

DIARY 2022/23

June 30<sup>th</sup> – Thursday

Today was a bit of a landmark in what one might call dynamic planning. Some might callously suggest that this is also called 'seat of the pants' but had you been there you would have known definitively that this was dynamic planning in the raw.

By the time I attended the Lifeboat station, just after we had seen the Tenby relief Lifeboat approaching, I think we were on several plan revisions in. This, of course, did not suggest that there were not further revisions waiting in the wings for their turn. The basis of the plans was to get Tenby's crew safely to shore and our crew out to the relief boat. When Tenby's crew were properly fed, watered and rested, they would launch on our relief Lifeboat and we would recover, erm, our new relief Lifeboat.

Very broadly, this is how it went, although there were several more revisions to the plan during the process as things change and therefore require expert dynamic planning. On the shore, we ran with a skeleton crew as with all dynamic planning situations it is best to have as few people as possible to confuse and we are already confused enough in our normal state. Experience has shown that the more confused people in the plan, the more at risk it is of failure, and we would not want that, now, would we.

The final element of it all was to recover the relief Lifeboat that Tenby had brought with them, back into our boathouse. This was the only part of the operations that was out with the dynamic planning scope. The very excellent Shore Crew will not have big words like 'dynamic' bandied about in its direction, thank you very much. As you might well imagine, dear reader, we conducted a textbook recovery up the very long slip at low water and brought the boat safely into the boathouse for later use.

It was early in the afternoon by the time I came back to the shop. The Missus had been quite busy during the later part of the morning and had sold all the pasties. The fact that we did not have many pasties to start with is neither here nor there, we ran out and that was that. After I came back everyone must have potted off somewhere as it all went exceedingly quiet.

The afternoon was getting a bit warm and sunny out there, which may have had something to do with it. We had a shower earlier, so very light that I thought it was the water coming off the span as we walked up the long slip with the boat. Yes, dear reader, it rained on me, but I have to say that given we had been in the blazing heat at the end of the slipway, it was most welcome and we hardly got wet from it. I am going to say, that did not count.

The store room has been accumulating boxes over the last few days and not one of them has come back out again. Since I had some time to spare, I spent some time

attacking the pile with limited success. Being quiet does not mean that we have no customers at all and the few that we did have, spread across the afternoon, made consistent progress impossible. All I can say is that there were a few boxes fewer when I finished than when I started, which was some sort of success, I am sure.

I was only filling in time anyway until it was time to go and launch the new relief Lifeboat on a jaunt with some crew on board. While all Tamar Lifeboats are ostensibly the same, they are indeed different and the character of the boat needs to be established, especially as it was about to be taken on a long cruise in the morning.

We started early in the evening and it did not take long to carry out the exercise. Since we had a jolly good time recovering on the long slip earlier in the day, we decided to do it on the short slip – a change being every bit as good as a rest, although in this instance, a rest would have been most welcome. I did better than that and handed over the reins to my compatriot who did all the commanding and organising while I scratched my behind and watched. At least that was my plan until the compatriot tasked with playing with the Tooltrak and brining in the Inshore boat decided it was time he went home and left me to do it instead. My man played a blinder because the Inshore came in well after the big boat and I was last man finished.

We brought the boat back on the short slip a while later in what was clearly a textbook recovery. Two in a day is good, but nowhere near the record, although for the life of me I cannot remember what or when that was. Never mind, this time we stalled the boat at the top of the slipway and gave it a good wash down so that it could get all wet and salty again twelve hours later. We are, after all, a very pointless, very excellent Shore Crew.

June 29<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday

Well, that was going exceedingly well until a sharp shower of rain in the early afternoon sent scattering the crowds that we had been carefully cultivating all morning. Happily, those dark clouds drifted off and order was restored. It had started to look like another disastrous day there for a minute.

The morning had been disrupted earlier by a crack in the flawless\* – for them – service provided by the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company for the last few months. A customer who had arrived over the weekend asked for a copy of the Financial Times each day. Ordinarily, this would have been delivered on Tuesday, Monday being the first day I could change it. When it did not turn up, I ordered it again and this morning again it did not get delivered. Perplexed, I telephoned what the company calls a helpdesk to discover that all changes now take a week to be processed and we will get our Financial Times two days after our customer has gone home.

Most corporations strive to improve processes over time, making them more efficient as new ideas and technologies emerge. It is good to see a British company, flying in the face of convention and doing things differently from the rest of the world.

The day had started out very well. The bleddy hound and I barely had a foothold left on the Harbour beach, but we managed. I doubt that we will tomorrow. We even met up with bleddy hound's best pal that was more luck than judgement. Since we have adjusted the morning routine, we rarely get to see her at all. I was about to go and prepare her breakfast when we bumped into them. I am not entirely sure that the bleddy hound thought that delaying breakfast even longer for the visit was worthwhile, but her pal certainly did.

The sun dutifully shone during the morning and business resumed to where it should have been. The café next door was buzzing and the street was filling up. It seemed like an excellent time to beggar off to the gymnasium, so I did. I had a blistering session and returned to the shop a little while later much invigorated, just before it started to rain.

One of the things that is incumbent upon us as trustworthy shopkeepers – excuse me - some of us as trustworthy shopkeepers is to provide assistance to our varied collection of customers. We have many from abroad who are unused to our coinage and some are confused by the denominations. I sympathise with their assertion that the larger the coin, the more it should be worth and therefore a twenty pence should logically be worth less than the ten and the tuppence more than the five, despite it being copper instead of silver.

There is also the issue where the visitor has shied away from the complexity of providing change and used notes for each purchase purchase. This, of course, is not sustainable and the visitor is soon overwhelmed by a surplus of loose change. There comes a time, usually at the end of the holiday when they are rather keen to dispose of it and this is where our attentive and helpful shopkeeper comes in. We, being attentive and helpful shopkeepers, are more than happy to spend some time helping our burdened visitor part with their heavy load of coins, usually by suggesting further purchases that might make the process more effective. You can see their little faces light up as they leave with empty wallets. We are only here for the comfort and wellbeing of our customers, you understand.

How the many customers in the morning were not put off into going away was testament to their endurance or deafness. We had the boys over at the station labouring away all morning drilling holes in the granite wall and generally being workpeople making a noise. They had removed the Sky television dish and were fiddling about with cables. I had forgotten all about it after the noise had abated and everyone had gone home until our neighbour came by in the later afternoon as asked about the big arial attached to the side of the station.

I had to go outside to get a proper look. They had erected a tall scaffold pole, maybe fifteen feet high, to the side of the station and hanging off it was our GPS satellite thing – it is technical, dear reader – and a VHF aerial. Above that was the pole through which our pager signals are transmitted. There is no sign of the Sky dish; perhaps we have Netflix, instead. It is quite an edifice that I will give six months before the screws rust through and a robust breeze topples it over.

\*Flawless, apart from dropping magazine titles at random intervals so that I have to reorder; wet magazines when it is raining; torn and unusable newspapers; incorrect numbers or no newspapers at all.

June 28<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday

Yesterday was the worst day of trading we have had since the last worst day of trading, and it was sunny with a few people around. It came as a bit of a surprise after a very good interceding few weeks. Today will probably be even worse given that it rained from quite early on in the morning until well into the middle of the afternoon. Do not fret, dear reader, the bleddy hound and I escaped Scott free during our walk down to the beach in the morning, as you might expect.

We did have a few deliveries to deal with during the day. One, the grocery delivery that someone forgot to conclude the order of last week, took a little time to put away and to find space for. We also have a new product to try out on unsuspecting visitors, a balti curry sauce. It replaces the vegan and all healthy pasta sauce we tried but hardly sold at all.

That goes the same way as the gluten free bread that I had to throw away, and the 'free from' cake mix that sold a few during the lockdowns but hardly at all since. I am beginning to wonder about this healthy, veggie, vegan stuff and thinking perhaps people give it up when they go on holiday and have a bleddy good omnivorous blow out before going back home to deprivation. We can provide vegan pasties on request with notice but giving over ten percent of the warmer, or the freezer for that matter for ice cream, is difficult to justify for one percent of the population.

Having cleared the store room of the groceries, I applied myself to the stationery order that turned up around the middle of the day. This was a bit more problematic as it turned up without an invoice. This meant having to check the website for every item which was time consuming and irritating. It was tedious to the point that I gave up on it and fiddled with some paperwork instead.

The weather front, the first of a few lined up to cut across us, left behind some swell in the bay. It was not huge, but it gave the few surfers out there something to play with during the afternoon. There was also some blustery wind coming in from the south that we mercifully could ignore, tucked under the cliff as we are. The rain cleared off at around four o'clock but there was no sign of the forecast sunshine

breaking through the clouds until an hour later. The local boys had some fun on the wall later, the tide and swell combining to make it excellent jumping off conditions.

For grumpy shopkeepers, this was a day better off behind us than in front of us. We shall look for better in the days to come, although I will not hold my breath for the promised heatwave allegedly heading our way next week.

June 27<sup>th</sup> – Monday

That naughty wind was still in evidence this morning when we visited the beach. I was glad that I took a jacket with me, although it was not bitter cold, just more comfortable with one on. It was difficult to tell if it persisted through the day because our flags dangling outside had wrapped themselves around their poles, so they were no help. It did not matter too much anyway because the sun broken through and made everything wonderful – until the next lump of cloud came across us.

It was a day for sneaking off to the gymnasium and having a blistering session, so I did that. By the time I came back the Missus was negotiating to take the Boat Crew down to Poole to pick up our refurbished boat because there was a shortage of hire cars at the time. Hopefully, she will not have to do that because there is no room at the inn for her to stay overnight and she would have to drive back after dropping them off. There is more to be tried and we shall see what drops out in the end but the Missus is on standby and has ironed her driving gloves.

Everything was running sweetly on the first day of a new week until I had a response to my letter to the wetsuit company about its shocking behaviour of debt chasing, especially on debts that did not exist. I was told that the problem lay in the fact that I had not paid amounts that matched exactly the invoice values. This confused the poor cherubs at the outsourced company and while they received the funds, they did not know how to allocate them, so did not bother to try. This alone beggared belief but the fact that my supplier was now asking me to resolve it with the outsourcing company took the absolute biscuit. I felt it best not to respond and will now wait until someone tries speaking to me and I will employ my best endeavours not to be blunt when they do.

On the bright side, all the pasties that we did not sell yesterday, we sold today. I am sure that after nearly twenty years we will never get ahead of what drives pasty sales. What was so different about today that made people want them that did not happen yesterday? It will forever be one of life's small mysteries.

The Missus spent some time in the store room up at The Farm to put together the order that I gave her yesterday. She came back with the truck bursting at the seams and with Mother. It was late on in the afternoon, so I was quite pressed to get it all out on the shelves. I did not, of course, but only have a big box of shoes to unwrap, de-stuff and hang out on their appropriate hooks.

We sell a huge number of these neoprene shoes each year and even more when someone stands on a weaver fish on the beach. I suppose that children grow and adults lose theirs amongst the mountains of other stuff that they have and just buy new ones each year. I suspect that one day soon we will understand what our predecessors understood that you only had stuff that you used when you did not have much money. There, that was brave for a grumpy shopkeeper who relies on selling stuff in abundance. Perhaps I just know that no one is really listening.

