

DIARY 2025

July 1st – Tuesday

It was reasonable cool when I eventually persuaded ABH to come for a walk with me. I had already been down to set up the shop because I could not get her to stir from the bed. She spent an extended time sniffing about at the top of the beach because the tide is not reaching there now and people had been there in abundance last night and had left behind all manner of smells, no doubt.

The mist was still hanging about from the previous evening and night. This morning it was the kind that drifts slowly on the surface of the water making it look like the sea is gently simmering away. Later, it retreated to the cliffs and hung about there in layers until the middle of the morning. It still left us with a layer of cloud and a thin mist right across the bay. Earlier, there were some patches of blue skies and high level cloud as if to say, see what you could have won in true *Bullseye* style.

I have given up with Radio Pasty's increasingly desperate forecasts for sunny days in The Cove. Even the Meteorological Office had rolled over and promised some dark grey clouds, generally meaning mist in these parts, although they did change it halfway through the day to make it look a little more like what we were actually getting. Today, we had some mizzle blow through The Cove in the middle of the day sending people scurrying for cover.

We were again very quiet for much of the day with fewer notable exceptions than the day before. I have to assume that it is the weather to blame and the heat and humidity creating an atmosphere of sloth. It gave me the opportunity to partake in the excitement and jollity of counting my newspaper tokens. I try to do them every six weeks just to keep on top of them. Obviously, the urge to do them more frequently is hard to resist but somehow, I manage.

It is interesting how things have changed over the years. Once, the tokens would have been almost exclusively *Telegraph* ones but more recently they have been pushed into almost obscurity by tokens from *The Times* and *Guardian* newspapers. I do not know what we can learn from our little sample, but we do get a wide cross-section of visitors here through the year. If it is representative of the country, I would say that The Telegraph is in a bit of trouble.

Regarding my broken false ear: I am sure you will be delighted to know, dear reader, that the person in the higher echelons of the NHS to whose mercy I threw myself on in the form of a message this morning, responded quickly to my plight. She forwarded my detailed complaint to the management of the company that runs the shop in Penzance with her not inconsiderable weight behind it. I await their response, but I have the notion that things might move quite quickly. Sadly, it is unlikely to be quickly enough for me to have a working ear 'ole before the fight starts

in a couple of weeks. Provided the remaining false ear continues to operate, I will at least be better off than last year.

In the doldrums during the afternoon, I was suddenly inspired to actually do some work. There were a couple of beachware items from a current supplier that I was keen to try, so I telephoned the company to order some. While looking for somewhere to put those items when they arrived, I noticed that our local interest books were looking a little thin on the bookshelf and we were short of maps. I managed to place an order for those, too.

There were some books in the store room, including *The Almost Serious Guide to Sennen Cove* the sales of which had recently revived after moving it to a different location on the shelf. I put some more of these out in the shop. A few days earlier, I had conducted a count of the posh Dunoon mugs ahead of a visit by the salesman tomorrow. This had unearthed a few forgotten items that I now also put out.

It had only just dawned on me that the school holidays are at hand and that I ought to pull my finger out and prepare the shop for the onslaught. I will commission the Missus, between cutting leaves of lettuce, the venture into the store for things we are missing in the shop. She had a big important Lifeboat events meeting in the evening for which she had spent the previous evening preparing. I thought it best to wait until that was over before troubling her further – more in the interests of my own health than in consideration of her busyness.

While she was at the meeting, I tried to placate ABH who was distraught. If the Missus is away shopping or on some errand far away, ABH merely sulks. If the Missus is somewhere close at hand, then ABH is strung out like a wire in tension. When I took her for an after tea stroll, she pulled me towards the Lifeboat station door. She allowed me to take her to the beach for a cursory run, but after, she was up the slipway ahead of me and would have been in the Lifeboat station but for an unusual adherence to a stop command that I called from twenty yards behind her.

I managed to drag her to the other end of the Harbour car park, whereupon she dragged me all the way back down Coastguard Row. It is a problem that I doubt now we will resolve. Perhaps it will moderate with age, but it does seem quite ingrained.

Perhaps it was the actually doing some work today, but I felt unusually weary in the late evening and when The Missus had returned from her very important meeting, I retired early. Several customers told me that the forecast for tomorrow is sunshine and that I should gird my loins. Yeah, right. Like we have not heard that before.

July 2nd – Wednesday

Golly G Willikens. Sunshine!

The cloud was breaking up above us when ABH and I ventured out to the Harbour beach first thing. The sun was trying hard to break through some thicker cloud out to the east. The air was pleasantly cool but when the sun burst through as we crossed the beach, the warmth on our backs was immediate.

The sunshine improved our busyness for the day which started as it has done all week with a bit of a morning rush. I had arranged to meet our posh mug salesman – he is from The North and not at all posh, but his mugs are very posh and also from The North. I thought that I had better clear that up. I arranged to meet him early doors as I thought we might be quieter, but he was a little late, which did not help. His arrival conflicted with the milk and pasty (sorry, MS) deliveries, which I had to clear first, and the early rush of customers seemed to go on longer than usual.

I had already prepared an order but it was always good to get his perspective on which designs are hot and which are not. For example, he showed me a new design shape that was quite alluring, and we will try them in a couple of attractive designs. The salesman had sent ahead some brochures which has shown another new design. It was a mug of gigantic proportions – in relation to other mugs – and I was keen to see how it compared. Unfortunately, he had left the sample in the car but showed it to me on his way out a little later. It had been requested by the German market, presumably by Bavarian beer cellars to replace steins. When I saw it later, it looked deceptively smaller than I imagined. We postulated, however, at what point down the mug would your tea get cold.

Our busyness was up and down during the morning, busier than the last few days but not remarkable. I made the decision around the middle of the day not to order any pasties for tomorrow. We had been accumulating over the last few days and I was keen to avoid having to freeze any. I could have laid bets that from the moment the deadline passed, we would see a pasty fest like no other – and so it was.

I had hedged my bets a little by ordering a case of frozen Cornish and cheese pasties that I could fall back on should the need arise. I felt slightly less exposed knowing I would have some pasties should it all go sadly wrong, which it rapidly did. In the end, I had to call a halt on bringing more pasties out but as luck would have it, demand fell away before I ran out.

The bit of my rear end that I had not covered were the cakes and scones, of which I felt that I had an abundance. Our visitors, clearly aware of this Achilles heel, went for it hammer and tong. I spent the afternoon selling scones, fruit cake, lemon sensation cake and hevvva buns and cakes. Someone must have blabbed, I feel.

We also sold some posh mugs, which was quite comforting. As we approached the middle of the day, we started to get busier in a consistent sort of way selling all manner of goodies and not just beachware, which I thought might have been on the cards today, given the sunshine. I was quite grateful, therefore, that one of the very

excellent Shore Crew said that he would stand in for me at the planned launch of the Lifeboat at one o'clock.

The boat has a three-yearly survey to make sure that everything is working properly and that it does not have any holes in the bottom. The original plan was for the boat to be out for three hours and I had tentatively planned around closing the shop for 45 minutes at around four o'clock. I had also told the crew that due to the length of the boat's absence, I would launch it with one other from who lives in The Cove. That way, those who live a little further off would not need to venture in twice or hang about for three hours.

It did not quite work out that way and in the event, the recovery was rescheduled for quarter past three o'clock. I arranged for the rest of the crew, which turned out to be one other and myself to muster half an hour previous to that to set up the long slip, which by then would be very long as the tide would only be an hour off low water. When I went across at the appointed time, the slip was already set up, which bemused me, so I geared up so that I would not have to do so late and returned to the shop to await the boat's return.

I did not have to wait long as the boat came back into the bay at roughly on time. We had what might be considered as a comfortable minimum crew but, as also might now be expected, we executed a textbook recovery in benign conditions in the blazing heat of the day. With a tightly managed washdown and resecuring in the boathouse, we wrapped up for another end to another launch and recovery. We are, after all, a very compact, very excellent Shore Crew.

Returning to open the shop, in very short order I was met with a renewed flood of customers, which was very gratifying. This continued for most of the rest of the afternoon and purchases moved smoothly from gifts to evening meals as we neared closing. Much of the food currently is from our premium ranges, which includes many of the local products that are naturally more expensive than the mass produced items. We would expect to see this change when the schools break up and our next cash and carry order will have to contain more over-stock. We have also sold much more fish than I anticipated and will have to carefully consider when and how much to re-order in the next two weeks.

I managed to close the shop and retire without having to fight off late shoppers in a five minutes to closing rush. Instead, I had to expend additional time placing orders with regular suppliers. One of these has moved to using an online order facility. Unfortunately, they do not always have what I need to order on the list. I spent unnecessary time searching for a local premium chocolate that was not there. I only discovered it was not there after I had ordered everything else. I will need now to call in the morning and get it delivered separately, which is a pain in the neck for both parties.

Conversely, it was most comfortable taking ABH around the block in the early evening sunshine. I had noted the previous time that the sun, even at that time in the evening was particularly warm and was grateful that I had elected not to wear a jacket. While the Harbour car park was busy with parked vehicles, there were very few people to chat to on our way around. At least with the Missus off to take Mother home, I was not dragged the back nine along Coastguard Row. She did have a full on sulk when we got back, though, until the Missus got home. It means I am not plagued for a game and can read my book peacefully. There are up sides, after all.

July 3rd – Thursday

We were blessed with another day of blistering sunshine. Gad, the heat, the flies. Even setting out the display at the front of the shop put in the morning should have required a parasol if I were to respect the rules of health and safety. No wonder vampires avoid direct sunlight; it was quite uncomfortable when you are unused to it.

It did not seem to bother our customers who arrived in numbers during the early part of the morning again. Actually, they were later than yesterday which gave me sufficient time to make a cobbled together ham salad roll using some of our own lettuce. The difference in taste between ours and even the local lettuce supplied from our usual deliveries is marked.

Thus fortified, I set to on the duties of the day. One of the first was to recover our pasty position (sorry, MS) after my error of judgement yesterday, not ordering any. We had no frozen cooked pasties, so I fell back on the frozen uncooked we already had in the freezer and baked a dozen. Despite being the baker, there were still only twelve. As we arrived near the end of the day, I was able to congratulate myself. We had cleared the backlog and sold the newly baked pasties leaving us clear for the big weekend delivery tomorrow, which was exactly how I planned it, ahem. We do love it when a plan comes together.

It was when the Missus came down and I was particularly busy with a minor rush that she noticed that the store room upright freezer door was not closed properly. I must have inadvertently closed it on a plastic bag hanging down from the top. We were lucky that the contents had not thawed, but it was heading that way. She then noticed that having removed the offending plastic, the door still did not 'suck' closed. Fearing that the freezer itself had gone faulty, she hurriedly moved the entire contents which was not inconsiderable.

The freezer is now the oldest refrigeration unit we have in the shop and predates us. I took the view that I would immediately look for a replacement being so close to our busy period. When I went back to measure its dimensions, I noticed that it was starting to cool again, so decided to keep an eye on it and make a decision about a new one a bit later. A few hours later it was back to operating temperature and the

Missus will refill it when I am at the gymnasium tomorrow – or if she is busy, when I come back.

Disaster averted, I returned to the jobs at hand. We had delivered yesterday some new and alluring beach towels that I was keen to get out on display. This meant grabbing a handy shoehorn and crowbar to wedge them into the already crowded shop shelves. Since they would have to go close to the other towels we have, I had to move things about. Some of that had to wait until I had some quiet moments and the whole task took more than an hour of elapsed time to complete.

I recall being busy doing things for most of the day ending up with quite a bit of cardboard in the store room in the process but when I looked back, I was darned if I could remember all the things that I had done. I know that all of it was done piecemeal as we were quite busy, largely with going home present buying – I must remember to top up the postcard fudge boxes in the morning because we sold many of those. The aloe vera plants that we seem to have an inexhaustible supply of, continue to be one of our best sellers. I do not have to water them now as they are not in the shop long enough. I am beginning to wonder if we need to move into horticulture as it seems to be doing better than beachware.

I think that I may still have been mucking about with beach towels when my pager went off at half past four in the afternoon. Fortunately, we just had the one customer in the shop at the time, who very kindly evacuated the shop quickly when asked. I told him that I hoped to be back in half an hour, but this turned out to be overly optimistic.

We always try and respond to calls as quickly as possible but, on occasion, some calls are more urgent than others and this was one of them.

Initially, there was just me on the shore and the priority was to get the Inshore boat launched, despite both boats being requested. As I drove the Tooltrak down to the car park barrier, another of the very excellent Shore Crew turned up and between us we launched the Inshore and the returned to launch the big boat where a couple more of us had arrived.

The boats were tasked to an incident at Pednvoudner by Porthcurno. The Lifeguards and Cliff Team were also sent along, and we waited at the station to monitor progress. It was an extended operation for which the big boat acted as a communications hub as, ironically, Porthcurno with all its global communications history, is a black spot for modern wireless interaction.

The boats returned to the bay some two hours later. I had not returned to the shop as the call had been one of those that could have ended at any time and there was much going on to coordinate. We had set up the long slip almost immediately after the boat had been launch certain in the knowledge that the kit would not be overwhelmed as the tide as still going out at the time. When we returned to the

bottom of the slipway two hours later, the tide was coming in and the cable we had dragged down was in the perfect position.

We had by this time accumulated sufficient numbers on the shore, bolstered by spare Boat Crew, to cover recovery of both boats simultaneously. I took charge on the slipway for the big boat and two of us went down to the slipway toe ahead of the boat's arrival. I find it immensely peaceful at the bottom of the slip on days such as today. The sounds that fill the street and the beach only yards away, seem distant and with the lapping of the water on the toe, it is a place of calm and tranquillity. Then the boat arrives. With the cable in the perfect position, this was a masterclass textbook recovery up the long slip in calm condition. Take up of the cable was immediate and the boat was secured on the cradle, washed down and refuelled for its next launch in no time. We are, after all, a very flexible, very excellent Shore Crew.

We had to wait for an additional time at the bottom of the slip because the Inshore boat broke down on its way back and had to be mended by the big boat mechanic. This does not bode well for its inauguration ceremony on Saturday. I am sure there will be much effort to make it all fixed by then.

I returned to the shop long after closing. The Missus had arrived before me and had finished off the closing including doing the newspapers and pulling in the outside display. The only thing I needed to do was to finish off the ordering and retired to my tea. It had been very quiet when I hurriedly shut the shop, so I hope that we did not inconvenience too many people by closing an hour and a half early. That will teach the five minutes to closing rush contingent.

July 4th – Friday

Gosh, I was sorely pressed this morning. I really should not have been since I was up at five o'clock. There was nothing voluntary about such an early hour, but I decided to use it to my advantage and get ahead of the posse. So, would someone please enlighten me how it was I was standing there at ten minutes to opening with still a pile of things to do.

It did not help that the newspapers were late, and three customers fell in when I opened the first electric sliding door in The Cove to see where they were. Adding to that, the milk turned up when I had a shop full of customers and then the pasties (sorry, MS) turned up when I had a few more. It was still a bit like that when the Missus turned up to let me go to the gymnasium with the beer fridge still to top up. I was happy to make a break for it.

There were a few people down on the Harbour beach when we headed that way after my blistering session. The sun was out, and it was warm. There was still a little power in the waves and the little girl was not keen to step in. In fact, she did not

seem very keen on anything very much, electing to stay in the flat instead of coming down to the shop and then, when we got to the beach, hardly bothering to amble across it. Most dogs I have seen hit the beach cannot wait to belt across the wide open space or plunge carelessly into the briny. ABH really cannot be fagged with any of that. Perhaps she identifies as a cat or something.

I was surprised late in the afternoon to receive a message from the much maligned council. Back at the start of May, I had neglected to place sufficient funds in my current account to cover the council tax charge. Noticing my faux pas almost immediately, I paid the correct amount by debit card through the much maligned council's portal. Shortly after, I received the much maligned council's standard missed payment notice telling me that they would collect double the amount the following month.

Anxious to head that off at the pass, I sent message using the online form to explain that I had already paid and would appreciate it if they did not take it again. The automated reply told me that they were very busy at the moment with an unusually high level of messages and that they would endeavour to reply within ten working days.

Having received no reply within the stated period and realising that the day of the double payment was hard upon us I sought to contact the department by telephone. While I was searching for the accounts department's well hidden telephone number, I noticed a notice that told me if I had not had a response to my query inside the ten working days, I should not seek to enquire about the lack of response for a further 28 days. So, I was a bit snookered.

I carefully watched my bank account at the appointed time for payment and, happily, only one payment was taken for the June period. I had not received a response, but I had a receipt for my payment, and all was well with the world. Not having a reply now was purely academic, so I forgot all about it ... until today.

Had the letter acknowledged that the lateness of the response had rendered it pointless, I would have understood. As it was, the letter told me that my debit card payment had been received, which I knew and had a receipt; that the double payment would not happen, which I knew because it did not happen; that a future payment of the required amount would be made each month until the end of the financial year, which I rather thought that it might. What is more worrying is that someone in the much maligned council accounts team had thought it worth their time at my expense to write a totally meaningless letter to me. Fortunately, I have a better sense of the value of my time and did not think it worth it to formulate a response to point this out.

We had quite a busy day. It followed the tradition of change-over days, and we saw the leaving contingent in numbers buying looking after the cat/garden/small child chained to the radiator gifts and cold pasties for consumption later. I was rather

pleased about the latter because my pasty order pays not heed to the forecasters' guess about the weekend weather and I had ordered quite a lot. As the weekend draws closer, it would appear that the Saturday at least, may be somewhat inclement and not the sort of day that we might sell pasties in abundance.

There is, of course, the Inshore naming ceremony to consider. This will bring a large number of people to The Cove to see some lengthy speeches said over the boat and a couple of vicars splashing it with holy water – or is that just the left footers. I had not intended to be present at the event, having pasties to sell and all that, but the Missus suggested that it would be unseemly for the Head Launcher not to be there and all other resistance was useless.

The later afternoon saw the arrival of the new visitors who may be with us for a week or maybe two. There are new newspaper orders to record and try and remember and mainly groceries to sell for those who have not relied upon a Tesmorburys delivery. Or, indeed, those who have relied upon a Tesmorburys delivery and found it wanting in some areas. I thought that we had seen another premature five minutes to closing rush from roughly before five o'clock, which petered out at quarter past. I took the opportunity in the quietness to start the end of day orders and was thus engaged when I was bowled over by a resurgence of customer visits at close on half past five o'clock. This continued until closing time when I was stopped halfway through closing the first electric sliding door by a gentleman requiring drinks to go with his fish and chips.

I then spent twenty minutes concluding the orders I had started nearly an hour earlier. What took the time was the order for Cornish biscuits and fudge. The company has an online ordering facility, which is most useful unless something is missing from the list that I know that they supply. In this instance, I need to delete all that I have already ordered and place the order by telephone taking care to look up the product codes for those items that could be mistaken for similar ones.

