

DIARY 2026

June 1<sup>st</sup> – Monday

Mizzle. I had to look twice since it had been a while since we had seen anything of the sort. There was not anything special about it, it was the sort of mizzle we would get at any time of the year, but because the air was still temperate, it was almost pleasant walking around the block in it this morning.

Although I had woken up at sparrow's as I had been for a week, I forced myself to stay put for a further half an hour. There would be far less to do in the mornings for the coming several weeks, so there would be no point in overdoing it. Unfortunately, ABH did not get the memo, and I had to explain it to her which rather spoilt the moment.

As there was not much to do in the morning it did not take me long to do it. There was hardly any bottling up required for the beer fridge and only a few items in the soft drinks fridge. The greengrocery had come very early indeed and was easy to bash out followed by the newspapers. It was only a few minutes after we opened that I had to call the Missus down to take over so that I could head off into town for my false ear appointment. I left her expecting the dairy and pasty deliveries (sorry, MS).

While it was just mizzly in The Cove, it was proper foggy up the top. It was thick all the way to Tregonebris Hill after which it was just wet. I had allowed plenty of time as I did not want to be rushing and to allow for the one driver who thinks that it is sensible in such weather to drive at between 20 and 30 miles per hour and brake heavily at each slight bend. He or she would speed up only for the 30 miles per hour limit through Drift, of course. I picked up this driver just as I left the village. I would have overtaken on the straight after Trevedra Farm but having already passed two cars with no lights on at all I reasoned that it was too great a risk.

I arrived in Penzance with ten minutes to spare, which was good enough. It gave me just enough time to recover from the shock of finding out the much maligned council want more than five pounds to park in my usual car park for two hours. Normally this car park would be near full at gone nine o'clock and I had wondered why it was nigh on empty. I think the bean counters at the much maligned council will be wondering where the money has gone at the end of the year.

It was more than likely I could have saved a couple of quid by selecting to buy only a one hour ticket. I did consider it but thought that I had better factor in how long it might take the police to arrive at the optician that does ears when I was compelled to throw myself on the floor, screaming and stamping my feet when the audiologist refused to believe that my false ears had a fault.

It was therefore something of a disappointment – that I had spent so much on parking – when the audiologist agreed that the false ears did in fact have a technical problem and would need to be replaced. Not fixed. Replaced. I did not even have to threaten or bribe; she came to that conclusion all by herself. She also suggested that when I get the new ones, I might try keeping them in a 'dry box'. She explained that, particularly when it was hot, the units would attract moisture from the air which might be detrimental. Of course, she could not say that was the root cause, but it was worth a try. Logic; helpfulness - I almost fell off my seat.

While I was in town, I thought that I may as well make it worthwhile and top up our pepper containers which were looking a little overused. This is the shop that has all manner of comestibles loose in tubs and will sell them in any quantity you choose. They were more than happy to top up our large containers for not an awful lot which made me feel a little better about the exorbitant parking charge.

It is a wonder how these businesses manage. Not only have they had to endure, significant hikes in business rates, national insurance increases and lifts in the minimum wage, the much maligned council are joining in with making parking unreasonable too. Corporation car parks in town should be free for the first hour to encourage shoppers to use the independent shops nearby. You can do quite a lot of shopping in an hour.

Still, all will be alright in the end. Some bright sparks have tabled the notion that a new railway could be driven into the Duchy connecting Launceston and Bodmin. The route would run along the course of the A30 we are told. The train would run faster than a speeding bullet, bring love, peace and prosperity to the nation, be the ideal transport for the gestating rare-earth minerals trade while avoiding the major centres of population and business, such as Plymouth. I am certain that it would suffer none of the issues the other big railway project has faced as the planners will have thought of everything and learned all the lessons.

We note that it is the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bodmin and Wenford heritage steam railway, so we must live in hope.

The weather that had set in for the day did not do an awful lot for business. The street was deserted for most of the day, and we made do with sporadic customer visits from people who appeared out of the ether. There was not a soul on the beach and the sea that had been building yesterday appeared to flatten out again today. When I looked at mid tide in the middle of the afternoon, there was no one in the water, either. These in between days will need to be sunny or special for some other reason if we are to see some decent trade.

The quiet gave me time to do some emergency shopping. I had noted with some alarm that our single cup hot water boiler had expired when I went to make a cup of tea before I returned to the shop in the morning. This is an idea tool as I can rush upstairs sling a cup under the spout and switch in on. The cup is full of hot water

when I return after attending to other pressing matters. Since I had left the shop unattended, I had to hurriedly break out the traditional kettle instead, which does not allow the same degree of autonomy. I had hoped to be able to order a new one from the catalogue shop in town so that the Missus, who was out that way, could pick it up on her way back. Sadly, they did not have one in stock, so I had to purchase it online for delivery. I somehow must survive until Wednesday when it is due to be delivered.

The vape legislation has been in place for more than a year now. It was the one that mandated that all vapes must be reusable and the one that the tobacco companies immediately found a way around. Quite how I should have known – read the legislation from cover to cover, I guess – but part of the bill was that as a retailer of vapes, I must act as a wastebin if someone wants to throw one away. This came to light today when my favourite waste collection company, Buffo, complained that too many of their lorries were bursting into flames because of incorrectly disposed of vapes. They have a lithium battery which are prone to ignite if crushed or made wet.

The company suggested a solution might be that a £5 deposit be paid when a person purchases a vape which is returned when it comes to disposing of it. The retail industry immediately responded by warning that it would just drive people to the black market, which is already big and mighty as it is for ordinary tobacco. I really do not have a view, but it was news to me that I would have to be ready to accept thrown away vapes if asked to do so. It has not happened yet, but if it did what on Earth would I do with it.

The answer dropped in my lap during the afternoon with a telephone call from the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company (recycling division). I had applied on Sunday to resume our cardboard collection. The very pleasant lady told me all the ins and outs including the thirty percent increase in the fee. She also verified the vape disposal law for me by offering a collection service for a mere £6 per week. Given that I sell possibly one vape a week and if I had one vape per month handed back to me, I would be surprised, I therefore demurred on their kind offer.

It gave me pause for thought whether I should continue to sell vapes or not. On one hand, the margins are very good. On the other, having to collect disposals would be a pain in the rear – we would not have enough to contract a removal service. If only I knew of a bigger retailer who would not mind taking them off my hands on the odd occasion I might have one to get rid of.

Towards the end of the afternoon, the rain set in properly. Any trade we might have had evaporated completely. The rain came and went but the first couple of showers did the damage. Fortunately, it had cleared out by the time it came to take the girls around for their last run. Lucky, ain't I.

June 2<sup>nd</sup> – Tuesday

It was a much better looking morning when I first threw back the virtual curtains in the living room this morning. As I recall, there was even some blue sky, but I did check the rain radar before I stepped out with the girls as there were one or two dodgy looking clouds hanging about to the west.

What I was not expecting was a ten degree drop in temperature with added wind chill. I had worn a hooded jacket which was just as well. When we walked across the Harbour car park the robust westerly was bleddy cold. The skies, at least, became brighter as the day went on and the threat of rain receded. The wind, however, hung on in there for the rest of the day which must have been marginally irritating for the folk wandering about.

It turned out that there were more folk by and by. The morning had been largely quiet but into the afternoon, the streets perked up a bit, and we started to see walkers coming through and some of the more hardy souls sitting about outside the café next door. Perversely, we did pretty well with our pasty stock (sorry, MS) yesterday when the weather was less conducive. Today, there was nothing doing for a long while. The only pasties sold were to some engineers working at the Lifeboat station and some trades people down the road. I reduced the number of pasties in the warmer as there was no point in them drying out with no one to have them. This, of course, induced a walking party to stop by and order more pasties than I had available.

Halfway through the morning, the farm shop cash and carry order arrived. It was relatively big and kept me occupied for the best part of an hour, unpacking and putting the goods out on the shelves. After that, I set to with the accounting again.

We have accumulated as many invoices this month as we did in the previous two and now we have reached the end of the quarter, they need to be input and delivered to our accountants. Naturally, as soon as I opened the box and started sorting them into date order, we started to get busy. I made some headway and will start again tomorrow after I come back from the gymnasium.

Into our little bit of busyness some orders started to arrive. I had thought it about time to fill our premium spirits shelf which were looking a bit thin and ignored. The bottles seem to sell better off full shelves for some reason. I added two new rums, although they have yet to arrive. They have a reasonable story behind them and are a bit more thought through than just calling in Jamaican spirit and adding Cornish water to it. They will replace the two gins in ceramic bottles whose supplier let us down so badly at Easter.

When the Missus returned from The Farm, I thought to have a go at repairing the nearside light cluster. This was the one for which I had purchased a new one complete with wiring because the garage said we had a problem with the wiring. Sadly, the replacement failed to come up with the goods and the brake light and reversing light both failed to function. I had assumed, or more like, hoped that it was the bulbs and I purchased new ones some while ago now. I had only just got around

to having a go at replacing them. When I removed the cluster, I discovered some loose wires. Whether the new loom arrived like that and I had failed to notice or I had disturbed the wiring when I installed it, I do not know. Since I had a lot of trouble seating the connector, the latter is likely the case.

I replaced the bulbs and asked the Missus to try reverse and the brakes without running me over. I am sure the temptation was great, but I am still here, happily. Unhappily, replacing the brake light did not work – that was the where the loose wire was – but, sweet joy, the reversing light did. Unfortunately, the reversing light not working does not incur a traffic offence; the unworking brake light does. I will have to order another loom which means getting another light cluster and ending up with two spares. Oddly, when I saw the truck late with the lights on, the rear brake light on the near side is permanently lit instead of the side light. The wiring must be wrong.

The day remained bright and windy until the end. I found that I needed a hat on our last walk. Flaming June, it is not.

### June 3<sup>rd</sup> – Wednesday

After a day's respite, we were back to mizzle again. The girls and I got wet as we traversed the block first thing. I was minded to think that the wind was perhaps not as strong as it was the day before. It is more likely that it was just a different direction.

The mizzle had largely cleared by the time I came down to open the shop. There was no point in coming down too early as we had precious few deliveries and not any bottling up to do. I amused myself with the newspapers and continuing with keying in the invoices, instead. The mizzle came and went sporadically through the day, keeping our customers away and allowing me to finish all the invoices.

I also had carte blanche to take time off to go to the gymnasium. I probably could have gone and shut the shop in the meanwhile. I doubt that anyone would have noticed. I had time, therefore, to carry out a blistering session without worrying too much about getting back quickly, although the Missus almost certainly felt the opposite. I was not back five minutes when she cut and ran off to The Farm for her own blistering session of a completely different sort.

I had placed the last order last night to replenish the stock that had gone out during the half term. This one was the fudge bags and traditional Cornish biscuits that are mainly bought as gifts for gardeners and pet sitters. I surmise that must be an awful lot of gardens and pets being looked after because we sell a monumental amount of fudge bags and biscuits. These items are perennially good value for such purposes and have been for the last 23 years. Not the same bags and boxes, of course, well, not all of them, anyway.

Since I had nothing better to do, I decided to continue my work of failing to fix things. The mobile vacuum cleaner that we have in the shop recently displayed its symptoms of having a dead battery. I leave it plugged in, so that battery was failing to charge. We had the same problem before, and I was able to purchase a new battery from the manufacturer, and it had worked ever since up to a few days ago.

Without thinking too much about it, I ordered another replacement battery, and it arrived today. It appeared to be charged already which I hope is why the blue light did not come on when I plugged it in. The alternative reason that the blue light did not come on is because the charger itself is not working. If that is the case, I have purchased an expensive battery unnecessarily and will have to purchase an expensive charger. With my run of luck, I will find out that it is the vacuum cleaner at fault.

If I were looking for a positive out of it all, the battery arrived with a small silica gel bag inside the packaging to ward off damaging moisture. The optician that does ears recommended that I use a dry box in which to keep my replaced false ear when they arrive. She had said that the company could provide one for around ten pounds and I had been fretting ever since. It occurred to me that I could use a small air-tight container, which we have in abundance in the kitchen, and place a small silica gel pouch inside it – for free.

I know that some of our stock items have them in the packaging, but I was unable to remember which ones. I am sure the packing person that dropped the little gel packed in with my battery did not think for a moment the joy it would bring to the person who opened the box some while later.

Before I left for the gymnasium, the Missus was telling me of her concerns about only having the digger for one more week. I asked what she had left to do and she explained that the chief priority was shifting enough topsoil from the bottom of the field to the top to fill the bean and pea frames. There are eight of these and they are large. I must have had a moment of light headedness because I found myself rather rashly offering to go up after I finished in the shop to lend a hand. I would drive the tractor with the tipping trailer, and she would stay with the digger at the bottom of the field and fill it on each of my journeys. We would probably move the requisite amount of earth in just over an hour, in my estimation, assuming no hiccups. After all, I had nothing better to do.

Naturally, because I was keen to close the shop on time and head off, we had a five minutes to closing rush to slow me down. The last of these shoppers took his time choosing a rash vest to go under his wetsuit. He asked what the letters S M L meant on the label. He had the good grace to slap himself on the forehead when I explained it meant, SMALL.