June 26<sup>th</sup> – Sunday

We were slapped around by a rather brutish wind as we headed for the beach this morning. I surmised it was just the day to run from Land's End to Cape and back dressed as a pirate. I was clearly not the only person to think that and there were quite a few of those who thought it such a good idea they got dressed up as pirates and did it.

The forecast had also promised showers passing through a bit like yesterday. In the event, they went either side of us and a few further up east giving us a clear run for most of the day. The sun did blot out with cloud eventually but we had the morning and a good chunk of the afternoon in brightness.

There were a few more people around than yesterday. Many new arrivals passed through the first electric sliding door in The Cove for their newspapers and morning goods. We had a good shout at it through the afternoon as well, although not what you might call busy but we sold every manner of thing ... except pasties. Are people not hungry anymore?

I even had some time today to scribble down a list of the things that we need from The Farm store. The Missus did one a few days ago but so far nothing has emerged from the top. She told me today that the list I did would have to wait because she had to get the joint in the oven and would not have time to fill the truck as well. I do hope that we can sort at least one of the lists out tomorrow otherwise I will have to do another because the first two will be out of date. I consoled myself with putting out some sunglasses that had arrived in the order last week.

You may have concluded from this, dear reader, that the later afternoon was a tad slow and you would be right. It was proper tedious with a customer dropping by every now and again just to make sure that I was awake. I was mostly. Much of my time was spent looking at the relatively stirred up sea making lots of white water in towards the beach and making feeble attempts to climb up the cliffs opposite. I suppose it was that sort of afternoon, enthusiasm drained even out of the waves in the bay.

We were back on form in the last hour of opening when panic set in that we might be closed forever. It is still good when people put their faith in the local store and do their primary grocery shop with us. It may be that they have no choice with no

transport, but it is still a good feeling for us. Some have even noted how well stocked we are and they have not even tempered that with, 'for a small shop', which is very good of them.

Difficult as it was to close the door on such adulation, sometimes – mostly around six o'clock every day – it has to be done no matter how hard it is. A grumpy shopkeeper must get his rest to look his absolute best in the mornings. Mmm, perhaps I should close earlier.

June 25<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

It was a day that was not exactly sure what to do with itself. When I poked my head out of the window first thing there was a bright bit of sunshine, sufficient to make me reach for my sunglasses when I took the bleddy hound for a stroll. No sooner than I had got outside than a big dark cloud blotted out the sun and make my sunglasses look a bit of a daft affectation. Naturally, we missed the heavy shower of rain that blew through The Cove shortly after we had opened for the day and several of those followed it at random moments during the day.

We were busy and we were quiet in tandem with the random rainy moments. Quite where people go while it is raining that they can be there the second that it stops has perplexed me since we took over the shop. This joins other spurious concerns such as folk expecting us to carry Land's End merchandise such as fridge magnets and stickers. I do not suppose there is any law to stop me stocking them, but it does not seem very honourable. I do not think I would expect the attraction to have such things with The Cove stamped on them.

It is occasionally the case that the enquirer believes that they are actually at Land's End. It does require some thought to realise that there is more land to the west of us and therefore the likelihood of we being the most westerly point is somewhat remote. We can forgive that as not everyone has a compass to hand. I tell other enquirers that we have an agreement with the attraction that our memorabilia and theirs is mutually exclusive. We do not, as I cannot believe for a moment that the monolithic corporation that owns the attraction would give a stuff about upsetting us by selling our gear.

I was asked today if we had any Land's End stickers. I gave the stock response and advised the enquirer that we had ones with The Cove on instead. This did not appear to meet with much enthusiasm. I was told that they were not going to pay a day's fee of parking for five minutes for the shop. I considered suggesting that they could avoid this by parking in the Harbour car park and walking to the Land's End shop but dismissed the idea as they did not look much the walking sort. There was an extended pregnant pause. I think that they felt if they stood there long enough that I would capitulate and sell them a Land's End sticker that I did not have. They left disappointed and despondent. Sadly, unless there is one on an online auction

website, they are never likely to have that illusive Land's End sticker to go with the one they had from John O'Groats.

It was not just the weather and it being a change-over day that was against us today. We had arrived at Mazey Day, the centre piece of the Golowan midsummer festival – if you can have a centre piece at the end of something. This would have attracted many of the locals and visitors alike who might otherwise have been enjoying themselves in The Cove. The event was being staged for the first time in a couple of years, so it was extra special for those who like joining in with such festivities. Next year we will be stocking Mazey Day stickers to see if we can attract a few customers back again.

It was another one of those 'not our finest days' despite the sunshine doing its best and the crowds making an attempt at making the place look busy during the afternoon. Unnoticed, by me at least, the swell had increased significantly in the push to high water and it provided a distracting backdrop for those sitting out on the benches opposite, trying to avoid the diminishing showers blowing through. It was not exactly a bad day, but as the showers receded the wind took over. Hold onto your hats for tomorrow, I reckon.

June 24<sup>th</sup> – Friday

If we had wanted a spot of rest and a little slow down after yesterday, we had it in spades today. We did not necessarily need it but had it anyway. It had concerned me slightly that the weather forecaster on Radio Pasty in the morning had made light of the rain heading our way. Normally, we get the Armageddon warnings followed by a sprinkling of showers that often miss us. Telling us that there was nothing to be concerned about really worried me.

The day had started without too much of a problem, although it was cooler out than I expected and there was a bit of a breeze running through The Cove from somewhere or other. I might have been better off with a jacket on the Harbour beach with the bleddy hound. She had done one of her early starts but gave up when it was evident that I was going back to sleep again.

I made it to the gymnasium this morning. The air was thick and heavy out of the wind and my blistering session was hard going but felt like it was probably doing some good. By the time I got back to the shop I was a shadow of the grumpy shopkeeper who had set out an hour earlier. Gosh, you have to love sessions like that.

It had started to rain by the time I came downstairs again. Quite obviously it was not going to rain on my way to and from the gymnasium. It was not until a little later that the proper rain started and cleared the few on the street who had remained after the first, lighter rain had started. I do not exactly remember when the rain stopped and the sun burst through again ably assisted by a robust breeze from out of the west. It must have been around three o'clock, but all those people who had run away and



hidden suddenly flooded the street instead of the rain doing it. We sold a small swathe of going home presents but it was not a day to set the world alight.

I had been indecisive about pasties for the day. If I had paid heed to the forecast, I would not have ordered any at all. It so happened on this occasion that I should have paid heed, but no matter, we will resolve any overstock over the weekend. There is always the chance that we will get a going home order from someone who did not think to pre-order and that would have scuppered even the few other people who wanted a pasty today. It remains to be seen what will happen with pasty sales during the summer as we have just had notification from our supplier that they are going up again. Still, we are not very price sensitive here and we can always perch on the moral high ground and point to the price of a pasty at Land's End and other major visitor draws.

Our extended holiday during the rainy season had left me time to whizz around the shop looking for things I had not done. I restocked the soft drinks fridge with some of the stock that had arrived during the morning and put some of our monstrous fish order out in the shop freezer on display. I also perused our shelves in the manner that a customer might, looking for things that were not there. It became apparent that we were short of pens, pencils and nail clippers, oh, and pegs, all holiday essentials. A remedy was required immediately. I spent a good hour drawing up a list and ploughing through the company website that we go to for such things and ended up buying more than was on the list. I remembered, too, just in the nick of time that we needed brown parcel tape and Sellotape for the shop. We have tried to reduce the amount of tape we use at the counter by not taping down so many of the gifts we wrap. This has worked quite well and so far, no one had complained, however, there is a need every now and then and we are close to running out.

Of course, as soon as the sun came out the streets were alive with people seconds after the last drop of rain fell. Many people had held out until the last minute to get their going home presents not wishing to get wet while doing so. We even had a five minute to closing rush, this time with the Olympic team that won slowest browser in the world event. It was an education watching them and an honour to host them in our little shop. In the end they actually purchased some things, obviously a moment that I will treasure and something to tell the grandchildren about – if I knew any of them.

June 23<sup>rd</sup> – Thursday

I had not exactly forgotten that we had a store room full of groceries and beachware from three separate deliveries yesterday, I had just put it out of mind. It came back to me quite suddenly when I stubbed my toe on a crate after walking into the store room first thing before first turning on the light.

Things had gone quite swimmingly before that with a quick trip down to the Harbour in some of the most glorious weather available to the dwellers of The Cove; the

outset of a proper rip gribbler. The toe incident was just the precursor to little day of horrors mostly related to the slog of getting stock from the store room onto the shop shelves and the spare onto the shelves in the store room.

I had made some inroads into the mountain of boxes but it was when the Missus came down that we started to make an impact upon it. She spent the time in the store room while I fielded customers at the till. We also welcomed in yet another delivery, this time of preserves and chutneys from our Cornish supplier and I managed to refill the appropriate shelves between customers.

The day flip flopped between blazing sunshine and a majority covering of high level cloud that blotted out the sun. There was no particular call for parasols, either because everyone who had wanted one bought one yesterday but mainly because we had not had time to replenish the stock. Unfortunately, the stock did not replenish itself overnight as I had expected.

I have been a little miffed this year with our wetsuit and bodyboard supplier. They gave us 60 days to pay the invoices, several of them, but then took it away again by not extending sufficient credit to cover them. We ended up having to pay the majority well ahead of 30 days even, which gave us some cashflow problems at the time. The company uses a management company to look after its invoice debt collection, which had proven difficult and impersonal in the past and are impossible to get hold of.

Today, we had a statement from them, which we do periodically, and in the same post a rather nasty, threatening letter dated four days prior to the statement telling me if I did not cough up, they would not hesitate in sending me to debtors' jail and throw away the key. It was a rude enough letter to start with, but it was also full of inaccuracies. The gross amount they pointed to was way above the amount on the statement and cited invoices actually paid in March and April. This took 'miffed' into the realm of 'affronted and rather agitated' and quite possibly beyond that to 'somewhat irritated'. Words will be had; in fact, I wrote them down and sent them. There, that will teach them to mess with me.

It was well into the later afternoon that the Missus was drawing her store room fixing extravaganza to a close. She had worked from mid-morning to late afternoon with little more than a quick spit and a drag no and again and a spin around with the bleddy hound in the middle of the day.

She had made noises about going to The Farm after work to move the tables that we installed into the polytunnel. The experiment to grow the lettuce on the tables in bags had not worked as the bags do not permit sufficient moisture to be retained in the soil and the lettuces are not doing so well as a result. It was aimed to save the Missus' knees, but we shall seek an alternative remedy for that. When it came to it, she was too worn out to countenance the thought of heading to The Farm, so we stayed at home instead.

There was no exercise launch of the Lifeboat in the evening; we did not want to risk bending it before taking it back to Head Office next week. Our own boat is ready for collection and the whole exchange is planned for the middle of next week. We shall break out the bunting and wave some flags, I am sure.

Our five minutes to closing rush took place a good half hour before we closed, which is always good to see. This allowed a sedate run down to shutting our doors and a quick check around the place for stock orders. Unsurprisingly, we have done quite a bit of damage to the soft drinks fridge and I shall remedy that as best I may in the morning. In fact, everything can wait until the morning because it is feet up time and begger everything else.

June 22<sup>nd</sup> – Wednesday

Wednesday was gone in a flash and we packed so much into it is incredible that we are still upright. It was also one rip gribbler of a day, although we had to wait a while for a robust breeze from somewhere to clear out.