As I did my rounds, I noticed that the postcard fudge box shelf was nearly empty again. I made the same note at the same time yesterday and by the morning had forgotten all about having to restock. Fortunately, the other reader reminded me, which was just as well because we sold nearly all of it again. I also need to remember to order some more.

I was quite grateful to collapse in a chair after I retired to enjoy some haddock from our freezer that is now happily freezing things again. Half an hour of that and I was up again taking ABH around the block in what we have been warned was the last pleasant and warm evening for a day or two. It was indeed pleasant and warm. I shall hold onto that during the dire and cataclysmic storms the forecasters warn us are on the way – I think they just mean a bit of rain, but that is not exciting enough and does not incite our campers to uproot and leave for home a few days early as one lady told me they were doing. Grrr.

July 5th – Saturday

I am beginning to wonder if the Inshore boat naming ceremony is doomed or cursed in some way. Who have we upset, we should be asking. On the way back from the shout on Thursday, it broke down. The Institute sent a special team to organise the event and put them up in the Land's End Hotel. This went on fire last night and they were turfed out of their rooms at two o'clock in the morning. The weather, though not as severe as promised – of course, it was not – was poor enough and the sea state meant that the Inshore's inaugural wetting was short-lived.

Later in the morning, I spoke with the Institute's two unfortunate hotel guests. They told me that it looked worse than it was. It seemed an outbuilding, like a bin store attached to the main building, caught alight. It may have been fortunate for the other guests that they were staying there. One of them told me there did not appear to be any staff present and it was our Institute man who called it in.

The St Just volunteer fire brigade were there in short order to sort it out. Another lady who was due to stay there tonight as well asked if we knew of other accommodation in the area just in case they were prevented from returning tonight. She told me that the hotel said that it would let her know but by the middle of the day, she had not heard and was looking for options.

We had started the day with what turned out to be the best of the weather. It was overcast, grey and cool but mercifully dry and we enjoyed a brief romp on the beach, ABH and me. It stayed much the same for a good part of the morning, but I fear that the forecast had driven anyone leaving off early and we were deathly quiet. Business did not improve at all from there and when the rain, such as it was, arrived I pretty much wrote off the remainder of the day. I have already harped on enough about the wide gulf between what the forecast would have us believe and what actually arrived, so I will leave that alone while I simmer gently under the surface. What we had was mist and the occasional waves of mizzle that passed through The Cove.

The few customers we did have during the day made a good fist of making me feel better about it. We sold some of our posh mugs, which make the sales figures look much better than they would with just general sales. The trade, however, left me with long periods of quietness which would have bored me senseless had I not chosen to fill them with shelf filling and list making.

The shelf filling made it abundantly clear that I will have to do much better with my cash and carry ordering next week. Many things are running out and the over-stock is getting worryingly slim. If I do the same next week, we will run out in the first week and have empty shelves by the second. The lists concerned the things that we needed to bring down from The Farm ahead of the hordes turning up for the school holidays. It is early yet but it is best to be prepared. It will also highlight anything that is missing while we still have time to do something about it.

If the day was not good for shopkeeping, it was not that much better for Inshore Lifeboat naming, either. The Missus had convinced me that I should make the effort to attend and so I ran over to the Lifeboat station at one of the quiet times in the morning to collect my regulation shirt and tie. I had thought to wear my little boy trousers because I have black dress trousers and only possess brown shoes. Later, I was to discover that wearing brown shoes with dark trousers seems to be in vogue. It is many years and probably not even then that I last wore anything fashionable. It was probably a good enough reason not to start now.

The Missus covered my absence from the shop and we gathered at the Lifeboat station car park just before two o'clock to have our pictures taken in our smart shirts and ties. We then repaired to the crew room where we were briefed about the course of events that would ensue at three o'clock when the ceremony started. It was probably all very interesting if I could have heard a word of it. I also found that I heard as much of the ceremony as I had heard of the briefing, although the singing was very good from the St Buryan Male Voice Choir.

One thing that we resolved was the odd name chosen for the boat, Arangy. It is an arrangement of the benefactors' initials, R and G.

The gig was supposed to be held on the Harbour beach originally. It was a tad perplexing because it was high water at the time. It was a neap tide but even so, the waves were quite high up the beach. What really kicked it into touch was that the sea had become quite feisty with the change in the weather and the waves were banging up the beach even further. It was something of a surprise that we managed to launch the Inshore boat after it was all over.

I had made my excuses and left when the last of the ceremony was over and before the launch. We have people for such things. I returned to the shop that was still quiet at the time but as the late afternoon wore on, we began to see some news arrivals, erm, arrive. I think that it was the busiest that we had been all day and although it was not properly busy, it was better than a poke in the eye.

When it came to pulling in the outside display, the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers decided that it would be a jolly wheeze to send the only shower of rain that we had all day. Thank you for that.

As that were not punishment enough, just as I sat down to tea, my pager went off. The big boat was required to stand off and support the Cliff Team in an incident on the cliffs at Land's End. The majority of the crew were at the OS, wetting the new boat's sponsons, and were at hand for the shout – some of them even capable of running to the station. Fortunately, it was still early in the evening.

It was one of those calls that could have been resolved immediately or could have lasted all night. Fortunately, we were called back to service while I was completing the service record book less than an hour after being called out. We rapidly deployed

on the long slip and by this time had sufficient crew to man the Inshore recovery as well. The boat was only around the corner, so it was back as we were arranging the cable and the span on the concrete toe. By the time the boat came back on the slip, we were ready to execute a textbook recovery up the long slip at low water in choppy conditions. We are, after all, a very vigilant, very excellent Shore Crew.

July 6th – Sunday

There was still some drizzle about first thing in the morning, which was very early again. I had the impression that it had come and gone all night. We got a little damp, mainly because ABH fancied an extended trip around the block and dragged her paws every step of the way.

During the day, the weather did try so very hard to improve. It remained dry but despite the best efforts of the forecasters insisting we would have sunny spells throughout the afternoon, the cloud stalwartly remained in place. The whole ensemble came with a punchy but relatively mild northerly breeze that kept any temperature increase at bay.

The less than perfect weather was not going to deter a bunch of visitors who had presumably spent the day yesterday cooped up indoors or in their cars getting here. It would have been difficult to see a drop in customers from yesterday, but the improved weather saw us reasonably busy from the middle of the morning onwards and sometimes very busy during the middle of the afternoon.

There was an interesting mix of stayers and trippers. You can generally tell from the sorts of things they are buying. One thing I shall have to look at squeezing onto our shelves is some sort of stain remover. I am guessing that this is the product of panicked holiday let guests trying to cover up some sort of spill or other. One of the main products we are asked for is Vanish. It is a difficult one because I believe it comes in various forms such as a spray or something you add to a wash. I was asked for it today and I told the customer we did have some but, strangely, I could no longer find it.

Another product to conjure with is Daktarin, which is some sort of ointment. We do not do that either, but the mere mention of it transports me back to my childhood. It makes me feel old if I could give a care about such things. There was a television programme called Daktari, featuring a cross-eye lion called Clarence and a cheeky chimpanzee named Judy. All television programmes that vaguely concerned Africa had to have a cheeky chimpanzee in them. I recall at the tender age of six or seven years old I had a rather soft spot for Cheryl Miller who played Paula, the veterinarian's daughter. She is 82 now and never writes. I do not think there was any coming back from that and the ensuing years could only ever be a bitter

disappointment ... ahem, until I met the Missus, of course. Phew. Do you think it is too late to talk about the chimp?

Earlier in the year there had been a little excitement that a book chronicling the journey a couple made on the South West Coast Path around Cornwall was being made into a film. There was the supposition that the popular book and now a film would draw visitors, at least to the places shown in the movie. It then transpired that the locations used were mainly in Kent or some far flung place east of Camborne and that there would be no ensuing bounty.

I had read the book which was entertaining but it had not inspired me to seek out the film to watch, especially as the locations were not local. I also recall that I had been left with a feeling of doubt along the lines of, methinks the lady doth protest too much. Anyway, I thought no more about it but it appears that I was not alone and an investigative journalist from the Observer did think more about it and dug a little deeper. According to his research, there is quite a bit of, erm, inventiveness within the tale and a fair bit of skulduggery behind it to boot. The journalist even questioned the veracity of the claim that the chap in the book was very ill. The experts he spoke with suggested it was highly unlikely.

The Diary, nor I, make no such claims, and merely report what was in the Observer newspaper. If it is to be believed, and the investigation seemed thorough enough, the authoress is quite a piece of work. What is certain, however, is that seeing any sort of increase in business on the back of the film was unlikely in the first place and now the chances are even more remote.

The group of limping young men that I met this morning soon after the shop opened were clearly not influenced by the book. They had used the Coast Path but only as part of the local Rat Run that happened yesterday. I discovered this when I asked if they had all played a game of nocturnal rugby to get into such a state. I had quite forgotten about it, which is probably no surprise as I did not see them charging through The Cove as they have done for years. They told me that inexplicably, the route had been changed this year to run up the cliff at Gwenver – a trial all by itself for mere mortals – and followed a different route to Land's End.

They all seemed jolly fellows, indulging in snacks, energy drinks and paracetamol. I am not sure that I would engage in any pastime that left me limping for days afterwards and requiring copious quantities of painkillers. Mind, drinking heavily and galivanting was not always risk free.

At one point in the blustery afternoon, the skies to the east opened to allow a glimpse of blue just so that we could be reminded of what it looked like. Shortly after that we enjoyed a short collection of light showers just as I sought to bring in the outside display. I think it would be very tedious if I were to mention just how divorced from any forecast I had seen this was. Oh, I just mentioned it. Sorry.

At least ABH and I remained dry when we walked around the block after tea. I did need a jacket, though, for the first time in a week. I consoled myself with gazing at the abundance of wildflowers now in full bloom – some going over, now – such as the mayweed and the invasive rape. We should really do something about all the flowers that have sprouted against the back door, and I note a rather large tree mallow has appeared out of nowhere. It is playing havoc with filling the recycling bags, which has just reminded me that I need to put them out for the morning.

July 7th – Monday

It might have been yesterday morning that I woke with a song in my head. It stayed with me the whole day and usually, playing the song will sort it out. I tried to do that last night, but finding the right recording eluded me.

The song is *This is my Lovely Day*, written by Vivian Ellis and AP Herbert – no, me neither – for the musical *Bless the Bride*. The only recording I had heard was a duet that I vaguely remembered and this morning, I found it on the Internet. It is sung by Lizbeth Webb and Georges Guétary in 1947. He was French and sings the song in a very clipped English accent, prevalent at the time in movies and the like but sounds quite archaic now.

I only ever recall the first verse which has a lovely sentiment and remember it for that reason. I looked up the rest of the lyrics this morning and rather wish that I had not. Things got a little dark after that, ‘sad and sighing, old and dying’, which took the edge off a bit.

It is a song about a couple on their wedding day. Their expectations are that married life will be so unspeakably dreadful that they envisage being on their death beds remembering their wedding day to be the only one they took any joy from it.

Where I heard it first, I cannot say. It is possible that the Aged Parent sang it to me in the cradle, the first verse to sooth me and the remaining ones to warn me life was significant less than a bed of roses when I got out of it. Ever practical was the Aged Parent.

Well, I do not know if that did anything for you, dear reader, but I feel much better for getting that off my chest. Now, where was I?

Ah yes. I was nearly blown backwards through the front door when I opened it this morning. It was not that severe as winds go but it was in our face, directly from the north and thirty miles per hour. That is the sort of wake up that can seriously upset a

person's day if he is not careful. Fortunately, I am made of sterner stuff – yes, I am - and we battled our way off to the Harbour beach.

The wind did not seem too bad down there, but the morning required a hooded sweatshirt and a woolly hat. We did not tarry and went back up to the shop to set out the outside display and fetch the recycling from the back of the building. I put it in the shelter beside the wheelie bin that I had to strap down on our way out and went back into the shop. There was a bit of a crash while I was struggling with the weighty windbreak stand and when I got outside, the plastic and metals bag had fallen over.

The bag is at least fifteen years old, although it has only been used in anger for a year. I noticed that the cover flap had a hole in it a few weeks ago and since then it had just got bigger. I reasoned, until today, that it did not matter very much but since everything fell out of the hole when it fell over, I will indent the much maligned council for a new one.

I had to wake myself up this morning and consequently was later than I would have been had ABH been working properly. Perversely, this meant that I was downstairs earlier than I would have been had I been woken sooner.

This suited me just fine as there were still wetsuits and wetshoes that needed stripping of their packaging and putting out in the shop. It was the remnants of the list I had called in from The Farm, topping up our beachware gaps in the shop. I mentioned a day or so ago, that it was best we prepare early in case we find there are missing things that we need to order in.

In truth, I had not expected there to be any shortfalls, so when the Missus told me we were out of four sizes in shoes, I was most surprised. I had counted these myself at the end of last season, so I knew the starting point was true and, if sales were roughly no better than last year, we should have had enough for the season. I could imagine, perhaps, a rush on one of the sizes and running low on stock, but not all four of them together.

I asked her to check but if she comes back with the same result I will have to place an order, which will be irritating because we just had a delivery from the company and I had to order more than I truly needed to escape carriage charges.

It took me into the afternoon to finish the last of the wetsuits. The gymnasium and a blistering session intervened and another walk on the Harbour beach. I felt very sorry for ABH. We were down there on our own to start with and not long later, another two dogs arrived both about the right size and age to give her a bit of a run and a chase. Despite the fact that she stood off a little way and did not engage in her normal mad barking at them, both studiously ignored her. If that were not bad enough, a third dog came down that she gazed at hopefully, but that one stayed on the lead and would be no help at all. It is a shame that there is not a rent-a-friend service in The Cove.

We were neither particularly busy nor very quiet. There were moments, although precious few, that I was dashing about making sure we had sufficient pasties (sorry, MS) lined up. There were also extended periods of desperation during one of which I managed to order the shoes that the Missus confirmed were indeed missing. We had either sold them and I had not noticed, or we have mammoth rats running about in size 3 to size 6 wets shoes.

We do have rats up at The Farm, but we have no evidence that they have breached the inner sanctum. There is nothing really in there that they would be much interested in, and we will endeavour to keep it that way.

The afternoon passed in a very sedate manner with little interest in it. I kept busy with things I now cannot recall but I am sure that they were very useful things. The Missus was late returning and therefore so was tea. ABH and I took our after tea walk late in the evening and combined it with the last of the day. We walked around the block and through the Harbour car park where the sun had decided to break through and blind us. It was not very busy there and we were alone along the back nine down Coastguard Row.

We are told to expect better weather. In fact, many people during the day, noticing my usual expression that they took for desolation, assured me that the forthcoming days would be filled with sunshine and loveliness. Of course, they will be. Every day down here is like that. It makes me think of a song I once heard.

This is my Lovely Day. (Ellis and Herbert.)

*This is my lovely day
This is the day I shall remember the day I'm dying
They can't take this away
It will be always mine, the sun and the wine
The sea birds crying*

*All happiness must pay
And who can tell if fate means well
Or the sky is lying
But look at me and say
You will remember too that this was our lovely day*

*This is our lovely day
This is the day I shall remember the day I am dying
They can't take this away
It will be always mine, the sun and the wine
The sea birds crying*

All happiness must pay

*And if our ship goes down
She'll go with the flag still flying
But look at me and say
You will remember too that this was our lovely day*

*I'll remember, I'll remember
When the time has come for happiness to pay
Sad and sighing, old and dying
I'll remember how we loved our lovely day
Our lovely day
Our lovely day*

July 8th – Tuesday

The wind was already dropping out yesterday evening and by this morning, it was just about gone altogether. There was a bit of tide on the beach this morning and an awful lot of weed but only on the eastern side of the Harbour. We were clearly not in the mood to hang about and returned to get the outside display arranged at the shop before going back upstairs again.

It took half the day before the sun we were promised made an appearance and a bit longer than that before we saw any customers in numbers. We dribbled through the morning with sporadic visits and the occasional flurry, which was hardly inspiring.

Not wishing to idle my time away, I wandered the shop looking for things running out and shelf spaces to fill. It resulted in a re-order of the popular soap from a St Ives based soap company and filling up the mood rings which are perennial best sellers, or used to be. The rings used to come with a little card showing a key of the colours and the 'moods' represented by each.

For the last couple of years, the rings have come without the card, which is a bit useless. At the trade show this year I found an alternative supplier and the cards are back again. We have seen sales dip through that period, but I am not sure that it had anything to do with the cards - it is not apparent that they are available until you get to the till. Since we have sold them for 20 years, perhaps we have reached the end of their popularity.

After such an interesting interlude, I proceeded to start the cash and carry order. It is a bit early but always good to get ahead of the posse. I can always go back and amend numbers if I find that we have sold an abundance of something subsequent to me ordering for it or not. Fortunately, it got a little busier shortly into the afternoon because I was struggling to contain my excitement.

Dealing with customers is far more interesting. Each interaction is unique, some fun some perhaps not so much but each one is precious in its own way. Sometimes it is

things customers do that creates a memorable moment and sometimes something we do, like the minimum card payment.

We do not get much push back for having a minimum charge on a payment card; the amount is not onerous, and we are very flexible on the limit. Mostly people will just purchase an additional item or miraculously find they had some cash after all. Occasionally we reach an impasse with a customer who does not want to purchase something else to nudge the total over the minimum and there are a few moments of fixed eye contact where the customer realises that I am not about to cave in on the issue. We have yet to fall out with a customer over it – although we did have an object thrown at us once during the Battle of the Dreaded Lurgi in '21 but that was wartime and does not count.

People have many reasons not to carry cash, not least that so many shops where they come from will not take it. One of the most perplexing reasons comes from walkers who do not want to carry cash because of the weight. I find this incredible. One such gentleman arrived today and was utterly determined that he should not bear the additional weight of £3.90 he would have received in change for the bottle of water he wished to purchase. He spent ten minutes searching for something to bring the purchase above the card minimum. He chose a couple of energy bars which he tucked into his pack for later.

I reasoned that in the worst case you would only need to carry £4.90 in change if you avoided it accumulating. After the gentleman left, out of curiosity, I weighed £4.90 on our scales. It is roughly 50 grams or a little ways under two ounces. It did not seem a burden worth the worry, and I doubt that he would have even noticed.

Oh, the weight of two energy bars – 90 grams.

We had the farm shop cash and carry delivery in the middle of the afternoon. It would have been handy a couple of hours earlier when I had nothing to do. Nevertheless, I managed to clear it all between customers and get much of it out on the shelves. It is convenient that I can clear the cardboard away too as the collection is tomorrow morning and I will need the space for the main cash and carry delivery at the weekend.

We had a proper five minutes to closing rush today. Right at the last knockings an America visitor from America with his family bounded into the shop. His only purpose was to enquire where I might recommend that they eat. As he rightly pointed out later, it was a very costly question because before they left ten minutes later, they had spent a goo deal of money – I had not even charged them reciprocal tariffs.