He then asked about the surfing conditions which is obviously my next specialist subject after quantum physics on Mastermind. The sea state has been building up to

a good frenzy over the last couple of days. It has got to the stage of bad, very lumpy and almost angry. These are not ideal surfing conditions and probably only the most experienced or foolhardy would try surfing in them after the Lifeguards had gone home. Due to there being one such individual already in the water, he assessed that it was ideal to go for a dip. I left him to it as I had a tractor to drive.

Talking of conditions, not only did we have the five minutes to closing rush and a talkative customer, the weather has chosen this very moment to unleash the heaviest of it showers just before we closed. A quick look at the rain radar showed that the heavy showers were queued up to the west, just ready to head in for the next hour or so.

So it was that we arrived at The Farm with the rain hacking down and a robust southwesterly pushing it in sideways. I had togged up in DIYman overalls, my big orange workman's waterproof trousers and a waterproof jacket and, initially, needed them. Happily, the tractor seat had avoided a flooding and by the time I extracted it from the shed and driven to the end of the field, the Missus was already there with the digger.

Shortly after we started, the rain cleared to warm sunshine, and we finished our work in the dry and reasonably pleasant conditions. I conducted eight trips with full trailers, tipping the soil next to the bean and pea frames. The Missus had cleared an enormous area to the back of the greenhouse, and it is mainly level. It certainly would have taken some effort to get it there.

Just as I put away the tractor, the rain returned. It showered on us again when we arrived home and took the girls back in. They had dutifully sat in the truck for the hour or so that we laboured only having a little run in the rain at the end. The sea had improved its game while we had been away with a large swell running into the bay and lumping over the Harbour wall. It was still coming over an hour later when I took the girls for a last spin. We will spend the night with the sound of it bashing around in our ears, which is oddly comforting at a distance. I doubt that I will hear it for long.

## June 4<sup>th</sup> – Thursday

It looked quite bright out when I peeked this morning. The only reason I put on my light rain jacket was to keep out the chill westerly that was still banging in at more than 40 miles per hour – near 60 miles per hour at Gwennap Head, windiest place in the universe. It was just as well I had my rain jacket on; I walked beyond the bottom of our steps and was rewarded with a face full of rain.

The rain was not too heavy and was short-lived, as were the subsequent showers during the morning. The sea, however, had tuned up its game and was churning away in the Harbour, lumping over the wall and in utter confusion throughout the

bay. There was not much splash up cliffs; the swell direction must have been wrong for that.

With far too much time on my hands I spent some of it fault finding on the shop vacuum cleaner. It did not take very long to apply a volt meter to the DC outlet of the charger and establish that there was no output at all. This would definitely hamper the charging process. Having already spent some £60 on a battery I was not about to spend a further £45 on a charger that the manufacturer had for sale. A quick look at one of the national auction websites established that I could get what purported to be the same charger for £10. If it had fallen off the back of a lorry or had been manufactured in a sweatshop in Shenzhen, I was not about to ask too many questions. It is on its way from wherever it is coming from.

I had also been putting off finishing processing the new order of bikinis and children's swimsuits since before the half term. I had shipped them into the back of the truck before the cash and carry delivery on Saturday and only got them out again yesterday. We did not need too many out in the shop, even after selling a few over the holiday. I extracted the eight garments in two sizes that we needed and rebagged the rest. I also mopped up the bikinis already in the shop that had parted company from each other, tops and bottoms. These are now pinned together and I will do the others bit by bit as needed.

I sent the overstock off with the Missus as she went off to collect Mother and head to The Farm. She told me she needed Mother up there to repot the tomato plants that had outgrown their original pots. I might have asked the question why they were not planted in bigger pots to start with which would have avoided the repotting. There is probably a perfectly reasonable explanation which will make me look daft for asking. I will therefore not ask, just in case.

While yesterday appeared quiet, the till at the end of day was quite respectable. Today was deathly quiet from the start until the end. Those that we did see told us that it was pretty wild out and I could not help but agree. It definitely was not wild inside and I spent most of the day Johnny no mates. I might have expected a slew of going home present buying but this week's contingent clearly have no gardens, no pets and presumably work from home. There was certainly no surprise when I did the till in the evening despite another five minutes to closing rush.

Our Lifeboat training sessions seem to have permanently migrated to half past six o'clock. While it negates me having any tea, it is probably more convenient for all and when we do have launches, it gives more time for sea-borne training. I duly attended at the appointed time and was sent out again to fetch milk and coffee from the shop. It is comforting to know that I have a use.

With the sea state not playing ball for a launch, the Boat Crew went off and did something shore based and we, the Very Excellent Shore Crew went and played with the Tooltrak. As part of the emergency procedures we must know how to

release the track brakes. When the Tooltak is shut down, the brakes come on automatically. If the machine needs to be towed, the brakes, logically, need to be released first. This involves tipping forward the cab, releasing the hydraulic tension and using a spanner to wind off the brakes on each side.

There are a few turnips in the hairspray of this procedure. First being that tipping the can requires a special tool which is held in the Inshore boathouse. This must be fetched to the site of the breakdown. A second is, if the machine breaks down in the sea, it would be exceedingly tricky to release the brake nuts which would be underwater. The last issue is that the Institution has decreed that the Tooktrak should only be towed by another Institute vehicle. By the time that arrives, our machine may well be ten feet deep in sea. We would hope, however, that we may only receive slight slapped risks should we use the Harbour tractor instead – although if we use the Harbour tractor without authorisation, we would surely be banished from the kingdom forever.

Having learnt lots of valuable lessons that we will, no doubt, consign to the recycling bags in the deepest recesses of our minds, we all headed off home to our beds – or something.

## June 5<sup>th</sup> – Friday

Well, that is much better. There was a bit of blue sky to look up at and admire this morning, it was relatively warm and the wind had stopped blowing with such immense fury. The sea was still in flux but had tempered its angriness to make it worthy of a couple of local surfers' attention to ply the waves under the promenade.

The spring tides are going off now which means we had enough sand to run down to the Harbour beach first thing. A fair amount of sand has been scoured out of the back west corner. I know this because I cannot see over the Harbour wall while standing there. I may not have bothered, either, but for an almighty clonk that came from the other side [of the wall – not spooky, although you never know] and had the girls on high alert. I will never know what it was, but the sea was obviously raging beyond the wall and making a terrible roaring racket. I stepped up on a rock to have a peek, and it was raging and making a terrible roaring racket.

After finishing off the quarter end accounts, I felt that some sort of celebration was required, so I took myself off to the gymnasium for a blistering session. If that were not fun enough, I took the girls down to the Harbour beach again under the sun of the mid-morning. I had worn a jacket but really had not needed to; it was proper warm under the bright, mainly clear skies. We met some other amenable dogs down there to have a play with but did not tarry long as the Missus had to trek into town.

She took the newly finish accounts to drop off at the accountants and collected Mother on the way. She repaired to The Farm after that and since she had Mother

with her, she would have been able to play some more with the digger. It goes back next week, and I am dreading the fallout.

What with the sun out, blue skies and no appreciable wind, The Cove was once again the place to be. We had people coming in and out of the shop when I came back from the gymnasium briefly and it took me a few minutes to remember that we use to call them customers. They would come in and buy things, so I hoped that this might be a revival. It was still happening when I came back to the shop to take over from the Missus. Marvellous.

Then the sun went and hid behind increasing clouds for the afternoon and everyone appeared to go home, disgruntled. It made for a quieter afternoon and gave me time to partake in one of my favourite pastimes, doing battle with errant suppliers. This should not have been a battle at all and could have been very simply rectified.

I had been tempted by a passing salesperson to buy some of the artisan rum he was promoting. Really, I should have known better as it was made by a St Ives company. It was a venerable company that had been around for a while but had recently decided to diversify into making rum based out of property in St Erth. As is normal with new orders I was provided a 'pro forma' invoice so that I could pay in advance. The order was then shipped in good time and is currently on our shelves. Since an invoice was not included with the order, I sent a message to the supplier asking that they send one.

That was yesterday and today I had a message with a document attached which when I looked at it was the same pro forma invoice I had originally, mainly because it was. I sent back a reply advising that I had not lost the original, but I needed a pukka invoice because I cannot claim my VAT back on a pro forma invoice – the HMRC get upset about it.

I had expected a brief apology and the correct invoice to be attached by return. What I got was a sharp retort that the pro forma was in fact a proper invoice and none of his other customers complained. He promised me that the HMRC would accept it despite the HMRC's own website saying that it would not. I have no doubt that I could submit it to accounts and seven years later I could happily shred it with the people at the HMRC happily ignorant of the subterfuge. There again, I might have an inspection tomorrow and the errant invoice brought to my attention before they heavies came in to cuff me and send me off to debtors' prison.

My point, that I eventually got across after several ensuing exchanges, was that they could not claim in one breath that the document they sent was a pro forma invoice and then, after making payment, claiming that the same document was a VAT invoice. It appears that the reason for the reticence for making good was that the system would not allow them to change the document. If I could sigh a big sigh across the ether at them, I would have done.

Still, as Ian Dury might have once said, reasons to be cheerful, part one: the new light cluster and loom for the truck arrived yesterday complete with bulbs. All I had to do was plug it in. This I did after the Missus came back from The Farm and left the truck outside the shop. Once again, I asked her to come down and work all the appropriate switches to see if all the lights were working properly and, lo, they were. The previous loom kit that I had purchased from the national auction website was clearly faulty.

If that were not enough to put lead in my propelling pencil, my false ears arrived by courier this afternoon. The very pleasant optician that does ears told me it could be ten days but here there were four days later. What utter and unreserved joy I felt, tearing eagerly at the packing. I had them fitted in less than a jiffy, however long a jiffy is and they worked. It really is quite remarkable the difference they make after not wearing any for a while. I had to turn them down two notches because they were just too loud.

It was around half past four that the rain started again. It had turned cloudy in the early afternoon, got colder and took its time to get wet. Someone told me it was raining; I had not noticed, it was so light. It stuck the boot into what little trade we had left, so I concentrated on the orders for tomorrow instead.

We watched the sea still thumping a bit as we sat down for tea. The swell was much more orderly now, but the waves were big and heavy. They seemed ideal for a few experienced surfers on the southern side of the bay one took a long ride in from about 50 metres out in a straight line to the shore, which was impressive.

The rain decided not to let up at all and just got heavier. By the time I took the girls out last thing, it was raining properly and was assisted by an increasing westerly. I cannot say that it was particularly heavy, but it was enough to wet the girls before bedtime and my shorts, too. The weather forecast that the Missus has on her smart mobile telephone told her it would continue raining through until tomorrow. I can hardly wait.

## June 6<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

Call me picky if you will but issuing a weather warning for 40 to 50 miles per hour winds for nine o'clock on Saturday morning after it had already been near 60 miles per hour during the night, seems a tad too bleddy late to me. The marquees of the Royal Cornwall show had been decimated overnight, causing them to cancel the last day, trees had been brought down and both our food waste bins had taken flight from our ostensibly sheltered flat roof.

According to the weather stations at St Ives and Gwennap Head, windiest place in the universe, the wind had already neared 60 miles per hour during the night. Such an event would usually have triggered a 'we are all going to die' weather warning

much earlier. Had I looked at the pressure charts, I might have had an inkling of what was coming and the wind was already quite robust last thing yesterday. In any case, it took me completely by surprise.

I do remember hearing a clunk in the night and some howling going on. BB had also been alerted and sat up with ears pricked. I concluded that it was a bin next door or our wheelie bin straining at its bonds. I went back to sleep again, unconcerned.

I would still have been unconcerned later in the morning had I not taken it upon myself to move a full food sack from the kitchen to the outside bin before I came downstairs. It was then that I noticed that they - we have, erm, had, two – were not there. I took a brief look outside and they were not in the immediate vicinity. I looked over the sea wall and I could not see them on the beach and nor could I see them when I looked as far as I could down the road.

Given that we would be seriously inconvenienced by an extended absence of outside food bins, I decided to take the truck and patrol down to the OS and back to see if I could find them. I caught up with one just before the new gymnasium and community building – still unfinished, by the way. The hoardings around the worksite that stick out across the pavement had prevented it going any further, which was a stroke of luck. It was only after the shop opened that a neighbour found the second bin and returned it. Sadly, it is missing the lid so it will have to be taken to the Household Waste Recycling Centre to be tipped.

We had lost most of the rain shortly after we had gone out and got wet in it. The main bulk had gone through during the night, and we had just the tail end to cope with during the early part of the morning. By the middle of the day, the western skies had cleared to blue leaving some milky high-level cloud to the north and east. The blow had continued throughout and well into the late afternoon. The foam on the sea was strung out like streamers heading into the beach and the waves were a mass of white tops marching eastwards. It was blown out entirely in the last stretch to the beach where the red flags of the Lifeguards were flying in warning.

When I had come back from my bin search, a recycling bag, one of two, by the thatch, Tinker Tailor, was rolling into the road and threatening to spill its contents as it went. I stopped to try and secure it after I parked the truck, but I was hampered by having our food waste bin in my other hand. I dare not put it down else it would have been back where I found it in a trice. I had done my best with the bag and for a while it seemed to be secure. Not long after, I started hearing the occasion tin can or plastic bottle scooting and clattering down the street and surmised that the bag had come loose again.

I am marginally community minded but there are limits. One of them was going to sort a neighbour's recycling when a gale of wind was blowing through loaded with rain coming in sideways. Eventually, I found a quiet moment to have another go at sorting it out. I stuffed it in the general waste wheelie bin and laid the bin on top of

the other bag. It solved the problem of recycling leakage, but it will no doubt confuse the backside off the waste collectors when they come around later.