We were understandably busy, except for the middle part of the day when everyone was down on the beach. No one was particularly interested in a warm summer day pasty, and I will be over-subscribed tomorrow I suspect. We cleared out all the parasols without anyone going short, which was quite a miracle, especially when I thought that we only had a couple left to start with. I was telling people I did not think we had any left and they kept finding just one more. We do not have any left now but I would not be surprised in the morning to find another couple in the display bin.

Today was all about deliveries, and surprise ones at that. The one we expected was the big grocery delivery and once we cleared off the person parked opposite the shop, we were able to get close enough to get it through the door. The main problem, which will get worse during the season, is that halfway through the day the shop is busy and people clutter the way through, holding up unloading. We may have to close for ten minutes during the peak but that will be a laugh try to close with the door open.

Before that order arrived, another turned up from our beachware supplier. I had not expected that one as one element of the order would take a week to be ready. They are going to send that bit on next week. As we expected to fill the store room with groceries and most of this delivery would be going up to The Farm, we piled it up outside on the newspaper bin.

The third delivery was a shipping order of fish, which I had supposed would arrive on the normal day of Thursday – a much more convenient day for us. We are, however, grateful to have it delivered, as this company do not usually do deliveries. It is only because we order so much that they do. The problem is not so much the delivery but the mountain of work that follows it. Each cut needs to be vacuum packed, weighed

and priced. There were about twenty cuts of hake alone. Compounding the issue was that the fillets of haddock and pollack were bigger than usual and needed to be portioned. Normally each one will fit in a bag by itself. Our man said that if he realised the size he would have portioned them first but I shall specify in the order next time.

The Missus was away with the bleddy hound at the veterinary doctor when the fish arrived. The bleddy hound was due for another injection of her super dog medicine, after a couple of days she will be bounding like a young gazelle. The previous injection was only just wearing off some six weeks later. It is not overly expensive and if it gives her a better quality of life in her dotage, so be it. Anyway, the Missus very kindly looked after the shop while I indulged in some fish packing. Despite the help, I was still at it long after we closed.

I glanced at my electronic mails when I eventually came upstairs. I noticed one from the Doing Parcels Dreadfully company informing me that they would be delivering a consignment between half past seven o'clock and one hour later. This was clearly a business delivery, so it puzzled me why it had been scheduled outside business hours. I asked the driver when he turned up and did not really get a satisfactory answer. He had at least another three deliveries on board for local businesses that I knew would be closed and so did he, but he would need to visit each one anyway just to prove it. This did not appear to make any sense at all, but I imagine it pleases his bosses and keeps him in a job. I did not analyse further, that way madness lies.

I am sure that there were lots of other things that happened today, but I am at a loss to remember what they might have been and it is now late. I had thought to put a simple note of 'back tomorrow' on this page but got rather carried away. I am going to sit down now and have a beer. Aye thang yew.

June 21<sup>st</sup> – Tuesday

That is one thing about it being the longest day of the year: more opportunity for things to go wrong.

It all started out well enough as we stepped out into the blazing sun. Some chap had beaten us to it, I heard later, by doing a dawn to sunset surf for charity, all 16 hours or so of it. It is against nature to have a day quite so long, no doubt caused by global warming. That aside, he was sure blessed with a lovely day for it but a serious lack of surf. A dawn to sunset float, then. As I looked out over to the beach it was very difficult to see which one he was of the four or five out there. There appeared to be no cheering supporters on the beach to mark his presence. At least he will be recognisable when he comes out at half past nine o'clock tonight, as a small, wrinkled creature dragging himself across the sand. We wish him well from afar.

The fishing boats were out as well by the time we got down to the Harbour and I saw them come back in around high water at eleven o'clock. I have no idea what they

were out for because I did not get to speak with any of them. Perhaps they were all still looking for their scattered pots after that bout of stormy sea a week or so ago.

The first sign of a serpent creeping into paradise was the bakery van not delivering any brown bread. Staffing problems have forced them to concentrate on pasties and a few speciality breads. Standard sliced bread has been outsourced, which is alright because it is still decent quality product. There were problems in supply last year and at the weekend they raised their head again causing me to get plastic bread from the milkman. Not having bread is one thing, I have an alternative. Taking the order then not delivering it is another matter entirely and I was not best pleased. The bakery told me they were in the same position; the bread had simply not turned up. It did not help me one bit or the fact it was not their fault sooth my furrowed brow, either. It made a grumpy shopkeeper even more grumpy.

It was not long after that a call came in from the new cash and carry. I already had a message from them to say that the truck was on the way down. It arrived in the middle of the day last time, so I expected something similar. I only just managed to get to the call as I had customers at the time. It was to tell me that the lorry had broken down and now would not be arriving today. As with many of these companies, scheduling deliveries is a complex and constrained business and I feared that we would not see the delivery this week. The blow was softened when the very pleasant man said he could reschedule for tomorrow, which was something.

If that were not poor enough for one day, the truck for the other cash and carry we use was later in arriving. It became so late that I concluded it was not coming at all and I had an inkling as to why. Some eejit had not properly concluded the online order session and all the shopping was sitting waiting for the push of a button in the online basket. Grumpy shopkeepers do not say rude words but there is the possibility that I thought one or two.

We bubbled along quiet nicely during the day but it took a very long time for people to get out of their beds this morning. Maybe it was linked to the seemingly interminable time it took for the tide to recede and offer some beach to sit on. It was quite plainly a beach day from the very outset but that does require having some beach in the first instance. It was early afternoon before a small settlement started to expand down on the big beach. By the end of the afternoon, there was a respectable number of people down there enjoying the sun, which rather distracted them from enjoying the spending of their shekels in the shop. Ah well.

The beautiful day turned into a beautiful evening as the light softened. The beach looked resplendent in it with a few people on it taking advantage. There were several people with boards in the water, I hesitate to say surfing as there still were not many waves, but it was the sort of evening for it, for sure. A bit of a breeze had cut in, maybe from the northwest with maybe a bit more north in it but it was not strong enough to ripple much of the water. It was also a time for grumpy shopkeepers to be gazing out upon it and realising, despite it all, just how lucky he was.

June 20<sup>th</sup> – Monday

Sunshine. And what a difference it makes to the world. We saw customers in abundance today, like they were held back by a big elastic band that suddenly snapped.

It was still not that warm as the bleddy hound and visited the beach this morning – hooded jacket required. The breeze that we hoped had gone away was back again in the northeast and was keeping those temperatures down for the rest of the day. We could not fault the sunshine, though, that beat down from a clear blue sky eventually and raised my hopes of a feast of aftersun sales tomorrow morning.

It was such a lovely day that a trip to the gymnasium was an inescapable certainty, so I certainly went. I cannot lay claim to any personal bests, in fact, quite the opposite. I must have over-extended myself since my last visit and I had to call in my rowing half a rod from the finish. I managed to pump my iron and run my supersets. I was thinking about benching my face off but was not entirely sure I knew what that meant. Nevertheless, it was a blistering session.

When I had left the Missus behind, business was beginning to look up a bit. It was still going relatively well when I returned a little while later. We are blessed with some most pleasant people around this week both those we have known for years and some new ones, too, including a group from North American – one side of a national border or the other. I rather suspect that they are Canadians, but I am not going to lay a bet on it.

One thing that I am most perplexed about, and, so far, it only applies to the Germans, is the necessity to enquire whether our sandwiches will be there the next day and then not turn up for them. On both occasions now, the enquirer appears at the last knockings of the day professing that they will be back first thing the following morning after checking at what time we open. 'Will we have sandwiches when we open in the morning?'. Well, I am not sure what they think will happen to them between our closing and opening. Despite being assured that the sandwiches will be there and on one of the occasions that they would be freshly delivered that next day, they still did not show up. It did not make them unpleasant people – just perplexing.

I sent the Missus into town after I came back from the gymnasium. Despite having thought that I had stolen a march on the inputting of the invoices, somehow we were still late in getting the physical ones into the accountant. So much for making tax difficult, erm digital that we still need reams of paper. Much of the invoice traffic comes in electronically and I am compelled to print it. However, just how much of that is the whim of the accountant rather than the Government direction, I have not cared to find out. It strikes me as sensible to keep the digital invoices digital and to scan the others into some sort of shared document management system. Just how much time difference there would be between printing and filing and scanning into a

system is hard to say. It would have some advantages, not least having to find less room for storage and I could look up retrospective invoices much more easily. The matter is somewhat academic at present and in the lap of the accountant.

The day continued to be relatively busy. The sun continued to shine, although we could have done without that niggling northeasterly. Even at gone five o'clock the Beach car park looked pretty full but the street had pretty much cleared out. Surely, they cannot all have been in the OS waiting for a table.

I had to do some ordering in the evening on top of the ordering that I had managed to do during the day. I had waited on our main beachware supplier confirming what we had left on back order. Oddly, it was far less than I had left on my system after marking off the incoming stock when it arrived. One of us must be wrong and I have sent my list for them to check.

They did mention a few items that would not be coming and because the catalyst for me contacting them in the first place was sun lotion, they had something to say about that as well. Apparently, some of the components of sun lotion are in short supply and thus sun lotion will be too. Tomorrow I will order in a big supply of wide brimmed sun hats and long sleeve shirts in anticipation, hopefully pipping everyone to the post before straw and sleeves run out.

June 19<sup>th</sup> – Sunday

The bleddy hound was pushing for an early walk, so I abandoned my usual routine to whisk her down to the Harbour beach. It has opened up nicely since two days ago when we were pushed off the same beach at roughly the same time. We do not tarry but it is good to see what the day is like before we begin – usually.

Today was nothing special, it has to be said. The wind was slightly kinder in that it was lighter than yesterday but it had moved around to somewhere in the east. This kept in in my face for most of the day and had me scurrying off to find a fleece to put on in the first hour of opening. At least it did not rain ... in the morning.

Yesterday, one of the young cooks from the café next door came in for apples. I asked if he was on a health kick but he told me that he was making mulligatawny soup. I was intrigued that it contained apples and he said that it complimented one of the other ingredients – or countered it or something. Anyway, a little while later the head man came in with a small pot of it for me to taste. Heavens to Betsy, it was some bleddy 'ansum and I am rather thinking that is an understatement. I could have done with a bowl of it today to chase away the chill.

Our visitors are pretty resilient – or full on soup, it seems, and we had a fair few milling about in the morning, coming in to browse and to buy. Caught by surprise, many were interested in our hooded sweatshirts and we sold more than we might have otherwise. We also managed to part with some umbrellas. With the wind still

humping in at more than thirty miles per hour, I held my own counsel that it may not have been advisable to open one today.

The relative quiet allowed me to make the list of goodies that we will need from one of our cash and carries. Last time we tried the new one and found them wanting in so many areas we went back to the old one. When that delivery came in, there were just as many deficiencies but they wait until it is delivered before they tell you what is missing. We stuck with the new one this time and managed to skirt around the problem areas with some replacements. I have asked for a direct debit with the company because our order maxes out our credit card and then only if there are no other goods on it. I had to transfer money to the card so that we could pay the bill this time as well because after three weeks they had still not set up the direct debit. Getting our groceries is hard enough without these goons throwing marbles under our feet each time we order.

So frustrated was I with the process, I forgot to order the beer. I know, what sort of excuse is that – to forget the beer of all things. Normally, I would go back in and add it to the order but because the beer alone is less than the minimum for a free delivery, it adds a charge. I have put it down as ‘click and collect’ and will call on Monday to sort out the mess and ask why our direct debit has not been set up – and to ask why they have so many out of stocks on their system and a note at the top of each page saying that they stock levels at this time are good.