From his forthright and commanding manner, I was guessing that the family were not from not so frozen Vermont, very far west of Camborne. I had bare had time to answer the question about eating when I was asked another about maps of the Coast Path that they were following. As I tried to answer that one, I was asked

another about how we must be deluged with American tourists. We see Americans from time to time, but the numbers are outweighed by Europeans and, I omitted to say on grounds of sensitivity, Canadians.

I would have loved to ask where in America they had come from and what had prompted a walk of the Coast Path as opposed to say, a visit to Buckingham Palace. I would have loved to ask many questions, but I was struggling to answer all the ones coming my way, so quickly upon each other they were. I felt somewhat exhausted when they left.

The sun had ceased shining when, much revived, I took ABH around the block later. It was a little later than usual due to a very important Lifeboat Operations team meeting. We manage to conclude these meeting in well under an hour, which is remarkable given how very important they are. The Missus has much more important very important meetings at the Management Team, which go on for hours.

We met a miniature ABH in the Harbour car park, the same breed mix and very small. The two of them got on like best pals and we each learnt that the two share similar character traits. I was only mentioning rent-a-friend yesterday and this one would have done nicely in a few months.

July 9th – Wednesday

If you were rather keen to have an example to hand of what a glorious day looked like, you could have done worse than chosen today. Had you asked me first thing, I might have given a different answer as it was significant less than glorious then.

Being a deeply cynical grumpy shopkeeper, I viewed Radio Pasty's assurance that the sun would split the hedges later on with a dusting of suspicion. After all, they had been consistently wrong for the last two weeks. Today, they hit gold and by the time our butcher arrived with supplies in the middle of the morning, there was blue sky elbowing its way into the cloud above us.

It did not take long after that for the sun to break through and for the day to almost aspire to rip gribbling standards, but having missed the morning, I am afraid that it fell short. Instead, we slipped into one of those days which is busy in the morning but drops dead in the afternoon as everyone settles on the beach and cannot be fagged to move. The only things that break the spell are the approach of teatime, the tide pushing them off the beach or a timely shower of rain. Happily, the time and tide conspired together to bring an end to all that slobbering around and to introduce some life back into our end of The Cove.

I had been very pressed during the early part of the morning. There was not much bottling up to do but we had some greengrocery arrive which took some time to sort out. It was as soon as I opened the first electric sliding door in The Cove that I was

immediately under siege. Alright, it was not quite like that, but we had three big grocery purchases in quick succession, which started a bit of a run.

The Missus took over the baton when she came down to relieve me for gymnasium duty. Her purchases switched from grocery to beach goods and in some short order she had sold most of our displayed stock of parasols. I had sold a few beach tents before I went, and I think that she sold some too. Had this been August month, I would be in a panic that we would be running out and missing some vital sales. It is a salient lesson and hopefully just in time. I should try and second guess a day in advance.

While in the doldrums after I returned from my blistering session and a run on the beach with ABH, the shop was not completely devoid of customers. There were enough coming and going to scupper any hope of completing the cash and carry list that is now in day two of its construction. I will have to give it some serious focus tomorrow to get it done. It is an order that will lead us into the school holidays, so I need to compensate for an increase in custom – we hope. It will require some thought, sorry, some greater thought.

Come four o'clock, after a few hours of casual shopkeeping I was bowled over by a flood of customers coming off the beach. This persisted all through until closing time when, mercifully, at five minutes to closing, it all went quiet. This was despite the Harbour beach being full of diminutive revellers who are well known to have an innate sense of our closing time. They arrive in a big hurry, dripping from head to foot, to denude our shelves of pop, sweets and snacks before we close. After they have gone, I spend ten minutes mopping the floor. No, you are right, I do not. I leave it to dry in the warmth of the shop and wait a week for the seawater stains to wear off.

Some of our customers take their time perusing our shelves. I cannot blame them as we pack things in quite tightly and I am sure a professional shelf planner would have apoplexy and all the rules we break. Even we can do a circuit of the shop looking for things that need topping up and missing a few.

I am not sure however, that we have ever taken quite so long as one lady who arrived before the four o'clock rush. She was quite noticeable when she arrived due to the number of tattoos she was sporting on both arms. A while after she came in, I spotted her by the rock and postcard fudge box section and then thought no more about her as we started to get busy. It was a little while after the big rush at four o'clock that she appeared at the counter. I cannot say for sure how long she had been in the shop and my curiosity was not such that it warranted a trawl through the CCTV. I would guess she had taken the best part of 45 minutes to collect four sticks of rock, two postcard boxes of fudge and a bookmark. I can certainly say that she gave us a very fair chance of tempting her with everything else we have. She cannot have missed a thing.

When I took ABH around later, the beach was still thronging with the local mob. You certainly cannot ignore evenings like this because there are not enough of them. Later in the summer, the beach will be filled with visitors too, and perhaps not so special for the local community. There were still adult stragglers there when we headed out again in the later evening. Now that is taking full advantage, for sure.

July 10th – Thursday

It would be hard to imagine a more comfortable arrangement than the one we had on the Harbour beach this morning. It was the perfect mix of clear unadulterated sunshine and cool air and AHB and I revelled in it. It was not overly warm in the flat, but it was not quite as delightfully refreshing as it was on the beach. When I came down to the shop about an hour later, the sun was indeed splitting the hedges, and the heat was coming up off the pavement already.

Although I have experienced it many times over the years, the heat pouring from the Lifeboat station walls never fails to cause me great wonder. The granite acts as a huge storage heater, I suppose.

There were no big grocery orders this morning, but the day started reasonably busy and before long we started not only seeing breakfast goods go out but beach things as well. Some people seemed to enjoy getting to the beach early and for many it would be their last full day. They could have done far worse than the one they got.

I was expecting a day much in the same vein as yesterday with a long pause in the middle and bookmarked by busyness either end. What we got was busy the day long. I will have to amend my assessment of such days. It is likely that we caught a flood of going home present buyers, which is the only thing I can think of that made sense.

I had thought that I would have time to comfortably finish off the cash and carry order, but it was late in the afternoon when I finally entered the last item. I left it for the Missus to send off in the evening because there were a couple of items she wished to add. In the midst of trying to get that done I also remembered to order some crab that had been outstanding all week and placed an order for scallops that had been waiting even longer. The main reason for delaying the latter, which was deliberate, was that I wanted to call in some smoked salmon and smoked mackerel packs and was keen that they should not run out of date before we got busy.

Occasionally, I am caught out by questions about our stock that I had not previously contemplated. Most times I can bluster my way through such surprises but a lady this morning had me banged to rights. We sell walking poles or hiking sticks depending on your preference for names. It is a telescopic walking pole used by people who like to walk the Coast Path and other such public paths and presumably

do a lot of it. It is a handy item apparently and used by the able bodied as well as those with some walking difficulty.

I admit that I was of the opinion that a pole was a stick was a pole. I was sure that more expensive ones are available but in truth, what additional benefit might be derived from one costing twice as much, I am at a loss to guess at. Well, I was until a lady started asked about our sticky offerings. Did they come in pairs, perchance? Were they left or right-handed? Could you pogo on it?

I am sorry to say that I was dumbfounded. These very pertinent questions (apart from the pogo one that I made up) had never occurred to me and I was woefully unprepared. I did the only thing I could which was to lie through my teeth. They were meticulously designed by experts in the field to be ambidextrous They would work very well as a pair but were also sufficiently balanced that a walker using one would not end up going in circles. The lady happily bought one.

What we also sold a lot of, to one group alone, was the remaining stock of five parasols. These are beach parasols some 180 centimetres in diameter or near six feet in imperial measurement. I am sure that the ladies appreciated this detail but insisted upon using them to parade about with on the street. They are lightweight enough, and I am sure they were effective. They might have acted as a suitable advertisement were it not for the fact that they had bought the lot.

The rest of the day, busy though it was, did not offer up any further excitement. For the first time in several days, we made a reasonable dent on the number of pasties (sorry, MS) we were keeping. Ordering anything like the correct volume all week was a trial to say the least. With no notion how sales might run today, the guess for the weekend was even more difficult. I reduced the numbers we had last week because we were hugely overstocked. By the middle of the afternoon, I was fretting that it might have been a huge mistake.

The bay had been in splendid condition all day. It was hard to ignore, and my eyes kept on being drawn to its glittering and placid waters. There were hideous numbers of small children on the beach thanks to a local school having a beach day and enrolling a small army of them into surf lessons. The only thing wrong with that was there was no surf. The sand stretched out wide and pastel coloured for acres. Up on the tide line were dozens of tents, windbreaks and parasols of the beach dweller camps.

There may have been no surf to speak of but the sea was dotted with various revellers on paddleboards, in kayaks and on foot in the shallows. My intelligence told me that the waters actually met my usual description of stepping into a warm bath – although they thought it was warmer yesterday.

Just before four o'clock, I noticed Cape Cornwall slowing disappearing. A thin cloud of mist was slowly pouring in from the northwest. Presumably a small area of cool,

saturated air was rolling in, blown by a light breeze. Within an hour, we were enveloped up to the level of the cliff tops – I was told it was clear up top. The air was suddenly pleasantly cool, although we could not even see the beach at one point. Then it retreated and left us as if nothing had happened.

The sudden disappearance of the mist had put a sardine in the custard of Inshore Lifeboat planning. They had intended to use it as a navigational exercise but in the end had to pretend that they could not see where they were going. We launched both boats into the quiet seas at around quarter to six o'clock, the big boat going down south to meet up with Penlee to do some towing exercises.

I had my own planning to do for the evening courtesy of the Institutes new training regime. There is much to commend it for its orderly arrangement of units that the boat crew have to complete to stay green lighted to go on shouts. There is also the unfathomable complexity that means a unit called PPE – amongst others – must be completed for each role on the shore. For example, I must learn about PPE in my role as head launcher, winch operator and general crew despite it being identical for all three. In order to be green-lighted, I must be recorded as having completed the training over twelve exercises, one for each role and for low and high water launches and recoveries. It is quite exhausting and suggests that someone at head office might have too much time on their hands.

It took me almost as long as the boats were out to create a plan that would see all the crew with outstanding units catered for over the coming couple of weeks. The beach had cleared out considerably by the time the boats returned from their respective exercises at quarter to nine o'clock. I was completing one of my necessary roles on the Inshore recovery, but it was clear from where I was that we executed a textbook recovery for the big boat too up the long slip in calm conditions.

We were wrapped up on the Inshore recovery just in time to help close the station doors for the big boat. The training we do is so important. Had we not launched the Inshore boat on the Harbourn beach this evening I would never have discovered that part of the essential PPE needed amendment to include sunglasses and 50 factor sun lotion. We are, after all, a very safety conscious, very excellent Shore Crew.

July 11th – Friday

The day surpassed itself for loveliness right from the outset of the day. I suppose it rather depends on how you rate loveliness in a day because if you were not very keen on blistering heat and very little in the way of breeze, this was not your day at all.

It was very warm from the off. ABH and I laboured through it down on the Harbour beach with the sea giving off very little in the way of cooling. It looked very pretty though. Later, after my blistering session at the gymnasium, she made a bee line for

the water and plonked straight in. I was very tempted to join her and probably would have done so had it not been so dreadfully wet.

It was the sort of day when everything, even ordinary tasks, required a maximum effort to achieve. Sadly, the morning was filled with things that required effort and where, whatever it was I needed, was at the back, underneath or high up. Even in the relative cool of the temporary gymnasium, the heat eventually called a halt to my 5,000 metre row, a 1,000 metres short. It was still a blistering session, it was just that I blistered far earlier than expected.

The Missus was in full flight when I got back. The pasty man (sorry, MS) who was a stand in and had been late all week, had arrived even later today because of the volumes he was carrying. The shop was jumping, and the Missus was trying to stuff the fridge and serve customers at the same time. I had arrived at just the right moment it had seemed.

It was still busy after I had refreshed myself and come down to let the Missus off to The Farm. In my short absence, at least two deliveries had come and gone and the store room, the one that needed to be clear for the cash and carry order, was full to the brim of cases of beer and pop. This would wait until into the afternoon when we entered the doldrums as we returned to a more usual sunny day profile of business.

The bay mirrored its performance of the previous day. Hardly a wave on the water, but plenty of people enjoying the wide open beach and the small shore break in the shallows. I learnt later that the local school had its sports day down there today that would have accounted for the large groups I saw. I noted this a couple of days ago and thought then that it was the local mob. Apparently not. My source told me that schools from further up country interlope on our beach for similar purposes. The very cheek of it.

During the quiet moments that I had the call of the store room dragged me away from any other pressing matters. Piecemeal, I managed to move the various cases of drink to the far end of the shop and some of those onto the shelves. It will be harder now to accommodate the volume of soft drinks that we need to keep onsite for the busy summer. During the week, I can combat this by daily deliveries but I still need to ramp up for the weekends. There is also the issue that the delivery comes after I have bottled up for the day, so I need to think a day in advance and guess what is going to run out in the interim.

It took all the way through to the end of the day to clear the store room floor and give it a quick sweep. We had started to see some customers come off the beach but, I guess, because it is change-over day, we did not see a major rush.

We did, however, start to see new arrivals. One of these was the advance party of a family arriving over the weekend. She told me she not came far, just over the border in Devon and some of the schools there had already broken up. This was a bit

worrying as I had stayed my hand a little during the cash and carry order on the basis that we still had a week or two in hand and I could get away with a bigger order next time. We could be in a bit of trouble if visitors start arriving in numbers.

The school sports day had apparently coincided with the end of the schools day and all the children had migrated to the Harbour beach to continue their games and frolic. At the same time, a slow trickle of parents started to appear and before long, the beer fridge and the snacks shelves were emptied of their stock. Along with the cash and carry delivery tomorrow, I also have a mountain of bottling up to do. What joy.

At the last knockings, as I went around doing my orders, I noted that the drinks fridge was almost empty of big bottles of water. It had been full with the last of the stock. Tomorrow's delivery of twelve cases of water will be timely but if this heatwave continues, will it be enough for a fortnight. Saty tuned to find out in the continuing saga of a grumpy shopkeeper and his stock of mineral water. Gad, the suspense.

July 12th – Saturday

I knew that this morning I would be sorely pressed for time. Greengrocery, newspapers, cash and carry and milk were all set to arrive, hopefully at different times. It was therefore me having to drag ABH out of bed first thing to get her out before the fight started. She was not happy.

She has not yet discovered my ruse that, after giving her a bit of a poke and getting a grumpy growl in response, I head to the living room and start talking to an imaginary person. So far, she has come running every time because she cannot bear to think she has not met someone.

We headed for the Harbour beach as usual where there was just a sliver of sand available to us almost at the top of the tide. When we had come past for our after tea walk the beach was still thronging from earlier. It could well have been the middle of a busy holiday day it was so busy down there. Likewise, the Harbour car park was rammed and with more vehicles arriving, we struggled to get through it. This morning, it could not have been more different with not a sole about and a very welcome easterly blast, however warm it was. Our very own little scirocco – how do you do.

With a little haste, I made my commitment to get down to the shop well ahead of the posse. It was still a task that took me almost until opening to repair the damage to the soft drinks fridge and the yawning gap left by the absence of beer in the beer fridge. As opening time approached, I put the Missus on standby to come down should the cash and carry turn up after opening time, which was looking increasingly likely.

I did have to call upon the Missus for some assistance because the cash and carry arrived shortly after we opened. It coincided with a small grocery delivery but mercifully the milk arrived ten minutes after we had finished. The Missus stayed to clear the backlog of tomatoes and litres of milk and made ready to head up to The Farm a good couple of hours in advance of her normal time.

What was left to do was all the cash and carry delivery and to fend off a growing number of customers while I worked my way through it. There were clearly new arrivals in town, and these mingled with the fortnight stayers to produce a very busy period. It did not go slack, and that was relatively speaking, until the early afternoon when I had to step up my processing of the delivery to get it done.

I was interrupted in my task by the arrival of the frozen order we had placed the day before. This was mainly ice creams and the order, thankfully, not one of our biggest. It did, however, need to be put away in a very timely manner especially as today was hotter still than the day before. Even the easterly breeze was not making that much difference in the shop today. I managed by simply dumping the boxes into the gap under the display and the other couple of items into the chest freezer in the store room. This would leave me hostage later when topping up the ice cream display would be an additional task on top of other no doubt urgent tasks when I would wish I had time to do it earlier.

I returned with some vigour to filling shelves in the shop between customers and when customers were not down the grocery aisle. A couple of hours later, the store room looked just as full as when I had started. I concluded that it was the cases of water that were filling up the space and creating the illusion. It probably was not, but that was what I concluded, and it made me feel much better about myself.

While I was dashing about waiting for the cash and carry man to arrive, Radio Pasty merrily announced that rain was on its way for Sunday afternoon. I was not completely sure that it was Sunday and the Missus told me that it was later in the week. However, it gave me enormous fun through the morning. Nearly every customer commented about the weather and how lovely it was, how hot and how very glorious. I would wait until the end of the discussion and casually throw in, 'rain coming'. Oh, what a jolly wheeze, it was and kept me amused for ages.

In the closing stages of the day, with yet another five minutes to closing rush in full force, I could hear the thump of the bass line of the Sound Waves event kicking off at the new Surf Lodge, previously known as The Beach restaurant. It is what passes for a discotheque in the modern age where the disc jockey is an 'artist' and sometimes called a master of ceremonies (MC) – at least I assume that is what it stands for. I am not entirely sure why a person putting similar sounding records on a turntable and playing one after the other attains such giddy heights of adulation, but I think it is all in the way the first record segues into the next. Anyway, the result from afar is a continuing bass line thump for a very extended period. Thankfully, I am deaf.

This reminded me of an event that I failed to pick up on at the time. Some time on Friday morning the OS had its new pizza shed arrive. Yes, I know I have not mentioned it before, largely because I forgot all about it after someone mentioned that it had required planning permission.

One of the Lifeboat crew sent a photograph of it arriving. It looks rather like one of those modern takes on an old-fashioned shepherd's hut that have been all the rage for camping in recent years. It is the same shape but at least twice the size and on very small wheels. I understand that it is to be hoisted to the terrace bar where it will sit comfortably with the concrete block of apartments the brewery erected in the car park and continue the tradition of, erm, architectural juxtaposition with the iconic seventeenth century inn.

Quite why the St Dreadful Brewery wanted to extend their food offering with a pizza shack is a little beyond me. Perhaps they were jealous of the popularity of the mobile pizza wagon that turned up in the beach car park now and again. The brewery like to boast how much it does for the community, so maybe they felt that they were doing us all a favour by stamping out these rogue, fly-by-night operations. It seems to me a shame that with all their resources they could not have thought of something new and different. It was also not all that long ago that the OS was trying to turn diners away because they were unable to cope with the volume. We shall wait with cautious optimism to see how this turns out.

By the closing time in the shop, I was a little frayed at the edges. The last rush had emptied the beer fridge in our customers' search for anything cold and alcoholic. At least I know now in what order of preference our offerings lie. There was only a few single cans of cider, some wines and a couple of gin and tonics left. The soft drinks fridge is in a similar condition, although there was more volume there to start with. Perhaps I should consider a larger beer fridge for next year. In the meantime, however, I need only consider getting up half an hour earlier to restock it all.