Our Friends from the North arrived near the middle of the day. They send a grocery list before they arrive, which is very good of them. As a reward, I usual manage to screw it up by forgetting something to add to the box. I think that I did rather better this year than previously and only forgot a couple of items. Fortunately, they are just down the street, and we were not very busy at the time. It was quite pleasant stepping out into a bit of sunshine even if it was accompanied by a force seven westerly.

After the sun came out, we started to see a few people. It really was just a few people, some walkers and those arrived and requiring a few items that they might have forgotten off their Tesmorburys shopping lists or had simple forgotten to bring with them; we sell a phenomenal number of toothbrushes and tubes of toothpaste. A couple of family members stopped by for a cream tea construction kit, complete with Cornish preserve and top clotted cream. They told me they wanted something while they waited for their Tesmorburys order to be delivered. I pointed out that at least they would have one quality meal at an uninflated price while they were on holiday.

We saw a few familiar faces arrive during the afternoon, which was encouraging and the weather continued to improve as the day went. By the time we were sitting down for our tea, the sepia light of the dropping sun lit up the beach like we had perfect weather all day. The sea was still rolling in a heavy determined and largely disorganised swell across the bay. The waves were big and deep but mainly breaking early and the last 100 metres to the beach were a mass of foam. Just behind were enough formed waves to give a few surfers a bit of a game for half an hour. They had to work hard for their fun.

The breeze was still quite firm when we went for our last run out. The girls decided on going all the way around the block which gave us the opportunity to watch the waves flosching over the Harbour wall. The sea in the Harbour was still dancing but it looked like it was tiring of its antics, and we could expect better later. There was a large bank of cloud out to the west, blotting out any chance of a pretty sunset. I suspect it will be heading our way overnight. I have not looked at a forecast for tomorrow but surely it could not be worse than we had the first half of today.

## June 7<sup>th</sup> – Sunday

The Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company is maintaining its track record of delivering anything but the numbers of newspapers I have requested. There have been pluses and minuses and, so far, we are a little in credit, which is nice. Today they shorted me on the most popular Sunday newspaper, The Sunday Times. We received two out of eight which allowed me to fulfil the requested reservations and nothing more. The company's sole job is to provide newspapers to the retail trade. It has been doing this job for 200 years – I looked it up. You would think that they

might have got it right by now. After 200 years they probably cannot be much fagged to care any longer. I do not know about grumpy shopkeeping for that long. I will let you know.

Mind, there were not a great number of disappointed newspaper buyers today. I have noticed this year above others that the number of newspaper sales have noticeably diminished. They were not huge to start with. Over the last few weeks, we have barely broken even including the busy half term week. I am still torn; the only thing keeping me from cancelling the whole effort is the cardboard recycling which is immensely useful and even with the new inflated price, is still a bargain.

The cloud that had threatened yesterday evening had indeed come in to cover us and was still with us this morning. It also brought a fair amount of mist that stayed with us all day. It was bright to start with and relatively warm and as the day progressed, the wind dropped out bit by bit. Later, however, it all got a bit dower and grey and hardly inspiring at all.

The crowds, such as they were and much better than yesterday, gathered in the late morning and stayed through until the middle to late afternoon. We were not exactly busy, and the pasty action (sorry, MS) was so poor it was only worth a mention by its near absence. As many of these customers are repeat visitors the questions inevitably come around to the St Ives, open top bus or the lack thereof. We receive comments of disappointment and sympathy in equal measure and a good deal of utter astonishment that such a popular service cannot be maintained.

Given that the bus company is unwilling to provide the more popular service it should have been no surprise that they stopped the number 7 St Just weekday service. I only found out that this had been discontinued when a visitor told me. Quite how we were supposed to find out, I have no idea. Even when the bus company revived a half-baked tour service from Land's End to St Ives using the number 7 service number, they decided only to run it at the weekends. In my view they may as well not have bothered at all if they were not prepared to run it properly.

I had thought to write to the much maligned council councillor who was instrumental in bringing in the St Just service a year or so ago but then considered it was probably a waste of time. I am sure the service was ceased because it was not being used enough and therefore uneconomical. Of course, it was. That was not the point. It was supposed to be a public service. If they had run it from Land's End and through a population of 2,000 rather from The Cove, population five and a hamster, it might have stood a better chance.

We would stand a better chance if some customers turned up, which is certain. The busyness we had appeared to be a bit of a flash in the pan and the rest of the afternoon dragged. It was rounded off by a few spots of rain towards the end of play, just for good measure.

Rather than submit to the boredom, I had started to rifle through the store room for things that needed to be put out in the shop. I had spotted some etching games that had arrived with the last order but had not yet made it to the shop shelves. I remedied that immediately and took them down the middle aisle where they were before. My intention was to continue with topping up from the store room as I had known that there were some novelties that needed to be put out.

It was as I was coming back that I noticed that the stationery was looking a bit thin and some items were missing altogether. I started with the obvious items, which were the mobile telephone charging cables. I had spotted these earlier when I had a quick look at the surf jewellery to fill a few gaps in that display. It was the work of a few moments to grab a few and put them out. I was heading back to get a pad so that I could make a list of the remaining items but as I passed the sun lotion I was distracted again.

I had also known that the factor 30 was in short supply and the factor 50 could do with a top up as well. We had some over-stock in the store room, so I lifted down a few boxes and fixed the shortfall. Because I had done that, I decided to have a look to see if we needed to order some more and in doing that, I discovered a few more things that we needed to order.

The sun lotion distraction cost me the best part of an hour trawling through the list of stock to discover items that we were short of. I compiled an order as I went remembering that I had forgotten the men's flip flops on the last order and adding crab lines that we erstwhile had from a different and now defunct supplier. As I did that I also compiled another list for the Missus to bring down from The Farm where she had headed off in the middle of the day with Mother and the girls.

I had hoped that the Missus would return with the stock, which would give me something to do in the back end of the afternoon when, I surmised, the little rush of business we had would be over. As it was, the Missus did not see the message – or chose not to – so there was no great unloaded and unpacking to be done. I had already been distracted by the next imperative, anyway, if I could only remember what it was. It was only when I went down to check the milk that I remembered that I was in the middle of doing the stationery. That will have to wait now until my next bored moments.

There were sufficient sporadic customer visits during the afternoon to keep me, mainly, behind the counter. I had by that time lost the impetus and enthusiasm for topping up shelves and given myself over to tedium and staring out of the window that is crusted with salt again. I added washing the windows and the broken food bin, which is still tied up outside, to my list of things to do next time I could be fagged to do something.

Quite fortunately, the rain held off until much later in the night to come back properly. It allowed me to take the girls down to the Harbour beach in the dry for our last run of

the night. The sea state had reigned itself in allowing the fishing boats to go out today, but it was still flogging over the wall an hour before high water. I am certain there will be sweetness and light tomorrow – sure of it.

## June 8<sup>th</sup> – Monday

The overnight rain had cleared out when I looked out first thing. Judging from the street and the robust wind that was back again, it had not long gone. The wind has been drying up the street almost as soon as the rain stops over the last few days.

Despite the lack of rain and some blue skies to go with our bluster, it still was not summer, not one that anyone wanted, anyway. It clearly did not inspire our customers to be out and about, so I was, once again, guiltless as I took my blistering session in the gymnasium again this morning.

I was a little wrong footed when I went to take the girls for a spin after I returned and made myself respectable for the shop. I had debated only whether I should take a jacket or not, which I was glad that I had, but what I was not expecting was to need a rain jacket, too. Out to the north was a clear band of rain that I assumed was heading our way. Having not looked at a forecast or the weather stations, I was oblivious that the rain was probably heading east rather down towards us. We did get a few spits thrown our way but the main bulk of it went elsewhere north and east of us.

While the morning was of not much help to us at all, our visitors came out in numbers after the middle of the day and some of them even came into the shop, which was nice. I had seriously downgraded the pasty forecast (sorry, MS) based on sales from the weekend. It is a dangerous thing to do because having sold only a few all morning and not bothered to back fill, I was ambushed. One order cleared out the warmer. Naturally, there were three or four people behind them all wanting pasties as well with none in pipeline.

I recovered well after twenty minutes, and we sold through the rest of the pasties running out in the late afternoon. I had ordered no fewer than the same day last week and had been left with enough to create a backlog midweek. Therefore, I had every expectation that the volume I had ordered would be sufficient. Typically, after the poor weekend we had a rebound that caught me off-guard. Of course, it all happened after the order deadline when I had ordered even less for tomorrow. We have plenty in the freezer to fall back upon.

With some determination, I completed the stationery list. I did not quite get around to picking the order on the supplier website; I will do that in the morning. The Missus, after delivering Mother home and doing some shopping, headed off to The Farm again. She took with her the list of beachware and novelty items we need for the shop and will also check for other things that we need from the beachware supplier.

She reminded me that we sold quite a few parasols during the hot week and we did not have many left. Ordering some more will guarantee we never see the sunshine again, of course but not having them will guarantee the reverse. Oh dilemma.

I will need to complete the beachware order tomorrow morning if we want it delivered this week. This would seem sensible since we still look like we will not be all that busy. I am particularly keen to get the men's flip flops as we have taken a few requests. I did have a quick check of the stock, and we will be flooded with size eight of which we have an abundance on the hook in the shop – and nothing else.

We did have one small success today. The pro forma invoice that I was doing battle with the supplier over was indeed rejected by our accountant. I reported this back to the supplier suggesting that they might just scribble a note onto headed paper that would suffice. I had a reply by return telling me that they had managed to find a way to get the software to print a different wording in the 'terms' slot. They included it with the message which, if they had applied themselves last week, they could have done a lot sooner and saved all the angst and bother.

The other winner of the week was the Missus. She threw herself down in front of me in supplication, asking if she could extend the rental of the digger. I said that I would consider it if certain conditions were met, and I was lavished with gifts and such. Alright, alright. None of that its true. I was very grateful that she told me in an asky sort of way to make me feel better about myself. So, she has the digger for another week and if she does not finish with it or has serious concerns about withdrawal, probably the week after that, too.

There was nothing much doing in the later part of the afternoon, which allowed me to finish my lists. The Missus was late enough back that we will leave the unloading until tomorrow. If I get the timing right, the new delivery will be the day after that probably at the same time as the stationery order which will be missing one crucial item that I forgot – it usually is.

There have been no proper summer evenings since the half term week. I wear a hooded top and rain jacket when I take the girls out last thing. The rain jacket is to keep out the wind, and it was probably due to the chill it brought that the girls were not minded to hang about. I was grateful because, as ever when I am working, bed was calling. What a very odd existence we lead.

## June 9<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday

It was a cracking little day by the look of it, especially if you like being battered sideways by a forcible westerly. For the first quarter of our opening year we had been plagued by strong and cold easterlies. The second quarter seems destined to be beset with strong and cool westerlies. It really is not ideal for the time of year but at least the rain cleared out early.

The girls and I were exceptionally lucky for our morning walk. ABH had woken me early which was instrumental in our good fortune. Not ten minutes after we came back, The Cove was lashed with a few showers for half an hour or so.

I was mindful that I needed to get the beachware order away if we were to stand a chance of getting the delivery tomorrow. Having been got out of bed early I had sufficient time to finish it off before I came downstairs to start in the shop. However, as I was putting in the final refinements it occurred to me that I had not considered if we needed any hats. The matter had arisen early when I was compiling the list but somehow the thought had eluded me. I therefore needed to wait until I had a chance to review where we were with the current stock.

Once I had got downstairs, I was immediately distracted with other priorities such as the newspapers. Once again, the volumes did not meet the delivery note or, indeed, my order, so I had to spend time filing a claim for each of them. Surely, it cannot be that hard to count out the correct number. Part of it, I am sure, is that the newspaper titles are separated by sheets of brown paper and more than occasionally I will get a run of the same title, a sheet of brown paper, another title, another sheet of paper and some more of the first title. No wonder they mess it up.

The other upset was that I had placed a greengrocer order on Friday for Saturday delivery. It did not turn up. I sort of thought that it might turn up on Monday but could not take the risk as we were missing some items that a couple of customers had asked for. Sure enough, both orders turned up on Monday. I spoke with the driver who offered to take one back, but I thought that I had better check with the supplier what they wanted to do as very often fresh produce cannot be returned.

The supplier told me that the error was due to a glitch in their relatively new computer system that had pushed random orders forward. They were happy to take the returns by which time I had used some of the items and put the rest in the fridge. I left the returned in our newspaper box out the front overnight in case I missed the driver in the morning. I did not but the goods were perfectly safe in the box anyway.

I eventually managed to drag myself back on track and check the hat situation. Some we would have had from a different supplier, but it was easier just to throw some additional hats at this order and solve the problem. I must have got it away in reasonable time because I had a message back to say all was well, although I did have to wait until later in the afternoon for confirmation.

There were a few more people around today than we had seen since before the weekend. We were seeing some busyness in the run up to the middle of the day that was very welcome and certainly giving me something to do. Even so, I managed to place the stationery order by and by and that should be coming in on Thursday. It would be helpful if it did not come the same day as the beachware which I am now expecting tomorrow.