It was trying hard to rain in the early afternoon and we did have a few spots here and there. The main bulk of the weather system came across us in the later afternoon and into the night when it worsened. Fortunately, the wind dropped out as it came back around to the northwest else it would have been in the shop again where it had only just dried up from the day before. Naturally, I avoided any hint of wetness as my rainproofness continues, although I would have gladly traded that superpower for a half decent weekend.

June 18<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

If we were slightly disappointed that we did not have the full on sunshine that the rest of the country basked in yesterday, we should have been truly upset by today’s weather.

It started out well enough but the lady on Radio Pasty warned that showers would be coming across us in the afternoon. It duly rained shortly afterwards in the morning, but obviously the bleddy hound and I missed it completely down on the beach first thing. It was a tad breezy when we ventured out but at eleven o’clock on the dot, the northerly draught suddenly increased in the manner of an elongated squall and scat over our wheelie bin. I had only just brought in the flags from outside, too, in an alarming moment of prescience.



I would judge that it is a tad superfluous to say that the weather put a small dent in our trade. Fortunately, two deliveries turned up that gave me the chance to do something useful during the extended quiet. Having said that, it was not all that quiet. Apart from during the thundery squalls where it got a bit wet from time to time, there were people milling about and there was a bit of shopping going on. By the look of it, there was a bit of going home present buying as well as just arrived food shopping.

Sadly, our friends from the North had to leave today. We have known them for a good few years and it is always good to see them make the trek. Before they arrive, we practise saying, 'why-aye bonnie lad' and 'when the boat cooms in' to each other so we can get used to the accent and understand a little of what they are saying when they get here. Last time I spent a convivial time with them in their cottage before they went home and hoped to repeat it this time. My timing was not great, arriving at tea time ish and, clearly, they had seen me coming up the street and hidden behind the sofa; a grumpy shopkeeper is a fearsome creature unleashed from the confines of the shop, so who could blame them. They will hopefully be here again next year when I shall endeavour to take them more by surprise.

Just into the middle of the afternoon, I had to activate the first electric sliding door in The Cove. With the wind going northerly and getting all macho and laced with rain, the inside of the shop doorway was getting a bit damp. The wind was also howling a fair bit and banging anything it could get hold of. Closing the first electric sliding door in The Cove dampened down the racket a fair bit and stopped the increasingly chilling draught.

You may recall, dear reader, that we had some trouble with the hot water dispenser that we purchased in an effort to reduce the cost of kettle boiling and to make preparing a cup of tea for me when the shop is open, a little more timely. The machine that we like very much for its features, unfortunately poured out tainted water – a complaint levelled against the product by countless reviewers. Despite asking for assistance from the company, which was forthcoming, the problem persisted and the unit will have to be returned.

The much cheaper machine that we purchased as a replacement is sadly lacks some key features such as pouring out sufficient water to fill my large mug in the morning. It is also painful trying to empty and refill as water goes everywhere. I have looked long and hard for a suitable replacement and, in the afternoon after much deliberation, we settled on a machine that was mostly what we wanted but has a smaller reservoir than was desirable. We shall see how this one goes.

As if it were possible for the middle of June, the weather worsened towards closing time. It almost ruined my rainproof credentials as it coincided with packing away time. Rain heavier than we had all day came across and there was a bit of lightning and thunder involved. I was just hoping that it would not take out the electricity and completely ruin a perfectly good evening.

Talking of which, I have met an increasing number of people somewhat bemused, confused and put out by the OS seating and eating policy. One pair who had dined there recently and early in the evening said that all the rest of the tables were empty and yet there were people asking if they could be fed and being turned away. The couple said that the tables were empty for at least an hour, during which time, they felt they could have been usefully employed. They added that some people were allowed to walk in where others were turned away, seemingly arbitrarily. They found it odd and a bit disturbing.

I know that many establishments have problems with staffing and are required to constrain bookings to manage their capacity and it may well be the case with the OS. Unfortunately, it does not sit well with customers who might feel better if informed and have less need to level their frustration at the local grumpy shopkeeper who can do little about it other than sooth a furrowed brow or two.

We found that we needed to wrap up warmly in the evening after being rudely plunged back into winter. If the forecast is correct, there is more to come tomorrow. Oh, sweet joy.

June 17<sup>th</sup> – Friday

There were the makings of one proper rip gribbler when I took the bleddy hound down to the beach this morning. A couple of hours later we were wreathed in fog with the mocking tones of the man on Radio Pasty telling us that there was a level 2 health alert in place for the Duchy.

We were more or less pushed off the beach by the final waves of the high tide lapping at our toes. The bleddy hound got a foot wet, so it was a good job she had not put her socks on yet. We did not tarry after that, which was fine by me as I had plenty to do in the shop before we opened.

Today, I made it to the gymnasium. Having missed out on Wednesday, I carried on with renewed vigour and had one blistering session. I quite surprised myself by beating my personal best on the rowing machine shortly before I melted into a puddle on the seat. While we may not have been as hot as the rest of the country due to our covering of low cloud, the temperature in the gymnasium was a good couple of degrees above that of the ambient temperature outside and benefitted from no light breeze blowing through it. I was still leaking an hour later.

As noted, we were beset with low cloud for most of the day. The intensity fluctuated and by near close of play, it was thick as a bag down in The Cove. The Missus said that had not affected her at The Farm but when they came to leave in the late afternoon, it was starting to drift by. Naturally, we had various comments, complaints and what-have-you-done-to-the-weather to which I developed a stock answer that I had only done it for their own good, to stop them being adversely impacted by the fierce sunshine that would have done them no good at all.

Despite the turn of the weather and the fact that it was a change-over day, we were quite busy on and off throughout the day. It means I get a bit of a rest between bouts of busyness, which would be quite pleasant if I did not have to try and squeeze ordering things into the quiet moments. I waited until after we closed yesterday to do the fishing tackle order that had been wanting for too long. Eventually, I get irritated by the frequency of the comments that we do not have any lures and spinners and force myself into doing something about it. Today, I managed to squeeze a surf jewellery order in between customers but I rather lost my way halfway through it after a number of interruptions so I could not remember how many of each type I had ordered. I am sure whatever turns up will sell at some point, anyway.

I have also sorted out the strategy for buying the sun cream, so that will be winging its way to us next week. Clearly, after that there will be no more sun. When I got upstairs to check what I thought was a good cross section of products, I noticed that the SPF50 lotion came in a half sized bottle for roughly the same price as the larger one we had before. It took the Missus and I ten minutes to sort out a new list spread between two suppliers to cover what we usually offer.

We are unable to get the big, branded products at any reasonable price so have always been forced to buy stuff people have never heard of. This has hampered us over the years with a certain amount of distrust, although even the brands we use are starting to gain some traction now. The Aged Parent telephoned during the afternoon on another matter but apropos of nothing at all he told me that a report in The Times newspaper said that the lesser known brands of sun cream had come out on top of scientific tests comparing them with well-known branded products. I do hope that everyone read it.

The Cove emptied in the later afternoon and with no five minutes to closing rush, I closed the shop relatively quickly. The Missus tells me we had near the last of the hake from the freezer. With neap tides coming, a big order of hake will be planned for the end of the week. Fish aplenty from our supplier with the sensible sized cuts.

June 16<sup>th</sup> – Thursday

The bleddy hound is becoming a little less demanding of my time in the morning. We are down to just short of half an hour early at present. It is a work in progress. As it happened, I too had awoken early – it must be the heat; the flies; this getting out of bed early for the last two weeks. At least it gave me a head start in the shop a little later as there was quite a bit of restocking to do.

The day had started all bright and shiny but as we drifted towards the middle of the day, the cloud rolled in. It was possibly the best part of the day when we strolled around the block in the morning. As with yesterday, the air was filled by a solitary bird song. I nailed it down to the little wren perched on the television aerial on Little Cottage's chimney. For the UK's smallest bird (apart from the Goldcrest that I

hurriedly checked before publication just in case I was wrong and I was), it sure had an outsize pair of lungs on it. I could hear the song both ends of Coastguard Row and it was no wonder nothing else was joining in – “*You not singing this morning, dear?*” “*No, that bleddy wren is at it again. I’ll just sound all girly.*”

It was another day of up and down with many busy periods in the morning with long gaps between. As the day progressed and the heat and humidity increased, so our visitors started to slow down shortly before they flaked out completely. It was a day for doing very little unless you had to and most people here, the other side of a counter, do not have to. I put in a bit of an effort to clear some of the accumulated orders that had arrived on top of the normal orders that arrive daily. The problem with doing anything that takes me away from the till for five minutes or more is that it seems to attract a crowd. There may not be a person in sight up and down the street but as soon as that trolley is full and I am halfway down the corridor, customers flood in. It is worth doing just to attract some business, frankly.

There was quite a bit of swell this morning on the full tide. That seemed less in evidence during the lower tide but there were enough surfers out there to show that it was still around. Most of the action, such as it was, was out back over towards North Rocks but the waves were hardly coming thick and fast and there was a lot of waiting around. This for me is another good reason not to take up surfing after all the other good reasons of not having the balance, somewhat dickie knees and it being far too wet out there.

There was no Lifeboat training in the evening and the Coxswain made the schoolboy error of signally that we would have a clear-up after all the scaffold and other works had been completed. Only the usual suspects turned up. Living just across the road, I did not stand a ghost of a chance, so I turned up with a mop and bucket. Since even the usual suspects scattered when they saw me arrive, I set to with some hot water and a product that used to ‘wipe out dirt in a flash’. They lied. It took a good 40 minutes to mop the two sets of stairs and both crew rooms, which are now looking sparkling – sort of. The others were not idle, taking the pressure washer to the boat hall floor and cleaning surfaces in the crew meeting room upstairs. To be honest, a lot more people would probably been a hindrance but a few more would have helped.

We are now able to use the station as we were before the fight started. Unfortunately the shop has been deprioritised at present as there must be more pressing things we are unaware of across the estate. This will no doubt please the Harbour Commissioners no end - and one or two of the volunteers – as they are one car parking space down due to the temporary shop there. It now looks set to be there for the summer. The portacabins and the container in the yard will go soon and it will look as if nothing had ever happened. Just need our lamppost back, now, so the Missus can see when she takes the bleddy hound out when the nights draw in.

June 15<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday

Whatever the much maligned council were doing to the big beach at the bottom of the OS slipway clearly worked. The Lifeguard truck was on the beach today, flashing its lights and frightening small children with its loud hailers.

It was a pretty fine morning for it to be down on the beach, although not first thing in the morning when the tide would not allow the bloody hound and I anywhere near it. For the first time in a while we were consigned to walk around the block. Her special medicine that I cannot remember the name of has bestowed upon her a new lease of life and she was uncomplaining as she followed me around the circuit. That did not stop her moaning that she had to wait until I had finished refreshing the contents of the soft drinks fridge before she got her breakfast.

I get a new price list from one of our fish suppliers each morning. They must be up very early because it arrives well before we open. Today's message reminded me that I had not placed the fish order that I was supposed to have placed yesterday afternoon. Since I had already delayed our customers by a couple of days so that I could place the orders all together, I thought that I had best do something to correct my mistake. I opted for missing my session at the gymnasium so that I could drop down to Newlyn and pick the fish up myself.

