was dull and breezy and the afternoon, a warm, bright beach day. There was something for everyone, especially grumpy shopkeepers who had a cracking time of it on the pasties during the morning and was selling beach goods galore in the afternoon.

The Missus was out of the starting blocks early on to tackle the immense order that had arrived before we opened. I am going to have to award our delivery guy a medal

at the end of the season as he is very efficient and goes the extra mile for us to get to the shop early. We share the load and have it done in very short order. He did have a young assistant who did not assist very much so he decided to do it all on his own.

The Missus is just as fierce about shelving and storing the delivery on her own – we would trip over each other if we both got involved. It is also convenient to have someone serving so the other can concentrate on the work at hand. She worked her way through the lot, including two further orders that arrived while she was doing the first. She then dusted herself off and headed for The Farm.

The afternoon of sunshine saw a large number of people descend on the beach. It was helpful that some surf arrived and drove something like one hundred people into the sea. It did our board sales no harm either, although they are in such short supply they will not now last very long.

With the weather looking rather shabby compared to the heat and sunshine of last week, the amount of beer going out of the door has been minimal. So too have the sales of soft drinks, so all that panic and ordering has turned into a store room of beer and nowhere to go. We now have four different national brewery lagers and one local to get through and all at different prices. We have also extended our posh bits by stocking red wine vinegar – because someone asked for it – and balsamic vinegar – because the Missus lent ours to a customer and left it in view by the counter where another customer picked it up as part of their shopping.

Of course, we were already posh with the Missus' "Boathouse Farm" salad leaves, spinach and rainbow chard. She waltzed into the shop in the late afternoon, hot from The Farm, brandishing her very first fully grown cucumber. This will be a proper boon when they get going to commercial levels because the last few weeks' deliveries from our suppliers have been super expensive, though I have no idea why.

With no bottling up to do of note and all the shelves recently stocked we were able to sit at our table for tea and relax. We will not get used to it just yet.

July 26<sup>th</sup> – Monday

I revelled in the pre-shop opening order as I went about my morning duties. I managed to top up the soft drinks and clear the cardboard from the store room as well as the normal stuff of doing the newspapers and putting away the milk delivery. It was not until the shop had opened, the very large bread and pasty delivery was underway and a horde of customers were lined up in the shop that someone mentioned baguettes and I suddenly remembered that I had to bake 10 for collection. There ensued some manic multi tasking while I baked the baguettes, sorted out the bread delivery and service customers all at the same time.

This was the nature of the day thereafter. After a record day yesterday, we continued into today, no one particularly caring that the skies had clouded over and it got a bit misty. It was also hot and humid, a poor combination especially on a gymnasium day, which is now a quick dash to the gymnasium, a very cut down blistering session and a rapid walk home.

The view outside the shop was not the best with two delivery vans vying for the Missus's attention. One was frozen goods, which therefore needed to be put away quickly while the other was bulky drinks and boxes to clog up the works. I had arrived just in the nick of time and the Missus and I boxed it off in short order while taking it in turns to serve customers.

The main big shocker of the day was an electronic mail from our main grocery supplier announcing that our order of beer had been capped at half the required amount. We had run out yesterday on a bit less than we had ordered this week so our fifty percent was going to come nowhere close to putting a dent in our current demand. We are getting used to expecting the unexpected and being agile enough to circumvent these marbles thrown under our feet. I guessed, rightly it turned out, that the cap was per line, so I rapidly ordered some different lines in. They will be less popular but the beer drinkers of The Cove can always go elsewhere – oh, of course, there is nowhere else.

It is not only pride that comes before a fall but being smug about being agile. We received another communication from the grocery supplier late on in the day. It contain a very long list of things that were 'temporarily not available', including many that have been temporarily unavailable for so long that any reasonable consideration might say that they were permanently unavailable. Most notable on this list were some of the alternative beers that I had chosen. Talk about kicking a man when he is down. That is just not cricket.

Naturally, because we need a clear store room for tomorrow, we had some big deliveries. I managed to clear a good percentage and the Missus finished the job off after we closed. The store room will be full again before we open if all goes according to plan. This is definitely keeping us off the streets.

July 25<sup>th</sup> – Sunday

As I pick up my virtual pen at half past four o'clock, I really cannot remember what the weather was like first thing this morning. It probably is not all that important because it turned out to be a proper rip gribbler by the afternoon and we became exceedingly busy.

It is for this reason that I am immensely grateful to the Diary's Tasmanian correspondent for getting in touch with a couple of pictures and a tale of villainy from the other side of the globe – or dish if you are flat Earth, of course. We do find that we must be terribly inclusive these days.

The River Tamar as seen from Brady Point making our own River Tamar look a bit like a small brook. I am, however, trying desperately to think of any landmark in the vicinity or even beyond Camborne, that is named after a convicted felon. I think we have a few that are named after ones that got away with it, though.

It really was another phenomenally busy day; another record breaker, we think. Thinking is a luxury and we can just about fit breathing in. With the last subconscious movements of my fingers, I can tell you that for the first time in yonks we saw dolphins frolicking out between us and Brisons, quite a big pod. This will give me great pleasure in the morning when I am asked if I saw the dolphins last night to say 'actually, I did' and a very good night to all of you. Obviously, I will not be saying that in the morning, even though I might feel like it.

July 24<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

Much to her shagrin, the Missus did not get any of the rain she was promised last night. The big lump shaved the south coast and headed out into the Atlantic. When I had a quick look in the morning before taking the bleddy hound down to the beach, there was a solitary clump of heavy rain sitting over the Islands.

There were a few spots of rain while I was putting out the shop display in the morning. I could not see where they might be coming from as none of the clouds above me looked particularly rainy. There was still not a breath of wind about, but Radio Pasty had dire warnings of gales late in the day.

Sure enough, the breeze picked up a little during the day. It did not stop a respectable party of campers down on the beach and by the afternoon, after a quick spell of drizzle, the skies cleared and the sun popped out. There was still nothing much in the way of surf, but at least low water dominated the main part of the day. It was just a shame that the majority of people did not turn up until the main part of the day had passed.

I had excelled with my pasty ordering. I have continued to order half of the weekend's supply in with the Friday order and refrigerate them. The only fly in this gazpacho is that much of the pasty selling happens after the deadline for pasty ordering for the next day. This makes ordering a bit of a gamble and ended up with us having more pasties that you might shake a big turnip at.

It is during the first weeks of the holiday that most of our friends and longer acquaintances turn up and it is, of course, a pleasure to see them again. Some have missed out a year but since the passage of time means very little here, I could not begin to identify those that did. I do not know if it is the comfort of familiarity that brings people back or just that there is nowhere else to go. Much of what they buy could easily be bought from Tesmorburys, so I must conclude that they like shopping

here. It is what I tell myself, anyway. They will continue to be welcomed, such a welcome that grumpy shopkeepers can manage, with open heart.

If anything troublesome is going to happen, it will happen in the next few weeks. In truth the niggle we have with the kitchen tap started some weeks ago and has been on the 'to do' list but since it required emptying the cupboard under the sink, it was put in the too difficult pile. The Missus clearly was as fed up with the taps wobbling as I was and late in the afternoon she came down to admit defeat on tightening the retaining nut. I went and had a look at her request and sure enough, not only was it in a difficult to get to place where a spanner cannot be turned but the nut is on a long spindle rendering a standard socket set useless. I fear it will need a plumber with a special skill or very small spanner and hands.

There were new arrivals arriving up to quite late in the day. It was lovely to see them too, especially when they came in telling me that Tesmorburys do not have x, y and z and did we have any. Even more pleasurable than that was being able to reply that not only did we have x, y and z but we had it in abundance. We have other letters of the alphabet, too.

The Missus insisted on returning to the shop after we had our tea to do the bottling up. Since I do the early turn, we are well matched. We are probably better at this than the forecasters are at forecasting the weather at the moment. The gale of wind we were promised never arrived, just like the guts of rain we were promised last night. I will continue to rely on looking out of the window in the morning.

July 23<sup>rd</sup> – Friday

There are times when all I can do is sympathise. Today was one such occasion when a gentleman arrival with his wife and adult daughter came in for pasties.

*Gentleman.*: "What have you got in the way of pasties, goodly shopkeeper?"

*Grumpy Shopkeeper.*: "Hello, sir. We have an award winning traditional Cornish pasty from the makers, Prima Bakeries or, indeed, for the vegetarians or those seeking some alternative to a meat pasty, we have the cheese and vegetable."

*Gentleman.*: [Aside to wife and daughter] "What do you want?"

*Wife.*: "What do you mean?"

*Gentleman.*: "Do you want a Cornish pasty or a cheese pasty."

*Wife.*: "What's in 'em then?"