One of my customers in the early afternoon was our Lifeboat Coxswain. Half an hour earlier another customer had told me that some of the crew were watching the slow and painful progress of a small yacht, sails down, grinding across the bay. The sea state was rough to very rough and the wind blowing force six to seven and the yacht was regularly dropping out of sight into the troughs. It looked fragile enough for Gwennap Head NCI to be concerned and a watcher from Land's End called it in as well. I had a look through the binoculars and the helm was leaning against the rear rail looking as unconcerned as any sailor taking a leisurely cruise in benign conditions. A discussion with the Coastguard ensued and eventually, seconds after I had served the Coxswain his pasty (sorry, MS), they agreed that the Lifeboat should launch just to check the condition of the boat and its crew.

I was able to shut up shop and be in the crew room getting changed when the pager went off. For a while, it looked like I would be launching the boat by myself but just as I released the safety strop at the back of the keel, another two crew turned up to help out.

The boat launched in good time and as I was unaware of the finer details, made the assumption that the yacht would be taken under tow to Newlyn. It was only after listening in on the radio broadcast that it became apparent that the lone sailor was not keen to be helped. It was probably not useful that he did not speak much English, but it was soon established that he felt confident that he could continue unassisted. With nothing further to be achieved, the Lifeboat was stood down.

Since the Lifeboat had caught up with the yacht just short of Cape Cornwall it did not give us much time to prepare for recovery. Initially we set out to make ready the long slipway but with the boat now on the moorings the Coxswain told us he was happy to attempt the short slipway even though the tide was on the cusp between the two. We had not got very far with the long slipway preparation, and it did not take much effort to switch.

We had some additional help from a member of the Boat Crew and between us the switch and setting up was a marvel of efficiency and cooperation. I hardly had to direct anyone in their duties and the short slipway was made ready in excellent time. While the crew were putting in the finishing touches to the 'fishing rod', I called in the Lifeboat for its approach. From my vantage point on the higher long slip, it was very clear that we had executed a textbook recovery in lively conditions on a dropping tide. We are, after all, a very flexible, very excellent Shore Crew.

I believe that it was gone three o'clock by the time I got back to the shop. Quite unexpectedly, we enjoyed some busyness for the next couple of hours. Whether people had been lured in by the launch or we just coincidentally happened to get a lot busier, I will never know. It is clear, however, that the Lifeboat launch impressed and inspired. For the first half an hour after I came back most people made some favourable comment about it.

Before she headed off to The Farm, the Missus dropped off my order from the store up there. It did not take long to disseminate it across the shop and for me to notice all the things I missed. I will have to furnish the Missus with another list, but we will wait for the deliveries to be over.

I was a little bit pressed for time after closing the shop as I had a Lifeboat operations team meeting to attend. For the first time in a week or so, the beach looked like a proper summer evening scene. The lowering sun was providing a warm, soft glow and the golden sands were dotted by people walking their dogs, taking late dips and generally mooching about. The sea state had calmed a little due to low water but there was a magnificent rip sitting out in the middle just a little offshore. The only give away that all was not perfect was that most of the walkers were wearing jackets. Looking back, the Lifeboat channel markers were near flattened toward the east indicating that our robust westerly was still banging away spoiling it a bit.

When I came back after my meeting, the Missus had gone back up to The Farm and did not come back until nine o'clock. At least it saved me giving the girls a last run out. I needed no further invitation to clear off to my bed.

## June 10<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday

I think that someone must have hermetically sealed off The Cove to visitors, letting only delivery vans through. My, my, we were deathly quiet for most of the morning today.

The weather did not help to present us in the most alluring manner, it must be said. There were low hanging clouds for much of the day that promised rain but never delivered. Like the other day, there was a dark, glowering shower to the north of us that passed by without coming south of the bay. I do not think that we saw more than half a dozen customers during the morning.

The heavy, wind-blown swell came back again, although a couple of the fishing fleet thought it just about workable. That too was a solemn grey and the wind blowing it was unseasonably cold and quite robust. There were people wandering about dressed for winter and heavy showers, and who could blame them. I think the forecast for today was rain in showers throughout. I heard something of the sort on Radio Pasty this morning and that would have put a lot of people off. It was Wednesday, of course, St Ives day.

I had absolutely no problem sloping off to the gymnasium in the morning. There was no one around when I went and the Missus was still twiddling her thumbs when I came back again. It was not until the beachware order arrived, coincidentally just as I was coming back downstairs again that we started to see any numbers arriving in the shop. Of course, we did, just as we were inundated with the arrival of boxes.

It was not the biggest order of the year, but it kept me busy picking at it for the rest of the afternoon. The Missus put as much as she could in the truck and the rest will stay in the shop, sunglasses, hats and sun cream, although some of the overstock will head up to The Farm on the next trip.

The delivery heralded the start of the business day, and we started to see numbers of customers come and go. I believe we saw the entire business day compressed into two hours between one and three o'clock. It was very weird, much like the rest of the day. After that, the day went flat again, and I would see a single customer perhaps every half an hour. Mind, there were two significant sales in that short period one that included two of our new posh mugs which are huge. They hold more than a pint each. I suspect that the second half of my tea would always be cold. Still, it was a tidy sale for two of them, thank you very much.

Due to the expected worsening of the sea state tomorrow, the Coxswain called a Lifeboat exercise for this evening instead. It was timed for shortly after closing time, so I had to pull my finger out to be ready in time and hope that we did not have a five minutes to closing rush. I crammed some tea in starting at four o'clock. I have to start it two hours before closing because as soon as I do, customers start arriving most of whom wish to ask questions or have lengthy chats. There were not many of them but they were strategically organised to create as much tea disruption as possible.

Near enough as soon as we had closed, I headed across the road. There were just enough crew to furnish both boats and it was my turn to drive the Tooltrak, It is a long while since I had done the launch at that particular state of the tide and I cleverly managed to find the reef on the right side of the Harbour which tipped the Inshore over at a bit of an angle. The tide line was also at the part of the beach that drops away quickly and to launch, the Tooltrak is up to six inches above the bottom of the doors in water. Thankfully, there was little movement in the water, but it was still leaking in through a poor seal at the bottom of the windscreen.

When it came to recovery about an hour later, I had the same problem. This time however, I had to wait, semi-submerged, while a novice helm took his time putting the boat on the trailer. All the while, water was seeping into the cab, and I envisaged myself slowly being submerged with it. They say your life flashes before your eyes as you drown. My greatest fear would be falling asleep from boredom before the water did me in.

The Inshore boat has arrived a good 45 minutes before the big boat came back. It had gone around to Porthcurno to seek some shelter from the westerly while they carried out some stretcher exercises. We were sheltering from the wind ourselves when the boat came back into view around Pedn-men-du, then sprang – well, moved determinedly – into our places when it came into the bay. With three of us from the Inshore recovery available, we conducted what was clearly a textbook recovery at low water on the long slip. One of the new members thoroughly regretted just

wearing a t-shirt down there as they waited for the boat to come onto the slipway. Even I felt I could have done with an extra layer, and I already had on two.

We carried out a thorough wash down and a swift resetting, ready for the next service. We are, after all, a very efficient, very excellent Shore Crew.

## June 11<sup>th</sup> – Thursday

Winter had returned to The Cove this morning and it certainly was not by special request. It was merely grey and miserable when I took the girls around in the morning. We were chased off the beach by the Harbour tractor, so I dragged them around the block. It was into more wind as we went across the car park but at least it was dry. Shortly after we got back, we had a couple of showers and then the mizzle moved in for the rest of the morning in varying degrees of heaviness.

The wind was still a major feature of the day. Two walkers wearing those loose nylon rain capes passed by not long after we opened. The capes were blowing so vigorously in the wind, the noise off them sounded like empty crates rattling down the street. I could still hear them as they went down around the Round House.

We had a few more orders this morning, so we must be selling some things. The store room was still blocked up by the remnants of yesterdays deliveries, so when our water arrived, it had to go down by the ice cream freezer until I could clear some space out the back. It is where we keep our supply of logs and I had panicked a bit yesterday when we put all the beachware delivery in the same place. I had ordered logs on Monday, and they were a bit slow coming, so I assumed they would probably come yesterday. Fortunately, they did not as we would have nowhere to put them.

The log delivery had escaped me today, so it had not crossed my mind that the water would be in the way. It was then that the logs turned up. I had to quickly scoot some of the water cases along a bit to make some room and squeeze the logs in behind them.

Being so quiet in the morning gave me the opportunity to finish off the big boxes from yesterday's beachware delivery and clear the stationery order that came in late yesterday afternoon. It surprised me that the delivery came in three large boxes; I did not think that I had ordered that much. It became apparent today that perhaps I had and the items that I had ordered were rather more voluminous than I gave them credit for.

It took me until into the afternoon with very little in the way of interruptions to clear all the stationery boxes, put the overstock away and break up the cardboard. The Missus took some of the cardboard up to The Farm to use for her weed control. The rest will be spirited away by the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper recycling fairies early one morning – if I remember to leave it out.

This only left the sunglasses. Each year I have a special deal with the supplier, and we call in 300 pairs of sunglasses which last us around a year. The downside is that they come individually wrapped in cellophane which is a tedious pain in the rear to remove and a ballsaching task at that. Clearly, I had put it off as long as possible but come near two o'clock in the afternoon, still little sign of customers appearing and no other jobs to do, my resistance collapsed, and I capitulated.

It took me until the late afternoon to finish the job. I had to find an extra box to put the overflow into and then had to find some space on the store room shelf. The work from the stationery order, the sunglasses and the rest of the beachware generated quite a bit more cardboard as you might imagine. When the Missus came back, she took more of the big stuff, so the store room was once again relatively tidy. I was feeling rather pleased with myself until I noticed the large box of men's flip flops that was still left to do.

I had to break away from the deliveries at that point as I was aware there were orders to place for tomorrow. I might ordinarily have done these after we closed but I had arranged to go off to The Farm again straight after we closed so that I could help the Missus move some more earth for her gardening. We would need at least a couple of hours, so I was not keen to hang around to extend the time. Like yesterday, I would need to cram some tea and, rather stupidly, I decided on something hot.

We had been very quiet all day. I was expecting an increase in visitors at the usual time a little way into the afternoon but there was nothing doing. The quiet, of course, allowed me to finish the unpacking – except the flip flops – but I would rather not have that sort of advantage, thank you very much. Unpacking can always wait. My frugal meal would take half an hour in the oven, so I put it in at quarter to four o'clock. At four o'clock, we started to see more customers turn up and when my meal was ready to come out of the oven, we were busy with successive customers with few breaks in between. By the time I had it, my hot meal was barely lukewarm. In fairness, it was two small and cheap pizzas from the freezer; they benefitted more from a surfeit of brown sauce that they would have done from being hot. I shall not bother again.

Up at The Farm, we reprised our roles of diggering and tractoring with the tipping trailer. It was more difficult this time estimating the amount of earth required as I had no idea of the size of the growing area it would fill. Plus, the earth would need to be deep enough to promote growth and to allow rotovating next year. We stopped at eight, or it might have been nine, trailer loads which is about the same as we did last time.

It is not an onerous job. In fact, as it is so divorced from shopkeeping it made a pleasant change, although perhaps I would prefer not to be turning my ten hour workday into a twelve hour workday. At least this time it was not lashing with rain at

the fore and aft of the job. Instead, we that insistent westerly blowing which was not exactly warm and when I tipped the earth, I would get a face full blown at me.

Throughout, the girls waited patiently in the truck; we cannot have them running about the field with the tractor racing up and down. They had plenty of opportunity to do their running throughout the several consecutive days they have been up there. During that time BB has gone from white to grey and, today she excelled herself and came back black, lagged from the feet up in mud. ABH either was better behaved or the mud does not show so much on her. When we came back, and after I had taken the girls for their last run out, the Missus was waiting with an empty sink and a fresh towel. I left them to it and headed for bed and looked forward to little miss fluffy white in the morning.

## June 12<sup>th</sup> – Friday

I might have been heartened by Radio Pasty's presenter when she announced that it would be brighter later and we could at last put paid to this dreadful mizzle. The trouble was she had said that about yesterday and it did not brighten much at all, so instead of being heartened I reserved the right to be sceptical.

At least we had some customers today, despite the weather. It was a few degrees warmer which made a good deal of difference. I also think that those who had come all this way to see The Cove thought that they better spend at least their last day here.

It was still quiet when I left for the gymnasium. The Missus was heading off to The Farm straight after I came back, so I did not have to give the girls a walk and I came straight down. It was busy when I arrived and remained so for another couple of hours. I suspect this was the swansong for many and we saw a plethora of going home presents being bought. This was followed by groups of walkers who had clearly arranged to be in The Cove for dinner and started buying pasties (sorry, MS) in numbers. I had almost forgotten how to sell pasties; it had been so long.

Our busyness was quite short-lived although we had sporadic visits for the rest of the day. To save me from another afternoon of tedium, we had a preserves and chutneys delivery. We had waited some time for these while our supplier waited for supplies. It must be quite fraught trying to maintain continuity when you do not know when orders will come through and trying to maintain fresh ingredients at the same time. Even when the main bulk of it was ready, I told them to leave the delivery until everything was ready all the same time. We had not run out of anything and there was no reason for them to break their necks and incur additional costs by delivering piecemeal. While we had some teething problems with them late last year, communications are much improved.