This supplier was one that I was tipped off for by one of our local fishermen. Unfortunately, when it came to placing the order they had not yet set up a delivery route for the Far West, so that scuppered that. It was a huge shame because they are a brilliant company and will deliver smaller amounts. Our biggest problem currently is a minimum order of £50 wholesale. I was quite delighted that they could complete my order as I knew it would be the best price and exactly what I wanted.

I was a bit late in getting there because I had quite forgotten that the roads are clogged with drivers unfamiliar with the roads and in cars not blessed with a reverse gear. That is not so much of a problem on the main A30 where top speed seems to be 30 miles per hour except in the 30 miles an hour limited sections where they drive at 40 miles per hour. On the way back, the car I was following at 30 miles per hour was further restricted when a tractor pulled in from of him. We both followed the tractor at around 20 miles per hours until the car in front spotted a convenient blind bend to overtake on, narrowly avoiding a car that had belatedly come into view in the opposite direction.

I caught up with the driver shortly afterwards, after finding a bit of straighter road, until he parked on the pavement on a blind corner outside the OS on double yellow lines and a keep clear. I think he was more local stock than visitor.

Somehow, I managed to get back to the shop halfway through the morning unscathed. Customer orders firmly awaiting packing and delivery, I retired to enjoy some breakfast and answer the response that I had from the hot water dispensing company.

They were urging that I did not send back the machine that produces tainted water but to check if I had inserted the water filter correctly. I am not sure how anyone could have inserted the water filter incorrectly but I duly sent photographs of my insertion and asked them to check if I had done it right. We await developments.

Then, before I could waffle on any further, a delivery of fudge boxes arrived. I never get any acknowledgement from the company which I send the order to, so I have to wait and see if it arrives in a week or so. Happily, and obviously, the order got through and it arrived along with a whole host of customers. To be truthful the customers were already here – not the same ones, different ones – but it did seem as soon as I had something to do, it got busier.

We now have postcard boxes of fudge and biscuits aplenty and they are all spirited away in the store room and of course in the shop, too. I have still to get a handle on ordering the sun cream. The tricky bit here is that my order of sun cream alone is insufficient for a free delivery and I have to find other things to go with it. This all takes time of which I am not in wholesale supply.

I even did not have much time to gaze out on the perfectness of the perfect day. Alright, it got a bit cloudy in the middle for a while but we can forgive it that for the splendidity – oh, come on, there must be a word, 'splendidity' – it conjured up all the way into the evening.

Hotness is coming on, apparently, although our side of the street when I packed up the shop display, was pleasantly cool. We will see.

June 14<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday

Well, that did not take long. In fact, I was just ahead of RW with finding out, who had clearly been sat on the Diary page on his computer frantically pressing the refresh button to be the first to alert me to the facts of the matter. He sent me a link to the Mini Fastnet race, which is what we were witnessing through the evening yesterday with that geet lump of yachts piling past and through the bay. It leaves and ends at Douarnenez in Brittany, somewhere near France and just south of Camborne. They were all still spread out in a bunch just northwest of us when I looked again in the morning.

The bleddy hound was not particularly interested in the couple of yachts still in view that had either given up or just were not part of the race at all when we went to the beach early on. Today, we avoided the fishing boats being launched that had us being careful where we went on yesterday's foray down there. It was a sunglasses sort of morning, too, with none of that naughty cloud to hide the sunshine away. Rumour has it that some European type sunshine is going to try and sneak over the border later in the week. My loins are girded and my clever Mr Dyson fan oiled and

prepared. I thought that I might need it today but the firm westerly breeze kept a lid on temperatures.

Business was brisk from quite early in the morning. This plays havoc with my breakfast but I shall learn to cope because I do not think it will slacken off now until after the ball is over. With sunshine beating down, we were busy throughout the day, although there was a bit more of a lull in the middle to late afternoon. I took the opportunity to do a bit of shelf filling and noticing that the soft drinks fridge was emptying fast. I was reasonably certain it was not that empty when I looked this morning but there again, I do not recall selling a fridge full of pop. I suppose that I must have done. It was that sort of say, after all.

The scaffolders were here again today. For some reason the noise of clanking metal seemed a bit more intrusive than before. I think that they will be back again tomorrow as there is a steel box left across the road and later I saw that there are still towers on the slipway. I did not think that they would be back yesterday but there always seems to be just a little more scaffold to come down however much they take away. I should not really be surprised. It took two weeks to put up so it should not be unreasonable to expect it to take two weeks to take down as well. It is not as if they have been slacking.

Business petered out towards the end of the shop day, as it is wont to do and gave way to a very pretty but still breezy evening. The beaches were very much closed to activity save for clinging to a rock as the waves lapped at your toes, so there was not much in the way of beach wandering going on except in the entrance to the Valley.

With a few days of sunshine still to come, we are running a bit short on sun lotion and I will have to pull my finger out soon to acquire some more. It is expensive enough at the volumes we can get, and we sell a lot for a small shop. I just hope that this is just not one more thing that has shot up in price as I will be very embarrassed to put the price up even more. Even grumpy shopkeepers have something resembling morals – not often, granted, but certainly occasionally.

June 13<sup>th</sup> – Monday

We had full cloud cover when I took the bleddy hound down to the beach this morning. I really was not too sure what to expect from the rest of the day but large bits of blue sky opened up later but not quite as large as yesterday's. It did not seem to matter; we appear to have the season started and people around in abundance, well, for the time of year.

As usual, it was a bit of a slow start. I did not hang around for long and headed off to the gymnasium as soon as the Missus appeared. She was rather keen to head up to The Farm as there is quite a lot to do up there by the sounds of it. Today was tying up tomato plants and fighting off the weeds. She tells me that outside, they are as high as an elephant's eye and closing in. Every time she looks around they are a bit

closer like a Dr Who baddie. They are even invading the polytunnel, the holy of holies and she is not having it.

She is not having it so much that she made a cleverly researched and planned impulse purchase of a pole trimmer. This is not a tool for trimming poles, as might be deduced from its name, but a pole with a trimmer on the end of it for trimming hedges and the tops of tall weeds. We have a Stihl strimmer but apparently even this is not man enough for the job but it appears the Missus is not man enough for the pole trimmer.

She took it to The Farm on Friday and gave it an initial trial. She was back grim faced in the later afternoon telling me that the machine was too cumbersome to wield. Not disbelieving her, I thought that I would have a look to see if the beast could be modified to be less cumbersome. I spent some time in between customers over two days trying to get to the bottom of the problem.

First, the body strap supplied, hooks on near the bottom of the pole, miles off the centre of gravity and no help whatsoever. I put a temporary fixing at various points up the pole to see if I could get the strap into such a position that it alone supported the weight while the hands did the manoeuvring. It seems, wherever I located the strap hook did nothing to alleviate the weight issue. The trimmer head was simply too heavy and the whole tool unbalanced. Even I with my height and gymnasium honed muscles would struggle to use it for more than a few minutes at a time. It is going back.

As if to underline the notion that I do not get out much, one of our regular customers asked what the much maligned council were doing on the beach. Given that the furthest I travel – with the occasional exception – is the Harbour beach, my limited view of the world did notice any activity on it. The customer explained that it was down on the big beach at the bottom of the OS slipway where it was all going on. Apparently, the contractors were moving rocks about.

There might have been all manner of explanations for such activity, after all the much maligned council slipped a bus lane into Truro in an inexplicable place with little warning before taking it out again less than three months later when they could not stand the sound of derisive laughter any longer. The most plausible of the explanations I could think of was that the Lifeguards have been unable to get their truck down there since they started before Easter. Since then, the eroded sand that is the root of the problem has failed to make a reappearance, so I suspect that action had to be taken.

If you are planning a holiday here, dear reader, in the near future and now are worried about the condition of the beach I must explain that there is plenty of sand elsewhere on the beach. Of course, that may radically change by the time you get here but if you are quick, I think you will be alright.



I must have been busier than I thought because I did not see very much of the beach at all today. I had a geek at the end of the day and there was no beach to look at by that time. We are just reaching spring tides, albeit not huge ones, but it still had the few stalwart beach dwellers pinned against the dunes and the rocks below The Beach café. There was definitely no getting the Lifeguard truck down there then.

As I reclined on our new electric reclining sofa in the evening the Missus asked what all the yachts were hanging about the bay and beyond. A quick look at the AIS shipping monitor told us that there were hundreds of yachts spread out around our southwest corner, mainly French. I immediately assumed this was the Normandy Channel race that commenced in Caen, runs up to Tuskar Rock, Around Fastnet and back around Wolf Rock. It is a race that happens annually and every year after that.

Later, having spread this information to several enquirers, I checked my facts and discovered that the Normandy Channel was run last month. The only race I could find vaguely fitting the bill was the bill was the Vendee Artique – please excuse the accent, or lack of it – which runs from somewhere around St Nazaire, round Iceland and, according to the route I saw, end in the middle of the Bay of Biscay where no one can see who really won. This started on Sunday, which made sense with their current position. I shall enquire further as this is now an official mystery that must be investigated. What this space ... well, this space a bit further up the page.

June 12<sup>th</sup> – Sunday

There were all the signs of a good day in the offing when I took the bleddy hound down to the beach – early again. There was some early brightness, although there was a bit of cloud around and the sun was a little hazy because of it. That all cleared up in relatively short order and the day blossomed into a proper cracker, albeit with a little westerly to keep the temperature down.

The early busyness we had yesterday was not apparent today and I ate my smoked mackerel in uninterrupted luxury. There were some goings on during the morning but the proper busy period came in the early afternoon like it usually does. This return to form was most pleasing; it is against nature to change when we are busy like that.

The day was going much according to normal until, with a shop full of people, our Lifeboat pagers went off. There might have been some dampness in the corner of my eye as I ejected people with armfuls of goods they were waiting to buy. I told them all that I would be back as soon as I could but it would depend on how long the boat would be out at which point they could slip donations for lost earning under the first electric sliding door in The Cove.

Both boats were required for today's call and fortunately, our spare man is back on call again and took the Inshore boat down to the busy Harbour beach while I oversaw the launch of the big boat. The sea state was nowhere near as poor as Friday but there was still a significant swell that would make it difficult for either boat

to get close into shore if it were required. We did not learn very much about the shout but it seemed to be an extension to the search cut short for the Lifeboat on Friday. Today, however, both boats unrestricted by the tide were out for a good while longer, standing by as the shore teams did their work.

I returned to the shop in the meanwhile and happily, the customers whom I had thrown out earlier were not so upset with me that they had run away and all of them came back for their goods. Our busyness continued on and off for the rest of the afternoon and the Missus, who had gone over to Mother's to cut the grass, returned soon enough for me to organise some support on the shore for recovery when it happened.

It happened around five o'clock. By this time there were sufficient Head Launchers and other volunteers to cover all the work required to be done to bring both boats safely back in. Noticing that I was supernumerary, I made myself scarce and returned to the shop to see the end of the shop day through. I caught sight of the boats coming in and it looked to me pretty much like a textbook recovery unless I am very much mistaken. We are, after all, a very interchangeable, very excellent Shore Crew.

We remained busy in the shop until the bitter end, which was most pleasing; it had been a good day. The evening was everything the day promised of it with the colours softening as the sun set. We possibly have more than our fair share of beautiful evenings, allowing folk to promenade until late basking in the peace and loveliness of it all. It is very hard to contemplate a person not wishing to see that another day too.