It was still blazing hot and the Harbour beach full of revellers when I took ABH around the block for an after tea run around. Ideally, we would have headed for the water but there were far too many small children about to make that comfortably possible. Even at nine o'clock, out for our last run, there were families still enjoying the last of the sunshine and plenty put to watch the sunset.

Time now to recharge for it all again tomorrow. Rain coming.

July 13th – Sunday

I think yesterday was some sort of record for outside school holiday sales. My, my, we were some busy. I had already explained that the assorted hordes cleaned out the beer fridge and gave their best shot at doing the same to the soft drinks fridge as

well. I may have mentioned that the ice cream freezer also took a bit of a battering and needed my attention too.

It did not help matters that the soft drinks were variously buried under yesterday's delivery and also on the shelf behind it. It was mainly the 12 kilogram cases of water that were the problem and I had to shift eight of them – we had already used four - to gain easy access to all the other drinks. I had given myself additional time this morning and there were no other deliveries to distract me apart from a smattering of cheese from the dairy. Even then, I was close to opening the shop by the time I had finished only to discover that I had forgotten about the ice creams.

Fortunately, after a brief rush to be the first few customers of the day, there was enough of a lull in proceedings to allow me to top up the dwindling sections. I even managed to tack on my breakfast before the fight started, which on busy weekends was nigh on miraculous. I had taken a risk by having some of the newly arrived smoked salmon. It would have been akin to a crime to have to rush it.

We were busy enough today but not on the scale of yesterday. Quite what drove that level of busyness it is hard to say. The weather would have played a central role and today, the sun had had been filtered by some thickening high-level cloud – told you, rain coming. Had I subscribed to some of the outlandish conspiracy theories I have seen on social media, I might have blamed the Government for some sun dimming experiment or cloud seeding by some passing jet aeroplane. I cannot help feeling that people have too much time on their hands. I subscribe to the old fashioned notion that it is the weather.

Whether it be the weather or some mad scientist experiment that we are unaware of, there seems to be an abundance of butterflies around this year. I do not know their names anymore and we have not latterly been introduced. I can tell you that there were a few white ones fluttering about on the beach the other day and a red and dark coloured one on the slipway. For the last week they have fluttered past the first electric sliding door in The Cove and one even came in for a brief exploration before leaving again.

I looked up what an abundance of butterflies suggested and found that it meant Panama, or rather Panama means an abundance of butterflies which is why Panama is called Panama – it has bung loads of butterflies, I understand. It was not quite what I meant, so I amended my search and found that it simply means that the environment is healthy. Why the environment is healthier this year than, say last year, I have no idea. Everyone else is saying that it is knackered; the butterflies, clearly think otherwise.

I am with the butterflies on this one. The Missus called me halfway through the afternoon and waved a small bag of peas at me, produce of The Boathouse Farm. Whether we will have sufficient for the shop is debatable but right now, there was enough for my tea. This also would have been at risk if Mother had teeth, as there

were not enough to share. I toyed with the idea of calling her dentist to delay her new dentures until after the pea season has ended.

We had some more extended quieter periods during the afternoon. I shamelessly squandered them by doing very little. There were still a few items in the store room that needed unwrapping and putting on shelves. I did a few but largely left them until tomorrow. It was at the end of the day that I had my work cut out for me. There was an abundance of ordering to do from all the denuding of the shelves that had gone on during the last thirty-six hours or whatever – I was not counting.

It was still plenty warm enough to be abroad in the evening without a jacket. I do not like to say that I told you so, but we had earlier watched from our window a couple of promenaders reach for their rain ponchos as a light line of showers passed through The Cove. It was brief, but it had rained for all those who thought me mad in the head.

The Harbour beach was occupied again as we passed by during our after tea walk, but mainly by sea. The proliferation of young bodies frolicking in the surf was absent tonight, although they had been there earlier and the car park just had the normal crowd of those possibly seeking to watch a glorious sunset later. The beach was completely deserted at nine o'clock when we passed by, but the sunset watchers looked to be having a treat. I was not awake long enough to see it.

July 14th – Monday

I am beginning to regret mentioning the rain now. It had clearly been raining at some point before I ventured out in the morning and the sky was not looking all that respectable. ABH and I got away with it, but a jacket was required against the brisk wind. It rained some more, quite heavily, just before we opened and when I was compelled to go upstairs on some errand and consequently got a brief soaking. There were some further lighter showers and even a couple after the Missus told me that there would be no more. What does she know?

The rain was not really an impediment to a bit a decent trading. In fact, it seemed busier than yesterday, but I think that was mainly because it was less of a beach day and more of wandering about shopping day.

Part of not making it a beach day was the sea state. We have gone from calm as a mill pond to quite stirred up. There is a burgeoning swell and the surf was making abundant white water inshore and looked prettier than it was useful for surfers I suspect. That did not stop an army of revellers from wading in and enjoying it and there were a few surfers out there making the best of it too.

It did not strike me as being very cold despite a bit of a breeze banging around from somewhere westerly. However, perhaps if you are from a warmer climate my warm

is someone else's chilly. So it appeared to be for a group of Asian girls. It might have been East Asia, but I am not very good at that sort of thing. I certainly would not make a career of it. I must remark that the situation was not helped by the apparent flimsiness of their apparel.

They sought out our warm and alluring hooded sweatshirts as a remedy but clearly did not recognise how keenly priced they were as they had the temerity to ask for a discount. I put it down to cultural differences and tried not to be too upset. It certainly took the edge off when they purchased two, then called their friends in who purchased two more.

The rain had abated long enough for me to put in a blistering session in the gymnasium and get ABH down to the Harbour beach afterwards. I was much recovered for my rowing and managed the whole 5,000 metres without issue. I must have just been a little weary on Friday or the jangling till from Saturday had injected much needed vigour into my system.

The little girl had a stroke of luck on the Harbour beach, too. As we descended the slipway, she espied a small dog around her size wandering a bit aimlessly down by the end of the western slip. Her initial approach was tentative, which I was pleased about as she usually frightens off any potential playmate by charging in guns blazing. Sadly, two seconds later she launched down the slope, all guns blazing. Quite miraculously, the other dog seemed to appreciate this and the two of them took off across the beach, full pelt. They spent a good twenty minutes charging around and enjoying each other's company while I chatted with the couple whose dog it was.

The Missus had been busy in my absence and when I returned, I was busy too. It was fairly consistent throughout the day, but I still managed to find time to clear the last few remaining items of Saturday's cash and carry delivery. We then had two further deliveries of drinks to replace much of the stock that was cleared out over the weekend. The soft drinks will have to wait until tomorrow morning and I will have to again get down to the shop early to get them done.

On our last beachware delivery, I had noted the absence of a box of funky seagull keyrings. These have been selling exceedingly well as the salesman had assured me they would. I had guessed the supplier had exhausted its stock but had no idea if it was on backorder or never to be seen again. While I was at the gymnasium, the supplier tried to call but as I do not take calls when I am halfway across the bay in my rowing machine, I called back. As I had thought, the item was back in stock but to get it delivered I still needed to make up a minimum order.

Creating the order was not hard to do, we needed pop-up tents for a start, but it took time to define what we needed and how many of each and update our records accordingly. The distraction almost made me miss the deadline for pasty ordering (sorry, MS). I discovered later that it probably would not have mattered too much as while pasty sales were reasonable, they had not met the expectation I had when I

placed the order for them on Sunday. We most likely would have enough to cover tomorrow as well. Later, I made the same error with the local bread, although it was a different distraction that time. Missing the bread order would indeed have been noticeable.

ABH was not that keen to take an after tea stroll, so we left it until she decided she wanted to go later on. It was pleasant enough out but the wind made a jacket a requirement for grumpy shopkeepers like me. For the small children cavorting in the bouncing waters of the Harbour, a swimsuit was all that was required. They were splashing and diving off the Lifeboat short slip and for some reason it put me in mind of the stories and old photographs of children playing in the murky waters of the Thames East End and docks in London. They were all without parental guidance and all perfectly safe and having harmless fun.

Even the older ones on the Harbour wall, daring thought it is, probably were not in huge danger, although there is an element of risk. The swell had picked up in the bay and large ponderous waves were rolling in, launching up the cliffs opposite and thundering in on the rocks. They were also rolling over the Harbour wall, sometimes flossing but mostly lumping and taking young bodies with them into the churning waters of the Harbour. This is The Cove in summer.

July 15th – Tuesday

I noticed, quite by chance that *The Times* and *Sun* newspapers were increasing their cover price from yesterday. The Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company, in its wisdom, decided that it was best not to inform its retailers. Perhaps they feared insurrection.

You might ask, dear reader, why there would be any risk of dispute from retailers because a newspaper increased in price. After all, surely the retailers would gain a commensurate advantage by selling a more expensive newspaper. Ah, but there is the rub. News UK has decided, with very little notice to anyone, to increase its cover price but maintain the margin paid to retailers at the old rate – at least until January when they may up it but at a smaller percentage than previously. The utter bounders.

I think I must have Maximilien Robespierre or Che Guevara's atoms somewhere about me, which is conceivable. My first reactionary impulse was to terminate my supply of the culprit newspapers forthwith in an act of fierce rebellion. I then considered the level of grief I had when we were doing no newspapers at all and canned the idea. It is, however, another good reason to part ways with the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company, which would also mean losing the very useful cardboard collections. Oh, very dear.

The newspapers were not the only upset of the day. It looked quite grey when I peered through the windows in the morning. When ABH and I stepped outside, we

discovered that it was grey. We had noted that for the last week, the sun was not creeping above the cliff until after we had finished our stroll and set up the outside display. This morning it was not bothering to show its face at all, and I even took a rain jacket as the street was still wet from recent rain. It was good protection against a blustery wind from somewhere in the west but except for a few spots of rain, that could have been wind blown bits of sea, I did not need it to stay dry.

ABH elected to take a walk around the block this morning and it is the only time of the day now that we see no one at all. The car park was largely empty whereas the last couple of mornings there have been vans parked there. I have had two recent complaints about the state of the Harbour car park toilets, which surprised me as most of the comments I have had were positive. They are cleaned regularly, in fact one of the people who complained, returned later to say that the toilets had indeed been cleaned. It cannot be said with any certainty that the problem comes from people staying overnight, but the overnight camping was banned a while back because of the mess being left behind. Let us hope it was a temporary aberration.

Talking of aberrations, I had a second Laurel and Hardy Company related issue, this time with the company itself. You may be aware, dear reader, that we sometimes are offered vouchers in exchange for newspapers, a practise that rewards us with an extra penny for each voucher taken – this is probably now a ha'penny for *The Times* and *Sun* newspapers, I have not checked. Every six weeks, I carefully count these vouchers and tot up their worth on a special form. I send it to the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company so that they can recompense me for the value of vouchers taken.

It takes a couple of weeks before the credit is shown on the weekly invoice. For the last twenty years, I have blithely assumed that the credit is correct, mainly because it looks about right and secondly, it is a bit of a fag to check it. For some reason unknown to my conscious self, I decided to check today and noticed that I had been shorted by nearly £5. Well, I was not having that, now was I. I promptly wrote to the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company Customer Services Team. I included the information that I assumed they would need, including the envelope number in which the vouchers were enclosed, the date on which I sent it and the value of the vouchers I had calculated using the pricing data that was on the form.

I was quite surprised to find a response from the Customer Services Team in my inbox by the middle of the afternoon. It is most unlike the company to be so prompt in its replies. In order to process my query with the relevant team could I please provide them with the envelope number in which the vouchers were enclosed, the date on which I sent it and the value of the vouchers and the number of vouchers. I did not dare point out that I had already provided this information – apart from the number of vouchers; they would simply find another way to torture me further. Instead, I cut and pasted my original message and added the number of vouchers sent. I will probably have to provide all the information again to the team that looks after voucher queries just shortly before they tell me that half a dozen vouchers were

upside down, in the wrong date order or I have written the claim number slightly outside the box provided for it and it was therefore ignored. I cannot exactly say that I am awaiting the outcome with eager anticipation or anticipation.

It did seem to be considerably quieter today, although we still had a reasonably constant flow of customers through the day. There were a few memorable quiet bits. I tried sitting down and putting my feet up but quickly discovered that I acquired a strong desire to fall asleep. To counter this somnolence, I whizzed about the shop, topping up shelves, moving things and collecting bikinis that were hanging off their hangers.

The latter were a subject of bemused concern for a while. I had collected tops without bottoms and bottoms without tops over the recent weeks with no sign at all of their respective partner. Today, the offending articles practically gave themselves up before my very eyes as I went to look again. My next challenge was to fit the reunited elements back onto the flimsy hanger in something resembling their original state. It is a mysterious garment, and I am very glad that I do not have to wear one. It was bad enough trying to get it onto the hanger.

My tour also reminded me that we need to order some more postcard fudge boxes which are looking low on the shelf and scant in the store room. By the time I reached the counter, something else had intervened in my thoughts and I forgot all about it - again. I have long considered my forgetfulness not a product of any sinister reason but merely my racing thought process. I am constantly thinking ahead to the next hour, the end of day, the following day, the following week, trying to get in front of things before they happen. The fact that I had thought about the postcard fudge boxes ticked a box in my sorry head as if it had already been done and the next item came up for review.

It is entirely possible that the next item was pasty ordering (sorry, MS). I had fully intended to miss a delivery tomorrow - for the second day running - on the grounds that we had enough. As with yesterday, we had a bit of a pasty rush which panicked me into a small order for tomorrow. At the end of the day, it was clear I should not have been such a wuss and stuck to my original plan. The forecast for tomorrow looks poor – it will obviously not be as poor as they suggest, but we will undoubtedly have a slow day of it.

The expectation for tomorrow is useful as we have a largeish beachware delivery and hopefully the small bags of sweets will be delivered in a timely manner, too. If I can get these boxed off this week we will be in good stead for a renewed onslaught next week when some more schools break up.

We concluded the day in a sedate and orderly manner. There was no particular five minutes to closing rush on the scale that we have recently been used to. The day was busy enough and we finished with a respectable till and two more bikinis on

the rack than we started with. That is not the ideal position, but it will have to do for today.

The sea had been banging about some more today, but it looked a little less banging than yesterday. It was also terribly blown out by the 40 miles per hour wind from the southwest. In The Cove we had been sheltered from most of it but the bay suffered somewhat. I met a local young man staring at the waves in the Harbour when we passed by on our after tea walk. He told me that he was considering wave jumping later and I enquired about his state of sobriety given that he was old enough to know better. I told him about the children yesterday and we agreed that by the time the Harbour wall jumping potential reached its peak, the kiddiwinks would be tucked up in bed.

We did pass by again at our last knockings and there were half a dozen of the local young people who should know better engaged in high jinks as the wave pounded over the full length of the wall. It was easily much more of a maelstrom than the previous evening and much more suited to the ages involved. I admit, it looked tremendous fun – if you like that sort of thing. I was rather glad I was only watching.

July 16th – Wednesday

Oh, deary me. It was a grand day for the high stool as my best pal used to say. I would have agreed with him, but I was stuck in the shop on vigil for the rare appearance of a customer.

The writing was on wall right from the outset of the day. The trouble was you could not see the wall for the mist, nor the other side of the bay, nor the beach. The end of the Harbour wall a mere suggestion. We discovered it was mizzle when ABH and I stepped out in it and occasionally the thin rain turned into fatter rain. It was hard to know which was wetter.

Despite the Missus promising that the rain and mist would clear in the morning, we were stuck with it all day. The wet stuff came and went but it mostly came in the morning and mostly went in the afternoon. It took with it most of our customers who most likely went to St Ives and complained that it always rains when they go to St Ives.

Having cleared the morning orders and topped up the drinks chillers, I merely had to wait for the Missus to appear so that I could take myself off to the gymnasium. While the air seemed to have cleared some outside with the change in weather, perversely the gymnasium was stuffier than usual. It did not enhance my rowing experience any, but I still managed the full 5,000 metres, although I probably looked like I had fallen overboard when I left.

We have some long-term friends staying up behind the shop in the mews. They have a dog around the same age as ABH and as luck would have it, they were standing outside the shop when I returned. I brought ABH down from upstairs where she had been languishing since we got back from our first walk. She is no longer keen to come and sit in the shop and this morning, she was decidedly out of sorts.

I had no problem bringing her down because she had seen our friends' dog from the window and was keen to meet. It was clear immediately that they both got on well and we jointly decided to head to what was left of the Harbour beach so that they could run about together, which they did from the top of the slip. One advantage of the weather was that the beach was deserted, and the two dogs chased each other all over with ABH occasionally diving into the sea to cool off. Usually, she will avoid it if there are waves, but I think she was desperate today.

While I was making myself respectable for the shop again, which obviously only takes a few moments, the beachware order that we were expecting arrived. Sadly, I missed being able to help lift in the heavy boxes and it seems that I also missed the Moomaid local ice cream delivery that needs timely distribution to the ice cream freezer. Thankfully, the Missus let me know how it all went in some detail. Fortunately, I was around to help load the beachware into the truck as the vast majority of it was for the store at The Farm. What a happy team we make.

By and by through the afternoon, I cleared the remaining boxes of hats, sun lotion and tent pegs. We do not sell a huge quantity of the latter, but when people are looking for them, they are immensely grateful that we do indeed stock them.

In the quiet bits of the afternoon, I bent my mind to the conundrum that the Missus raised the previous evening. Several weeks ago now, I alluded to a cunning fund-raising plan that the Missus had in mind to top last year's record breaking raffle for the RNLI. This year she intends to run, and it has been agreed by the Institute's hierarchy, a drive-in movie night over the October half term school holiday. The plan is to run Halloween themed films, a matinee for the families and an evening showing for adults. Attendant will be food stalls and a bar, presumably majoring on non-alcoholic beers, and I hope a young lady carrying a tray of popcorn and ice creams walking the aisles during the intermission. I think having a Wurlitzer introduction might be asking a little too much.

The stumbling block that we have is how to sell the tickets at a distance. Usually, ticket sales would be done via a website that would collect the purchasers' money and issue an electronic ticket. The Institute recommended a partner that they use for such things, but the partner would fleece us of seven percent of each ticket sale, which as you might imagine, we would rather avoid.

We expect to pay payment card processing fees but that only amounts to around three to four percent of each transaction and is unavoidable. Using the Missus'

discrete card machine would allow for this service, but she would have to send an individual message to each enquirer with a link and then, somehow, issue a ticket. A heavily manual and time-consuming prospect. We would rather avoid that, too. We could provide a link on a Facebook page but then how do we arrange to send a ticket or would the receipt be sufficient. We will continue to ponder.

There will be a big announcement for the event soon, but at present it is still in the planning stage.

With the weather misbehaving into the evening, we had not major rush at any time of the day, let alone at five minutes to closing. The day ended with a whimper, instead. It was starting to dry out a bit when I took ABH around the block after tea and was positively balmy and dry at last knockings. The mist was still as thick as a bag but there were no wave crashing over the Harbour wall and the water in the Harbour was reasonably placid. Hopefully a change is on the way.