Our preserves and chutneys are now brimming on the shelves and the overstock neatly tucked away. There was nothing left for it but to attempt the flip flops and that been sitting on the store room floor and glaring at me every time I went near them. The first thing I did was to remove all the size 8 shoes as the hooks in the shop were already full to overflowing with them. I counted the size spread in the box, and it was disappointing to note that the size 8s represented 25 percent of it. The size 11s by contrast, of which we sell many more across our ranges, are a mere eight percent of the box. Unfortunately, there is nothing we can do about it.

We had to wait until five o'clock for our 'brighter later' and even then it was by dint of the fact that the sun had tucked under the blanket of mist. I still could not see the Brisons and Cape Cornwall was a mere suggestion the other side of the bay. The sea state that had picked up to prevent our exercise launch on Thursday night was still choppy in the bay underpinned by a bit of lump to go with it. It was rubbish for surfing, but when we sat down to tea, there was a group of about ten keen enthusiasts in the narrow shore break on top of the sand bar there. It was so narrow they had to queue up in a column to take turns coming in.

The mist that has looked like it might have been thinning at one point in the afternoon, had come back again in the evening. My customers are still adamant that a heatwave is on its way for the weekend. I wish I had their confidence in the fantasy weather websites that they have been looking at. If it does come, I will have no shortage of pasties to serve the ensuing crowds which is as well because I am fast running out of freezer space for them.

## June 13<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

I had to pinch myself this morning. I could see Brisons and was rather hoping that I was not still asleep. It took until the middle of the morning for the sun to break through the haze, but it all looked splendid after a while and, for once, there was no howling wind to go with it.

We had customers nearly from the off. It was the newspaper, breakfast and pasties (sorry, MS) to go home brigade. I also had one call from a couple of anglers getting ready to head out on an inflatable, for a few hot pasties. I had not yet prepared the hot food for the day; I wait for there to be enough people around, so we do not have a warmer full sitting there getting dried out.

The order coincided with my decision to have a bacon sandwich today. Fortunately, the bacon had almost cooked to my liking because I had to remove it to put the pasties in. I had started early, too, to avoid such risks but had clearly not reckoned with it being so busy so early. It almost scuppered my plans to eat it while it was still hot. I had assessed that it was probably my last opportunity before the end of the season and barely just scraped in.

Business slowly accelerated during the morning and into the afternoon. For the first time since half term there were small camps set up on the beach above the tide line. There was a surf school out early doors which swelled the numbers on the beach but there were also a good few in the swimming area further along, no doubt enjoying the warm bath temperature of the water, ahem. The swell had not yet abated even though pressure was rising and would stay with us the weekend. As a result, there were some decent waves piling in and at mid tide there were a dozen surfers out the back trying to find the right one.

Later in the tide, the waves became serious. They were at least head height, clean and about 50 metres out. For a change, they were right under the Lifeguard hut, which probably pleased them immensely as they could keep a close eye on proceedings. The waves were definitely for the more experienced of which there were about a dozen.

For some strange and curious reason, I awoke white and screaming at some unfathomable time in the morning thinking about our stock of Cornish pasta. Like our other Cornish and artisan products, I had hoped for better than the two packs we hold sold since Easter. Like our other similarly premium products, their price reflects the time, thought, care and effort taken to produce them. I surmised that this was probably a problem. Unlike our, fudge, biscuits and little cans of pilchards where a higher price is somehow expected, pasta suffers from an image problem. If I was going to shift any significant numbers of it, I would have to provide some sort of inducement.

It took me until halfway through the morning to summon the courage and psychological will to label up a two packet deal for a favourable price. This might work as everyone loves a bargain and it will be quite eye-catching because it is such a rarity in the shop – a deal, that is, not pasta. We have pasta. If it does not work, we have at least another year to try some other alluring artifice as the products have a long shelf life.

I had no time to dwell on the enormity of my actions as the shop started to get busy thereafter. We enjoyed such busyness all the way into the afternoon and even ran out of some newspaper titles for the first time. The sales were not limited to groceries, either. Some posh mugs went out, gifts from across the shop as well as beach goods as people headed for the beach for the day. Then, at around three o'clock, we hit the doldrums which was just as well because my pager went off.

I closed up and was across at the station in good time to launch the big boat. As we were doing that our pagers went off again to launch the Inshore as well. On the face of it we would have managed that too with the three we had on shore but there were insufficient Boat Crew at the time to man it, so we focused on getting the big boat away which we did in a timely and efficient manner.

It was at this point that we had a good look at the Harbour beach. It was packed with beach and water revellers. There were adults and children all over the slipway and what sand the high tide permitted to be sat on and children in abundance frolicking in the Harbour waters and several in mini kayaks racing around on the chopping sea. Outside the Harbour wall, the waves were dancing and jumping and more than occasionally throwing themselves over the Harbour wall. To launch the Inshore boat would require some careful management.

It was not long after the boat launched that the necessary crew arrived for the Inshore boat. On the shore, our numbers had also increased and I threw all hands at getting the Tooltrak and trailer safely down to the Harbour without squashing any small children. I went up to the Inshore boathouse to make sure all was right there and we had enough banksmen to walk down with it and then came back down to check the road crossing. Two of our Launching Authorities has arranged themselves on the road, so I headed down the slip with the Tooltrak and trailer just leaving the boathouse.

As I went, I advised people in the way and in the margins of the route to stand back and clear the way. I soon found myself leading the Tooltrak down as it gained on me, looking like a herald in front of an advancing royal parade. All I needed was a long horn to play.

With it being high water, the boat would need to launch from the middle of the beach, so when I reached the tide line, I turned along it to clear the way of small children digging in the sand and running the risk of getting my wellies wet – twice. By the time we arrived at the launch point we had at least four of us holding back the crowds and the Boat Crew arrived swiftly on our tails.

There was enough swell in the harbour to cause the launch some issues. As the Tooltrak waited with the trailer in the water, the swell scatted the trailer sideways and had to be corrected. We then had to carefully reverse the Tooltrak up the slipway out of the waves and we all returned to the boathouse thanking everyone for their cooperation on the way.

The boats had been launched to a lady cut off by the tide at Nanjizal beach. Quite how you manage to cut yourself off there was something of a surprise but apparently, the young lady was on the rocks at the north end and could not get back. Unfortunately, although there was some serious effort, the Inshore could not get close enough to execute a rescue as the swell was as big there as it was outside the Harbour wall. The decision was to wait for the tide to recede and the lady to self-extricate when she had the opportunity.

Back at the station, we had set up the short slip for recovery. I had waited with increasing reports of people waiting outside the shop for the grumpy shopkeeper to appear. With another team member arriving, I felt that there were enough there to manage without me and I left to relieve the desperately waiting shoppers.

As I had planned, the boats were recovered separately. All hands were again required to safely manage the Inshore recovery on the busy beach. The boat was then left at the top of the slipway while the big boat was brought up the short slip in what was clearly a textbook recovery in choppy conditions. We are, after all, a very responsible, very excellent Shore Crew.

There were a couple of people waiting at the door when I returned at near five o'clock. It did not take long for others to realise we were open again and we remained busy throughout until a clear five minutes to closing rush right at the end. People were most kind about my absence and enthusiastic about the Lifeboat launch, of course.

A lady came in at last knockings; in fact, she came in twice because she did not realise the time. Very kindly, she said that we had exactly what she needed. I said to her that we did not always have what people wanted, but if they tried sometimes, we might just have what the need. It was good we could get one to know satisfaction. Mick would have been proud, I am sure.

### June 14<sup>th</sup> – Sunday

Well, that did not last very long. We had a howling easterly breeze this morning and sunshine leaking through a mackerel sky. I had left my hooded sweatshirt jacket in the shop so had elected to wear my woolly jacket instead for the morning walk. I was very glad that I did. The forecasters would have us believe that the wind was 15 miles per hour. It is a good job that they are not traffic policemen if they cannot tell the difference between 15 and 30 miles per hour.

That aside, it was a glorious morning, and the wide expanse of beach was lit up showing off its pastel colours in the hazy sunshine. The east wind had speckled the bay with tiny white horses running away to the west and the only waves were breaking on the tide line which meandered around several sizeable sand bars along the beach front. The biggest of these is a long finger stretching out from the southern end of the beach and is the probable cause of the rip that generally features there. The other sand bars are smaller and rounder; little islands, semi-submerged. Also, for the first time this year and even on the cusp of spring tides, it was possible to walk to Gwenver across the sand.

The day had started busy. I had scarcely enough time to finish a bit of breakfast before we broke into a reasonably regular flow of customers. I was a little surprised because I thought that the wind might have put them off. It may well have done but it was early yet and there had not been enough time for it to irk people too much. It was not doing too badly with me because there is a limit to the amount of fresh breeze a person can enjoy being slapped in the face with.

Towards the end of the morning, we started to see pasty sales (sorry, MS) quickly gain pace. I responded with a continuous baking for an hour or so which put a satisfying dent in the stock. It then progressed to putting a worrying dent in the stock that looked like it would run us out before a respectable end of pasty day. We had plenty in the freezer but use of these needs to be planned an hour in advance. Getting it wrong would mean throwing them away if we did not use them. What a dilemma.

I consoled myself by placing an order with the rather splendid Pullins Bakery and their fruit cake and flapjacks that had been selling exceedingly well. In other quieter moments, and there were precious few today, I followed it up with a wine order and a list for the Missus to bring back from the Farm which I am sure brought her some delight. I had noticed that there were holes on our grocery shelves that I needed to get down and fill. Strictly, we are due a cash and carry order this coming week which is already a week late for this time in the season. I shall have to do the shelf topping up early in the week to make sure.

Business went a bit sporadic later in the afternoon before it dropped off nearly completely. I probably would not have noticed else, but the wind dropped or slightly changed direction at about the same time. It was largely because I did not have any customers to serve that I realised I was no longer being cold or slapped around the head. There were just as many white horses in the bay, but the flags were not lying flat any longer but that might have had more to do with the state of the tide. It was difficult to tell earlier, but the swell had almost completely gone and if it were not for the wind, the bay would have been flat as a dish. I am always amazed at just how quickly it can go from one extreme to the other in such a short space of time.

We had a few flurries of customer activity during the closing stages of the day but nothing at the end that we could righteously call a five minutes to closing rush. We also had a pasty revival at some point, and I made the decision to extract some cheese pasties from the freezer when one customer requested that I bake a gluten-free pasty. At the close of play we were left with half a dozen pasties across the range that had not sold. When we started from a position of being flooded with over-stock at the end of last week, that was not bad going.

The day closed on par with the day before, but there again, we had not closed in the middle of the afternoon for two hours today. The good looking weather had remained until the end and people who had managed to find shelter told me it was very warm in the sunshine. When I took the girls down to the beach at last knockings, the sun was sinking beautifully in a hazy sky. It met with cloud on the horizon before it found the sea, but it was enough to enthral one watcher on the western slip while the girls sniffed around the empty beach.

We will do it all again tomorrow if the weather will let us, which I very much doubt. There is a big low pressure system out to the west, so more of what we have been

used to for the last few weeks, I expect. It should give me time to attend to our shelves, perhaps.

## June 15<sup>th</sup> – Monday

It was a very different picture in The Cove this morning with low cloud making its entrance and total cloud cover blotting out the sunshine. On and off during the early part of the morning there was a fair amount of drizzle in the air as well, contrasted by a sudden rise in humidity and oddly warm. There was also, mercifully, no wind.

As trading days go, this was not one to set the world alight. It was unlikely to inspire a headlong dash for the best spots on the beach and, to add to the misery, the sea was flat as a dish. Unsurprisingly, we were quiet all morning and my trip to the gymnasium consequently guilt free again.

Having concluded my blistering session, I was urged to return to the shop as quickly as possible. The Missus has just one day left with her precious digger, and she was going to have to somehow use it and keep the two girls safe at the same time. I was careful not to mention the digger, digging, buckets, swings or tracks for the whole time I was within earshot. It was a most nerve-wracking experience, and I am glad she spent most of the time up at The Farm. There is, of course, time yet for her to come up with some business justification, or indeed blackmail, to keep it for another week.

It cannot have been all that diplomatic of me to ask for a list of items we needed for the shop. This would have distracted her from digging for at least an hour but, in my defence, I did ask for it a day or two ago. For my part, when time allowed, I started to top up the grocery shelves in the shop so that I could see what might be needed from the cash and carry. There were times close to midday and just after that when I could get a good run at it. I managed to completehoped the non-food and the top two shelves of the food. After that, it started to get busier in the shop which slowed me down considerably.

I do not believe we had sold more than one pasty (sorry, MS) before the middle of the day. Sales were still not buoyant in the run up to the order deadline, but I took the view I would order the same as today and worry about overstock on the third day. I very quickly went from expecting a surplus tomorrow to wondering whether I would have enough to see us through the day. Just short of halfway through the afternoon, I plundered the frozen stock to add numbers. Since the order deadline had passed, it was too late to do anything about tomorrow. We still have plenty of frozen to fall back on, but I was grievously wrong-footed about demand for today.

Our afternoon of sporadic busyness had scotched any hope I had of finishing off the grocery order. I will start early tomorrow and finish the topping up. The order should not take long after that. I might have carried on in the late afternoon when we went predominantly quieter, but the Missus returned with a truck half full of the trinkets I

had asked her to dig out. That took the time I would have used for the groceries and that was that. After all the scratching my head and looking at stock lists I still forgot the clothes pegs but I did get most of it out on the shelves. Just when I thought that I could get on with our closing sequence, our wine order arrived. He had been busy and was good enough earlier to tell us he was running late. It does not matter too much but it is now in the way of the pasty order tomorrow, so will have to be dealt with promptly after I get down in the morning.