June 11<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

Today went off a bit lively and all before nine o'clock. There were some big sales all before I had really got into my stride in the morning and it took me quite by surprise. Obviously, I struggled on under such trying circumstances.

The bleddy hound had me up early again but I ignored her and went back to bed. She seemed unperturbed by this, so I think we are back on an even keel again. I did head to the beach with her before the first of my morning chores as a bit of a sop, but she still has to wait for her breakfast until I get my cup of tea. She has to understand 'fair', I feel.

The sun was shining from the very off, although I had a face full of wind when I went around the corner of the Lifeboat station on the way to the beach. The wind was westerly and moderated through the day, as did the sea state, although that was still a bit messy and blown out for the surfers but at least it was not red flagged today.

As busy as the morning was, it did not last into the middle of the day. It was not a day for pasties, for some reason, and the general population melted away a bit. If nothing else, this part of the season is keeping us on our toes. There was nothing

wrong with the weather during the day, although the decreasing wind did persist until the end. The slow down once again provided me with the opportunity to post a few invoices and to get that element of the quarter end out of the way. I also topped up the sunglasses stand and make a start on the small bags of sweets that are so popular, especially during the school holidays.

The Missus ran off to the bright city lights after I told her that I had ordered a replacement for the smart hot water boiler that we had purchased last week. We had been playing with it since it arrived and every single drop from it was tainted with some sort of chemical taste. It is a familiar one that we sometimes have out of the kettle, but it is rare. Out of the machine it was consistent even after cleaning it with descaler. It is going back.

After the Missus returned with the new machine and headed off to The Farm, I tried out the new one, which apparently has the same problem. Later on, I flushed through a full tank of water and after that the water tasted fine. The water we have out of the tap here is soft and good tasting despite being messed with by the water company, so having anything to change that is pointless, including expensive water filters. The new machine is very basic and getting the right amount of water out of it is a trial but worth a go for now.

Our second grocery order of the weekend languished in the store room for most of the afternoon. I had meticulously checked it having missed a few items from the first one. The problem is having some of the list in the box, some in the refrigerator and some in the freezer. That is a lot for a poor boy with a small brain to collate. It was getting late, and I had begun to fret whether I had mistakenly penned in the wrong weekend. During the five minutes to closing our friends cascaded through the door, adding a further box full to the advanced list. It is good to know people that can make a grumpy shopkeeper slightly less grumpy on a Saturday night.

June 10<sup>th</sup> – Friday

That bleddy hound has got it into her head that early o'clock is a most acceptable time to get up. We have not yet ceased to be nervous about the state of her constitution, which is much improved, thank you for asking, but still lodged in our recent memory. This means getting up with her just in case. Next week if she is still doing it, she is on her own.

I had left it the best part of an hour before taking her out. There was a lump of heavy cloud over the top of us at that stage but out to the west it looked a bit better, and the wind had not really got into its stride by that time. The sea also was a fairly benign thing but by the time I had opened the shop it was exploding in great fountains up at Aire Point and Creagle. That was close to low water. Later in the tide, it was getting very playful on the reef out of Porth Nanven and over Brisons. Great rolling waves were striding down Tribbens and over Cowloe the sea was boiling in a white froth for ages.

It may have been pretty down in The Cove but overall it was carnage. The Jubilee bash had been a bit of a super-spreader event for the dreaded lurgi and they are all dropping like flies, I am told. Even a couple of our neighbours in The Cove caught a dose by attending church on Sunday - holy dreaded lurgi, which I am not sure is better or worse than the normal one. They were playing the Cornish skittles game, smite, up at the party and I think I better had move on, else that happens to me.

The morning and the middle of the day were pretty slow going even for a change over day. I had resigned myself to a bit of an uneventful day and started work on the invoices that have piled up over the last couple of weeks. I was making good progress until later than expected in the afternoon, we had a bit of a rush. The sun had come out, unnoticed by me, after a bit of dourness that had crept in at some point during the later morning. Whether it was this that created a resurgence in activity or just the arrival of a new contingent, I have no idea, but I certainly did not recognise many from earlier in the week.

We cleared out most of the pasties and a whole range of novelties, beachware and general groceries piled out of the door. At some point along the way the first grocery order of the weekend turned up for collection, which was handy, as I no longer had to deliver it. Also, during the melee, our racking units arrive that the Missus had requested so that she could hang our stock of wetsuits in the barn. They arrived on a huge lorry and on a pallet within. The pallet blocked the pavement for a while and I had to disassemble it between customers. Happily, the Missus took the frames up to The Farm when she came back from a brief shopping trip.

The day fizzled out quite nicely and I sat down to a very welcome tea. I think I had probably had the first mouthful of fish pie when our pagers went off asking ever so politely if we would not mind assembling at the Lifeboat station, just in case. The just in case was a missing person somewhere up Pendeen way and before very long, we were asked to launch the boat so that they could go and have a look alongside the Coastguard team and the Coastguard helicopter.

We probably launched away before seven o'clock and the boat battled its way up to Pendeen through the rolling waves. They surveyed the coast, as instructed, between Pendeen Watch and Portheras several times but were inhibited from getting close because of the sea state. With the arrival of the helicopter and the three Coastguard teams involved on the ground, the Lifeboat was stood down before we lost the low water recovery window for the long slipway. It would otherwise have meant a six hour wait for the short slip and even then we could not guarantee that the sea state would allow it then.

In the meantime, I had handed over the reins to another Head Launcher who had been absent for some while. I returned home to finish my tea and to keep an eye and an ear open for progress of the search and signs of the boat returning to station, which happened shortly after eight o'clock.

The team were setting up the long slipway when I returned and after speaking with the Coxswain on the ship to shore telephone – he uses a mobile telephone and I answered on the station telephone, cutting edge technology – we agreed that the conditions were calm enough for a pretty straightforward recovery. While we waited at the tow of the slip for the boat to return, we watched the sea. A short while after a big set plunged behind Cowloe, we had an echo on the slipway with a bit more movement. We have brought the boat in under worse conditions and as the boat manoeuvred into position, the Coxswain dropped it onto the keelway between those sets.

We executed what was clearly a textbook recovery up the long slip in somewhat tricky conditions. I surrendered my lifejacket to one of the others while I took a back seat for the final parts of the operation. We are, after all, a very job-sharing, very excellent Shore Crew.

June 9<sup>th</sup> – Thursday

I made an escape today, stuck my head above the hill and tipped my hat to the road. As exciting as it sounds, it was not. It was a trip to my bone cruncher, some shopping for the Missus' new arch and return to St Buryan to pick up Mother. For all its mundanity, it was all new to me – after I had dispensed with the bone cruncher, which I did last month – as I travelled over to St Just and then onto St Buryan. The most obvious thing as I drove around was the abundance of growth in the hedgerows. There has clearly been some adherence to the 'no mow May', which has now leaked into June. As commendable\* as the practice is, the hedgerows are now exceedingly bushy and not only can you not see around the corners, you cannot see the corners to see around. The whole visibility issue is exacerbated by the insistence of most drivers that because it is daylight, headlights are not required even if the heavy mizzle is restricting normal vision to less than 100 metres in some places.

Yes, it was not the perfect day that we might have expected in the middle of June. We were still dry, of course, when we headed for the beach in the morning, and it was still quite temperate as well. It was not until I was out that the weather closed in as a cold front passed over the Duchy and brought with it low cloud just as I was heading onto the moors. Up at the builders' merchant where I headed to get the fencing stakes for the arch, it was pretty exposed and the breeze took wicked advantage of my short sleeve shirt and shorts. It was very acceptable clobber when I started out in the morning.

The scaffolders have returned to our end of The Cove to start dismantling the art installation they created some months ago. I watched for a while in the quiet of the wet afternoon. It was mind-numbing and laborious effort removing one pole at a time and handing it from top to the man at the bottom loading the flat bed that had been dropped by the lorry earlier. There was one point in the afternoon when the kitchen staff at the OS came by and had stopped for a chat with the kitchen staff from the

Sennen Cove Café next door. We all stood watching the guy at the bottom catching the poles dropped from fifteen feet above. We wondered at the disaster if he sneezed at the crucial moment.

Our dodgy weather continued into the afternoon and only came good again after everyone had got fed up and gone home. It was not the most dynamic day for business, just ticking over with some spells of desolation here and there. I had used the slack time judiciously and topped up our postcards. This resulted in a top up order from the postcard company as we appear to be running out here and there. I also took the opportunity to order some of their stoneware mugs as I recalled having a previous customer of them calling after breaking his and looking for a replacement. At least I will have made someone happy when we get them in.

There was no Lifeboat training launch in the evening, possibly due to the scaffolding works, so we made ourselves happy by trying out some sausages prepared by a local farmer from his own stock. This is a bit of a one-off as he does not produce them regularly. Direct from the farm and stuffed full of meat – if there was any rusk at all, I could not tell – they were about the best sausages I had ever had. We are exceedingly lucky to live where we live and know who we know – well, mainly.

\*New territory for the much maligned council. They could not do something and be praised for it.

June 8<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday

I was taking no prisoners this morning when the bleddy hound made her move. I told myself that she would make much more fuss if she was desperate to get out and on that basis and the fact that it was half past five, I duly ignored her. She got the message and went back to sleep again – with one eye and one ear open.

We still made it to the beach earlier than we would do normally. There was a small milk order and some newspapers, so we were not pressed for time as we are when it is busy. I was quite surprised by the strength of wind but remembered the forecaster on Radio Pasty saying something about it yesterday when talking about the weather heading towards the weekend. I had put a jacket on for the convenience of pockets and was glad of it when we stepped out towards the Harbour.

It was not the last that I heard of the wind. Several customers commented how blustery it was, but it was more than compensated for by the largely blue skies and fierce sunshine. Find the right spot and I imagine it was a stonking good day. The wind was westerly, so it was unlikely that our beach lovers would find much general shelter on either coast. It did not stop some hardy souls from setting up the beach behind a wall of windbreaks. I struggle with that. You would not be able to see anything with the windbreak between you and the view. You may as well be in a sandpit in the middle of an industrial estate.

I made some progress with the grocery delivery before the Missus came down to the shop to let me get off to the gymnasium. It is hard effort sometimes and takes a bit of will power, especially going to the end of the 5,000 metres of rowing, but an hour later it is well worth it. There is a bit more blister to the blistering sessions now that it is a little warmer and worth every penny of the annual subscription that I have to get around to paying.

The Missus was keen to have me back behind the counter as she had some errands to run. The first was to top up with fuel in the truck and scoot over to St Just to pick up some red diesel for the tractor. She had forgotten to get the fuel for the truck when she was last in town, which is an expensive error. There is a sixteen mile penalty for such mistakes but she covered the faux pas with a shopping trip and no one noticed, obviously.

Later, we planned to load her new archway onto the truck but she was too late coming back. The previous one, an ill-advised purchase, was made of thin metal and lasted less than a year. The new one is made of timber and very sturdy it is too. The legs, I noticed, are not very long allowing less than a foot to be buried in the ground. I suggested using a few of the remnants from the posts holding the roof on the compost shed, should you remember such a thing, dear reader, and bolting them to the arch's feet. It was only after she was gone that I thought to look at the instructions. It recommends using fence post stakes, which would probably do the trick and stop it being bowled over by the first serious puff of wind of the winter.