July 17th – Thursday

The mist was still hanging on and was as thick as a bag when I peered out of the window in the morning. It had been quite cool when we went to bed last night but during the night, someone had turned up the temperature. The wet may have gone out of the mist but it was exceedingly humid, and I rather wish that I had not worn my fleece jacket when I took ABH down to the beach.

What I was also, was late. I had overslept by half an hour. For some reason, ABH has stopped waking me in the morning, although having said that she will of course resume the practise tomorrow morning. If she does, it will save me the fag of setting an alarm. I dislike setting an alarm because if I wake up earlier, I feel compelled to lie there until it goes off when it would be much more beneficial to get up. If I do get up before the alarm goes off, I have to remember to cancel it in case it goes off when I cannot reach the telephone to cancel it or, having cancelled it, forget to set it again. My life is full of such dilemmas.

I had omitted to place an order for pasties (sorry, MS) yesterday and so there was no delivery this morning. Because yesterday was so dire, there was precious little bottling up to do and few other deliveries. It was presumably why fate handed me a lie in today because it did not really matter. Instead, I made a start on the ladies' shorts that arrived with the beachware order the day before. This was to take me nearly all day but at least I had something to do between customers.

One of the main impediments to completing the shorts earlier was a rather hasty launch of the Lifeboat. A crabber six miles northwest of the station was taking on water, which crabbers any distance from the station should ideally not be doing. It

was unclear how bad the situation was at the time of the launch, so we launched as quickly as we could which is from inside the station. We had a dry run of this procedure using the new steel cable a few weeks back. This paid dividends as we were able to try it for real in the certainty that it worked.

As is frequently usual in these middle of the working day launches and to a similar extent at weekends, we were short of crew both on the boat and the shore. The shore side was not a huge issue as two people could run the in-house launch procedure, and we had three. The boat meant waiting some extra seconds for additional people to arrive.

The next phase of the operation was to wait and see what happened next. There were a number of predictable outcomes all of which would produce a different time of arrival back at the station. We could therefore not set up in advance and had to listen in on the radio messages and to go from there. On this occasion, we could mainly hear all the conversations between the boat and the casualty and the Coastguard. We learnt very rapidly that the boat's own pumps were coping with the inflow and that the Lifeboat was only required to standby in case anything went wrong.

Once the casualty crew had got the ingress under control, they were able to apply a fix to the leak and restart the engines. We would have been required to escort the vessel back to Newlyn, just to make sure their fix held but as luck would have it, Penlee, just done with a medical evacuation, was free to take over the escort not far from where it happened.

I was not keeping tabs, but I think that there was probably an hour or an hour and a half between launch and our boat being released. I had followed the incident closely so that I could organise a recovery team when I knew what time the boat would be back. As time elapsed and the potential for the boat returning became higher and higher, we got busier and busier in the shop. In the end, I had to call order and close the shop after ejecting the last couple who had entered.

Ostensibly, I only came back to the shop to cover the all important pasty order for the weekend. Miss that and we would have been in trouble. The Missus had covered for me a short time after I left for the launch. When I came back and I had made my plan for pasties, she took ABH off for a walk. It was not busy when she went but after that I was pretty much stuck to the till and after that, across to the station for the recovery.

We were fearfully short on shore; there were just two of us. This would be feasible but slow as I would have to work the winch then stop to assist with the slipway activity and then go back to winch again. Not ideal. We were grateful then when the winchman, pressed for time for an appointment he had to keep, came back to cover while he could. It is hard effort with just two crew and in the heat and humidity, quite uncomfortable. Despite these concerns, we managed to execute a textbook recovery

up the long slip under the blazing heat of the sun. We are, after all, a very damp, very excellent Shore Crew.

My first job when I returned to the shop was to load some more pasties into the oven to replenish the shop stock. This was fateful because I suddenly remembered that the sudden rush of customers we had before I left for the Lifeboat recovery had distracted me from placing the pasty order. I hurriedly check the time and discovered that there was three minutes between me and a disastrous pastyless weekend. I quickly placed the call, and all is now well with the world, but it was a demmed close thing.

We continued to be fairly busy through the day with people buying going home presents and others who had apparently just arrived buying beach gear. I never cease to be amazed by how quickly we recover from a poor weather day. It is as if it never happened. There must have been longer, quieter spells because I managed to complete labelling and putting hangers on the ladies' shorts. They are squeezed onto a rack at the end of the shop. We are woefully short of rack space for bikinis, swimsuits and shorts. So far, I have not come up with an idea to remedy or at least ease the situation as clothes seem to take up an inordinate amount of space. Their current condition I am sure adds to the problem that customers leave them in such a mess.

On Lifeboat training days, I have taken to having tea in the shop. I start at four o'clock because the second I make plans for it, we start to get busy, and it can take two hours to consume a simple sandwich. Today was no exception. We were flooded with customers coming in for last minute gifts to take home alongside those picking groceries for their own teas. I continue to be chuffed by the amount of people who buy their groceries from us and compliment us on the breadth of such stock. Thank you. I also am surprised by the number of people who rush in close to the end of day for swim shorts and swimming costumes, towels and flip flops, eager to get to the beach. What on Earth have they been doing all day that has left them this late in the afternoon keen to spend time on the beach.

I think I can understand that a person coming down the hill at the back end of a sunny and warm day, looking down on the wide sand and azure blue sea, thinking, crikey, I just have to go in for a swim. All right, I cannot see the allure myself, it is far too wet for one thing, but I know that some people just cannot keep out of it. That being the case, why were they not here earlier.

Having closed the shop, I made my way ahead of most of the pack to prepare for the evening's Lifeboat exercise. Part of my Head Launcher job now consists of planning who does what so that they cover any outstanding training units they have. It is a time consuming business and a bit like one of those puzzles where you have to move panels around to place them in the correct order. In my case, I do not know which panels are going to be present when I do the planning and I have to allow contingencies if people who have been placed in critical roles, do not turn up.

One of the main issues is that those of us in head launcher, winch and Tooltrak roles, rarely do the ordinary crew roles. A failing of the Institutes' training system is that if we carry out, say, head launcher for a low water launch and recovery, it does not tick the box for crew for low water launch and recovery despite us doing not a wholly different job. We therefore have to do a launch and recovery, now and again, as crew member, which gives me a problem because there is not enough of us. What utter fun it is.

Nevertheless, we launched the big boat for the second time in the day from inside the house. We felt it necessary to refine the procedure and to share our knowledge from the launch we did earlier in the day. We had expected to see the boat again in less than a couple of hours as both boats went off to play with Penlee's Atlantic 85 RIB down at Porthcurno.

As time went on and we watched as the trio of boats carried on further and further east, our Coxswain, on shore for the night, made enquiries. It seems that while the boats were out training, they happened upon a yacht with a leak and were busy fixing it and towing it back to Newlyn at the same time. It was gone nine o'clock and well past my bedtime when boat boats returned to The Cove.

The Inshore came first a good hour before the big boat that had to go all the way to Newlyn and back. Weary, at least I was, but with substantial more crew than earlier in the day, we carried out a textbook recovery up the short slip and tucked the boat away for service on another day. We are, after all, a very relentless, very excellent Shore Crew.

July 18th – Friday

I can talk about them now that they have gone. We have had a family staying close by who have frequented the shop for their day-to-day groceries and snacks, for which we are, of course, very grateful. It therefore might seem churlish to mention their almost unnatural predilection for apples.

It had not been that noticeable to start with but as the week progressed, I was ordering more and more to satisfy the demand. I was waiting to hear of orchards being decimated and fearful that my supply of cider might dry up later in the season. It was not until the middle of the week that things came into better focus. They reminded me that last year they had requested an apple and custard pasty (sorry, MS). I could not bring myself to enquire about such an aberration let alone order one. This year, obviously, they had decided to circumnavigate the local supplier and make their own.

I have asked the Missus to plant a few apple trees up at The Farm so we can cash in ourselves next year.

The day looked a whole lot better than it did the previous morning; you could see it for a start. It was warm but at least not as humid as the day before and in fact it was entirely pleasant as we took a wander on the Harbour beach. I had even remembered to wake up at the appointed time, which was comforting. It was the very best time to be out because the day slowly – very slowly, really - deteriorated after that.

Injecting an element of contrast into the day was the arrival of a lady who, it slowly emerged, was slight out of tune with the world that the rest of us inhabit. She came complete with three Malamute type dogs, including a puppy – twice the size of ABH. They were a welcome distraction. I was rather glad that the Missus was there too.

The lady had insisted that we fill the two dog bowls that we have under ABH's seat, which we did. We were then instructed to move one of the bowls because the adult dog commanded one and would not let the timid puppy have a drink. She had asked if she could come into the shop with the dogs, but I suggested that perhaps they might be a bit of a shop full, so she came in anyway. The dogs collapsed in a heap. Next, we were asked about the best fish and chip shop and as she told us she was heading to Penzance, we recommended a fish and chip shop there. She also asked where in Cornwall she might go that was quiet because one of the dogs was fearful of people. I pointed out to the lady that she was visiting Cornwall, one of the most visited areas of the country at near the height of the holiday season. We discussed Lizard peninsula, which might be quieter than, say, Newquay but I sensed that she was in output only mode and whatever I was saying was purely incidental.

During this conversation, the lady had hold of all three dogs on the same lead. At some point, when another customer wished to come in through the crowded doorway, she casually threw the lead to one side to let them in. There were more questions and more disjointed conversation during which the two younger dogs promptly fell asleep. It was then that the lady discovered she had lost her mobile telephone. This prompted a reaction that was perhaps slightly more extreme than the circumstances demanded, and we learnt that she was dependent on some form of benefit and would need to contact her benefactor and could not afford another telephone. She announced that she would retrace her steps to look for it and could we telephone her number every few minutes until she found it.

We were still discussing the difficult logistics of such a service while we tried to serve other customers when she remembered that she had left it in the toilets. She immediately left the shop and headed in the direction of the Harbour car park with a sharp instruction to the dogs which they studiously ignored. The Missus hurried to evict the dogs and as they reluctantly rose to their feet and headed to the door, the Missus confirmed that the lady had gone out of sight leaving the three dogs behind.

It was with relief and no small measure of trepidation when she hove into sight again with the three dogs that had caught up with her. Thankfully, she ignored us

completely headed to the café next door. It was too late to warn them. I am sure they coped; there are more of them.

The rest of the day passed mainly without unwelcome incident, which was welcome. There were, however, long periods without any sort of incident whatsoever, including customer visits. I took the opportunity to unwrap a package that had arrived yesterday. It was a belated order for novelties such as pens, keyrings and pasty magnets. I forget how mind-numbingly tedious these types of things are because each small item, hundreds of them, are individually wrapped in cellophane and some more difficult to extract than others. What a jolly time I had.

We now have keyrings in abundance adorning the keyring stand and pasty magnets covering the side of the beer fridge because I had nowhere else to put them. The pens were a replacement for the same volume, one hundred, that refused to work last year and had to be thrown away. I tested one or two, but I was too weary from unwrapping cellophane wrappers to either continue or give a care.

If we are to stay on the subject of deliveries. We had ordered a supply of our small sweet bags at the outset of the week. Sometimes these arrive the next day and sometimes, like this time, the best part of a week later. It would have been handy if they had arrived on Wednesday when we had poor weather and few customers. The small gods of grumpy shopkeepers rarely do handy, and the big heavy boxes arrived today at quarter to five o'clock. I had to shift them into the store room where they will be in the way until I can get them on their stand.

The timing of the order, just before the holidays start, was deliberate. The 50 pence sweet bags, many hundred of them, hang on a rack central to the main thoroughfare. If we are lucky, a full stand might last two weeks as it is denuded like a tree after a plague of locusts has been through. I do not know for sure, but I suspect it deflects purchases away from the main confection stand. If they were not there, I think we would not be able to refill the traditional sweets quickly enough as we are delivered once a fortnight for those.

The shop day was busy enough, although it did not seem so at the time. It was busier certainly towards the latter half of the afternoon and we were blessed with a five minutes to closing rush, which today was slightly problematic.

We were closing in on our six o'clock shop shutting time, and thankfully I had completed the newspapers and bringing in the outside display. It was then that a gentleman appeared with his finger stuck in a cup of water. He looked quite flustered. He looked quite flustered, mainly because he was quite flustered and panicked too. He explained that he had been taking down a beach tent and one of the plastic poles had shattered sending minute fragments into his finger. He was directed to us by someone who told him that we had everything a chap with splinters in his finger might want, particularly a needle.

He had already been to the Lifeguards, with whose service he was unimpressed. To be fair, the Lifeguards would have regarded fixing the problem as minor surgery and would have directed him to the nearest professional medical help as they are not trained or equipped for such things. Grumpy shopkeepers, however, are at least equipped for such things with a handy sewing kit complete with unsanitised needle. We also have tweezers that I use to pick tape out of our neck sealing machine used on plastic bags – just the thing.

I did spray both items with hand sanitiser before I handed them over, initially without payment I will have you know, and since our man appeared to have a pressing need, allowed him to commence his minor surgery on our highly unsuitable counter. It also set quite a bizarre scene that as he picked his finger apart at the counter, I had to service the needs of several late customers buying foodstuffs alongside him.

He decanted outside, where there was better light and he could sit down. I assisted as best I could, although I stopped short of having a go myself, but found some smaller tweezers and offer some words of encouragement. It took around twenty minutes before he announced that he believed that he had extracted the last of the almost microscopic fragments. As if to demonstrate his gratefulness for my support, he paid for the sewing kit he used. I provided additional plasters and antiseptic wipe for free, and I had not even had a drink. I am sure the trauma will subside over time.

I returned to the flat to be castigated by the Missus for delaying tea. Had I known that it contained much of our own produce – the fish we relied on a supplier for – I might have left our man to his fate. The Missus had some of our own salad; the Missus hates fish.

July 19th – Saturday

We had a rather sedate morning. It did not surprise me in the least, although I had prepared for an exit bubble by getting the pasties (sorry, MS) ready early. The main problem was the proliferation of different forecasts put about by the various bodies. Some said rain at certain times, others said no, and Radio Pasty said that we would be very unlucky if we encountered a shower today. I told that to the people who got absolutely soaked at around midday by a sudden and heavy dour pour. I think that they already knew that they were unlucky.

I had advance warning of the poor weather when both the BBC and the Meteorological Office were showing an abundance of sunshine for the weekend. Our International Correspondent, our friend from not so frozen Vermont, very far west of Camborne, send me a note during the week telling me that she had seen a weather warning in place for our area. It seems that if I want an accurate advance forecast (as opposed to the forecasts that our people do five minutes before it happens and still get it wrong) I need to move to America, which would rather defeat the purpose. It is a conundrum.

We had started out quite brightly, despite a fair amount of cloud cover. Looking at it, I was quite happy to put my faith in Radio Pasty, especially after that single shower of rain. Even that fell apart when the rain started encroaching in the latter part of the afternoon. Radio Pasty had told of rain coming in overnight but missed the mark by a fair few hours.

Today was all about the weather with nearly every customer mentioning it. It was no surprise really; at least one of the forecasts was talking about us all being swept away in some tsunami-like floods and the need to seek higher ground or arks. One couple, a lady with a cheery disposition enjoyed some light-hearted conversation about it. How she was still light-hearted was a testament to her resilience because her spouse was so curmudgeonly, that he could out grumpy a particularly adept grumpy shopkeeper on the worst of grumpy days after winning a world grumpy competition. He told us that the BBC had said that it would rain at two o'clock and he would brook no counter argument.

We had enjoyed some busyness during the morning, but the mid-afternoon turned a little quiet – and then very quiet indeed as the rain moved in. It was difficult to know whether it was the natural effect of the change-over day or that the misleading and conflicting weather forecasts had chased people off. It was just as quiet on the beach where all week – apart from Wednesday when we had mizzle all day – there had been some gatherings. It should be noted that my comment about the beach on Wednesday was a guess, as I could not see it all day. It may well have been rammed with damp revellers.

Again, the absence of people on the beach might also have been due to the lack of waves. Or indeed that high water now comes roughly in the middle of the day and cancels any surfing until earlier or later. With no waves, it cancels surfing earlier and later as well. This weekend appears to be two extremes: the flat calm today and enough of a forecast upset tomorrow for the organisers to cancel Cape Cornwall Swim – again. The Lifeboat was due to launch for the event in an unofficial capacity as the Institute is keen not to be seen as a steward for hire service. So, we launch on exercise in an incidental sort of way that keeps all parties happy.

It does not always happen but more often than not, when I least expect it, something of note turns up. It took a regular customer to bring to my attention the furore over the plans of a national budget hotel chain to build an hotel in St Ives. I understand that it has very recently been permitted to go ahead.

The Cornishman, that bastion of independent and unbiased reporting, put a computer-generated photograph of the new hotel “looming” over the town on its front page. Both our regular customer and I looked closely at the image for some time but neither of us could identify the offending property. It took him a further few minutes before he pointed out a fairly innocuous looking building, carefully hugging the skyline and sensitively blended in amongst the neighbouring properties. It made me

wonder, would I be ever so cynical in thinking that the vast majority of complaints against the development were from existing hotels and accommodation providers who could see the golden days of inflated prices and little competition slipping unchecked from their grasp.

I then considered how I might feel had the development been planned in The Cove. I think initially, I might have taken affront, but had it been done in keeping with the environment – assuming that was possible in The Cove – then I might more readily consider the increase in business it would bring and much needed competition to current providers. I have mentioned before the lack of more reasonably priced accommodation in The Cove. Some businesses increased prices during the dreaded lurgi and never brought them down again. Others suffer the ‘gold tap’ syndrome where the property has been enhanced beyond the reach of an ordinary family’s pocket.

It looks like things have improved this year, but I am still seeing some properties vacant even at this time in the season. Another thing I have noticed is the increase in late bookings – facilitated because there are vacancies. One local provider told me that she had a cancellation because the forecast was poor this coming week and that the customer would book on another week. This also brings into focus the lack of accuracy and the tendency to over dramatise poor weather, but that is a completely different paint pot of cucumbers.

At around five o’clock it started to rain properly. It came and went a couple of times, then came again and stayed. It pretty much put paid to any further business apart from a few stragglers and a very welcome return of some regulars. We also had an increase through the day in sales of umbrellas and rain ponchos. Late in the day when it was hacking down, a German family came in to purchase an umbrella each. I told them, as I had told everyone else buying similar during the day, that it would pretty much guarantee that it would not rain again. Just after I took the German family’s money and I told them that, the rain stopped. My we chuckled.

I could even have a little chuckle myself later. I had assumed a late run with ABH in the rain but while it poured down enough to cancel our after tea run, our walk at last knocking was in the dry with unthreatening skies. I am dubious about the likelihood of devastating rain tomorrow, but the forecasters have already done the damage.