Even since before the easterly wind on Sunday, our shop windows have been lagged in salt, and I had been looking for an opportunity to give them a good wash down. Given the absence of customers in our last twenty minutes of opening, I hauled the hose out. Ordinarily, the second the hose is deployed, customers crawl out of the woodwork and front around corners to thwart my work. I can only think that there must be a fault in reality, the end of the world is nigh or there is a crack in the space/time continuum – not one customer, not one interruption until after I had finished and put away the hose.

It was a German person asking what he should do with the glass bottles of drink he had consumed. Apparently, they have something call recycling there that everyone can us, not just householders. How very progressive. I still find it quite remarkable that a visitor here, unless they are staying in holiday accommodation that has a private arrangement, cannot even take their recycling to the Household Waste Recycling Centre. They must either take it home or be forced to use one of the general waste bins if they are fortunate enough to find one.

The spectre of DRS (Deposit Return Scheme) looms large. A price has been fixed for shops operating a manual operation of three pence per unit returned to cover costs. I am hoping that we are permitted to duck this onerous duty. I predict a riot – albeit a small one grumpy shopkeeper riot – at the end of the year as I prepare to bat it off.

## June 16<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday

Radio Pasty offered us rain in the morning and mizzle in the afternoon. It rained, but in the afternoon and the mizzle did not appear to arrive. The Missus told me the rain was much worse at the top. If left the morning dry and bright but enveloped in thick fog that raised occasionally before lowering and thickening again.

Anyone paying attention to the forecast, which must have been near everyone, either stayed at home or went somewhere else. The Cove was gruesomely empty for all of the morning, and the hours dragged by with hardly any shoppers not even just passing through. As we know from previous experience, the rain, or threat of it, kills off the trade and the mist digs a hole and buries it.

As it happened and with little surprise, the rain hardly made its mark, most of it slipped by us unnoticed – electing to dump on the Missus, instead. The promised

lighter rain later did not happen either and as folk discovered that it was warm, humid and dryish, they started to appear in numbers. Fortunately, they had not yet started to amass when the Lifeboat was called out at half past one o'clock.

One of the Boat Crew poked his head around the first electric sliding door in The Cove to advise me that my pager was about to go off, which it duly did a few seconds later. There were no customers in the shop and few visitors in the street. When I closed, I doubt that anyone noticed.

It was as well that the shout ended up being a tow from 11 miles off to the northwest. Two of us turned up to launch the boat, which is enough, but had the boat been back shortly after, we would have been in a bit of trouble. It is a feature of mid-week calls that many of both crews work outside the village and are unable to attend. It is not much better at weekends. There were enough for a minimum Boat Crew, and we waited with an ear to the radio for news about the prognosis of the craft the boat was called to.

We had made the assumption that there would be an ensuing tow, and we closed up the boathouse and retired. Sure enough, less than an hour later, the casualty vessel, a 57 foot motor cruiser, was indeed taken under tow heading to Newlyn for five hours. Our mechanic and another crewmember went aboard to see if the engine failure could be fixed, but apparently not. Since it was such a large boat, the tow was slow, and we estimated an arrival at Newlyn well into the evening. Back at the shop, I switched on the scanner and monitored the operation while I worked.

To fill the empty void before the shout, I had completed the cash and carry order on paper, leaving the online work until later to allow me to remember anything I might have omitted. After that, I migrated to having a look at our gift cards, which were looking a little thin on the rack. Even after I had ferreted about in the draw for spares, there were still many gaps in our offering and since we seem to sell quite a lot of cards, I thought it best that I attend to the stock.

There was still plenty of the new cards we purchased this year. Disappointingly, one of the local artist's cards have not sold as well as I would have hoped except for one title that has sold out completely. I concentrated on some of the old favourites and will refresh that stock as soon as I have created the list. Quite remarkably, while I was reviewing what we had left, another local artist came into the shop to see if we needed any of hers. I had rebuffed her a few weeks ago when she had come in before but this time, we had almost completely run out of her cards. I was able to pencil a quick order together and send her off with it.

All the while, I was keeping tabs on the Lifeboat. When it seemed reasonably certain what time they would be arriving at Newlyn, I organised a crew for recovery, guesstimating the arrival time at The Cove, which is always a bit tricky. It did not help that the boat which had been averaging just under six knots for the entire journey, sped up in the final furlongs – or possibly leagues. This necessitated a rather swift

reassessment of the arrival time in The Cove, quarter to eight o'clock, and thus the muster time for the crew. I am sure that they are used to me by now.

We were a raggle taggle bunch of experienced and crew newer to the experience. Since the boat was due back a little more than an hour after high water, we set up the short slip. Just as we were placing the final touches to the arrangement, the rain started again. I had not bothered to look at the forecast or the rain radar else I might have arranged a session on the winch. A geet lump of heavy rain was lined up to pass over us for the duration of the procedure which was most inconvenient.

Fortunately, the Institution provide us with some full metal jacket waterproofs that I adorned myself with for the occasion. As the head launcher of the day, it was me standing out on the long slip in the downpour as the boat approached. From my elevated, if uncomfortably exposed, view it was possible to note that this was indeed a textbook recovery up the short slip in moderate sea conditions – and pouring rain.

As the others attended to hooking the boat up to the quarterstoppers that secure the boat when not attached to the main cable, I ducked into the dry of the boathouse. I concluded my direction from there, ensuring that the boat was brought into the house, refuelled and secured on the cradle and made ready for its next service. We are, after all, a very exacting, very excellent Shore Crew.

## June 17<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday

The Cove disappeared behind a wall of fog again today, thicker and more humid than the days so far. We are used to this in May. In June, it is a rarity.

The day fitted the same profile as yesterday, deathly quiet in the morning and the appearance of some people in the afternoon. This allowed me to complete and send off the cash and carry order. I might have waited another day but one of the items I ordered was what they term and 'online exclusive'. This merely means that it is not in the depot and they must arrange for it to come from elsewhere. This can take a few days. I rather hoped by sending in the order early that the online exclusive items might reach them and be included in our delivery on Saturday. Otherwise, we will have to wait until the next delivery in two or three weeks by which time I will have forgotten that I ordered them and order them again.

I had just finished that order when I received a message that our fish order was ready to collect from Penzance. I had only sent this out on Monday but anticipated that we might have to wait until next week. The spring tides are big this week and many of the netters will be tied up. We missed out on the haddock I ordered, which was annoyingly replaced with pollack that does not sell so well. Going back again for additional haddock may be difficult, so we must hope this order will last for the summer. I also noticed that we had only half the hake we ordered. I normally avoid

spring tides for our order, but I meant to do it last week and ran out of time. I should have waited.

This Missus went into town to collect the fish while I prepared the store room with the vacuum packer and the scales. It can take a few hours to finish packing and pricing and even longer if we have customers coming and going. The biggest problem with that is that I have to remove my fishy gloves each time, which gets a bit heavy on the number of disposables I go through. Today, however, I managed with just two pairs and I was delighted. It is the small things, you know.

It took me until an hour before closing to finish and clean up. All the bagged fish was in the freezer, labelled and priced. In that time, the weather had closed in almost unnoticed by me. I did spot a gentleman sitting at one of the tables opposite a little earlier with a big golf umbrella but as I could not see the rain coming down, I assumed that he was just a little over-sensitive. It had, in fact, been raining but it was the mizzle that soaks you through before you know it.

Whatever it was doing, it was most effective at clearing the street. We had seen some sporadic visits during my fish packing time, but it was less than intense and probably the reason why I only went through two pairs of gloves. It would have been good to note the state of the sea and the expanse of beach at low water – I mentioned the big tides – but for the length of the day the sea and the beach were mere assumptions that they were still there. There was the added evidence that I could hear the sea, so the other assumption was that there was a moderate swell, too.

The fog thickened up nicely for our last run out. We were allowed on a slim sliver of beach which we too advantage of. I could barely see the old hotel looming out of the mist, but I am not even sure we could see the top apartment. The rest of the cliff and the big beach were invisible. The forecasters have this pencilled in through to the end of the week, so it will probably be gone tomorrow. It would be good to have a view again, not to mention customers.

## June 18<sup>th</sup> – Thursday

Whoo hoo! sunshine! All ten minutes of it just before the shop opened. Lucky, ain't we.

When I first looked out of the window, we had the same degree of fog that we had the previous evening. I assumed that we would have another day just like the previous two but was pleased to see that the fog had lifted by the time I came down to open the shop. Our pasty man (sorry, MS) had told me that it was still foggy up the top of the cliff which is often the case when the mist is clearing off.

I went and buried myself in the store room sorting out the pasty delivery and then trying to clear some floor space for Saturday's cash and carry delivery. When I came

back out again and maybe an hour after we had opened, the fog was back just as thick as it had been before. Our little bit of sunshine was a flash in the pan.

Our part-time neighbour from down by the OS told me yesterday that she had her water meter replaced for a spanking new one yesterday. She told me that, initially, her water had run discoloured for a short while after the work had been done and thought to warn in case it happened to us as well. She said that the water board had dropped a note around ahead of the work, but she had not seen it. I had no idea whether we were included in the replacements or whether it was just her meter as we had not seen notification either.

Shortly into this morning, a waterboard man turned up outside the shop and was ferreting about inside the water meter covers there. I asked if he was replacing all the meters and he confirmed that he was. There really was no need to be informed in advance because our water was off for no more than a few minutes. The old units seem to just screw off, and the new ones screw on in their place. He dropped in to advise that we run the tap nearest the meter for a few minutes just in case, but we had no issues at all.

Someone suggested that the new meters could be read electronically, which I thought unlikely unless that has somehow managed to get them to generate their own electricity. I looked at the waterboard website which showed a close-up of the meter, and it is again an analogue one. I imagine that it is much more accurate than the last one and they can measure my usage down to the last drop, now. It is encouraging to see that our two inflation breaking increases in water charges over the last two years have been put to good use.

I had found it very warm during the night and was thankful for a bit of breeze blowing through the skylight every now and again. It was warm again during the day and very humid. It is the moist air that is the current seat of our misty woes. I am assuming hot moist air from the continent and cold sea. Word on the street is that it will get even hotter over the next few days as a heatwave builds over Europe and kindly sends some over to us. Well, most of it will be used up by the time it gets down to The Cove, but I am sure we will feel a little bit warmer than we have done for the last week.

I do hope that we get busy soon because I keep on buying things to alleviate the boredom. Yesterday, it was the cash and carry and before that it was the greetings cards. Today, I ordered stamps and, largely due to a gentleman who reminded me that we had run out of coasters by a local artist, ordered those as well together with some with some of her cards. She has added some rather alluring washbags to her portfolio, and I made enquiries about those. We would want the colourful artwork she had done of The Cove on it but that might require a minimum order that we would be unprepared to accept. I asked her anyway.

It was not until two o'clock in the afternoon that we got busy. I had whiled away the hours buying things and doing preparations and buying some more things. Then, quite suddenly, at two o'clock we started to see a small influx of shoppers. They were followed by a few more, then some more still. Before I knew it, I was going full bore while trying to ensure a succession of pasties because those were the main focus of the sudden spurt. The rush lasted almost exactly one hour and then we went very quiet again. Had I known in advance which hour it would be, I would not have bothered opening for the rest of the day.

After the initial fog had cleared and come back again, there were times during the day that it lifted enough for me to see the beach. In the later afternoon it remained elevated for an extended period, and I could see Cape Cornwall and Brisons, although I could not see the tops of the cliffs.

The sea state had remained calm. I think that there was a moderate swell but during low tide this was not particularly apparent. There had been a few surfers in during the higher ranges of the tide, but they all made themselves scarce during low water. The bigger tides are easing off now, but it was still possible to walk to Gwenver even an hour after low tide. The remains of the spring tide offered a wide expanse of sand with hardly anyone on it and just a few camps up at the top of the beach.

There seems to have been an influx of sand since I last looked with any detail at the shape of the beach. We noted the sandbars a few days ago but out at North Rocks, just to the side of Escalls Vean, the sand has claimed back the exposed rocks that had shortened the big beach in the early part of the year by 50 to 60 metres. The abundance of sand at the back of Gwenver appears to have been unchanged and there is plenty of sand at the back of the big beach, too, all the way from North Rocks to the car park. A lady who had not been to The Cove for a year remarked on just how much sand there was and that we had not seen it like that in some years.

What else to do on a warm and pleasant June evening but launch a Lifeboat or two on training. We duly gathered at half past six o'clock to prepare ourselves mentally and physically for the ordeal ahead and one of the very excellent Shore Crew brought along cake. Marvellous.

We launched both boats out at quarter to seven o'clock and prepared the short slipway for recovery later on. Instead of our usual in depth discussions on very important matters while we waited, we watched some instructional videos. Those of us who had been crew for some years escaped the joy of watching these when the new training system was brought in. We were bestowed with grandfather rights from previous training but these expire and we had six months to renew our acquaintance with them.