I am going to have to stop the Missus talking to other people. It is costing a fortune. She had discussed with a neighbour at the cricket a machine that they have in the kitchen that boils just the right amount of water for a cup of tea or whatever purpose hot water is required for. The hot water dispensers, of which many and varied appliances exist, are being marketed on the premise of saving money. Boiling a kettle is so yesterday, apparently, and it is difficult to boil an exact amount, especially when several cups are involved. Often the kettle is boiled several times as well, so the theory sits well for the new device.

It was a difficult proposal to knock down, so rather than waste my time I set about with some research. The market has several of these devices available and it was difficult sifting through them as they largely do the same job. I settled for one that has a good manufacturing pedigree, a more variable selection of cup sizes and a large capacity. It is unarguable that it will be cheaper to run than boiling the kettle the way that we do, even though we do strive to not fill it each time. I will keep a close eye on it and report back in 2035 after the capital has been paid off and the savings start to kick in. I will not even mention carbon neutrality as I suspect we will need to not use the truck for six months and plant a rain forest somewhere.

Business had been reasonably brisk thanks to the sunshine but after about half past four even that tailed off quite a bit. It left a few stragglers to pass through while the beach opened up in a reversal of last week's order of things. The surfers had

probably had one good day in the last two weeks but that did not stop a desperate few from trying their luck today with a punchy onshore breeze. I sure they were having a big, wet, splashy, fun time, nevertheless.

Then, just as I thought about a quick tidy up and closing the curtains, a big five minutes to closing rush.

June 7<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday

The bleddy hound had me out of bed a good forty minutes before the alarm was due to go off. Another day I might have let her be but given the parlous state of her constitution over the last few days I decided that I had better not take the risk. It also dove-tailed quite nicely with the early grocery delivery that we were expecting, so it meant rather less rushing around than otherwise might have been the case.

It was all rather pleasant down on the beach first thing, although the air seemed quite heavy and damp. It had been raining overnight but just how heavily, it was hard to determine. I did not bother to check if there was still some rain around because, of course there would not be when I stepped out. I had not put the bins out yesterday evening, largely because I forgot but I had plenty of time to do it during the run up to opening the shop. When it came to putting out our own rubbish, I noticed that someone had wrenched the lock off the front of our bin. It beggars belief that someone would spend five minutes effort prising the lock off so that they could throw away a disposable cup when there is a public bin twenty metres further on and a sign pointing to it under the lock they spent time ripping off.

While on the subject of disbelief, I was accosted last night by two young postpersons. I could not believe that the Royal Mail must have special dispensation to allow twelve year olds to drive their vans. Anyway, they had come to the shop to ask directions to an address of a property that did not sound familiar for hereabouts. I asked if they had a postcode for which they had to scrabble around to find. I keyed it into an Internet search engine and discovered that it was in St Just. It is a good job that the Royal Mail insist that we use postcodes on our letters else I would never have been able to tell them where it was.

Warm though it was throughout the day, clouds of mizzle blew through The Cove from time to time during the afternoon. It certainly cooled people's ardour for hanging about outside, although it did not die a death completely. Trade generally picked up in the later afternoon, after everyone had worked out that it was probably not going to get very much better out there.

The Missus had headed up to The Farm in the middle of the day with Mother. Quite what was on today I have no idea but they did not come back with any produce for the shop. This is probably as well since it is relatively quiet at present and best off done nearer the weekends. The grass in the hedgerows must be going to seed



because the truck came back covered in the stuff. She also brought back some stock to replenish the bits I had forgotten on the last topping up.

While she was up growing things, I buried my head in the store room between customers and worked my way through the large grocery order delivered earlier. Our regular man who was most helpful has left the company, which is disappointing but the replacement who just as efficient and very helpful. Most disappointing of all was the number of 'out of stock' items appearing on the invoice. At least the new company was up front about what was missing, the old one was just being sneaky. Even so, we had some key items that we would otherwise have missed out on, like vegetable oil which we are finding it increasingly difficult to get hold of. I will have a word with the Missus and see if we can produce our own from The Farm. There must be instructions on the Internet on how to make it, surely.

After Mother went home after our tea, I settled back to watch the television for a short while before reading my book. I use headphones so as not to disturb the Missus watching whatever she is watching on her Bramley pad but mainly because they do mumble so on television now, ahem. Tonight, I switched on my wireless headphones and discovered that the bleddy hi-tech sofa beat me to it and connected it own speakers first. Try as I might, I could not get the speakers to switch off and my headphones to switch on. I am guessing there must be a solution even if it is ripping the wires off the sofa's speakers. I will investigate when I have some time.

June 6<sup>th</sup> – Monday

We field some odd requests from time to time here in the shop. We are, after all, The Cove Visitor Information Contact Point and should be prepared for all manner of questions from the general public. Today's request, however, came from a neighbour, a lady in her eighties, so it came as a bit of a surprise that she asked if we had a sledgehammer that she could borrow.

I have always found it best not to ask counter questions such as, what did she want it for, because it can lead to all manner of complications. Instead, I told her that it was a shame that she had not asked yesterday because I had changed trousers this morning and no longer had it about me. Happily, she dropped by later to freshen my sweet peas on the counter and told me that she had found another solution for her gardener. No, I still did not ask – we must have all seen what happened to Alec Guinness and his gang in The Lady Killers and what she had intended for her gardener was none of my business.

It was another morning for the sunglasses as the sun was beating down right from the off and it was already super warm, even first thing. I always thought that I was an early starter, but I met a couple of fishing boys down on the Harbour beach with their boat resting on the tide line. They told me that they had already been out on the mackerel for a few hours and were just getting ready to go back out again to pull their lobster pots. At least they had the tractor to pull and push them about today.

I am beginning to feel a bit like Cool Hand Luke of late. The Missus hard boiled a clutch of eggs for the cricket on Friday but ended up not using them. I thought it the right thing to do not to waste them and include them in my breakfasts. It seemed a noble idea before I discovered there were rather more than I anticipated. This is the Missus cooking hardboiled eggs, after all. I thought that I would be bound to enjoy them but that is starting to pale a bit. At least there are not fifty... quite, and I have had rather more than an hour. Rumour has it Mr Newman only ate eight for the scene and I have easily beaten that.

The profile of the business day was quiet at times and busy at others at very random intervals and rather busier than it might have been had it not been sunny. It is a routine that we will need to get used to over the next few weeks. I have enough to keep me occupied, just, and we have taken several advance orders for the weekend including some cooked lobster and crab orders. It is quite satisfying to have people know what they can get in advance of being here and gives us enough time to prepare so that there are no disappointments.

It was the sunshine really that gave us all a little boost today. It was not until later in the afternoon that some cloud rolled in but it was good enough to do it slowly and did not ruin a perfectly good day until long after we closed. Someone had told me that they were expecting rain the afternoon. I asked where she was going so that I might avoid it but she was right in that it started to mizzle a bit just before we closed.

I spent some time today clearing out the store room ahead of tomorrow's delivery. If they are true to form they will be here early, so I must gird my loins for an early start.

June 5<sup>th</sup> – Sunday

It was a bright and sunshiny morning when we started out. The bay was flat as a dish, piling further misery on the surfing community, although many will be miles from the sea by now. The sunshine did not last long and the cloud rolled in by mid-morning and we had a close brush with a weather front dropping some heavy rain towards the middle of the day. There were some brighter periods later on and it was warm with the vicious northeasterly gone for now.

Down on the beach two fishermen struggled to get the good old winch launch operation back in place. They did not have a key for the new tractor and had to find an alternative method of launching their boat, the old way. This involves stringing a cable from the end of the Harbour wall and up to the winch room at the top of the slipway. They told me it had taken some time to set it up and not a little effort. It was best not to be there if they got the system working as the lines under load would sweep over parts of the beach.

The start of shop operations was not quite the mad rush that it has been over the last week. First, I was able to revert to a later getting up time and the reduced numbers

of newspapers cut down the time of preparation, which is handy because they and the milk are late on Sundays. We had a few early callers but by the end of the day, the piles of newspapers were still fairly substantial. It does seem that this year they have really gone out of fashion.

As expected, the business day was a shadow of the ones we had enjoyed all of last week. It is a different profile of customer we have now, which is mainly single couples or ones with younger children and retired couples. One customer with older children told me that in his neck of the woods the children had two weeks off, so they were able to come down in the quieter week – and cheaper, probably. Business was slow, but more lively than before the holiday and if it runs to expectations, each week will get busier as we move towards the summer holidays.

In the extra time I had, I was able to run through the complete shopping list for our new cash and carry. We had been cleaned out over the last week of many groceries and the gaps needed refilling with some urgency. I handed the list over to the Missus to be checked and input. It was not long after that she told me that the new cash and carry had so many 'out of stock' items we would have had to make a separate trip to the old cash and carry to fill the gaps. We decided to do the same list on the old cash and carry to see which came out best. It was the old one on this occasion.

If we have to do this each week in the summer it will be rather more than a pain in the bottom. It will also cause carnage on the shelves with alternative items sharing the same shelf space as we cannot wait for one to run out before replacing with the other. Suddenly, we find ourselves no better off with stock issues. The ideal will be to choose the best from both but one will not deliver less than £1,000 worth of stock and the other charges for delivery under that.

It was difficult to be concerned with that while we sat and had our tea at the table, looking out over the sun drenched bay in the evening. All the clouds had rolled away for the last knockings leaving it just perfect for those promenaders taking in the last vestiges of the day – or clearing up after a street party.

June 4<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

Well, we had enough warning. I am sure that the forecasters are feeling very proud of themselves having successfully predicted the weather for the morning – more than 48 hours in advance, too. We escaped the worst of it by the look of it with the main bulk of the rain swirling in from the south with us in the eye of the swirl – it is a technical meteorological term. The Far West just caught the edge of it and all the heavy stuff was over by mid-morning.

The bleddy hound is still not right. She had us up a couple of times during the night which was not ideal after the day we both had. She still pressed to go out in the morning despite that and we headed for the beach as usual. Naturally, the rain paused while we went out. The sand, untouched since yesterday, looked like it had

been trampled by a thousand stampeding horses. They had clearly been followed by a similar number of gulls, picking over the left overs. Happily, there was precious little evidence of the human occupation that had preceded it, so a big well done everyone who frequented the Harbour yesterday.

The day that followed was laboriously slow by comparison. It will take a few days to adjust. The BBC won the battle of the opposing forecasts as it was mizzly and grey the day long. The 'zzle' part came and went in various degrees of wet but it was not our finest day, for sure. There were a good number of visitors passing through early on. The day had brightened a little and these were leavers collecting their going home presents and snacks for the journey ahead.

I could have told you exactly when those people went home and the relative doldrums started but a Lifeboat shout at ten minutes to midday interrupted my observations. We responded to a mayday call from a yacht, I discovered later. With no information other than the online map of where our boat was headed it looked like it was heading for the Scillonian. It became clear later that the Scillonian was standing by the small yacht until the Lifeboat arrived.

The decision was taken to tow the boat back to The Cove and run it up the beach here since it was only small. This saved quite a few hours of towing and the boat arrived back in the bay at around one o'clock. There then followed some manoeuvres with the Y boat to bring the yacht back into the Harbour at roughly low water before the Y boat was recovered and the boat was able to come in.