*Daughter.*: [Makes non-committal noise]

*Gentleman.*: "It's a traditional Cornish pasty. It's what you eat in Cornwall. There're everywhere. Do you want one?"

*Wife.*: "No."

*Daughter.*: "What's in the cheese one."

*Grumpy Shopkeeper.*: "It has cheese instead of the steak of the Cornish pasty. It is a vegetarian option too."

*Gentleman.*: "Well. Do you want one?"

*Daughter.*: “Don’t mind.”

*Gentleman.*: [Appearing, against all odds, incredibly calm.] “We’ll have one cheese and one steak pasty please.”

*Grumpy Shopkeeper.*: [Finding proceedings rather amusing and trying to contain himself] “Certainly, sir. [Bags the required pasties and takes payment.] “Good luck, sir.”

The man stepped outside the shop carrying his pasties and gave one to his daughter. His wife, then snatches the steak pasty from his hand and wanders off saying she had changed her mind. Gentleman comes back inside.

*Grumpy Shopkeeper.*: “When I wished you good luck, sir, I did not think that you would need it quite so soon. I have seen seagulls be slower than that.”

*Gentleman.*: [Smiling wryly] “You don’t need seagulls with my Missus about.”

*Grumpy Shopkeeper.*: “Steak pasty, Sir?”

*Gentleman.*: “Yes please.”

It was very much a different day today. We caught a little dash of sunshine while we were on the beach and that was it for the day. I now wish I had chosen the weather forecast with a bit of rain on it and sunny spells rather than the one with cloud and no rain. How wonderful it is, though, to have so many choices.

The one I chose also came with a gale of wind. It was the main feature of the day and negated any necessary competition between me and the bleddy hound over use of the fan. The breeze was easterly and nicely squirted through the first electric sliding door in The Cove to keep me cool. It either moderated in the afternoon or changed direction slightly because I was once again forced to employ the fan. Thankfully, by this time the bleddy hound had been whisked off to The Farm.

There was a pause in traffic at some point during the day as one lot of visitors left and the next lot arrived. During the afternoon there was a fairly constant, if stuttering, flow of customers from the new contingent testing the waters of the shop. Young children, just arrived, clearly have holiday money burning a hole in their pockets – a condition for which we are happy to provide a solution.

If I had thought that the wind had moderated I was quickly disabused of such an opinion by the loss of two of our more robust kites. They will stand up to around a force five wind. Had I known that the wind had increased I would have warned against its use. As it was, I ended up having to provide a replacement followed by a refund.

As if to prove the point, a fairly long squall blew in at around six o’clock. It stirred up the bay into a mass of white horses galloping away and rattled our nets and windbreak stands. There was enough rain in the mix to send me rushing for my rain jacket – just in case – but it was all over in half an hour. The rain went, the wind dropped and we returned to some semblance of order. As we sat at the table having

our tea, we looked out at a picture of bright serenity across the bay, with hardly a ripple on the water.

Down to the south a huge rain system was heading our way and the Missus was expected refreshed water resources up at The Farm. When I looked at the rain radar just before we went to bed it rather looked like the big bulk was going to track just south of us. Oops.

July 22<sup>nd</sup> – Thursday

There was a fair amount of high level cloud about in the morning, the first in a little while that took the glare out of the sun. I chose not to wear sunglasses but wished that I had because it was brighter than it looked. The sea made itself very alluring and was begging for some paddling. I should remember that tomorrow, but I fear that I missed the boat.

The day followed much the same sort of pattern as yesterday but might have been a little busier. The tides are getting bigger and the high water line encampment a little more squeezed against the rocks and the dunes. Due to this it really was not possible to say whether it was busier down there than the day before or not. Still no surf and even the paddle boarders have given up.

Tempering the extreme heat a little today was an easterly breeze but even that was warm – our very own sirocco. It would have been a cracking day for putting out the washing but probably not such a good day for actually doing it. It was the sort of day for doing nothing at all and that is precisely what most of our customers did.

At least I did not have to vie with the bleddy hound for use of the fan apart from a short time while the Missus dropped into town on an errand. She was whisked away to The Farm after that, the Missus eventually getting there after two days. Even then she could not escape the shop entirely. I sent her quite a list of stock for the shop to bring down. We had some good news from one of our suppliers that some body boards are on the way. I would guess there is enough for around two weeks of business, which is better than what we have at present.

All Mother's little helpers – a brother and sister-in-law in quick succession – have gone home so she dined with us at tea time. Thursday is not her normal day but I suggested I cook some frozen pasties, which is a winner because the Missus does not have to cook them, I do them in the shop, and she can stay at The Farm longer.

The disadvantage of her staying longer is that the rather large list I sent her did not arrive until late. Still, she stayed to help me unload and put it out and we are now as fully stocked as we are likely to be for the large influx this weekend. If we thought the last one was busy, we are going to have to hold on tight to our seats for this one. Wheee!

July 21<sup>st</sup> – Wednesday

I think that the heat might be getting to our visitors; we spend long periods today with hardly any customers at all. I cannot see that there were any more or any less down on the beach, so they must have gone and hidden somewhere else.

It was already warm down on the beach in the morning, the sun just adding to the warmth that had not dissipated overnight. Unlike yesterday, there was little in the way of a breeze either, so it was only going to get hotter during the day. Once again, the bay was flat as a dish and about the only ripples caused by passing paddle boards and kayaks.

The Missus had announced yesterday that today she would be attending The Farm and no arguments. That was until a call came in from my bone cruncher to tell me that I had been squeezed into an appointment in the afternoon. There was a pain in my neck – although the Missus probably would say that slightly differently - that was not getting any better that came to a bit of a crisis on Monday. It was the Missus that insisted on the bone cruncher, so I just did as I was told.

I do not often get out and about on the roads during the summer time and it is an experience that is best kept that way. It was slow progress into town and busy, too. I was exceedingly grateful that the truck has a very efficient air conditioning system but the cool evaporates very quickly once the engine is turned off. Luckily, I did not have to wait in the truck long for the appointment time to come up.

I arrived back with a spring in my tail to nigh on empty streets in The Cove. The beach was busy but it was busy yesterday and there were still loads of people promenading. We had a quiet time of it in the shop, too, but with heavy peaks now and then our turnover was not much down on the previous days. It is clear, however, that hot, sultry days are not pasty days and I have had to ease back on our deliveries – probably just before a big surge tomorrow.

Despite a big extractor fan at the back of the shop, it got rather warm standing there in the later afternoon. The bleddy hound had ensconced herself in her cubby hole and the Missus had set up the fan for her. Alright, it is a fan we got for her, after all, we would not have spent £200 on keeping me cool, now, would we? However, has she never heard of share and share alike. I was sweltering by the time I managed to stage a coup and grab it off her.

Our grandiose tea time meals have descended to mundanity over the week. The Missus opened a tin of red salmon and made sandwiches.

July 20<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday

More heat but even the flies are flaking out under the onslaught of the sun. It was rather lovely on the Harbour beach first thing, but I cannot say that I would have

wanted to be down there later on. I have never been one to sit on a beach anywhere and would rather be wandering about the hills or places of interest. In this heat, I might even have avoided that.

I had to wait for the Missus to come down to the shop near the middle of the day before I could wrest the fan from the bleddy hound. I did think to buy another so that we would not be fighting over it all the time but there are none to be had for some reason.

We were, unsurprisingly, as busy as we were the previous day. It started out well with our very pleasant and utterly efficient cash and carry driver arriving well before we opened. We both set to carting in the extremely large order that had taken the entire van, which usually contains at least two customer orders. We were knocked back a bit on water, which I had expected but our beer order had been untouched – other than the fact someone cannot count and we were down two cases of lager. I am sure we will cope – maybe,

Thanks to the delivery being so early, I was able to fill the beer fridge and put out some of the water bottles. Even though we had our water and beer many other items were missing including all the headache pills. Our customers can drink themselves into oblivion now, but woe betide them should they have a hangover the next day.

The big beach looked busy but it was high water for much of the peak time. Little encampments were strung out almost to North Rocks, thinning as they went. I have definitely seen a busier sea but there was absolutely no surf for the boys and girls to frolic in and unless you had a paddle board, which seems to be becoming a most popular sport. Even then you were consigned to gently drift here and there under paddle power.

For some, paddle power was just not enough. While I was up having a spot of croust – it is now impossible to have any sort of breakfast in the shop – the Missus called up. A lady had come in to report a couple of kayakers stuck in a rip. By the time the message got to me I could see the two paddle boards with multiple occupants were making slow headway against the tide coming towards the Lifeboat channel markers. Anxious to avoid another Inshore launch, and knowing they would be quicker anyway, I called up the Lifeguards who, of course, already had eyes on and were in the process of launching the jet ski. The casualties were escorted back into the Harbour, safe and sound and somewhat knackered, I imagine.