The videos cover such important and enthralling subjects such as manual handling of loads, hazard assessment, control of substances hazardous to health and many others. There are hours of videos to watch, and each one concludes with a question

and answer session. If we were to undertake the watching of these as individuals, the system would automatically record our performance by virtue of our login credentials. By watching them in a group, the boss can sign us all off regardless of whether we were all paying attention or not and however many questions we as individuals got wrong at the end. Being fine, upstanding members of the very excellent Shore Crew, we all paid minute attention to every detail in the films, and all contributed to the correct and conscientious answering of the questions at the end. Honest, guv.

Before we were called back to duty we had covered five of the countless videos we were commended to watch. I know this because I recorded each title in the service record along with the names of each person who had bribed me with cake and cups of tea for the duration.

Both boats were in the bay when we returned to our stations. The Inshore boat was rowed into onto its trailer as part of the training assessment of one of the crew. He was later passed out as a successful Tier Two crewmember.

As the Inshore boat was recovered, I signalled the big boat that all was clear and ready for its approach. In a curious sensation of déjà vu, I found myself overseeing what was clearly the second textbook recovery up the short slip in two – or is it three – days. The only difference being that we had somewhat fewer crew on the slipway and there were different from the ones a couple of days ago.

We stopped to give the boat a good wash down before brining it into the house, strapped down and returned to point down the long slip ready for its next service. The other major difference from the previous recovery was, fresh from our video training, we were able to carry out our duties much more aware of the risks involved in lifting heavy things and the hazards all about us. We are, after all, a very safe, very excellent Shore Crew.

## June 19<sup>th</sup> – Friday

As you know, The Diary likes to keep its reader up to date on world news, at least the bits that matter. I therefore find it incumbent upon me to share the latest bit of groundbreaking research that has hit the headline and that you, in your busy life, may have missed, dear reader.

It may come as a shock to you to learn that self- checkout, which has its own three letter acronym (TLA), of course it does, of SCO, has for the first time become the shoppers' preferred method of settling up for their goods in retail premises. In fact, 54 percent of shoppers prefer to pay for some of their goods in this way.

As ever, it is the detail that is important here. The study did not reveal why shoppers prefer this method and it may well be that they prefer SCO to the alternative of waiting three hours in a queue for the one service till that is open of the available

twenty standing idle. The other important detail is that the study was undertaken by a company called ECR Retail Loss. The company aims to help retail stores understand where money is going that should end up in the till and is not. The implication in this case is that shoppers prefer to use SCO because they perhaps forget, ahem, to pay for everything.

Data from the company states that on the introduction of self-checkout losses rose by 22 percent. We might have been heartened by the fact that since 2018 that figure has remained unchanged, suggesting that the Great British Public is no more dishonest that we were eight years ago. Sadly, the conclusion drawn by ECO Retail Loss was that the supermarkets were getting better at managing SCO, instead. A cynical person might read 'managing' as putting all the employees that could be manning the checkouts onto watching with eagle eyes the people using the self-checkouts to ensure they are not robbing the shop blind.

Retailers vary in their estimates on just how much is theft against accidental mis-scanning between 6 and 80 percent. It would have been interesting to see which supermarkets had such a low opinion of their customers.

You may definitely be heartened and assured that The Old Boathouse has no plans to introduce self-checkout. First, we would not like to push that 80 percent any higher on the next survey and secondly, my customers would not be able to guess all the right prices like I do.

Today, it would have just been nice to have customers, robbing ones or not. Our mist was back and so too was the mizzle, heavier than before. It had all looked sweetness and light first thing, and I thought that we might just be out of the woods. There was enough greyness about to make me doubt my convictions and, sure enough, not long after we opened, the mist was back.

One of the first couples I served today, just setting out on a walk, tarried to discuss the weather. They agreed that they would much rather be here than in the late 30 degrees heat that I understood Germany was experiencing. I said that at least it would be dry as long as the southeasterly breeze continued as it was rare for it to bring rain. I followed them out of the shop because I had forgotten something from upstairs and walked into a wall of mizzle. In my defence, it was not really rain, but moisture floating about inside the cloud we were in. I realise that it was not much comfort when you were probably getting wetter standing out in it than you would have been under a proper rain shower.

The mist raised and lowered more times than a man engine step. The wettings were frequent and lasted for most of the day and, along with it being a going home day, cleared out The Cove. We had smatterings of business across the day but nothing that was going to keep me in anything other than rags and gruel. My dreams of a hot meal and holeless socks would have to wait for another day. Obviously, I should have been more mindful when I was doing all that buying earlier in the week.

Talking of which, the new glass novelties I ordered arrived today. The salesman dropped by earlier in the week and pointed these out in the catalogue. They did not look that alluring in the pages of the book and when he told me that they retailed at a priced that exceeded my expectations, I railed at the idea. He then went to his car and brought back some samples and they are now on our shelves. It was the glass pasty (sorry, MS) that clinched it. I will put them up on the online shop later. You know, dear reader, the button next to The Diary on the website, in case you missed it.

The Missus disappeared for most of the afternoon visiting a dear friend in hospital. She stopped by at the shops on the way back and returned loaded with food shopping. Perhaps it will be more than just a bowl of gruel tonight, after all.

Mother had maintained vigil during the Missus' absence and because the shop was so quiet, I was able to entertain her with cups of tea. As ever when the Missus is not there, the girls mope about and sulk and are therefore hardly any trouble at all. They line up to sit by the open window where there is a little cool breeze seeping in. While we are surrounded by cloud, it is still warm and incredibly humid and the living room gets stuffy with all its deep layers of insulation.

We were back to even thicker mist when I took the girls out first thing. The only reason that I knew the end of The Cove was still there was because the Surf Lodge has bright lights along its guttering. It will be interesting to see how we fair over the next few days because nearly everyone has told me the weekend will be hot and sunny. As ever, I shall wait and see.

## June 20<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

Completely in line with my expectations, I could not see The Cove again this morning. The fog was the thickest that it had been all week and the end of the Cove was invisible, lost in an impervious grey wall.

I thought nothing of it as it was something that we had been accustomed to all week. What I could not get used to and treated with some suspicion was when the cloud lifted an hour into the shop morning and patches of blue appeared in the thick cloud cover out to the east. Given that the rest of the cloud appeared to be quite immovable, we had a surprising intensely bright morning. It was almost like June was making an attempt to burst out all over.

We had some familiar faces turn up which is always good to see. It means that all is well with the world and nature is in balance. One group were excited to see that the church quiz was back again this year. The quiz is almost as part of the holiday year as ice creams, pasties (sorry, MS) and rain on August bank holiday. They purchased this year's teaser and told me that they had come third the last time they attempted it. I warmly congratulated them and told them, all I had to do now was meet the other

two people who had sent them in. I am occasionally a very naughty grumpy shopkeeper.

One local lady stopped to tell me that she had never seen so many walkers about and indeed, there was a proliferation of them today. I told her that there were just as many yesterday, you just could not see them. They were almost matched in number by the kayaks that left the Harbour this morning. They headed off in two groups of more than a dozen and went off around the corner. The group are regulars, the West Cornwall Symposium or some such my sometimes neighbour told me this morning. I thought it made them sound like a brass band. I had an immediate image of them gathering off Land's End and pulling tubas out of their storage lockers.

The kayakers had a good day for it. There was no swell in the bay, at least, and the breeze was light and from the southwest by the look of it, which would explain the disappearance of our fog. Unfortunately, it was not the ideal combination for our surfers, but it did not stop half a dozen from bobbing about in the shallows and hoping. Yesterday, there had been around sixty or possibly more in a group. I suspect it was one of the local schools down there having a bit of a sports day, perhaps. Today, the surf schools were all quiet, but the Cape Cornwall gig launched and was patrolling the bay at a leisurely pace for an hour or so in the afternoon.

Again today we had a bit of a rush between three and four o'clock. I am wondering whether this is the new five minutes to closing rush and I should be looking to shut the shop at four o'clock instead of six o'clock. Or, perhaps, if people wanted us open for a bit longer, we could run a happy hour from four to five o'clock when everything is twice the price. Well, it would make me happy.

I served a few stragglers in the run up to closing but largely, the street was empty. It allowed me to have a geek at the closing expanse of beach as the tide pushed in. It really was quite splendid, bathed in quite strong sunlight at the end of the afternoon. I think that I had earned the right to stop and stare having largely completed the cash and carry putting away. I had done it all piecemeal during the day with not much having to go out onto the shop shelves. The delivery itself had been swift and efficient thanks to the boss man turning up to help. He was conducting an assessment of a new driver, and we had everything unloaded in just over ten minutes.

I had few other deliveries to deal with. However, the newspapers were a mess, yet again. The Saturday Telegraph which is very popular because of its weekend inserts came without any weekend inserts. This makes a bit of a mockery of its £4.50 price tag. When the correct number of newspapers do arrive, many are in an unsaleable state, like they have been kicked around the depot floor for half an hour. I am minded to complain but I really cannot think that it would do much good. I am very weary of shouting at the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper company.

In a show of hard evidence that summer has returned, the Harbour slipway and Harbour wall were full of sunset watchers when I took the girls out for their last spin. By that time, there was no cloud to speak of, although it was quite hazy, so the sunset would not have been that spectacular. It will be setting tomorrow – today as you read this dear reader – on the longest day of the year and I will have long been in my bed by that time. Happy Summer Solstice to you – Christmas is just around the corner.

## June 21<sup>st</sup> – Sunday

I could have bet my barnacles on it being a good day today, after all, we had a taste of it yesterday. Today, we had all those who had arrived yesterday and who had already announced themselves as well as those who had arrived after we closed and the trippers who came later in the morning.

It was the first time in quite a while that we had people fall through the first electric sliding door in The Cove the moment I opened it in the morning. In the first hour or so, we had quite a rush of breakfast buyers and newspaper readers. That developed into beachware buying session before we started to see a more orderly flow of customer comings and goings.

Inevitably, on such a day, we were going to be selling a lot of pasties (sorry, MS) especially as the kiosk next door did not look likely to open until later. It was one of those days that I was reasonably certain that the demand for pasties would start early, so I made them ready for half past nine o'clock. Two minutes before they were ready, I took my first order for one.

I had made the assumption last night and had emptied the freezer of all the pasty overstock from previous days so that it might defrost in the fridge overnight. When I looked at the numbers a little way into the morning, I reckoned that what was there was probably not enough either, so I baked off all the uncooked frozen pasties in the freezer as well. Since this commandeers the oven, it required careful planning and making sure I had a warmer full of everything before I started. It was either exceptional forward planning on my part or an exceptional quirk of fate that the baking pasties came ready just as the pasty warmer ran out. We do love it when a plan comes together.

Much of the end of yesterday was spent trying to extract myself from being required at the Lifeboat station this morning. Quite late in the day, a training launch had been organised for both boats which would join with the Lifeguards for a joint exercise. Being early on a Sunday morning, the numbers of both boat and shore crew were thin on the ground. Right up until last thing last night it looked like I might be stuck with it which I was trying to avoid on the grounds that I knew we would be busy. Happily, one of the very excellent Shore Crew changed his mind from being a no on the attendance board and let me off the hook.

It was just as well, too. The boat launched at just gone nine o'clock. The Inshore boat launched away too, once it was discovered that there was enough crew for that as well. It was not very long afterwards that the big boat came back to be recovered up the short slip. Apparently, it had experienced a technical problem and had to come back to have it fixed. It launched for the second time about half an hour later, presumably to test the fix and was next seen scooting around the bay. It provided quite a spectacle for the crowds that were lining the railings many of whom had cameras raised filming the show.

The boat returned again for its second textbook recovery of the day up the short slip and this time was strapped down and made ready again. We are, after all, a very repetitive, very excellent Shore Crew.

The fault had not been fixed to anyone's satisfaction and will have to wait until our own mechanics or ones from Poole can come and fix it properly.

As ever on a sunny day, everything went quiet at the end of the morning and into the early afternoon. The hiatus allowed me to do a quick farm shop cash and carry order. It had been three weeks since the last one. I would normally be ordering fortnightly at this time of year, so things must have been slower because of the weather. The reason for our middle of the day lull was plain to see down on the beach with small camps planted along the high tide line all the way to the Lifeguard huts. There was no reason for them to be above the tide line when I saw them because the tide was receding. It was just where they started out first thing when the tide was high.

The inshore was dotted with heads as swimmers dominated the waters. There were a few paddle boards and a few kayaks but there was not a surfboard in sight. The bay was like glass with not a wave anywhere to be seen. Initially, there was no wind either. We had to wait until the later afternoon for a light westerly to start up. I was told that it was hot out and it certainly looked it. It also looked some glorious down on the big beach as the light softened near the end of the afternoon.

It was difficult to know what temperature it was locally as I still find it hard to trust Land's End weather station that still has the wind as northerly. It reckoned the temperature at 23 degrees but St Ives and Gwennap Head, windiest place in the universe but not today, were 17 degrees and 20 degrees respectively. Some were clearly expecting the temperature to drop dramatically during the evening; we sold more logs and kindling today than we sold all week in the fog. We sold some hooded sweatshirts earlier in the day, too. Not complaining.

I had temporarily left my bed this morning at around four o'clock and noted the eastern sky lit up spectacularly by the emerging sun. As I took the girls around last thing, the sun was still somewhat off setting. It being the longest day and all, it probably would hang around until midnight or something just to make a point. I for

one was not going to hang around with it because the busyness of the day had wearied me somewhat.