July 20th – Sunday

We were sitting in the middle of a low pressure system this morning. The synoptic chart suggested that it was not going to move very much during the day. The rain radar showed large lumps of heavy rain circling us between fifty and one hundred mile out. There were smaller lumps closer by but, on the balance of probability, we were unlikely to see very much rain today at all except for the occasional shower. However, some of those occasional showers looked heavy.

I discovered all that in five minutes this morning when a visitor asked what my take on today's weather would be. It was sunny at the time, just after we had opened, with broken cloud which is probably why he asked. The Meteorological Office was showing sunny spells with showers all day long, which I suppose was not unreasonable and the BBC, black raincloud and showers all day long which probably was. My point is, obviously, if little ol' daft me can determine what the weather is in five minutes from looking at the data ... oh, for heaven's sake, grumpy shopkeeper, give it up.

It was a very pleasant morning, if you could ignore the back of your mind nagging at you that it was going to rain any moment. It had that feel about it that it had not long stopped raining, but I am not sure I heard any in the night. It was windy, first thing, probably as that low pressure system moved across us. By the time I opened the shop, there was just a bit of breeze coming in from the southwest from which we were mainly sheltered.

The morning might have been very pleasant, but it was also very quiet. We had one shower of rain in The Cove and one lady told me she had been soaked through over Porthcurno way. The quiet might have been people waiting to see how the day developed or it could have just been that this week's contingent are lazy beggars and wanted to stay in bed. We had to wait until after the middle of the day when it busied up considerably.

I had thought that we would have just about enough pasties (sorry, MS) for the day. We did – almost exactly the right number. The fact that I did what I did last week and panicked near the middle of the afternoon and cooked off some frozen ones unnecessarily was obviously disappointing in review. The cooked ones will not be wasted.

What put me further on edge was the lady that I left outside the shop last year for half an hour after we closed and forgetting her pasty order came back for a reprise visit. She reminded me that part of the problem was a Lifeboat shout that intervened in my careful planning. Nevertheless, I fretted for the rest of the day that I might sell out the last pasty or neglect to make sure a hot one was available. It gave me some relief when I realised that I would not run out of pasties, but I was also mindful that there was many a slip between cup and lip.

One of those things might have been the geet lump of rain heading our way at four o'clock. A customer had come in and told me a storm was heading in; they could see it from the car park. I was a bit surprised because I thought most of the big rain was skirting south of us but when I looked at the rain radar, it did indeed seem to be heading this way as those on the Islands could testify as they were getting a good soaking. We got busy and I took my eye off the ball but a while later, we were still dry. I took another look and noted that as the lump of rain approached, it broke up and went either side of us. The main bulk went south as I expected.

I had thought that it might have interrupted the Surfers Against Sewage paddle out that they planned. It was a neighbour who reminded me that it was happening but when I looked at the poster one of them had asked me to put up, I had missed it. The poster advised that it was a global paddle out to stop deep sea mining. Quite how paddling out in The Cove was going to achieve that aim was a tad mystifying. I thought the same about how it was any business of surfing people against sewage unless the deep sea miners were known to be careless with their effluent. I think that The Cove's surfers possibly felt the same because there did not appear to be a large showing, unless they did it so quickly that I missed it.

The only other shower of rain we had fell while I was bringing in the outside display – of course, it did. I might have got away with it but a customer distracted me and by the time I got back to it, the rain was coming down more heavily. I had taken the precaution of bringing down a rain jacket for the occasion, but it was hanging in the store room and I could not be fagged to go and get it.

I had asked the Missus to bring down some emergency items that we were missing from our shelves. We could have done with a major restocking, but I did not have the time to walk the shop making a list. We had shoes and cricket bats that we had run out of. The rest will have to wait until early in the week to come.

There was already plenty of list making to do. The farm shop cash and carry was due and I had forgotten the wine order during the week. I had short ordered the cash and carry last week by mistake and some of the items were close to running out. I made sure I ordered plenty this time because we will hopefully be in full flight by the second week of the order cycle. With this supplier, there is no reason why I should not order weekly, but it is easier to make the volumes over two weeks and it is a lot of effort that is best left the way it is.

The Missus put more of our produce on the table this week – some of the cabbage was ready and a few of the beans. There is not enough for the shop yet and may not be. I am not sure of the master plan for what is and what is not for the shop shelves. Whatever happens I am sure will be a pleasant surprise.

It was not much of a surprise that we managed a walk around the block after tea without getting wet; I had checked the rain radar. The street dries in minutes after a short shower and there was little evidence that it had rained at all other than the foliage requiring a much longer bout of sniffing than usual. It was warm enough but clearly not attractive enough to have more than a few cars in the Harbour car park.

I am hoping for better this week, but I am not entirely confident that we will get it. It feels disappointing at the start of the week when the school holidays commence here. I know this because a young man from the bus company dropped me a bus timetable for the six week run of buses to St Ives. I am afraid I gave him rather a hard time by explaining how much trouble the lack of service had caused. It was a

kindness really because I suspect he will have a much worse time of it up in Pendeen and the north coast. Best I prepare him a bit, I thought.

July 21st – Monday

I thought to go through today's Diary without mentioning the weather. Unfortunately, it was such a spectacular early morning, it would have been a disservice to dawn everywhere not to say anything about it.

The eastern sky was filled with an explosion of bright dawn colour as the sun tried to force its way through the tiny breaks in the cloud. In fact, it rather looked like someone had set fire to the cliff tops in a rather big way. The colours were not only reflected on a large part of the bay but also in the tower of cumulus cloud out to the northwest. Just to add a little icing on top, the bay was filled with a thin layer of mist that had also taken on the hue of the sunrise. Gosh it was pretty.

Despite Radio Pasty's protestation that we were having sunny spells all morning, that was the last of the sun we saw all day. It was overcast and grey throughout, and looked like it might rain at any minute. Mercifully stayed dry here while a geet trail of rain piled in from the north on everywhere east of Camborne. Somehow, with the dull grey sky, a choppy sea that looked as leaden as the sky, we did not feel all that lucky.

It was the least inspiring day that we had seen for a while. Most people I met looked like they really would like to be somewhere else. Indeed, many people were somewhere else; it was also the quietest day we have had in The Cove for a while.

Time and the Penzance bus wait for no man, so I got started on the cash and carry order no matter that I was three days early. I was keen, I tell you, keen. It must have been the blistering session at the gymnasium that stoked the embers of my enthusiasm and kicked me into action. Alright, it did not. I had to try very hard not to sit on my backside and do nothing all day. In fact, I did a bit of that anyway but mostly I topped up shelves and checked what we were short of in the store room. It staved off the boredom quite effectively.

We did have a trickle of customers throughout the day and one or two notable sales that helped no end. One German lady purchased eight of our posh mugs and various delights and later in the day came back for more. We sold a couple of bottles of premium spirits as well and it was not even a going home present day, unless people were just getting ahead of the posse. I do not actually now recall if it was today, but another German visitor purchased 20 international stamps and that was after I had explained the enormous cost of them. Not that we make any money from the stamps, but it looks good on the till at the end of a poor day. I told him that I hoped his friends knew how appreciated they were.

I am enormously pleased that our postcards seem to have found a renewed lease of life. I think it has made all the difference having large full stands this year; the stands have looked very sparse these last couple of years. It was a bit of a risk making such a comparatively large investment, but it seems to have paid off.

It was about the only observation I could make on a day so completely devoid of interest and excitement not even this Diarist could make anything of it. It was like someone had taken a big vacuum cleaner and sucked everything out of the day that held any glimmer of delight. Yes, it was that bad.

Then, at the end of the day, the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers stepped in and played an absolute blinder. At approximately ten minutes to closing, just as we were experiencing a very minor five minutes to closing rush, the sun came out. Yes, it was a cracking evening, thank you very much. It even brought a few people out to enjoy a bit of warmth in the continuing breeze. Bleddy ideal.

July 22nd – Tuesday

No super sunrise this morning but the day looked a whole lot better than it did yesterday. It was brighter for a start, and we could see bits of blue through some high cloud. The sea did not glower so much, and the swell and wind chop were gone, although there was enough of a swell to keep a few surfers busy later.

The morning passed in nervousness as it looked just as quiet as yesterday. By the late morning and into the afternoon, we were back to normal, although we have had busier times in the week leading up to the main holiday season. It would appear that yesterday was a particularly dull, whatever the opposite of a flash in the pan is. It was probably just a bad dream and all I had to do was click my ruby slippers together a few times. Maybe I should have clicked them a bit harder because today was not exactly where we should be either, it was just much better than yesterday.

We were quiet enough in the morning for me to finish off the cash and carry list. I will hold off from keying it in for a couple of days to allow me to remember the things I have forgotten. It will also give me something to do if we fall upon hard times again and distract me from wailing and grinding my teeth – I cannot spell gnashing.

Just at the outset of when things started to pick up, the farm shop cash and carry arrived. It was quite a big one this week and needed clearing up a bit so that I could get in and out of the store room. To be honest, the main bulk was boxes of crisps that I knew would sell though very quickly once the hordes were here – all supposing they arrive at all – so I ordered a good few. It kept me occupied between customers for most of the rest of the day and some of it will wait until tomorrow when I have clearer access to the end of the shop where some of it must go.

Now, maybe it is because I came up through a few years working in Information Technology that I would always consider having a plan B for things I might find important. We rely so heavily upon technology that when it stops working, we would be lost without some sort of backup plan. If our very ancient till should breakdown, we have a spare. If our card payment terminal fails, we have another we can fall back on. Even if the power goes off, we can still take cash, although we would probably close to prevent the freezers being opened and closed. If the power outages were more regular, we would have a generator. Our main computer is backed up at least two different ways and I always have a spare battery for my false ear to hand – I would have spare false ears if they let me.

It is not just technology, either. We have two suppliers for most of our critical grocery items. We have a fall back for our main cash and carry, although I would really have to be desperate to use it. If I have an appointment somewhere, I leave early to compensate for any unforeseen circumstance and will have thought of an alternate place to park if I was unable to use the primary place.

It puzzles me greatly, therefore, how someone can come to the till to pay for their goods on a mobile telephone and, discovering that it has malfunctioned in some way, have no alternative means of paying. Surely, that is a bit like Neil Armstrong getting into Apollo Eleven without checking he had enough fuel to get back again. (If you were the person running out of battery today, Apollo Eleven was a space rocket that took Neil Armstrong and a bunch of pals to the moon and back – it is on Google – oh, sorry, your smart telephone is out of battery.)

Perhaps I should have thought about contingency when I purchased a replacement craft knife for the shop. The old one, had lost its ability to retain the blade tucked up in the mechanism and it would extend in my pocket, which was not ideal. The new one arrived today attached to a backing card from which it appeared reluctant to be parted. I consulted the instructions handily printed on the reverse of the card which directed me to tear the card at a particular place. I tried. The card, which at first appeared to be standard cardboard was, in fact, Kevlar, the sort of thing they use for bullet proof vests. It would not yield to any amount of abuse I levelled at it. What I needed was a knife.

I resorted to my original knife but not only did the blade fall out in my pocket, it would retract if any pressure was applied to the blade, like using it for cutting, for example. I fell back on using a pair of scissors that did the job in as far as removing most of the backing but the bit that attached the card to the knife remained resolutely in place. It entered via the slot at the top where the slider is that moves the blade in and out and exits where the blade pops out. Pulling from the exit end seemed to do nothing but wobble the bit going into the slot at the top. At least this demonstrated that they were connected.

After carefully examining the knife and card, it was clear that pulling from the blade end was the only thing that could be done. I did not want to assume that it would not

tear and leave the card forever stuck inside. It would be a schoolboy error to make the assumption it would not tear just because I had been unable to tear it previously. In the end, that was my only option, but I cut the bit going into the slot as close as I could so that it did not impede the cardboard being drawn out from the other end. It was still a tough nut to crack.

I made a mental note of this procedure. I bought a second knife for The Farm and will have to do all that again. I thought I would leave it for another time as I did not have the will to do it immediately.

Our busyness had ramped up considerably in the afternoon. By three o'clock we were flying along with all manner of purchases. Customers were flooding in, some fetching tea, some having snacks coming back from the beach and others collecting novelties and gifts. The accompanying jangle of the till almost brought a smile to a grumpy shopkeeper's face.

I had sold one of our magnificent flasks of squid ink gin to a Dutch visitor who is staying in the Cove. I recognised him again today even though he was wearing sunglasses. They were the aviator type, as you might expect. He told me that the gin was just as good as I had assured him it was before he purchased it, which was something of a relief. Not long after he went, another Dutchman came to the counter with another flask of squid ink gin. I remarked what a coincidence it was, but it seemed that his countryman, unseen by me, had recommended it while they two were in the shop. I told him that his mission now was to find another Dutchman to recommend it to. Squid ink gin zoal aanbeloven door Nederlanders.

That all happened in the closing stages of the day, possibly because people were piling off the beach at tea time. The Missus had arrived home relatively early to pack some lettuce. We had suffered all day without any in the fridge, and she aimed to make amends. The rest will be packed tomorrow while I am at the gymnasium.

Sales of the lettuce and rocket have really taken off, well, you would expect that of the rocket. I discussed with the Missus the likelihood of other goods coming on stream. Sadly, it seems we are still learning what is and what is not possible. The tomatoes are coming on in small quantities, a few being ready at a time. She thinks that for us to have enough for selling, we should have had a full greenhouse of tomatoes alone. Of the cucumbers, we may have small numbers but not regularly but she believes the courgettes are probably going to be viable in number and maybe the melons which are coming on strongly. We will have to wait and see. In the meantime, I can tell you I enjoyed some of our tomatoes with some local brie in a roll for breakfast and I had some of our spring onions for tea.

I also managed to take ABH around the block after tea in some late broken sunshine. It was not as warm as recent weeks, and I needed a jacket. The sunset did not look like it was set to inspire and when I took her out again at nine o'clock, it was a little overcast. It must have been cool during the day, too, as we entertained a

couple of girls walking the Coast Path who expressed delight at the warm in the shop. I told them if they were in any longer than half an hour, I would charge them rent. When I saw them still perusing the shelves fifteen minutes later, I accused them of stringing it out. Happily, they thought I was joking.

Certainly, I felt a little more upbeat about today than I had the previous one. Let us hope it is a continuing trend. No one likes to see a grown grumpy shopkeeper weep.

July 23rd – Wednesday

Things did not end up going as planned today, although given that there never is much of a plan, that things had deviated from the plan that was not was hard to determine. I am glad I was able to clear that up for you.

The day was not looking up to very much when ABH and I ventured down to the beach. That all changed in the middle of the morning when the sun came out and people perked up and started milling about. I often harp on about how a proper sunny day is of not much help to us. We get a rush in the morning as they head for the beach and again in the evening as they rush home. Today was almost perfect with a shower of rain in the middle of the day. Had it been just a little longer it would have chased them off the beach and into the shop. Still, it was busy enough today which just added to the utter mayhem that ensued after discovering our fish order would be early rather than late.

I had placed a fish order after finding that we had run out of hake. I would prefer not to have fish orders arriving at any time during our busy period but unfortunately, that was how it worked out. Fortunately, our supplier told us that it would be ready today and based on previous experience, it would not be until late in the day. The planning, such as it was, would see the Missus disappear off to town to run a couple of errands with Mother in tow and thence onto Camborne where Mother's teeth were waiting for her. There was some concern that they would not make it back in time for the fish but then we had the telephone call in the early morning to say it was available right then.

It is a good job that we are light on our feet and able to change with the wind. Unfortunately, there was no wind today, which hampered us a little. I agreed to sacrifice my gymnasium session so that the Missus could go and collect the fish in the morning, come back, collecting Mother on the way, and head off to Camborne and the teeth after dropping the fish back at the shop. Things went swimmingly.

I found myself at the outset of the afternoon with a big box of fish portions to vacuum pack, price and put in the freezer. This is time consuming and labour intensive. I had deliberately stayed my hand in ordering too much aiming to have just sufficient to see us through August. Looking at what we had, I think that I did quite well. It was also an advantage that the day had formed into its sunny day profile which left me a

good deal of time to process the fish without too many customers diverting my attention. In fact, it all worked out rather well until the latter stages when it started to get busy.

That may have been the case, but it still took the most of the afternoon to complete despite doing it as efficiently as I could. I had it all packed away before half past four o'clock, I think, which left me plenty of time to deal with the five minutes to closing rush and a sizeable pasty order (sorry, MS) for some regulars that take them to the Minack. They had me worried for a bit because they were late coming, but we still managed to close on time.

It is still a little worrying that this week is not quite as busy as we might have expected. I am hearing reports of many holiday lets being empty and from first hand knowledge places in The Cove that are usually popular, like the big thatch, Tinker Tailor, are also devoid of happy visitors. It was busy enough today, but I sense many of the customers today were trippers or are staying just outside The Cove. It will explain why we have late starts. Next week will be the litmus test and I wait with bated breath.

I was warned to expect a deluge of diminutive revellers descending on us in the middle of the afternoon. Sennen school broke up for their summer holidays today and the entire contingent fell upon the Harbour beach for a celebratory jump off the Harbour wall. Clearly, the school is smart enough to end the term on a high tide. We did have several visitations. Small people appear to graze on their sweets and drinks and have to return multiple times for the next instalment. This would work better if they did not all have smart mobile telephones with which they expect to pay for 50 pence sweets.

They are the same children each time and seem surprised each time they are rebuffed and end up having to purchase a few more items to meet a (much reduced) minimum spend. There are too many of them now to run pocket money bags for them like we used to and, in any case, not one of them uses money anymore. I might consider running an account in arrears for each of them, but they tend to forget quite quickly the previous times I have extended credit. Fortunately, I do not and a clip around the ear 'ole (virtual, of course) seems to revive the memory.

I do not need to remember that they have visited. The shop floor is awash when they eventually stop coming and going. I used to mop after the last one went of an evening but now leave it to the warm of the shop and, if necessary, sweep up the residual sand the next morning.

It was till live in The Cove when I took ABH around after tea. We met up with one of our friends from the house on the corner of Coastguard Row on the way back. She was busy in the garden. I have mentioned before that they cultivated the land next to the cottage very much in keeping with the environment. Now in high summer, it looks magnificent with huge gunnera here and there, Cornish palms and various other

distinctive greenery. In their adjacent own garden, they have planted numerous succulents between the rocks. It is a proper feast for the eyes as we pass by and ABH gets treats if we see the ladies.

It rounded off the day very nicely, thank you.

July 24th – Thursday

I am going to get this out of the way to start with, so sorry, MS. I had a pasty meltdown today largely because no one had told me it was National Eat a Pasty Day. It was also Buy a Loaf of Bread Day, but I will come to that later.

It had all started innocently enough with my usual starting gambit of twelve pasties in the warmer at a very reasonable ten o'clock. I do not think it was long after that someone came and purchased four, which is a bit steep for an opening bid in the game of will the grumpy shopkeeper have enough pasties today. I did not ignore the warning and put some replacements in the oven but before they were ready, someone came and cleared me out of the remaining pasties in the warmer.