The tide here can run in or out at around four knots, depending on springs or neaps and in the Tribbens, a narrow channel, the draw will be more pronounced. Swimming against it is impossible, even as a strong swimmer, as our end to ender found out some years ago. Rowing against such a drift can be equally challenging and you are more likely to run out of puff before you run out of sea as our boy found out two days ago, and he was a local.

The Missus spent nearly the entire day sorting out the grocery deliveries. This rather meant that the bleddy hound was confined to the shop for the same period. Once upon a time she would spend all day on her throne by the door, watching the world go by or slumbering until the next customer decided she needed a smooth. Now, she is thirteen, and is intolerant of sitting around in the public eye for too long. A mixture of high temperatures and arthritic bones has her outside one minute, up on her throne the next and as a last resort, in a cubby hole under the counter. If we are busy, this can be quite difficult as she does not do 'waiting', either.

Despite it all and against the odds, we popped out the other end of the day roughly unscathed. A little after hours work is required but the Missus has conceded that some work at The Farm needs to give way to some in hours bottling up of the soft drinks fridge, at least.

I think I would have been much better off not knowing the forecast has our temperatures in the West increasing tomorrow.

July 19<sup>th</sup> – Monday

Gad the heat; the flies. Another rip griabler to end all rip griblers. That Harbour beach was sizzling even when we were down there in the morning and later it was positively glowing with latent heat like hot coals were places under the sand.

We had another rip roaring day in the shop, although it was a bit more orderly than the weekend with slightly fewer people around. Even then we had our moments of mayhem as everyone decided to all shop at once.

Happily, mask wars are now a thing of the past. We had decided that we would continue to wear ours for the modicum of protection that it allowed us along with our counter screen and, of course, the protection of our customers. Since we no longer have a mandate to force others to wear a mask we changed our signage to state that we would be appreciative of mask wearing in the shop. We had no idea what to expect but we were pleasantly surprised when the majority of our customers both more mature and young, all wore masks.

More than anything, it was a blessed relief. No so much that people are not required to wear a mask but that we are not required to police it any longer. It was really the only point of contention with customers and the source of anxiety for us. We would never know if the next person at the door was going to be abusive or apologetic for not wearing one. It is thankfully over, and a great weight feels like it has been lifted from our shoulders.

What is not over is the propensity for Lifeboat shouts to come at inopportune moments such as just when the Missus was about to head off to The Farm to do a bit of work. It was fortunate that she had not already left as I was able to slip across

the road for a quick launch from inside the boathouse. The Inshore boat went out too and attended a report of a lady fallen off the cliff at Logan Rock or thereabouts.

The crew were attended by a doctor and a paramedic who offered their services at the scene, and it was lucky that the lady was not badly injured. She was transported on the Inshore boat to Porthcurno beach where an ambulance took her to be checked over.

I had kept a metaphoric eye on the action by radio and on the AIS tracker. The crew agreed later that having both boats in attendance in that area was essential as being so tucked into the cliff there, communications with Falmouth Coastguard were poor close in. I could not help feeling that this was somewhat ironic given Porthcurno's history.

When it was clear that both boats were just wrapping up, I called in our team to set up on the long slipway for the boat's return. It would have been quite uncomfortably warm at the bottom of the long slip in full kit with the sun beating down but there was a breeze blowing through that made it just tolerable. The sea was like glass, and we conducted what was clearly a textbook recover up the long slip and tucked the boat away for the next one. We are, after all, a very consistent, very excellent Shore Crew.

I had closed the shop for duration as I sent the Missus off up The Farm. It was reasonably quiet during that period of the afternoon between three and four o'clock so there were not too many people inconvenienced. I was, however, mobbed shortly after reopening again and it stayed busy for the next hour or so.

Bearing in mind that this is a week before we normally get really busy, when the local schools go on holiday, we are already at full stretch. Diary entries may be a little jittery for the next few weeks. My apologies now.

July 18<sup>th</sup> – Sunday

It was another gorgeous day in the offing when I ran the bleddy hound down to the beach in the morning. It was the last time that I imagined that I would be out in it gathering up my vitamin sun. The bottling up the Missus did the previous evening was a great help and allowed me to clean our welcome mat, which had become rather unwelcoming. There was still a puddle underneath it from the last downpour, which was a very long time ago it seems. I also managed to refresh the fridge magnets and a few more missing items while I waited for the milk and newspapers to arrive.

The pace of the day was far more reasonable than it was yesterday, which might be best described as manic. It seemed that everyone had just arrived, seen the weather and the beach, assumed that they had just a few hours to live the life and gone nuts. Today was kinder on the Grumpy Shopkeeper, although it was still very busy and we

ended the day on the same amount of business. Once again, the beer fridge was empty by the middle of the afternoon but the continuous onslaught had moderated. I did not top it up again as we had very little to top it up with. The subsequent shoppers fell on the remaining slim pickings and had to be satisfied with that.

I would have to look up exactly when it was, but the Missus came down from upstairs having been preparing to head off to The Farm with news that the boat was about to be launched. Sure enough, a minute or so later my pager went off while I was in the process of getting out of the shop. I only learnt later that a kayaker was caught in the tide round towards Gamper Bay and needed a hand to get back, although it is likely he would disagree with that.

I took the Inshore boat in the direction of the beach with a few out walkers who we use to stop the driver running over anyone they are not supposed to. These were entirely necessary today as the route was packed with visitors with the final hurdle of a windbreak across the bottom of the slipway. Most of those in the way scattered helpfully, especially as I had my finger pressing the horn button almost continuously. As the boat launched, however, there was one swimmer right in the path of the boat who decided to nonchalantly continue with a bit of casual backstroke despite clearly having seen the signals the boat crew were making for him to get out of the way.

The boat was back in the Harbour in very short order; the person in the kayak had told them that he did not need any help. We waited with the boat on the trailer until the kayak came around the corner of the wall, just to be sure.

The Harbour beach was packed with revellers with the tide quite a way in. Amongst all that a rib was stuck on the beach, the owner asking for assistance which was slow in coming and a local punt arrived back to add to the melee. Just for good measure the Harbour tractor was brought into play to recover the punt which uprooted several families who had camped in various places on the sand. It is a working Harbour, after all.

The big beach was just as busy with the tides being all wrong this week landin high water in the middle of the day. The sea was just as packed as the sand and it could not be argued that this was definitely very much a beach day.

We both worked late again, this time to complete our mammoth food and drink orders which will arrive on Tuesday. There was very little in the way of bottling up to do as it is not really possible without bottles. It is likely that tomorrow will be a little more manageable without the addition of weekenders but the schools here are not even out yet and it is set to become even busier from next weekend. Gosh, we can hardly wait.

July 17<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

It was the sort of day that the phrase rip gribbler was coined for. It was sunny at the start of the day, sunny through the middle and sunny into the evening, when it stopped being sunny and became night.

I would have been very much mistaken if I thought that I was going to have a free ride for the second day in a row, so it is just as well that I did not think that. It would have been difficult to think that anyway when I was run ragged from the very moment I opened the shop. By half past ten o'clock breakfast faded into being a vague desire at some point and was only satisfied when the Missus came down at around half past eleven.

There was very little in the way of respite during the day, if anything it just got busier. It was not until the end of the afternoon that the pace began to slacken. I did get a brief opportunity to refill the beer fridge having had it emptied at some point in the early afternoon. We are going to have to put in a monster order for beer on the next opportunity and find somewhere to keep it. Our previous maximums, based on the available space in the beer cupboard in the store room, which even in the busiest of summers has always been sufficient, has been proven woefully inadequate. Having refilled the fridge we promptly emptied it again in short order.

The Missus stayed in the shop today and cleared much of the store room of all the boxes that had accumulated from yesterday's orders and the day before. There are still some big items left but she will do those tomorrow, so she says. It was entirely necessary because I would not have stood a chance of doing it myself. I did join in by pricing some hats and purses that I could do at the till and by the middle of the afternoon, the lion's share was done.

It was our first later closing today, which also coincided quite badly with our glorious Coxswain's wedding day. If you were going to have a wedding, today was arguably a pretty good day to have one. We were invited to the evening bash in a marquee erected by some of the crew. It was initially going to be at Land's End where the wedding had been held, but things change and the evening arrangements were moved to the field at the back of the top car park. My, what a splendid arrangement it was, too, with a familiar live band, Three Minute Warning, who did an excellent job and it was a delight to be able to witness a live band once more.