I had been watching and listening to progress from home and had fortuitously heard that the boat was coming back just as the decision was made. I called in the troops for a quick setup on the long slipway and quite a few able volunteers responded to the request. We brought the boat in on the long slip at low water in what was clearly a textbook recovery in the light mizzle and strong northeasterly breeze. We are, after all, a very weatherproof, very excellent Shore Crew.

We started to see some movement in The Cove in the later afternoon as people peeled away from their dinners and the new contingent started to arrive. It was odd seeing people going around in coats with hoods up against the weather. It was not that warm in the shop, either, as the northeast wind was blowing straight in through the door. It was while I was looking out through that door that a familiar face came into view. It was a regular visitor, although I fancied I had not seen her or the husband for a while. I asked if they had missed the last couple of years and they told me that it had been nine years at least since they were last here. Ouch.

The day ended as a slow petering out but the business day had been deceptively bright, despite appearance to the contrary. It was very pleasant closing an hour earlier, too.

June 3<sup>rd</sup> – Friday

Hot to trot, straight out of the blocks. That was us this morning when the rush started as soon as we opened the first electric sliding door in The Cove. The first few hours of the morning had been quiet all week and then it is as if the assembled crowds suddenly realised that only had one day left. The forecasters have been banging on about how poor the weekend is going to be and it has people concerned. It will not be as bad as initially painted – I hope – and it is a fair chance that the thunderstorms forecast will pass up the spine of the Duchy and leave us alone.

In the meanwhile, once again we started the day in fine fashion with wide blue skies and strong sunshine – and a strong northerly keeping down the apparent temperature. I started restocking the aftersun again. The bleddy hound was not in such fine fettle. It is quite often that she will rally after a day of being poorly and relapse the following day and so it seemed today. She was up very early and could not settle again unable to find any comfort. I took her down the beach later and she did not seem too upset then but still mooched about when she got back. She had no choice but to head off with the Missus for the charity cricket match, which I am sure she enjoyed tremendously.

It was late in the morning when we started running out of things, although in my defence it was closer to the middle of the day than late morning. Sausage rolls went first followed by the cheese pasties. I had not ordered enough, although even if I had ordered enough, it would not have been enough. How is anyone supposed to predict this kind of slaughter. It was early afternoon when I noticed that the crisps had started to disappear leaving large ugly gaps in the baskets. Some of these things we cannot replace until Tuesday, so we will have to hobble through. I am expecting a bit of a truce over the weekend as people go home and partly due to the frightening weather forecast, which will put people off.

I might have recounted what was going on across the beaches today, but I did not get the chance to have a look until the end of the day when the tide was pushing people off them. Mostly, I saw the square foot of counter where people were putting things in front of me to buy. It was very well attended today, and much shopping was done. Mixed in amongst it all was plenty of going home presents. One customer, newly arrived, told me that it was very quiet coming down – hopefully not so quiet we return to where we were before.

The lack of waves may have scuppered the surfing for much of the week but the wind driven boys and girls had a field day today – well, evening. There were all sorts out there: kite surfer, windsurfer and wing surfer with the hydrofoil board. All were whizzing across the bay at some terrific rate of knots.

Towards the end of the afternoon, I had several people remark that the queue for the bus stop was impressive. It stretched back almost as far as the Sennen Cove Café, which closed early because they ran out of food. It was a good time later that two ladies stopped by and asked if I knew anything about the buses, as they had been

waiting for more than an hour for any bus at all. I checked the bus company website where it is possible to see where the buses are, if they have signal to whichever network that they transmit over. As luck would have it both buses, the St Ives and the Penzance, were arriving at the same time when normally they would be half an hour apart. The Penzance bus was only about ten minutes late but the other well over half an hour. Hopefully the queue would be shared between them else there would have been some very disappointed people.

The Missus returned from the charity cricket tournament well after five o'clock. It had been a busy day up there, sunny but very cold as they were exposed to the northerly breeze all day. She came back with a whole pile of sandwiches because the attendance at the tournament was somewhat less than the population of Albania that she had catered for. We had some of the leftovers for tea as neither of us could be fagged to do anything else. Before we settled, she came down to help me restock the drinks fridges. I will do the grocery shelves tomorrow morning as they had been practically denuded by today's rush.

I checked at the end of the evening and it was the busiest day of the week in which all the days were busy. It was a very timely rescue and we must hope that the upbeat business continues through the summer, though maybe not quite so intensely as this week just gone.

June 2<sup>nd</sup> – Thursday

Ah, a glorious rip gribbler in the making especially for her majesty's big do. I thought that I better have a jubilee getting up early so that I could do a jubilee stocking up, particularly of the drinks fridges that I had clearly only half done the night before.

I took the bleddy hound for her jubilee run around the beach and discovered that however early I was, the fishing fleet was out long before we got there for their jubilee fish. It was beautiful down there and the water lapping high on the sand was as clear as a mountain street minus the expired goats upstream. It was no surprise when I looked out in the middle of the afternoon to see not only the big beach packed with happy souls enjoying the sand and sea but also Gwenver, dotted with myriad human forms, which is all I could see from the shop.

The day was entirely spectacular from the outset until the last drops of light were extinguished from our part of the world. Whatever your views, Her Majesty certainly knows how to throw a party.

We did not do too badly and lasted until about four o'clock before the beer fridge was completely empty. I had despatched the Missus to the cash and carry at Hayle for more beer in the middle of the morning and had tried to estimate how much beer we would need for the weekend. By the middle of the afternoon, that was beginning to look like a futile gesture. It also became clear that I had woefully underestimated the order I placed with the local beer company whose beer has been flying off the shelf

ever since we decided to give it a try. I sent the salesman a message but the lack of reply rather suggested that they are one of the few of our suppliers who do not work through the holidays.

After delivering the beer, the Missus headed off to The Farm to collect the items I had described that we were in need of on the shop shelves. It was not just beer that had been flying out but various beach things as well. We have the luxury of being able to take better stock in the lull that will inevitably come next week. This week we treat as a tester for the continuous busy weeks of the summer, but it is already clear that we will need to do better on the beer front.

We had not long unloaded the truck after the Missus had returned when my pager went off calling us to the station. There was some concern for a paddleboarder who had abandoned his board and was missing in action over at Porthcurno. Both boats were called to assist the Lifeguards, already on scene and recovering the board, and the Coast Team who were on their way. For a person in the water, we launch as quickly as we can and on this occasion the big boat launched from inside the boat hall to save time, which means Head Launcher doing pre-launch checks in a fog of exhaust fumes.

Such calls rarely take too much time, so we set up the short slipway for recovery near the top of the tide. Those sharp-eyed Harbour webcam watchers will have noticed that the boat had been pulled back inside the boathouse yesterday after the scaffolders removed the temporary obstruction on completion of the works. All that was left to do was to await the boats' return.

I was not particularly mindful of the time but both boats were released from duty and returned to The Cove at around six o'clock. For the Tooltrak Inshore recovery vehicle it was tricky manoeuvring on the packed Harbour beach with the tide making it smaller by the moment. For such occasions we use more banksmen than we would normally to alert the crowd of the Tooltrak movement and to be the driver's eyes in the blindspots. I understand the term came from the man who stood on the bank for a better view to direct works but, of course, these days there are few banks left open for the man to stand on.

The sea in The Cove was quite placid but we heard that it had been quite fresh on the south coast, which might have been the issue with our boarder. The calm this side allowed a textbook recovery up the short slip and a hurried reset and ready for launch again. There had originally been a training launch planned for the evening and this went ahead regardless of the earlier emergency but using only the big boat. I ducked out of the training launch as by that time sufficient numbers had arrived, and I had other work to do. It was still high water on the second recovery, which I am sure was also textbook. We are, after all, a very repetitive, very excellent Shore Crew.

I returned to the shop to relieve the Missus who had managed to put away most of the beachwear she had brought down. I finished off the last half an hour in the shop and then spent a further hour topping up the soft drinks and beer fridges as best I could and doing tomorrow's orders.

Meanwhile, the Missus retired upstairs with mountains of food, the makings of sandwiches and cream teas. She is catering for the Lifeboat cricket team, hurriedly put together a month ago for a charity match with the Fire Brigade in aid of the Air Ambulance and another charity I cannot immediately recall. The original match was rained off, so much of the food made then was frozen for the resurrection of the match, now tomorrow. She is a little trojan that way and worked late to get it ready. Had it not been for the Lifeboat shout she could have started earlier but the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers know exactly when to throw a rocking horse into the chimney.

June 1<sup>st</sup> – Wednesday

The bleddy hound was a little under the weather today. She climbed over me at half past five o'clock deciding she would be better off in the living room. It was not an attempt to wake me up, just a route to the floor, so I ignored her and tried to get back to sleep again. This proved elusive so I got up and discovered that she had been sick on the newly shampooed carpet. I suspected that it was a dirty protest at the way her life has been disrupted over the last couple of days.

In the end I took her around the block a good hour before we would normally go. It was a beautiful morning, very quiet and a bit crisp of air. The only noises at all were from the natural world. The fresh air did not seem to help the bleddy hound any and she refused her breakfast as well, which is a sure sign that she is not well. I left her resting and headed downstairs and since I was early, thundered through the outstanding tasks of refilling shelves and clearing up the waste cardboard and plastic. I was mightily pleased with myself and I would have been even more mightily pleased if I thought that I would not have to do it all again in another twenty-four hours.

The sky was looking somewhat threatening in parts during the morning. I would say that there was probably some rain around, but it did not bother us any. As the day progressed, the clouds rolled away and the blue skies that replaced them let the sunshine come streaming in. The Meteorological Office website told us that the noticeable breeze was in the northeast but the flags on the Lifeboat channel thought more northwest. I will go with the flags, I think. Whatever the direction, the bright day brought customers back to The Cove in large numbers covering the upper parts of the beach in bright colours. The tide is becoming kinder to the beach goes by the day, but it is pushing back the exodus until the early part of the evening. Soon they will be banging on the door just after we close expecting to be served.



Six months after ordering them our sofas arrived today. Happily, they came in manageable lumps of sofa and were joined together by two burly delivery men. These were different burly men to the removal men, after all it would be confusing to have the same burly men do removals and deliveries. They are both now fully functioning – the sofas and the burly men - all singing – they have a Bluetooth speaker in them – and all dancing, plugged in sofas. Alright, they do not do dancing; that was an embellishment, although they can do synchronised movement. I avoided testing them by sitting down as I know how comfortable they are and would have been gone in moments, especially after my early start.

After I oversaw the installation, the Missus retired upstairs to finish off the putting away of the detritus that had lived behind the old sofa for some time. By preference it is likely that most of it should have been put out rather than away, but the new sofas came with a storage box, so that was alright, then.

We were probably not busy on the same scale as the last few days, I sensed. I have moderated our pastry order for tomorrow as we were building up quite a stock. It is one of the advantages of being very busy that things like pasties and bread can be manipulated more easily in the knowledge that it will probably sell if not one day, then almost certainly the next. We have found that we are selling them from mid-morning until almost when we close. In the evening, I let them naturally run out but had to do a special warming for a group who turned up at last knockings.

The street was still busy when I managed to close without shutting anyone's fingers in the door. Half of the fluid crowd were wetsuited and coming and going from the Harbour where many were leaping off the Harbour wall. The other half were seated on the tables opposite eating from the chip shop and coming to us for drinks and sweets afterwards.

I was most comfortable later when I tried out my Captain Kirk seat with lots of buttons to press. Shame it was for such a short time.