I was in the process of putting more into the oven when someone came and ordered a further four. I told them to come back in ten minutes when I would be able to complete the order, albeit straight from the oven. They did not turn up at the appointed time but someone else did and asked for four pasties. I supplied them with the four I was mentally holding for the other customer, which was a happy result but turned sharply unhappy when the original customer turned up two minutes after the other one had left asking for his four pasties.

There were two pasties in the warmer left over from the previous four sold and the next batch were not far off being ready in the oven. I gambled on being able to bag the two in the warmer slowly enough that when I went to the oven, those would just about be ready to go. Fortunately, I was right. The onslaught continued over the period of an hour and a half with frequent requests for multiple pasties. I was playing catch-up for the entire time. I am very glad it did not last any longer.

The day had started very overcast, and I was very pleased that the weather forecast was right, and the cloud rolled away in the late morning. It continued as a day much the same stamp as yesterday and we had quite a presence of visitors during the day. I am staying with my theory that the majority are from outside The Cove as once again, it took a while for the day to gain traction. Once it did, however, we were flying for much of the day.

As described many times, there is a lull in customer activity when most of our visitors are settled on the beach. I used this and the quiet of the morning to complete the cash and carry order, the biggest of the year so far. It probably will not be topped because by the time the next order arrives, I discover that my expectations of the

amount of holiday busyness we will get was grossly exaggerated and I will tone down subsequent orders. It is a difficult thing to get right but none of it will be wasted.

There was a fair amount of expectation and excitement around the Lifeboat launch in the evening. I lost count of the number of times I was asked what time it was. Because it was a little earlier today again, I must take my tea in the shop. This is usually fraught because we get busier toward the end of the day and I have to start my tea halfway through the afternoon if I am to stand any chance of finishing it before we close. It is not like it is a sumptuous feast, just a pasty or one of our sandwiches.

Today was much busier than previous weeks and my tea was largely abandoned. The day had warmed up nicely, and as a consequence our beer fridge was centre of attention. At the end of the day, it was mostly empty and I am very glad that we will have reinforcements arriving on Saturday. I also noticed that much fishing gear had gone, and I will have to keep an eye on it so that we do not run out.

This year we have had increasing demands for bait. We have only ever kept frozen sand eel but since I lost the stock in a freezer breakdown, I have not replaced it. Following that I could not get any as it was a poor year for the eels and have not remembered since. We do not keep live bait as shoppers complain when it starts eating the tomatoes. I used to point people at West Cornwall Angling in Penzance and continued to do so until one customer told me that it had closed a while back. There is another place in the centre of town, but it is harder to get to and not as big, I believe.

There have been people fishing off the end of the Harbour wall for weeks now and today was no exception. They were joined by any number of small children jumping off the wall behind them and a press of families on the beach. It is why, when we came to launch the Inshore boat in the evening that I directed nearly all the available crew as bankspersons to ensure safe passage of the Tooktrak. Nothing ruins a launch more than a squashed small child and plays havoc with the wash down later.

Since we were then low on numbers for the big boat launch, my concentration was such that I did not see the Inshore launch. I discovered later that there were no unfortunate issues and there were certainly none launching the big boat. As usual, we retired after setting up for recovery.

This week there were no diversions of recusing anybody during the exercise although the Inshore was put off meeting with Penlee's rubber boat because Penlee had no helmsman. The big boat narrowly escaped being called to a Pan Pan that went out during the time it was out as the location was more St Mary's patch than ours.

Once again, I laboured with the administration and the weird training regime the Institution is pressing on with. I find it odd that last week a person had three units

outstanding, which we completed and this week they have five. It is far too complicated, and it needs to do away with the separation of low and high water launches and recoveries for many of the units. PPE, for example is the same for high water launch and recovery and low water launch and recovery but they are four different units that need to be covered.

Both boats returned at the same time. I was running as head launcher for the big boat and when me and my oppo looked up from the bottom of the slip, we were all alone in the world. All the remaining crew had beggered off to the Inshore recovery. We had to do some rapid redeployment as there were fewer people on the Harbour beach to manage, and the team needed fewer bankspersons. We pressed ahead anyway as the additional crew were only needed when the boat got to the top of the slipway.

We had to haul some extra cable down as the tide had gone out a bit since we set up. It has been well above the rollers on the long slip and covering the concrete toe. Even at the time we went down, there was only a foot or so of toe above the water line and there was a bit of swell running, too. Nevertheless, we carried out what was very clearly a textbook recovery up the long slip, washed down with a newly arrived crew and fuelled up for the next launch. We are, after all, a very exact, very excellent Shore Crew.

July 25th – Friday

My day began at half past midnight o'clock to the dulcet tones of my Lifeboat pager going off. We are highly trained in the pushing out and the pulling in of both Lifeboats, no really we are. What no one teaches you about is the staggering around after getting rudely awoken from a deep sleep by the insistence of the pager alert, trying to find the right hole in your trousers to stick your foot in.

There are two of us close enough to the station to be first ones there. I found myself a few minutes latter with our neighbour wrestling with the Lifeboat station doors with the notion that there was perhaps someone waiting for some help in the water. The boat was tasked to Pednvounder to make a shore line search for a possible person in the water there.

When the details emerged later on, I do not know what surprised me most. There were two people on Pednvounder Beach, near Porthcurno, in their cups, waving their torches around but otherwise doing no harm to very much. A concerned citizen, casually walking by on the Coast Path, a good distance from anywhere, just after midnight, spotted the torch light and called it in. To be brutally honest, I am leaning towards being drunks on the beach being the more rational behaviour of the two and yet it was they we went to rescue.

It did not sound like it would be a terribly long operation from the outset. We pondered for a moment then the three of us there present set about making ready the long slip for recovery. Then came the wait while we listened in on the Coastguard channel for news.

As we assumed, the tasking took no more than an hour and, from launch to the boat being tucked away, it was an hour and a half. By the time the boat came back into view we had amassed a further two people to help out and I left them at the top of the slip while me and my oppo headed into the darkness at the end of the toe.

The boat had launched at near low water, but we elected not to take the cable down onto the rocks just in case the tide caught us out. We were lucky enough that the incoming tide just about allowed us the relative safety of the last slipway step. The water was dead calm, sloshing about at our feet and despite having only one dim headtorch between us, it was relatively light down there. It meant that we were able to clearly demonstrate a textbook recovery up the long slipway in calm conditions. We are, after all, a very nocturnal, very excellent Shore Crew.

The remaining hours during which I was permitted sleep, were very few and I woke up again three hours later feeling like I had not really gone to bed. It helped not one iota that we expected the largest pasty delivery (sorry, MS) of the year so far. It arrived while I was still dealing with the milk and an early rush of customers, of course. After such a bruising morning, a visit to the gymnasium was just the ticket. As you recall, dear reader, my Wednesday visit was scuppered by events outside my control, so I owed it to myself to have a proper blistering session to make up for it.

It did something for me, but I am not entirely sure what. As if that were not enough, I trekked up the steep part of Stone Chair Lane to our neighbour up the hill, the one with the even steeper steps and the locked stair lift that would have come in very handy. She was delighted to see ABH, although such joy probably did not extend to me, apart from the fact I was carrying her bread order, but we stopped and chatted for a while, which was entirely pleasant. ABH came away with a big treat and I spent the rest of the morning taking the flea out of my ear.

It had been sunny then and the streets were thronging. We saw friends leave that we had seen fleetingly through the week. Then we saw the throng dissipate and the cloud thicken as the day progressed. It was still dry and warm, but the lack of sunshine took the edge off a little. We saw some busyness through most of the day and clearly an influx of new blood as well. I am also surprised at the number of German and particularly Dutch visitors we have here. As far as I recall, they do not generally stay into the summer six weeks, but they are very welcome.

I had made good progress clearing out the store room ahead of our delivery during Thursday. It was largely unintentional but saved me being too bothered about it during a busy Friday. Then we had the soft drinks delivered, the Missus unloaded the requested stock from the truck before she went off and I had a load of boxes of

general stock I had emptied and needed clearing. The store room was full again by the middle of the day and I had to start over clearing it out again.

There is definitely a shift in the visitor dynamic and I noticed we had started selling a lot more groceries than we had even earlier in the week. On the one hand, this is, of course, good news that people are electing to buy from us rather than relying entirely on Tesmorburys deliveries. The alternative viewpoint instilled mild panic when I noticed that many of the goods leaving us were ones that I had not covered in our cash and carry order as I thought we had sufficient quantity. It will be two weeks before I can replenish the goods, and I wonder if I have enough fingernails to chew on.

We closed an hour later today. We had our five minutes to closing rush an hour earlier. Our last hour saw me staring at the walls and biding my time. It will take a short while before our visitors get used to the new closing time.

Spilling out into our last hour, our new surf jewellery representative did a sterling job refilling our stand. I had set some parameters, and she had done the order. We agreed that she would turn up after the delivery to fill the stand and it all worked rather well. She would have been earlier but had been held up behind a traction engine bound for St Buyan Rally.

It was the same rally that the Missus had spent most of the day preparing for. She is setting up the RNLI fund-raising stand there. There is much work to do organising it and delivering things like the gazebo and collection buckets amongst much else. At the same time she was making preparations for the choir event in The Cove on Sunday. My, she has been a busy girl. I will not see her for most of Saturday, but I will be busy with the cash and carry delivery. I expect we will compare notes some time in the evening.

July 26th – Saturday

It would be untrue to say that I was pressed for time this morning. It was more that my time had been carefully set out to ensure that all the tasks I had to complete got done before the shop opened. It was a tight schedule.

To service my cunningly crafted plan, I had got out of bed half an hour early which itself was a feat of herculean effort. I mean, as if sparrow's was not early enough, for heaven's sake. ABH was playing ball, too, and came out with me when I asked, prompting me to mask just how utterly shocked I was that she had done something to command. This put me in the shop around twenty minutes before the cash and carry delivery was due but, in fact, put me 45 minutes ahead of the delivery because it was later than they said.

That did not make it 'late'. I had dropped a note to the manager and asked if we could get the delivery at least half an hour in front of opening; it was bang on half past eight last time and I was keen to avoid that this time, when we were likely to be busier. He turned up at half past seven o'clock which gave us plenty of time to unload and time after for me to do the newspapers. Ahead of the delivery, I had cleared the bread and the greengrocery which was exactly how I had planned it. We do love it when a plan comes together.

Sadly, the only element in the master plan to let the side down was the milk delivery and that was down to me not the milk company. I had seen the milkman about to drive off and he told me that he had nothing for me. Yesterday, I had a message from the company telling of woefully unclear messages left on their answering machine. Instead, could we please send the order via electronic mail, which I duly did at the end of the day – except I did not. Inexplicably, I had missed pressing the send button and my message remained in my outbox. Despite it being my fault, the milk company sent out our order on a second delivery, which was very decent of them.

For the first couple of hours of the shop day I was able to shift some of the cases and cartons. I managed to get what I could of the beer cases into the beer cupboard and that freed up enough space to move about a bit. Next, I cleared the top of the chest freezer which is a favourite dumping ground and that made the pile look much more respectable. What really filled the store room was the 16 cases of water. We had managed with 12 last week but we had a significant number of days without sunshine. We also had fewer people, I hoped.

I cleared quite a bit but then got busy in the shop and I was reduced to doing bits between customers. We then got really busy in the shop and I had to give up altogether.

I had peeked out of the window in the morning to low cloud filling much of the bay and everything looking wet, which it was. ABH and I were wet too after a while although the rain was very light. It did not bode well for a busy day and a fridge full of pasties (sorry, MS) but Radio Pasty assured me that it would brighten up later. True to their word, it brightened up later. We had glorious sunshine, warmth and very little in the way of breeze, in fact, it was all the right ingredients for a blisteringly busy day. It was therefore not much of a surprise that by and by and little by little the day developed into a blisteringly busy one.

It was therefore not precisely ideal that my Lifeboat pager went off at three o'clock in the afternoon and I had to turn a shop full of people out on the street in short order. They were most understanding, and it only took a minute for them to vacate and for me to get myself across the road.

The Inshore boat was tasked first and my neighbour from up the street, unencumbered by a shop to close, beat me to the Tooltrack, so I went to the station

to climb into some appropriate kit. We had barely got the Tooltrak halfway down the RNLI car park when the focus was switched to the big boat. Saturdays are notorious for finding available crew of either Boat of Shore persuasion and today was no different. For the want of a helmsman for the Inshore, we had to launch the big boat with a skeleton crew.

The boat was tasked to the Porthcurno area again where some young people had got themselves stuck on the 'saddle' on the outcrop at Logan Rock. The Porthcurno Lifeguards were in attendance on a rescue board and the Cliff Team also turned out. It seems that there was a bit of sea running down Porthcurno and the stranded youths were not keen on getting out by sea. In the end, they all walked back up the path leading up to the Coast Path and the lifeboat was stood down.

I had returned to the shop in the interim to wring a few more pounds out of the still thronging crowds. I kept a weather ear out for developments, but it was once of the very excellent Shore Crew who came over to tell me that the boat was on the way back. We had set up for long slip after the boat left, assuming that the boat would not be that long. By the time the boat was set free, first it was longer than we anticipated and secondly the sea state had deteriorated since we looked last. We had to reset to the short slip.

We were just putting in the finishing touches when the boat steamed into the bay. Observed from the Harbour wall by a group of children and from the beach by some family groups, we executed what was clearly a textbook recovery up the short slip while sizeable waves washed over the toe of the long slip. In no time at all, we had the boat on the cradle and pointing at the long slip, ready for its next service. At the briefing we outnumbered the boat crew by one, which was unusual to say the least. We are, after all, a very constant, very excellent Shore Crew.

As soon as the briefing was finished, I returned to the shop to carry on where I left off. When I had gone over to the station for recovery, the street was still quite busy, and I had to again throw people out of the shop – although not quite as swiftly. When I got back, the street was nearly empty.

It was a momentary lull, and soon various groups started heading back from the beach and collecting things for tea. Others were heading to the beach for some end of day revelling, and I suspected that the air in The Cove would again be filled with the smoke of a hundred barbeques judging from the firelighters, charcoal and burgers heading past the till.

At the end of the day, I surveyed the carnage in the shop. I was going to have to cover a lot of ground the following morning given the empty state of the soft drinks fridge. Adding to the workload are a pile of cash and carry cartons between me and the spare soft drinks at the back of the store room.

I was not the only one kept busy today. The Missus had left very early doors to set up the RNLI stand at the St Buryan Rally. She was there all day with Mother in toe together with the in-laws who are down this weekend to take her off on her holidays to North Devon on Monday. After finishing there, which was late in the shop day for me, she went up to The Farm to pick more lettuce. From there she returned to the shop to bag and label it so that I have some in the fridge for tomorrow.

Crikey. And here we are just starting this holiday season lark.

July 27th – Sunday

I alluded to a very exciting story about bread a couple of days ago and was rightly castigated for not following it up. Well, it might be a few days late, but I can tell you that we have a sliced bread crisis. It is caused by a failure to order enough. In my defence, although it is a bit weak, ordering the cheap stuff from the milkman is a bit of a trial. I have to give 24 hours notice, which of course I forget, and then have to get it for the day after. This kind of works out unless it is the weekend when all bets are off and I cannot get ordered bread until Tuesday and must rely on whether they have any spare. I also failed to order sufficient from Paul's Bread, the local artisan baker. On the bright side, we have plenty of rolls.

There, now that I have fulfilled my contractual obligations I can move on with the rest of the day. I have received a very supportive report from our International Correspondent, our friend from not so frozen but very smoky, Vermont. (Canadian wildfires again.) Reading in The Diary of the challenges of ordering the correct number of pasties (sorry, MS), our friend tells me that she has invested long and exhausting minutes of intensive research into coming up with the infallible pasty ordering formula. She admitted that it was not all her own work and that she enlisted the help of her friend, Al.

The formula very cleverly allows for weighting to be applied for things such as Weather (W), School status (S), Bus Availability (B) and even the Time of Day (T). Obviously, I would like to share some more of the detail with you, dear reader, but there are intellectual property considerations here and the Federation of International Pasty Purveyors Association and Society would pay dearly to get their hands on it. If Al is to be trusted, I will henceforth have perfectly tuned pasty orders provided, of course, that I get the weather, bus availability, school status and the time of day correct. I cannot think of any flaws in the system at all.

We were busy again but not as busy as yesterday. The day was bright but not as sunny as yesterday. Whether there was any correlation, I doubt, but Radio Pasty had assured me that today would be the better of the two. Perhaps no one else believed them either and went and did something else.

The culprit was a body of cloud that got thicker to the east. It probably went to the south too; I cannot see to the south but made the assumption because that was where the sun should have been. There was warmth, and I was overly warm in the shop, and it was that sort of day which may have accounted for the proliferation of people in the water. I think I saw something of the same yesterday down on the big beach, but I was a brae bit busy to be sure.

At the top of the beach we were in summer mode, too. The camps were not as big as we might have expected but there was decent crowd there, nevertheless. They were tucked in close to the rocks, but high spring tide would chase them off later. At least the rock field does not appear to be there anymore and the gradient to the dunes appears to have levelled out a bit. That could be more sand on the main bit of beach or less up the back. Who knows and, frankly, I not sure who cares, either, although it will make it easier for the Lifeguards to get up and down to their palatial hut.

The Lifeguards at Gwenver were busy in the afternoon. Actually, it was more the Cliff Team attending to a casualty between Gwenver and Aire Point on the Coast Path. I would have known nothing about it but for the air ambulance circling above. The radio scanner did not cast much more light on the situation and, besides, I was busy. I did have time to see that the air ambulance had very cleverly landed near the Coast Path the other side of Aire Point which, given that it is the side of a cliff, was a clever bit of landing.

At low water there were waves breaking along the shoreline and some out the back towards North Rocks. A youngster told me yesterday that the waves were so big they broke his new bodyboard in half. I could believe it, seeing the waves breaking over the Lifeboat toe yesterday afternoon. In the evening, they were flossing over the Harbour wall and were at it again in the morning not long after ABH and I had gone back up the western slip and around the block. The day before, the waves were threatening to cut us off the other side of the western slip but today, they were not near but there was not much beach to wander on.

One of the regular visitors is back. He is the one who arrives first every morning with some appalling joke to tell me. "I wake up every morning with a tea bag in my mouth. I think my kids take me for some kind of mug." It brightens my day no end. It is fair play I suppose because my customers have to put up with an awful lot from me. I now try and make sure the customer is not a foreign national when I quip for obvious reasons of misunderstanding. I was caught out today, however, by a Swiss who was buying very expensive international stamps to send home his postcards. It was when I placed the 'air mail' stickers with the stamps that he offered that it was an essential item because otherwise they might try and send it by boat.

The Missus must have ducked out of the rally early today because she was home at half past five o'clock. She dropped off some of the kit and caboodle she was using and went straight off to be there for the sing song down on the wharf. The main aim

of that was to snatch some of the lads before they beggered off to the OS to help her unload the heavy gazebo weights in the back of the truck.