The backdrop to the event was the slowly setting sun that dropped into the perfect sea out of the perfectly cloudless sky at around half past nine o'clock. Given the day and that half past nine o'clock is my bedtime, we did not last long after that but had to run out to St Buryan to pick up the bleddy hound who had been lodged with Mother.

I had faced the dilemma of whether we did the restocking in the shop into the night or I got up at the unfeasibly early time of half past four o'clock to do it then. Fortunately, the Missus is a bit of a night owl and volunteered, nay demanded indeed, that she do the soft drinks and the beer and I would finish off in the morning.

It was an arrangement that sounded very reasonable, I thought as I sunk into oblivion.

July 16<sup>th</sup> – Friday

That was a good sign, having to wear my sunglasses to the beach for the first time in a while. Well, I thought it was a good sign until it clouded over just before I opened the shop.

The cloud did not hang around for long and we ended up with a proper rip grihbler and no mistake. All that was missing was a few waves for the surfers but in my humble experience, rip grihbblers and big waves seldom walk hand in hand. So, we entered the strange doings of a rip roaring beach day where we were overrun during the morning and suspended state of animation during the afternoon.

If I ignored the fact that we were not earning any money, which I am able to do for very short periods of time – normally when alcohol is involved – it was actually quite a pleasant respite from the onslaught. However, I did not fritter away this precious resource and set to in the store room with its boxes full of orders that I had not been able to get to. It took a little while but I managed to get through all of it before the next delivery arrived.

There is only so long you are allowed to be smug before the small gods of shopkeepers decide that you have had enough smugness for one day. It was around four o'clock in the afternoon when a big lorry arrived outside the shop. Our recent top up beachware order was quite big, I have to admit, and the company thought so too, so they sent it on a pallet. Most of the boxes are destined for our store but some of the big ones were needed in the shop and either way they need to be decanted from the pallet.

Four o'clock is not the best time to be receiving pallets of goods and signalled a late finish for both of us. Having said that, we are quite efficient when we have a mind to it and the boxes were shovelled into the truck in short order – that is after having unloaded the truck of another large consignment that the Missus had brought back from The Farm store. It was not the easiest task in the world topping up the soft drinks at the end of the day as they were buried behind all the boxes that we stuffed into the store room. I can see that there will be quite a bit of priority shifting tomorrow while trying to clear it.

It was a beautiful evening for sitting around outside with a long drink, watching the sun slowly sink and the gulls effortlessly glide about. I do not think you will have much trouble with the sun and the gulls but finding an ale house that is open, has staff and is willing to serve you might be a question of luck these days and will explain why I spent half an hour replacing all the missing beer in our fridge.

July 15<sup>th</sup> – Thursday

Once again we were blessed with a cloud covering early on. It improved in measures during the day before relapsing to cloudy again. All along there was a misty haze hanging in the air that kept us guessing whether it would close in or not.

This did not seem to bother anyone today. I am guessing that the visitors here for just a week were going to make the best of it come what may. In truth, the weather was rather pleasant, it was getting warm and it was definitely dry for those not dowsing themselves in sea water. Early on, when the sun was in the ascendant, we had several requests for parasols, which is when we found that we ran out of them the last time the sun shone.

We are long past the stage of being able to keep all the plates spinning and I do not believe that we even know how many plates we had in the first place. I just wish we had bought plastic ones.

The beach appeared to be busy throughout the day, but I did not get to look very often as the shop seemed to be busier. We are getting into our stride now, although it has a pronounced limp, and things will only get busier from now on. I was due to send the Missus a list of the things we needed from the store, but I did not have time to write it until late into the afternoon. Even the orders that I did manage to get off are festering in the store room for lack of time to open the boxes and process the contents.

I remedied this at the end of the day after the shop was closed. By that time the orders sitting in the store room had increased in number and the beers and soft drinks needed topping up as well. I was dug into this operation when there was a knock at the first electric sliding door in The Cove. I had placed a belt and braces fish order at the start of the day, ordering in from two suppliers as the customer was keen to collect the order today. Thankfully, one of the orders turned up early to satisfy the customer. It is a good job that we were not reliant on the second as it would have been too late. This meant vacuum packing a fish order on top of all the other tasks there were to complete.

I should say that I do not in the least blame any of our daily delivery companies for lateness or absence. As things progress into this inferno of busyness and with a shortage of staff everywhere, things will only become trickier. Customer beware; we may not be able to deliver everything on time or at all in the coming weeks.

There was no way I could have finished all the work and, as it was, I missed the Lifeboat training launch at seven o'clock. I settled for a quick tea then headed across to the station for the recovery, scheduled for half past eight o'clock. There were more than enough of the team there to carry the work and for the two new members to do a bit of learning on the job. Since there are only four lifejackets, I settled back in the boat hall and watched proceedings until the proceedings came inside. I can quite categorically state that the boat was brought up the short slipway in a textbook

recovery and expertly made ready for another launch, hopefully another day. We are, after all, a very over-manned, very excellent Shore Crew.

I returned home with just enough time to go to bed. Where did that evening go?

July 14<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday

Crumbs! We are not doing too well down here for the sunshine stakes. It was overcast again in the morning when we headed for the beach but it was perfectly temperate with a bit of coolness coming off the sea made it really quite comfortable.

I made a bit of an error in my ordering for our Tuesday deliveries that caused me some extra work before we opened. Thankfully, I have an extra half an hour on gymnasium days and I used it all up bagging marshmallows.

We have been persistently ordering those big pink and white marshmallows from our main cash & carry supplier and it has been equally persistent in not sending us any. These are the marshmallows that our visitors place on the end of a stick and enjoy melted over a barbeque. We have been unable to get them elsewhere, or so I thought.

The other type of marshmallow we sell in abundance is the small sort that people put into mugs of cocoa or drinking chocolate to make a drink that is already unfathomly invested with sugar, even more sugary. Although I had given up on getting the larger marshmallows, the smaller ones are readily available in big packs from the cash & carry; our small packs, which are only available as part of a much bigger, mixed order, are running out.

I had the extremely bright idea – at the time of thinking of it – of getting a large pack and rebagging it into smaller packs. This is what took all the time in the morning and completed, left us with twenty little packs, which should go down well. It would have been much the labour of love had I not, shortly after confirming our orders, discovered that our alternative supplier not only sells small packs of small marshmallows but also does the big ones, too. I think the relevant proverb is 'look before you leap'.

Despite our imperfect blue skies, we were deluged with visitors today. The crowds started gathering from quite early on and persisted until the early afternoon when, satisfied that the breaking up of the cloud above us signified summer was on the way, everyone beggared off down the beach and left us alone. We had a resurgence in the later afternoon and at five o'clock, were deluged again.

I not only fear that our breweries will be unable to cope with the demand for beer but I also worry the beer we will not have enough space for the beer we can get, which is considerably more than we have been used to stocking. Especially, the beer fridge empties at an alarming rate and I do not have an ounce of hope that I will be able to

refill it during the day. Even if I do, I then have to witness customers 'mining' the shelves to get to the ones at the back, even though they would be the same temperature as the ones at the front. I will then get, with the fridge contents in disarray, the plaintive cry that none of our beers are cold enough and do we have any at the back that are cold? Well, no. What would be the point in keeping hidden beer that I can more readily sell and presenting ones that are not?

I spent some time after we closed in bottling up both the beer and the soft drinks and any remaining will wait until the morning. It was at this point that I slid open the first electric sliding door in The Cove to be confronted, across the street, by my brother-in-law and wife who I thought we safely ensconced at Mother's. The Missus had dropped over there earlier in the day, so I did not expect that they would be here to reciprocate.

We spent a pleasant hour in the hazy evening sunshine at our benches across the street, as one does have to be careful who one invites into one's home these days, you understand. We sat and talked and watched the tide coming in. They pointed out, on the rocks below, that some idle loafer, ahem, talented artist, rather, had set two big rocks atop bigger rocks, carefully balanced on their sharpest point. It was some clever feat of engineering and one that almost stood the onslaught of the encroaching waves. Now, that is a way to end a busy day.

July 13<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday

We guessed it. The weather was just teasing yesterday with its glittering blue skies and sunshine. Today we were fogged in and I could not even see North Rocks when I threw back our virtual curtains. Of course, we all know that I cannot throw open our virtual curtains because they have a very posh drawstring on the left but call it poetic licence. The fog lifted and thinned but remained with us for the rest of the main part of the day. I jokingly told some early customers that it would be a lovely day – after about six o'clock. I was only a couple of hours out.

It was a bit of a disappointment to our many visitors who turned up based on yesterday's promise and a fair forecast that turned out to be not so accurate. On the plus side, of course, it was warm and dry, although not so warm that it stopped us selling a few hooded sweatshirts. There were plenty of people around all day, since they had got here and they were not going home again in a hurry. They did a bit of shopping too, which was very good of them. We had a cracking day on the pasties, which for once I was ready for.

I spent quite a bit of the morning filling up the store room. We had the two main grocery orders arrive and then some beer and later some smart soap in a big box. It was not until the early afternoon that I was able to deal with some of it but the rest will have to wait for the Missus to get piled into it.

The sun burst through at just gone three o'clock and for an hour we had The Cove in full Technicolor instead of black and white. We had a sudden spate of blonde and ginger people running in to buy sun lotion. I cannot blame them and, in truth, many more people should have been doing the same. Even with a bit of cloud cover, the sun down here is stronger than in most parts of the country.

The mist rolling back in put paid to any sort of last minute rush today. There was no mass exodus from the beach, although it was busy down there all day long. We only find that people cling on to the beach until the last possible moment when the sun is in full attendance and the look at of it goes hand in hand with how it feels. We are a strange bunch of creatures, all told.

The Missus decided that there was probably too much in the store room to do all of it during our opening hours to tomorrow and went down after tea. I did offer but we know from experience that I would only get in the way as we both have particular ways of getting through such things that are not necessarily compatible. She knocked it all out in about an hour and a half, which you can do when there are no interruptions and no one standing in the aisles you are trying to populate with stock.

It is time to run off to bed because it is my turn in the morning.

July 12<sup>th</sup> – Monday

Even the bleddy hound conceded that there was so little beach down in the Harbour that it was not a good idea. The sea had become a little boisterous too, which knocked the nail in it.

It very pleasant going around the block for a change and to note all the differences since the last time we did it. The first was the solution put in place to ensure that the Harbour car park bin was not filled to overflowing again – it had been taken away. I am sure that this will be most effective. The most striking and the most welcome change, however, is that the Harbour car park toilets are now open again, which will be a relief to many. I stole a quick peek inside and they were sparkling clean. Let us hope that having had them taken away that their use is respected now.

I told the Missus later about the toilets and she told me that they had been open for a few weeks. Does she not know some people have a Diary to write and must have a constantly vigilant finger on the beating pulse of The Cove. I have been sending people down to the far end when they have enquired, too.

There was sunshine first thing poking through our windows of the flat, which looked very encouraging. When I stepped outside though, there were dark clouds to both the east and west, piling up and glowering. I had other things to concentrate on while setting up the shop and had forgotten about them by the time I came to take the bleddy hound out. Clearly, ignoring dark clouds is the thing to do and the day blossomed into quite the rip gribbler. By the early afternoon a veritable army of water

users had entered the shallows in spearhead formation while others went in further out where there were some decent waves piling in. The beach, too, was populated in a way that indicated the busyness yet to come I imagine.

It had been reasonably busy during the morning and just ambling along when I left for the gymnasium. Things had turned quiet by the time I returned but when I came down from having a spot of croust, pandemonium had been released in the shop. As I took over from the Missus there was a queue forming down the aisle, although respectfully distanced. We remained busy for a little while and then the day entered its fine weather routine and we hit the doldrums in the afternoon.

We had a couple of big boxes delivered in the early afternoon. I had ordered in an additional number of hats since all the ones we ordered at the start of the season went at the half term break. Since the shop was quiet, I embarked on disassembling the package and getting the hats priced and out into the shop. This was particularly necessary as we have our grocery orders tomorrow and the store room needs to be clear. I had only just managed to price and put out one type of hat when the first of a legion of customers entered the shop. I was pretty much pinned down behind the counter from then on, although I did manage to at least price most of the remaining stock. Putting them out was just impossible.

The flow of customers continued for the rest of the day and morphed into the five minutes to closing rush. For the first time in a while I was kept back after school while the last of the customers concluded their business. After closing the door I managed to finish off the hats and the bottling up, eventually finishing an hour later. This was good training as we will be closing at seven o'clock from this coming weekend. Gosh, I had hardly wait.

July 11<sup>th</sup> – Sunday

At least the rain help off until I had the shop open. There was some wet hanging in the air when I took the bleddy hound down to the sliver of beach, a portent of what was to come. The bleddy hound has taken to heading down to the Harbour regardless of the tide and the smallness of the beach just to avoid going around the block, I surmise. She will be dragged around the block if it gets a bit lively down there, though.

There was no chance of that today. The sea was a flat as a dish and, before the rain and mizzle came in, was grey as slate under the leaden sky, so perhaps that should be lead grey under a leaden sky. For some reason this tends to make the sea translucent, and I could see the foot of the slip quite clearly, even though it was near high water.

The rain set in properly once we were open and, of course, cobbled up trade completely. There were some brave souls wandering about in waterproofs and a few looking to buy some. We did not do too badly on the pasty front despite that, which

was a bit of a surprise but at least I was prepared for all eventualities. While poor weather badly affects business, at this time of year I do not bother much with mitigating what we order in as long as the poor weather does not look like it might be sustained. Either that or I am getting a bit more laissez faire about such things.

As it continued to rain in varying degrees of wet for the rest of the day I set to with our weekly orders. I managed to get most of this done, including refilling the shelves almost completely before the middle of the day. This is where the ordering gets a little tricky because at some point in the next two weeks the pace will go from steady jog to all out sprint. Our order arrives on Tuesday and will need to last through the following weekend, which in my estimation is still pre main school holidays and will only just be taking off. The following week's order will be huge to one degree or another and we will need to guess what degree or the other to stock accordingly. Once we get there, we will know how busy it is and ordering becomes simpler.

Still, I had plenty of time for mind games and pondering as it really was not that busy today at all. The Missus went off and did a mammoth shop that will hopefully see us through our busy weeks. Anything else we need we will get by other means.

By the time the shop shut the poor weather had started to clear away to brighter skies. In the end, the sunset was magnificent and you would have hardly have thought we had a poor day at all. In fact, it was not that poor at all, shored up by a last minute dash for beer and wine to be consumed, no doubt, during the big match in the evening. I suspect the buyers fell into two groups. One to drink during the match to enhance the experience and celebrate or commiserate after, the other to enter a blissful state of oblivion and wake after their partners had finished screaming and shouting at the inanimate panel on the wall and everything was back to normal.

I do not drink on the Sabbath out of respect for my liver and anyway, had to clear the orders I had written down for two suppliers. I also had to wonder what I was going to do when the newspapers were an hour and a half late in the morning.

July 10<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

Today seemed to be a day destined to travel in slow motion and our visitors joined in with the ruse – eventually.

It had rained for most of the night and the morning was still grey and overcast. The dark clouds hung about in a threatening manner and should have been arrested for loitering. When they all went, which was not until the middle of the day, they gave way to a blue sky day with lots of potential and not many people. I am guessing it takes some time to arrive in recent weeks with more traffic on the road than you can shake a red and white bollard at.

That is not to say that there was not a line of little blue camps running along the high tide line. There was, but it was not as big as some of the sunny days we have seen

so far this year. There is a bit of an expanse of beach in the middle of the day as we head back towards spring tides, so that helped to make it look a bit sparse, that and it was a bit sparse.

It was not all that obvious, but it looked like there were some waves out towards North Rocks. They had attracted a dozen surfers or so and over on Gwenver it looked even better. There were even some surf school sized waves at the near end of the beach, so I do believe there was something for everyone, if everyone had been able to turn up.

From a pretty dismal start we broke into a bit of a canter into the afternoon. We shifted some shorts and swimsuits as people were rather caught unawares by the sudden appearance of the sun. We also sold a few pasties and sun lotion, which I had fortuitously spent some of the morning topping up in a blinding work of inspiration when I had nothing better to do.

Talking of having nothing better to do, I almost forgot to tell you that we caught up with the bike-o-boat story a few days ago. It was written in *The Cornishman*, so it must be true, that the the bike-o-boats (*The Cornishman* calls them water-bikes – how ridiculously unimaginative) that left the Harbour beach last week were, indeed, on their way to the Islands as the last leg of a long journey. The team had started in the north of Orkney and had first crossed the Pentland Firth on the bike-o-boats – on a very good day, clearly. They had then cycled the rest of the way to The Cove on traditional bikes having found that the bike-o-boats did not move very fast on land. They had done all of that to bring to the public's attention something that I cannot immediately recall, National Parks, I think. There, now we know. Bravo, what!

The Missus ran off to The Farm again very early doors. She had sent a message to her best tractor pal who knows a thing or two about them. We knew that the fitting of the topper needed some work, and he was just the man to advise about such things. He called this morning to say that he would be there in half an hour, so the Missus ran off quickly to meet him. It was a very worthwhile session because she now has a list of parts that will stop her topper bouncing off the rails every time the tractor hits a bump. He also left her with some other pointers about how to use the tractor more effectively, so she was very much in clover – until she cuts all the clover, now she knows how to do it.