In twenty two years of it being here, I have not once attended the summer Sunday choir singing as I have always been in the shop. Tonight was no different. The sun had properly broken through the cloud a couple of hours before, which made a change. I would say of all the choir evenings I have witnessed, more than half have been in the rain and more than one has been cancelled because of it.

The evening excelled itself. The dipping sun was bright and kept the warmth in The Cove as the choir and the crowd gathered about them. In the hour or so before that, the street had gone much quieter, probably because of the football, and we were only busy as opposed to mad busy as we had been for most of the afternoon. I think I might have changed my thoughts about how busy it was compared to the day before, but I was too busy to do so.

Just before the choir started up, we saw a revival for a short while before we went quieter again during the singing. It allowed me time to pull in the outside display and get one of the orders done. Then, at two minutes to closing, around a veritable crowd poured through the door. We had been open for ten and a half hours but our happy customers decided that it had been best to wait until two minutes to closing and for fifteen minutes after that to do their shopping. It was a busy day, but we had more people in the shop at that moment than we had at any time during the day. Golly.

After the last one left, I had time to survey the empty shelves and the scene of devastation. It was something to look forward to dealing with in the morning, I felt.

July 28th – Monday

My, my, another busy one and sometimes some sunshine and once, a little bit of rain. It was the day that had everything. Not that I particularly noticed as I was doing other things.

The bay was overcast again this morning but dry and overly warm for far too early before the sun could even be bothered to crest the cliffs to the east. I have noticed that it is dim in the flat when I get up and I am hoping that my particularly regular waking up time is nothing to do with daylight. ABH had long since given up waking me up and out-sleeps me fairly consistently. She is getting pretty good at getting up not long after and often without me having to make a big show of talking to myself.

There was much more beach to galivant upon this morning but, even then, she wanted to walk around the block after only a few minutes of sniffing about the beach. I was early again, so a couple of extra minutes walking around made little difference. She must have been a little under the weather today because she went straight back to bed after we finished with the shop display and did not even bother me for a game while I tried to drink my tea.

I was down in the shop early again to take care of the drinks fridges amongst other things. It is taking me around an hour and a half before we open to clear all the chores. I have until now tried to rely on just in time delivery which worked well when we were not selling a case of Diet Coke a day in the shoulder seasons. I am going to have to start ordering in some buffer stock as I am a day out when we run out now.

At least I got my milk order today. It arrived after we were open but fortunately, we did not have an early rush, so I was able to get it into the fridge before the fight started. Everything else was boxed off before we opened but the Missus finished off bagging the tomatoes that we had lent to the café next door. It is more convenient for both parties that if next door want something that they replace it the next time they order. Just when you thought that it was safe to stick your head out of the store room, we had another three deliveries after that.

The Missus dutifully dropped down to cover me while I slipped away for a blistering session at the gymnasium. Now that we are in the full thrust of the season, I pare back the session and reduce my visits to two a week. It will take some effort of body and mind to ramp back up again when the holidays are over.

Just before I left, Mother and the in-laws dropped by on their way off on Mother's holiday. The in-laws whisk her away for a couple of weeks then bring her back and stay with her for a couple of weeks. It is a huge help while we negotiate our busy weeks of summer. Truth is, she is no trouble anyway, but the holiday is a nice touch and she get to see some extended family while she is away.

I ran ABH down to the beach as usual after I came back from the gymnasium. There was quite a crowd up in the western corner set up with chairs and parasols, clearly in for the day. ABH would usually go and have a nose, intent on meeting everyone but she was not much interested today. I fell in with a couple of visitors we had not seen for a while. They added some credence to my suspicion that many holiday lets in The Cove were chasing people off with high prices. I was about to put 'unreasonably' before that, but I think the prices run in line with how opulent the properties have become in recent years. That is of absolutely no use to a cash strapped family looking for reasonably priced accommodation where they can lay their heads at night and not worry about leaving some sand on the floor.

I spoke to one of the holiday let owners recently who told me that the agency she uses has been pressing her to upgrade her accommodation. I know they have much more information and knowledge at hand, but I truly believe that they are wrong here unless the property is really in a parlous state, which I doubt.

What our visitors would also probably like when they are set up with the beach chairs and parasols on the beach is for it not to rain like it did while I was chatting away. It was not particularly heavy rain, despite it beefing up a little after I got home, and it did not last very long. I think most people ignored it, although it did drive a bit of a

frenzy in the shop when I arrived. It rained again later in the afternoon and that was even less of an event.

The Missus announced that she was going to go to The Farm to pick lettuce. She would then come back and sort out the residue of the cash and carry delivery that was still largely blocking the store room – as well as the beer and soft drinks two subsequent deliveries had added to the pile. She drove off with ABH and a friendly wave and that was the last I saw of her until six o'clock.

Hands up for soup. I think much of her delay was my doing. We were short of a few items that were in my view from the counter, and I told her that we needed some stock brought down. She told me to write a list and send it to her, so I went around the rest of the shop where I found quite a few more things that were missing. By the time I had finished, the list was rather long and I think it took her a while to pick it all and load it into the truck.

I was busy when she came back down and there were cars parked across the street from us, so we will unpack everything tomorrow. Even more to pack into the store room – even if it is only temporarily. The only thing I unloaded from the truck was some more lettuce and rocket and one cucumber.

The shop was busy for the whole of the afternoon in varying degrees, so I did have time between mad busy periods to process some more of the stock in the store room. I had spent some time in the morning clearing some room at the back and shifting six cases of water out of the way. It did help a little to access some of the stock at the back, but the floor still looks pretty full, and the additional drinks cases do not help. I would start first thing clearing some of it tomorrow, but I will be too busy processing the new deliveries coming in, although I will start with using some of the drinks first.

We had a proper five minutes to closing rush again actually at five minutes to closing. It was not as severe as the night before and I closed not long after we were supposed to.

The sun had broken through for last knockings of the day as it often does. ABH does not get an after tea stroll now because after tea is too close to last walk of the day by the time I have finished tea. It will be the way of things for the next several weeks and the little snoring bundle of fur on the chair across the room looks unlike she could care less.

July 29th – Tuesday

Our low cloud, mist and mizzle were back this morning. It was quite refreshing being out in the humid air being humidified. The old hotel loomed out of the mist above us and the other side of the bay had disappeared completely. The mist stayed with us

for most of the morning, in fact it did not go until well into the end of the day, not completely. Its presence did not completely kill off our buoyant trade, but it gave it something of a kicking. It also gave me the opportunity to roar through the remaining boxes in the store room since we had a lack of customers.

You will note, dear reader, that I said that I had the opportunity, not that I did anything with it. I did not, however, completely ignore my duties and did, perhaps, meow through some of the boxes there. I probably may as well not have bothered because the Missus came down near the end of the morning and did what she does best: steamed through it like it was nothing at all. It took her less than an hour and at the end, the store room floor was clear. I will never find anything again, but it looks very good.

From there, she progressed onto bagging the lettuce and rocket that she brought down from The Farm the previous evening. Since it was so quiet in the morning, I had held back on heating the pasties (sorry, MS) until I could see it getting a bit busier. In fact, I had forgotten about them altogether and the Missus going into the fridge reminded me. It was fortuitous because not long after they came ready, we were suddenly mobbed by an influx of customers in one big rush that lasted the best part of an hour.

It was an odd deluge and not related to a change in the weather or any event that I could determine. Many were buying pasties, but many were collecting beach goods and other gifts to take home. It was the busiest that we would be all day.

After doing everything else, the Missus brought the truck around and started on the lengthy list of goods I had supplied her with yesterday. Much of it needed to be priced and she did that out of the back of the truck. I did the labels for the wetsuits and the couple of gift items I had included. All that must have taken a further hour after which she went off with ABH to The Farm to pick spring onions for our crispy duck tea. We are not growing ducks, so we had to purchase those.

This reminds me, one of the things that the Missus brought down late yesterday was a half size – alright quarter size if it was a really big seagull - seagull dog toy. When I visited the supplier's open house show, the salesman had told me that this item would be really popular and that I should buy plenty of them. When he first told me something similar several years ago, I was sceptical (what, me), but subsequent sales have proved him right nearly each time. I did indeed buy a fair few.

I had run out in the shop but a lady who had seen them before they went asked when we might have them back again. She had come back before The Missus had brought the truck around and unbeknown to me had collared the Missus while she was at the end of the shop. The Missus went around to the car park to get them, and I the lady bought two. I put them out soon after and we sold a further four.

The other surprise seller – and I mean surprise – was our ‘waiters’ friend’ bottle opener and corkscrew. I do not recall the last time I sold one of these. It must have been either earlier this year or late last year. Yes, we sell that many. Today, we sold about half a dozen in reasonably quick succession. I surmised that there must be a bottle opening tournament being held locally or perhaps it was one of those social media challenges people are asked to carry out and film for the entertainment of others. Perplexed, I asked the last buyer what was going on. He told me he needed to open a bottle of wine and did not have a corkscrew. I suppose that also could be a reason, but it seems rather too coincidental.

There may not have been sunshine, although at least I could see Cape Cornwall in the afternoon, but there were waves. They looked reasonably useful waves too with a whole host of surfing type people bobbing about and occasionally riding a wave into the shore. I was quite surprised to see the land party were all there with their colourful beach shelters and windbreaks. They were not that much shorter of numbers than they were when the sun was shining.

Talking of the sun shining, it deigned to break through at about half past five o’clock when most people were considering going home. We had enjoyed a reasonable flow of customer through the afternoon, making the most of the cloudy day and the sudden appearance of the sun seemed to make little difference at all.

When I stepped out last thing with ABH, The Cove was thrumming with life. The street had a general flow of people mainly heading towards the Harbour car park. The car park itself looked busy, although I turned ABH around before we got there as it was far too busy with distractions for her and we would have taken all night getting across it once she had said hello to everyone.

At first, I thought the busyness was due to the first of the Land’s End firework evenings, but I noted that most of the traffic was heading away from the car park. I suspect that many of the pedestrians were probably heading up there but reckon that the vehicles had been there for the sunset. I think we will have to wait until a rainy day for a peaceful walk around the block but will happily settle for shorter walks until the end of August, thank you very much.

July 30th – Wednesday

It seemed that there was a better day in prospect today, largely on the basis than when ABH and I went to the beach this morning, we did not get wet. We were not far off the mark: the cloud was higher, the day brighter and it was dry and warm

throughout. We will settle for that and so did many of our visitors who decided that it was a beach day, after all.

As beach days go, it was ideal. There was no strong sunshine and blistering heat pinning people to the beach, so we had a constant flow of customers all through the day. There were certainly enough of our visitors on the beach, camped out from under The Beach car park to The Valley and some beyond. There were probably more than any of the days so far. What I had not properly appreciated was that these people clearly had not eaten since they arrived at the weekend.

For the last few days, we have been accumulating pasties (sorry, MS) having consecutively ordered in more than we have sold despite trying to moderate volumes accordingly. It was helpful therefore that our visitors decided that today they would eat pasties and sausage rolls in some abundance and reduce our overstock to a mere fraction of what it was. What was perhaps not quite so helpful was that I had earlier made the decision to pare back even further on our pasty ordering and called in an absolute minimum for tomorrow.

Maybe I should have paid more attention to the pasty ordering formula our friend from not so frozen Vermont, very far west of Camborne sent me. I have not looked again but I do not think that there was a weighting for fickle bleddy visitors. I had thought to question her on it, but her last report seemed to suggest she may be a little preoccupied by a black bear in her garden. It was no weak excuse – she sent a video. I may have looked upon the trouncing as just one of one of those things, but they did it with the bread as well.

As you may deduce from this, we had a bit of a time of it now and again during the day with pockets of busyness amongst the general flow of comings and goings. It may have put a stickleback in the candyfloss of my pasty ordering and readiness, but it was welcome, nonetheless. We had a jolly time along the way with many customers enjoying a jolly jape or two as I stumbled and staggered my way through the business day.

The japing and the jollity can occasionally wear a little thin, however, in the presence of parents, whose confidence that their very small children can run about the shop unsupervised, and not be tempted to paw and transplant the stock, might be, how shall we say, a little over-inflated. The parents seem oblivious to the whoops and shouts and occasional smashes and tickles while they focus their attention on their own toys and gifts.

The sun broke through at about four o'clock for a couple of hours, which was good of it. It was about that time we started to ease off for the day, obtusely. Earlier, I had a little time to look down on the big beach in its overcast glory. As well as the camp at the top of the beach, the shallows were cluttered with a host of water users of varying sorts. I could not tell you where the marked out areas for surfers and bathers were but, then again, I am not sure the bathers could either. There was just a mass

of bodies between the south of the beach and well past The Valley in the north. I did say that it was a proper beach day, after all.

I ducked out of the day early Lifeboat training in the evening. A man must know his limitations. It was called early because a training-assessor was available today to sign a few people off on various levels of training. How we know who has passed what I cannot begin to imagine. I think it would be a good idea to have a badge we could sew onto our waterproofs or, since we are to do with the sea, an appropriate tattoo here and there. I was just thinking aloud, you understand.

The Inshore went out separately from the big boat and early. As there was only one assessor, he would have been spread thin had both boats gone out together. This also played to the advantage of the very excellent Shore Crew who also needed units signed off on both the Inshore and the big boat. Despite being very excellent Shore Crew, they too occasionally struggle with being in two places at one time.

I watched some of the shenanigans from afar and listened in on the radio scanner as well. The installation of a VHF aerial on our roof has paid dividends in getting better and clearer coverage. Later, when I took ABH out for her last walk, I was able to witness the end of the exercise which had been quite lengthy, especially for the Inshore boat that was coming up the slipway when we returned. I stopped momentarily, for that is all it takes, to note what was clearly a textbook recovery up the short slip. We are, after all, a very consistent, very excellent Shore Crew.

July 31st – Thursday

It was pretty gloomy when I dragged ABH out of bed and headed for the beach first thing. The gloom was as much the result of the return of low cloud as it was the unwillingness of the sun to rise as early as it did. The low cloud was most unwelcome after yesterday's bonanza, but it looked harmless enough up on the top of the cliffs.

Imagine my surprise when I emerged later to find that the mist on top of the cliffs had descended and filled the bay. I was further taken aback when I pushed open the first electric sliding door in The Cove to welcome the greengrocer man and found that it was raining. It had soaked the box I had left out for him, so I had to take it back to add to our waste. I could have done without that.

I was down early in the shop again. When I surveyed the domain yesterday evening, the soft drinks had gaps all over and the beer fridge was a mere shadow of its former self. At least this time I had taken the precaution of ordering in some stock to replenish it with, although this did take a while. I was also pleased that I managed to find nearly everything that the Missus had salted away during her store room floor purge. We were just about ready for the onslaught when it came time to open the doors. There was only one problem: there was no onslaught.

Despite Radio Pasty's promise that the afternoon would be brightness and light, we had the morning to get through first. Thick grey mizzle was not appearing to encourage many people onto the street, and we remained quiet right through until the early afternoon. It did not help that the brightness and light did not come through as promised until well into the afternoon and it was at least half past two o'clock before the skies started clearing from the west. Our celebrations were short-lived as the mist thicken a few hours later and the rain came back, although as mizzle rather than heavy showers.

In the interim we did some business but in comparison to yesterday it was poor fare. We definitely came nowhere near the pasty rush (sorry, MS) that we had yesterday. Our visitors probably will not eat for another three days based on previous experience. I had hoped to clear out ahead of tomorrow's delivery which includes all the pasties for the weekend. I now regret baking over the frozen stock which today proved superfluous. We will not be wasting any, but it makes organisation ahead of the delivery harder work.

I would have had very little to do in the afternoon had it not been for the timely delivery of our stationery order. I had only placed the order yesterday, so that was pretty good going. Amongst the usual products of tweezers, nail clippers, sketch pads and coloured pencils, I have added some sufficiently frequently asked for that they made it to the good idea list in my head. It tends to be those staying in camp sites that have biting insect problems. Here in The Cove, the most frequent complaint is weaver fish stings, and we can do little about that apart from enjoy the tsunami of wetshoe sales that ensue. We now have a bite and sting relief product and a repellent that has often been asked for. Clearly, if the repellent works, I will not be selling any bite and sting relief but, for those bitten and stung, hopefully they will buy both.

I have, for the last week or so, been hobbling about my duties in the shop. This is not to do with my dickie knee – alright, much of it is – but additionally one of the two cords that form the toe post of my clever sandals snapped. It was subject to abuse last year by the youthful ABH who had chewed half through it. I am surprised it lasted so long to be honest. I sought to purchase another pair straight away and agonised for ages wondering what size to get.

There was no size displayed on the ones I am currently wearing, and my 'normal' size varies between shoe type and source of supply. I resorted to advice on the Internet which recommended measuring the foot in millimetres and then converting using the supplied table. That was sound advice until I discovered that the source of the advice did not have a table to consult and neither could I find one elsewhere. The best I could determine was that it should be a size nine.

My everyday shoes that I purchased in a shop are size nine and a half, which surprised me because I had not purchased shoes that small for a long time. They are

perfectly comfortable, so I concluded that my feet must be shrinking. The only reason I have taken you down this rather circuitous detour, dear reader, is to explain that I ordered a size nine flip flop and subsequently fretted that I would have to send them back for being too small. Two things did not help in this situation; one was that the Doing Parcels Dreadfully company delayed delivery by two days extrapolating my anxiety ten fold in the process. The other was that my foot has swollen thanks to my dickie knee and exacerbated by standing up for twelve hours without a rest.

I am pleased to report that the flip flops arrived today and that my balloon-like left foot squeezed between the cords with just a little effort. That aside, the length of the shoe itself is nigh on perfect on the left and perhaps just a smidgeon short on the right but not sufficient to warrant returning the whole package.

The Missus had flown the coop at around four o'clock to go and set up the fund-raising paraphernalia at Land's End. She carries about and sets up the gazebo, the tables et al ahead of the volunteers arriving to run about the place collecting donations. Land's End put on a firework display twice a week and we have first dibs on running RNLI collections there. The Missus hangs about until the end to dismantle the gear and bring it all back again. This makes her very late coming home.

Since she left at four o'clock, ABH had the choice of spending three hours alone in the flat or coming to the shop with me. She chose the former and despite a few visits when the shop was quiet, she stalwartly refused to change her mind. Therefore, at seven o'clock when I had shut the shop and finished the ordering, I took her for a run around the block to stretch her legs a bit.

It was still busy in The Cove. The car park was half full of people milling about and on more than one occasion we had to wait for traffic to clear before advancing. It was perfectly pleasant out; the mist had cleared again leaving just a covering of cloud to the horizon. By the time we reached Coastguard Row, we were on our own and could look down on the busyness of the car park and wonder how completely different the place is during these six weeks.

We went out again at nine o'clock for the last run and watched, with a few others, the sun sink slowly into the sea thanks to a small gap in the cloud on the horizon. What a peaceful end to a full day.