In the later afternoon we headed into proper rip gribbler territory. If things had been slow earlier, they changed down a gear as folk enjoyed the sun in all its soporific glory. Even the five minutes to closing rush was more of an amble. I have my money on a faster pace tomorrow.

July 9<sup>th</sup> – Friday

It looked grey outside and about to rain. In fairness it looked that way all day except when it was actually raining, which was not as much as we were advised that it was

going to be or at least not when it was supposed to be. A line of light rain passed through in the middle of the day but the persistent, heavy stuff waited until gone four o'clock before it arrived, which was most decent of it.

In recent weeks I have taken to splitting our weekend order for pasties across two days. Half of it comes in on Friday and the remainder, adjusted for what we have used during Friday's business, I call in on Saturday. This not only saves us some time on the Saturday morning, shipping in a whole heap of pasties but also moderates the loading for the bakery and the driver – we are good like that, you know.

It has worked very well for the last few coasting weeks but I sense we may be on the brink of something bigger this week. The larger order of pasties I called in, partly for today and partly for tomorrow were nearly all gone by the time I came to place the order for the next day. This was not part of the plan. My cunning strategy was dealt a further blow a little later, after the bread deadline, when all the bread rolls were sold. The bread, too, went a little sooner than I expected. We will face the weekend with what we have ordered, obviously, and raise our game next week.

I am not sure quite how we managed to sell so much, although we have had better days. The street was empty for most of the day after the first rain swept through. People seemed to appear from nowhere to do a bit of shopping and disappear again. There was also a fair amount of going home present buying and arrival reconnoitring. We had a fairly big and precise order for fish for a special weekend birthday party, which I was very pleased came together well. We have other orders pending, which is a sure sign of summer arriving. If the weather holds, I suspect we are in for a busy weekend of it.

Among today's leavers are some that we have known a good while and predate us in the shop, too. It is good to see them arrive year after year like the marking of an anniversary or the arrival of an expected event. All is well with the world. One leaving couple today came in bearing flowers as a gift, to thank us for being there, they said. For me, this is a novelty as most people are grateful that I am not. The Missus loves her flowers and I am just grateful we have customers like these.

The Missus ran off to The Farm after I had returned from the gymnasium, missing the arrival of the flowers. I had not asked the plan but she was heading to St Buryan first to pick up Mother and to pay the farmer who keeps the lane clear to drive down. The Missus had held off during June because of all the beautiful wildflowers in abundance the full length of it. She capitulated when the lane became almost impassable for foliage. She can bounce up and down there all day long with her shiny new brakes now.

The late afternoon rain was not as heavy as we were led to believe but it kept most people at bay, nevertheless. It turned on the taps properly just as I was getting ready to close to ensure I got a good soaking as I went upstairs. There were a few last

minute grocery shopping expeditions and the day as a whole was surprisingly worthwhile in grumpy shopkeeping terms.

I celebrated with a small beer – or two.

July 8<sup>th</sup> – Thursday

We actually made it to the beach this morning without getting wet. I do not believe it will last. There was a little breeze about but it was perfectly temperate with no need for much more than a t-shirt. It looked like a good day in store.

We started off quiet enough. There was plenty of time on my hands before opening, especially as the newspapers had not arrived. It gave me the opportunity to install our new fridge in the store room. The fridge that we currently have is used for all sorts, some of our own use, keeping fish while I vacuum pack it and for overnighting pasties that would otherwise suffer in the heat of the shop. This is especially the case at weekends when we often have 150 pasties or more to see us through the two days.

The new fridge was going to be bought last year and was destined to go under the pasty oven but this necessitated taking the legs and most of the body off the table on which it sits. A couple of times in the last few weeks we have been pressed for fridge space and again with the day before yesterday's abundance of salad leaves. By chance I found a fridge sized between normal under the counter and mini fridge, which looked ideal to sit on the desk in the store room. It was and it did.

By the middle of the day the sun started to break through. Our numerous visitors decided that was all that was required to make it a bit of a beach day. When I looked down at the big beach in the early afternoon, the sand was barely visible amongst the mainly blue camps and black-suited sea revellers. This had much to do with high water than the amount of visitors but it sounded good. The surfers are still out of luck for decent long-travelled waves and were confined to the shore break. Some were able to capitalise on it, but it was small beer really.

It is one of the products that have sold most readily since we had them in last year, the small beers, that is. I believe the first we had was from Sharps Brewery a good couple of years ago when they sold Offshore in the little cans. It did very well then and we only stopped recently because they stopped making it to concentrate on filling big barrels with the stuff instead. We switched to another local lager in a small can until they too ran into trouble with trying to find a canning slot, which sounded like a bit of an excuse for not being able to make enough beer. We think this one is probably coming back soon but even then it may not last. The demand for beer is outstripping supply.

This chopping and changing will continue throughout the summer, I feel, as all sorts of products become unavailable for one reason or another. We are going to have to

get used to it and be pretty fleet of foot finding alternatives and, where necessary, alternative suppliers. It is all going to take a little effort when we have little time to devote to it.

Making it all worthwhile are the small highlights that come our way every now and then. Sometimes it is the very simple things and today it was just that. A family had come in, as families do, and did a little browsing for this and that. They had a small boy with them who was probably three or so years old but anyway was very small. When they came back to the till, I was presented with one of our torches that they wanted to buy and it was clear that the small boy had chosen it as small boys will. I told no one in particular that we needed to remove the cap inside it that stopped it from being turned on accidentally while it was in the shop.

I was not aware but what I was doing was being very closely scrutinised and I unscrewed the back end of the torch. I flipped out the plastic cap and turned the torch on to test it. In doing so I looked up and caught the expression on the child's face. It was a look of wonderment and excitement, of pure pleasure and joy. It was a look that filled the shop with light, much brighter than the torch, and filled the heart with gladness. It was a look I will remember if I ever forget the light.

July 7<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday

If you ever feel at a loose end and have too much time on your hands that you know what to do with, have a stock room full of stock to put out, order in a sea full of fish, book your car in for service and organise a Lifeboat launch all for the same day. My what a helter skelter of a day you will have.

The day certainly did not start out that way. For the third day the bleddy hound and I got wet running down to the Harbour beach. The rain was easing off a bit when we went but it had clearly been hacking down earlier, the rivulets in the sand said so. At least there was now howling wind blowing us about and the bleddy hound did not seem that concerned and we wondered for a bit, picking up some discarded cans and bottles on the way.

I managed to find the public bin at the top of the slip that seems to elude so many visitors. A lady burst into the shop on Sunday demanding I take her plastic bottle to put in our bin because "all the bins around here are locked". Our two bins, the commercial one and our domestic one, are locked else they would be full by the end of a single day. The public bin is twenty metres away, but too far if you need a bin right now, clearly. I must write to the much maligned council and ask that we have a bin immediately in front of all visitors so that they do not have to walk anywhere to dispose of rubbish.

Amongst the signs of pent up anxiety are chinks of light. We have a young couple who are spending their summer working at one of the surf schools and shop regularly with us. On the day after the announcement of a ceasefire in the mask wars

hostility they came into the shop and asked if we would like them to continue to wear a mask after the ceasefire date. I told them that I understood it to be entirely voluntary, so it was up to them but that we would continue to wear ours because we see so many people. They said that they would continue to wear theirs too, which left me feeling that there was hope yet for the world with people like them in it.

The Missus had opened the shop while I took the truck and its noisy brakes to the menders. She was fully into clearing the store room when I came back and continued for most of the day. Then the fish arrived. After the week before last when we ran out almost immediately and a week of spring tide when I could not get any, I ordered in a huge amount of hake, haddock and pollack. This was added to by a further customer order for cod, so I had some of that from another supplier. This arrived late in the morning and I set to with that as we both served an increasing volume of customers between jobs and fish.

The day was similar to yesterday when we had not let up in the flow of customers coming and going. Before I knew it and with the vacuum packing the fish barely started, it was time to head across the road for the Lifeboat launch.

There have been two engineers here from head office. They are conducting a survey of our boat ahead of a planned refit sometime probably in the next twelve months, compiling a list of the jobs that will have to be done then. To continue their work they needed to put the boat through its paces at sea. Whenever our boat launches it needs to be Search and Rescue (SAR) ready, so required a full crew for the exercise. Unfortunately, mid week and middle of the day is not the best time for very excellent Shore Crew and we were a bit short on numbers. Some of us were just short.

The boat launched away at around one o'clock and spent around two and a half hours out staring and stopping and turning in circles. It came back into the bay just before high water so we made ready the short slipway. Happily, we found another spare crew member to help and we executed what was clearly a textbook recovery at around half past three o'clock up the short slipway. We are, after all, a very dependable, very excellent Shore Crew.

I returned to the shop just in time to collect the truck from the garage. It has sparkling new brakes. Unfortunately, the old ones were down to the metal and had spread flakes of metal down the side of the truck. These need to be polished off before they start a rust chain but quite when I am likely to be able to do that, I have no idea.

It was impossible to finish the fish with the shop open so I waited until closing and spent another hour and a half vacuum packing and labelling. Normally, our machine gets a rest between operations but with me able to focus on continuous packing the vacuuming was running at full tilt. Fortunately, the sealing element waited until the last packet, which was the rubbish from the process being sealed into a bag to prevent it from smelling the place out, before overheating and flaking out.

I left the machine out overnight, just in case, and will try it again in the morning to make sure that it was just overheated and not burnt out completely. It is typical, however, for things to fail just when we are approaching or are in full flight. I shall sleep with my fingers crossed tonight.

July 6<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday

The bleddy hound and I caught the only rain of the day when we went down to the beach this morning. It started after I had put out the shop display and done my first set of chores for the morning. It could not have been more accurately timed and was long enough lasting that I could not wait until it was over.

There was some breeze about but when we turned the corner of the Lifeboat station we were fair near bowled over by the strength of it. That breeze persisted for the main part of the day, although it seemed to ease from the middle of the afternoon on. It brought out the woollies, coats and hats again and if you looked at a photograph of it in a year or two, you would never put it in July.

It was a strange day for all that. Apart from the usual quiet morning we were constantly busy throughout the day. There is normally a little lull here and there but as one customer or group left, another came in. It was mostly a function of it not being much of a beach day, although there were quite a few down there camped out on the high water line. The sea state was a bit feisty and very surfy close in but the people there seemed to enjoy having water thrown into their faces.

The later afternoon saw an escalation of numbers coming to the shop. From around three o'clock it got a bit full on and stayed that way until nearly five o'clock. I have no idea what drove the masses to descend upon us, but I was hard pressed there for a while. When I looked at the till at the end of the day it was clear that they were not big spenders either. I know that I sold a lot of postcards and I imagine there will be a lot of happy grannies around the country in a day or two.

The Missus returned from The Farm with a truck full of stock, just to add to the madness and somehow we managed to shovel it into the store room through the remains of the crowds that were still circulating. Then some more Cornish earlies arrived just to put the icing on top. Fortunately, the Missus is confined to barracks all day tomorrow because the truck has to go into the garage for some work to be done and promised to work through it all. I will probably not be twiddling my thumbs, either.

July 5<sup>th</sup> – Monday

The weather forecasters got lucky today and had a forecast for rain that was actually correct. I suppose if you forecast rain ever day then you will get lucky at some point.

Still, we had a reasonable morning and a busy one, too. I do not know whether everyone came out ahead of the rain to get all their pasties in before they got wet but we sold the entire day's supply before one o'clock, when the rain started up. One customer was so excited that he ordered a pasty while it was still warming up in the oven, paid for it and never came back. There were an awful lot of customers who never came back in the afternoon but thankfully they had not all ordered pasties.

The enforced break gave me the opportunity to do absolutely nothing. Instead, I cleared the orders that had arrived during the morning and placed some long overdue orders. It is amazing what you can learn when you have the opportunity to walk around the shop. For a start, we have sold things and there are now gaps on the shelves where they used to be. Some of these we have spares of up in our store but others are properly run out. We are going to have to be creative this year to fill the profit gap that will yawn open because we cannot get staples like wetsuits, bodyboards and windbreaks, amongst other goodies too numerous to mention. With the best will in the world we will not survive on selling pasties and salad leaves alone no matter how many we sell.

It spurred me on to some industrious activity in the afternoon, clearing a shelf in the store room of toys overstock. It filled a few of the gaps and revealed some items that I had wondered what happened to. I felt quite the achiever at the end of it and ran upstairs to swap my little boy trousers and flipflops for some serious full metal waterproofs. I had been marvelling at the dripping customers who had entered the shop from the middle afternoon when the rain started to up its game. It was my turn now, just as the rain had discovered how easy it was to pelt down.

I pull the bins down for the crowd in the mews behind us once a week. It is not an onerous job and only takes a few minutes. I say it is not onerous because that is usually the case, however, every now and again there must be visitors who have brought lead bars and sacks of pig iron with them and decided that they now longer require them. The bins today were over full and exceedingly heavy. Nothing domestic weighs that much, surely. I will let the refuse collectors check for discarded bodies and the like as I am sure they have training or insurance, or both, for such events.

The Missus went downstairs again after dropping Mother back home. This evening she spent packing rocket and baby spinach leaves into bags. We are right on the edge now of over-supply, which would be fine in a few weeks but right now, despite the bags being very popular, we might struggle to sell. She is going to have to order the lettuce to stop growing for a day or two.

July 4<sup>th</sup> – Sunday

Well, what a surprise, I needed my rain jacket when I went downstairs to set up the shop this morning. It was still giving some rain when I took the bleddy hound down to

the Harbour but it was light enough to be reasonably pleasant in an obtuse sort of way.

It was a very slow start to the day, presumably long distance drivers recovering after their efforts. Apparently, there was cause for celebration too last night, something to do with a bunch of boys kicking a leather bladder around a field. It made our newspapers fearfully late and I was only saved from some awkward stuffing of magazines between customers by the fact that we did not have any customers.

So slow was it early on that I managed to do the cash and carry shopping lists way ahead of schedule. It was only after that we started to see some busyness in The Cove. This was aided, abetted and promoted by the warmth and brightness that the weather forecasters tried to hide from us. We had been promised a weekend of miserable weather and had a weekend quite the opposite. Although I did not fall hook line and sinker completely for the forecast, I did moderate our pasty order a little because of it. We did not fare too badly but ran out earlier than I would have liked.

In the afternoon, the breeze freshened from the west. There was still very little in the way of waves for the surfers and the breeze just flattened it further. Despite that, there was still quite a bit of water activity close in to the big beach, observed at close quarters due to the middle of the day high water by the people in the little string of encampments at the top of the beach.

It was towards the end of our day when we started seeing the stragglers from the second day of rat racing coming through. They were coming in after reaching the Harbour, I think, although I could not be sure that they did not come along the road instead. Two portly gentleman runners came into the shop about an hour before we closed for some soft drinks and chocolate bars. One of them asked if we did cigarettes and bought a packet. I advised that perhaps he should wait until he got to the top of the cliff before having one. He told me that he had gone without since seven o'clock this morning, which on the face of it was probably just as well given the twenty five miles of rough terrain he had to get across. Athletes these days, really. I am not sure that Roger Bannister's four minute mile could be attributed to him wanting to reach the corner shop before it closed for a packet of Capstan Full Strength.

The Missus pitched up late in the day brandishing a full box of freshly picked salad leaves. I have been harangued over the last few days because we had none on our shelves mainly due to the Missus being crook. I am pleased to report a new twenty bags are available from tomorrow morning. I shall expect a deluge.

July 3<sup>rd</sup> – Saturday

I shall be eternally grateful when the mask business is over. Not because I do not like wearing one or that I am against the principle of it but because I am fed up to the

rear teeth of the congenital, clueless eejits who enter the shop, and should be wearing one, in varying degrees of not wearing one.

[Well spoken gentleman enters shop with mask in hand.]

*Grumpy Shopkeeper.*: “Could you put your mask on, please sir.”

*Well Spoken Gent.*: “Yes, yes, I have it here.”

*Grumpy Shopkeeper.*: “My understanding of the science is that it is far more effective when actually worn, sir.”

*Well Spoken Gent.*: “Yes, yes, I am putting it on. I just wanted to ask ...”

*Grumpy Shopkeeper.*: “That’s the thing, sir. You’re not actually putting it on, just talking to me and holding it. Putting it on will required some upward movement of your hands.”

*Well Spoken Gent.*: “Oh yes, of course. But I just wanted to ask ...”

[Grumpy Shopkeeper gives hardest hard stare he can conjure.]

Well Spoken Gent eventually puts on mask and asks question that he could have asked while standing outside.

Here endeth today’s rant. Thank you for being there.

I reported last week on the race to Cape Cornwall and back and the supposition that I had misread the signs about it. I had not. This week the real Rat Race, Man versus Coast, was run. Last week’s was a pale imitation and this one was over twenty-five miles of mixed terrain including our rocky foreshore not bothering about the state of the tide, weather or anything much else. This year the organisers are doing it twice, one on Sunday as well. You can do them both if you fancy it but none of the runners I spoke with did. The runners start on Marazion beach, head up to the north coast just north of Morvah and then a simple jog down to Land’s End. It seems to be a very relaxed event. One runner with just one mile to go stopped by for pasties. Well, I expect he started off before dinner time.

I was about to say that they had a very decent day for it, but I imagine they prefer conditions to be as miserable as possible to add a little more gruel to the gruelling run. It was a day forecast to be full of showers from one end of the day to the other but was largely dry, warm and bright all day – at least here it was. It was a little damp first thing when I ran the bleddy hound down to the beach but that hardly counted as rain. Not bad for a day with a yellow warning in place. I noticed too that the forecast for tomorrow had been severely moderated and was now showing it to be mostly dry as well. I will take my rain jacket down to the shop tomorrow, then.

All was not well on the Internet this morning. I noticed when my program to retrieve electronic mails failed to connect to the server. Our website was missing as well and so too was the website that my supplier has to tell me what might have happened to my website. When eventually I was able to find both websites I discovered that the problem was with the wider Internet failing to direct traffic to its correct location and expected to continue for a while. It gave us some moderate trouble with card payments as well.

It was not properly a beach day and the numbers down there on the sand were much reduced. We were seeing parents with small children buying buckets and spades and you could not argue it was not a great day to be digging holes and making sandcastles. It was also a day for walking, apparently, given the numbers of walkers I saw coming through. It is the pastime of choice, it seems, and many people have come to the shop saying how crowded the path is at times and how difficult to pass safely, both in terms of dreaded lurgi and not falling off the cliff. It is one of those times when I am glad to be a Grumpy Shopkeeper behind a counter and a screen.

I have had The Cove in enquiring about the Missus and her spots. The bites are still driving her mad with itching but she is much improved after the effects of the pill have worn off. We shall have to search around for a more effective insect repellent unless she just wears her bee suit all the time she is up there.

It was not our busiest of days and, oddly, we transacted more cash than we have done for a long time. Perhaps the irrational fear of money is slowly fading in these fast changing times. There was a little five minutes to closing rush and signs of the new contingent arriving with their different needs and wants for the coming week. It keeps us on our toes, at least.

July 2<sup>nd</sup> – Friday

I am not saying it is wrong to try and make plans, it is just that you need to be prepared to see them in tatters on the ground almost before they come into being around here.

The day was bright as a button when I crawled from my sack this morning. I even wore my sunglasses to the beach to save me squinting as I usually do. Today we were on our ownsomes with no weird machines to try and avoid. It did strike me that the machines were probably set for a run out to the Isles of Scilly and were breaking some sort of record or other. Bully for them if they were. That would have been some cycling effort.

I put in some effort of my own down in the shop before opening. On gymnasium days I have an extra half hour, so I used it well and topped up the soft drinks fridge. I had already done the beer fridge, in the main, last night to get ahead of the posse. The Missus dropped down to the shop to relieve me for my gymnasium session not long after we had opened. She had booked the bleddy hound into see the veterinary doctor on a routine matter in the early afternoon, which meant me clearing the gymnasium and my breakfast earlier than usual. So, the scene was set for complete chaos.

I conducted a shortened session at the gymnasium because even with the Missus down early, time would have been begging on a longer session. It was possibly a psychological response but I clearly put in some extra effort in the cut down session

and when I came back I was quite worn from my exertions. I had just gone upstairs to get ready for breakfast and to return to the shop when my Lifeboat pager went off.

I was still wearing my post gymnasium gear, t-shirt, sweatshirt and hooded sweatshirt with woolly hat when I ran across the road. There is no time for niceties in these matters as we have no idea if we are responding to a yacht that needs a tow or a person in the water drowning – Lifeboat kit went on top of the post gymnasium kit.

In the third decade of the twenty-first century our big heavy wooden doors are still pushed open by some eejit, in this case wearing t-shirt, two sweatshirts, waterproof dungarees, a big heavy lifejacket and woolly hat, and sweating profusely. It helped that I was joined by another team member who was far more sensibly dressed in a t-shirt alone. I doubt he lost two pounds just by launching the boat.

The boat had launched to a yacht that had fouled its rudder in some potting gear just to the northwest of Cape Cornwall. Well, that is where the boat was told to head and the last I heard before I retired to drain the sweat that had accumulated in my boots and go and get changed.

I sat down for a bit of breakfast and a quick geek at the AIS page on the Internet to see how the boat was doing. I looked northwest of Cape and found nothing at all, so I widened the search and still found nothing Lifeboat shaped. In the end I did a vessel search and found it about four miles to the southwest of Land's End doing 25 knots. I checked that the page data was accurate and current and concluded that the boat was given the wrong coordinates to begin with.

I had a brae bit of croust and looked again at the AIS page to discover that the boat had done its bit and was heading back. This required a quick response from the few of us that were available, and we met up almost immediately to set up. The tide was pretty close to the long slip rollers when the boat launched and near high water. We were tight on numbers, including a fairly new recruit, but we set up as quickly as we could and were just finishing off when the boat arrived. It had to wait five minutes but that is not long, especially when it ended with a textbook recovery up the short slip and tucked away in no time. We are, after all, a very responsive, very excellent Shore Crew.

Yesterday, up at The Farm, the Missus did her mowing and strimming. In the process she was eaten alive by horse flies and I spent some of the evening after Lifeboat exercise dabbing her with ointment. This morning, driven to distraction by the itching and soreness, she took an antihistamine tablet that knocked her for six. By the time I came back from the Lifeboat station, she was feeling a brae bit poorly, which we were unsure if it was the bites or the pill. The balance of probability suggests the latter. I suggested she take half an hour off, because I am caring in that way, but she had already gone and I did not see her for the rest of the day.

It was neither the busiest nor the quietest of days but it suited the day very nicely. The cloud rolled in during the morning, but it stayed warm and a little bit muggy for the rest of the day. We coasted into closing time with the occasional customer dropping by and with the merest hint of a five minutes to closing rush. Must be an evening for curry and a beer.

July 1<sup>st</sup> – Thursday

In an object lesson not to pay too much attention to the weather forecast, today was pencilled in as the best of the week. Today, opened with somewhat grey skies, although quite bright, and with mist hanging on the cliffs. It took most of the morning for the mist to clear but even then it was hazy out to the west and big fluffy clouds top the east. It redeemed itself later but best day? Arguable.

We were not alone on the Harbour beach when we slipped down there first thing. A couple of strange contraptions sat on the sand and a large RIB was tied up to the Harbour wall ladder. The items on the beach were basically bicycles strapped to two floats and were there for some promotion or other. Before very long we were joined by a film crew. I do hope I did not ruin their take by walking across the shot with a poo bag dangling off my fingers. Live the high life with bike-o-boat.

As might be expected with such a poor weather outlook, we started slow. Since it was not raining, the crowds started to gather in a lazy, not too much of a rush sort of way and the usual newspaper customers filtered through. The tsunami of customers that arrived in the shop at midday was therefore a complete surprise and had me pinned behind the counter for half an hour or more. We sold an abundance of hooded sweatshirts along with the usual going home type presents. I could quite easily have closed after that, not because we had made such a killing but because the day entered its sunny day profile and hardly a soul would have noticed.

The afternoon became shinier and warmer as it went along. The forecasters could be forgiven in that it was mostly the best day of the week, apart from yesterday that won it by a morning. The little encampments at the top of the beach grew from mid morning and were well established by mid afternoon. There were still no waves but in the middle of the tide, the shallows were populated by small groups who seemed satisfied with just standing about getting their lower halves wet. Even most of the paddle borders had given up.

The Missus was up at The Farm from half way through the morning and was back late. There was no particular need for her to hurry back as tea was not required. I had time to slip a bit of pollack in the shop oven in some foil and some bits from the shop shelves and had a sort of pseudo kedgeree. It was bleddy 'asnum and I might just sell the recipe in my 'Cooking for Grumpy Shopkeepers' cook book that has not been written yet.

The reason for the disruption was that some bright spark had called for a Lifeboat exercise. We had missed the last couple of weeks due to tides and sea conditions but tonight there was no excuse. We launched both boats with plenty of hands at around seven o'clock in front of an excited crowd – cue applause, cheers and the throwing of top hats into the air. Both of the crowd left after that.

We wiled away the intervening hour after launch by setting up on the long slipway and admiring the most beautiful of evenings. There were several youngsters on the beach, ending up dipping in the sea. A group of lads skipping stones, which they did for an hour. I am surprised that the Harbour was still big enough for the boat afterwards.

The inshore arrived first and took away one of the team, followed by the big boat a short while later. From where I was standing on the steps between the short and long slipways it looked very much like a textbook recovery. Our man from the Inshore recovery returned to give us a hand and we tucked the boat away in the boathouse while giving it a quick squirt on the way up. We are, after all, a very efficient, very excellent Shore Crew.