We walked around the long block and although there were quite a few cars still in the Harbour car park, there were not as many people around as the previous evening. I found this curious because with all the high level cloud about, I suspected that the sunset was going to be a corker. I had not bothered with a jacket and for the first time in a while, truly did not need it. It was the first time in a while that I had to do a drinks order, and I will have to extract my digit in the morning. So, retiring to my bed seems like a bright idea for now and the rest of this extra-long day will have to manage without me.

## June 22<sup>nd</sup> – Monday

It seems that we are not permitted more than one good day at a time lest we be spoilt. It is like when we were children – well, when I was, at least – we could not have sweets unless we had done the washing up, scrubbed the floor first or swept the chimney. All three if you wanted more than one. Today our 'chore' for having a good day yesterday was to endure a robust easterly and the occasional shower of rain. Personally, I do not think that the Cornish have been forgiven for not covering Bishop Trelawney's backside back along.

We had started out with just the wind. A little sirocco, like Max Bygraves (amongst many others) used to sing about. I had gone back into the flat to retrieve a jacket when I took the girls out first thing as it was not all that warm at that time. It was only later, standing in the shop that it became muggy and uncomfortable, and later still – wet. The skies were clouding over even then and getting thicker all the while.

I had been a little wrong-footed by getting down to the shop later than I should have. Actually, I did not have any particular time in mind, it is just when I started clearing the morning orders and realising that the drinks fridges needed more topping up than I recalled, it occurred to me that I should have started earlier. I had to apply myself rather more conscientiously than I would have liked at that time in the morning and was still packing fruit and vegetables when we opened at half past eight o'clock.

I was not helped by the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper company sending shortages again. They had messed up at the weekend, too, not sending the inserts for the Saturday Telegraph and then shorting me on the Sunday Times. I had increased the number after running out last week. The company reduced it again. After deciding not to, I drafted a blunt letter just to make me feel better. I did not really intend to send it. It was there, goading me to send it in the morning. So, after an agonisingly lengthy mental tussle with myself, I lost and went ahead and sent it after removing all the swear words and personal invective.

Like yesterday, we were busy from the outset, although maybe not quite as busy as yesterday. There were plenty of people around and much buying of breakfast goods

and newspapers. Things were definitely looking buoyant and despite the robust easterly, we were selling beach goods – especially windbreaks and sun hats. I might have to shoulder some of the blame for the ensuing showers because I might have mentioned to a couple or two while they were buying parasols and wide brimmed hats that they would be good for keeping the rain off. Well, how was I supposed to know it was going to rain.

The showers did not come to get us until around the middle of the day and shortly after. The first waited until our soft drinks delivery arrived and then started in earnest while we fetched it into the shop. It was no ordinary rain, either. I have never seen such large raindrops – they were easily a bucket sized each one. On the other hand, they were quite widely spaced, so had I been a little more nimble afoot, I might have dodged them.

The shower was preceded by a heavy peel of thunder. It was just the one and when I looked at the rain radar, the rain was heading across us in a short band that covered just a few miles out to sea north and south. It looked quite intense. There was another band not far out, giving grief to the Islands before it came and got us an hour later. After an initial rush for cover into the shop, everyone scattered and cleared the street. They were gone for a further hour before slowly drifting back and gathering on the seats opposite again. It only gave us a further hour before the day started to wind down and, besides, it started to look gloomy again and those who had got wet once were probably not keen to repeat the experience.

The Missus had left at about the same time as the rain started to go and visit a friend in hospital and was gone for some while. She had left the girls with Mother and did not return with them until after I had closed the shop. Since she had neither prepared or planned anything for tea she suggested that we try the Surf Lodge at the end of The Beach car park. We have heard nothing but good reports about the place and have long threatened to go and have a meal there.

The day had become intensely warm and very humid so sitting in the shade would have been ideal, especially for the girls. Naturally, the only free table was in the sun, but it was inside and occasionally a brief cooling breeze wafted through. The girls found some shelter under the table, and I joined the queue that was not all that long and was being dealt with efficiently. There was also no lengthy wait for the meal to arrive, either, which given that it was very busy, was testament to the bar's organisation. I had fish tacos and the Missus the crevettes. Both arrived hot and were excellent. On that small sample alone, I would be happy to recommend the place. I think it will be mayhem in August, and we will avoid it but will be returning. Given that neither of us have dined out together in several years, it was something of an event.

After the meal, the beach looked irresistible and the girls deserved a proper run. We headed to the tide line and both girls immediately went in. We walked along to the southern end of the beach where the advancing tide had created a pool between the

tide line and the rocks behind. It was still and deep enough for ABH to swim properly in. BB, with her unfeasibly long legs, was still walking along the bottom until it shelved away sharply and she dunked in above her head.

We did not tarry long but it was one of those moments that was together thoroughly pleasurable and memorable. The warm breeze took the edge off the heat and the sinking sun, still some way off setting, was blinding as it bounced off the water all around. We slowly made our way to the OS slip and sauntered off back home with two cooler and slight damp hounds in the vanguard. What an utterly splendid evening.

## June 23<sup>rd</sup> – Tuesday

Crumbs and crikey! It was warm from the very outset of the day today and the sun was rising through some early haze above Escalls when we went to the beach. The easterly breeze was in its death throes, but I was comfortable enough in just a t-shirt this morning. ABH headed straight for the water and dived in.

There was more haze out to the north and as the morning went on, the haze crept in and filled the bay. It was thick enough to almost obscure Brisons and Cape Cornwall and it took the blue out of the sea that was flat as a dish once again.

Our early morning shoppers are getting later by the day. Even then they were not late enough to find their favourite newspapers. Three of the titles were late arriving at the depot in Redruth and the delivery trucks left without them. I cannot blame the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company for that. It happens when the editors are trying to sneak some late running news item in before printing time. It will happen again after the next England football match and I have warned all those disappointed newspaper readers this morning what to expect tomorrow, or whenever it is.

The haze did not seem to put anyone off and by and by The Cove filled with trippers and beach goers. We sold through more than a case of parasols by the middle of the afternoon; our stock would normally last all year, but it looks like I will have to order more next week if this weather carries on. We are also running through our big brimmed and lightweight showerproof hats. The showerproof bit is merely incidentally, I suspect, and both ladies and men have been buying them. The other big seller is water, as you might expect, and I had called in another four cases of big bottles from our local supplier. Finding a local supplier for it was very much a breakthrough, meaning we do not have to stockpile it, although I keep enough in case there is a temporary interruption in the supply line.

Much of the haze eventually burnt off in the main. At least I could see the shapes of Brisons and Cape Cornwall more clearly. If rip gribblers came in sizes, this would be

the XXL version. Blue skies all day, elevated temperatures and light breezes from somewhere. The beach was highly populated for the time of the year and dotted with parasols, tents and windbreaks and there were many bathing suited people swimming, paddling and sitting around on surfboards in the still waters. The scene looked utterly glorious and because it is not school holidays, it appeared a more comfortable setting altogether.

We are not breaking any temperature records down here. A regular visitor told me that his car had registered 27 degrees up in Mayon at the top of the hill and by the time he reached the Harbour car park, the thermometer had dropped to 21 degrees. I was certainly not too bothered in the shop. We are on the cooler side of the street anyway by not having any direct sunlight except first thing in the morning. My rather smart fan in the shop keeps a cooling airflow behind the counter and I turned up the extractor fan at the back of the shop to full power.

We had a couple of deliveries, including the heavy cases of water, which gave me cause to exert myself somewhat, but otherwise I was almost permanently engaged in poking at the keys on the till. The busyness had started a little way into the morning and continued in varying degrees of intensity right through until the back end of the afternoon. It may not have been uncomfortably hot in the shop, but it was sufficient to bring me to a peak of weariness I had not felt in a while. By the end of the day, I was very happy to close and collapse in a heap.

I have a concern that lingered through the day. No, I have many concerns that linger through the day, this is just the most recent. On Sunday, the much maligned council saw fit to remove the public waste bin from across the street leaving just the one under the Lifeboat flag. We need two at this end and the one across the street was better placed than the one at the top of the slipway. There have been occasions, even outside the main season when both have been full and overflowing from lack of frequent emptying.

A neighbour advised that the operative who came to collect the bins on Sunday morning, also cleaned the ones left behind. It is possible that the bins were removed for repair – the flaps on the one across the street were inoperable – so they may be returned at some point. It seems an odd time of the year to carry out maintenance when they have had all winter. I wrote to the much maligned council – it was a very sweet and ungrumpy letter in the hope that they would look kindly on our plight. I am yet to receive a reply. I am also yet to receive a reply on the last matter I brought to its attention which was so long ago now, I have forgotten what it was about.

I did not get a last run around the block with the girls. The Missus took them up to The Farm after tea. She was unable to take them up earlier because it was too hot. The Missus went on her own and reported that it was so hot in the greenhouse she had to open all the doors for half an hour before she dared venture in. She told me she left the top doors open overnight – the clever builder ensured that the structure had stable doors so that they could be left open without the critters getting in. Alright,

the clever builder was told by the Missus to make stable doors for that very purpose. It was just as well because the builder made the doors so robust and heavy he would never have been able to lift one full length door into place to secure it.

I stayed home on the sofa with my feet up – unable to move for an hour.

## June 24<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday

We lost a grand lady of The Cove today. It was her eightieth birthday, which is about as grand a way to shuffle off as you could possibly arrange. She was blessed with a fine Cornish sense of humour, a joyful laugh, memorable presence and a sharp tongue for those that needed it. She counted as an admirable best friend to the Missus, enjoying several holidays abroad together, and for whom she will be more sorely missed than for some. Most of all, her very existence was stitched into the fabric of The Cove and The Cove will be an emptier and sorrier place without her.

I hit the ground running this morning, mainly because I found myself late on parade and no idea why. I had got out of bed early – ish – without the aid of ABH who was snoring her head off having chosen to wake me up much earlier for a reason best known to herself. BB had vacated the bedroom for the front room in the middle of the night, as she does from time to time. Again, that is a secret all her own.

Actually, I had not realised I was late until I saw the clock in the shop. My intention was to move the public litter bin from its position under the Lifeboat flag to where our missing one used to be. I had tested it earlier when I returned from the beach with the girls. It was a tad heavier than I hoped and would require opening and the inside bin moved separately. I was about to give it a go when the bread turned up, which distracted me. It was also apparent that the soft drinks would need more time than I had left before opening and that I had better get my finger out.

It was all a bit of a rush, especially after I leant over the ice cream freezer to open the curtains and discovered that several of the ice cream lollies had sold out. I tarried to top the bins up before finishing off the newspapers – several missing again – and returning to fill the beer fridge.

Luckily, our visitors had decided to remain in bed or have an extra cup of tea before they roused themselves and we were relatively quiet first thing. I cannot blame them. It felt much warmer and more humid than the previous day at the same time and I believe the breeze had eased some as well. When I checked Land's End weather station at around the middle of the day it was showing 28 degrees. We are still better off in The Cove, although I have not had any visitor reports since earlier in the day. We were still a few degrees lower than the top, they said.

It was very possible that the additional heat slowed everyone down today. We were busy but not a patch on yesterday's busyness. As a consequence, I was not quite as

beaten about as I was the previous day and, on a few occasions, it was downright tedious.

Our pasty sales (sorry, MS) have taken a beating, too. It seems that mid to late twenties degrees heat is not pasty weather. I mean, who would credit it. In the grand scheme of things, we sold quite a few but with the numbers of people and youngsters in The Cove at the moment I would have expected much better. I duly reduced the volume coming in tomorrow and hope to manage the numbers down before Friday.

While our traditional pasties may not be flavour of the day, we have sold a surprising number of the gluten-free variety. I buy in, at great expense, a box at a time of frozen steak pasties and trust that we are able to sell them before the date expires. It is not the ideal arrangement: we either cook them in the shop or the customer can cook them at home. In the shop we must keep the wrapping on which impedes the browning in the cooking process resulting in a cooked, but rather anaemic looking pasty. We offer customers the choice and warn them of the downside of cooked in the shop. Despite that, we have a customer this week who is on their third. They cannot be that bad, then.

The Missus did not spend long at The Farm with ABH; it was far too hot up there. It is near enough the highest point in the village and therefore closer to the sun. Earlier, she had taken BB to the veterinary doctor for her lady operation, bless her. She looked very sorry for herself later when the Missus picked her up. She has been sternly warned against jumping and running. Yes, right.

We had a quiet run up until closing. In fact, it had been quiet since the middle of the afternoon with the notable exception of a small pasty resurgence when I was least expecting it. I had to hurriedly slip some more into the oven and just about managed to get by without disappointing anyone, although one local worker had to come back again for their cheese pasty.

At the beginning of the day, the topping up of the ice creams fortunately led me to see that we needed to place an order for restocking. As testament to how slow the day had been, there were no orders to place at the end of the day, save for some whole milk. A friend and neighbour from up the hill had told me we should expect a gale of wind tomorrow from some direction or the other which might blow a few customers our way. I am sceptical, as ever, that our forecasters have that sort of insight and will stick my head out of the door in the morning and decide from there.

We will end there and send a final farewell for our friend, from Clive Blake – I hope he does not mind. Her Cornish Eye.

*The Cornish sun,  
Masked by a Cornish cloud,  
She thought her Cornish thoughts,  
Her Cornish thoughts were loud,*

*She viewed the Cornish landscape,  
And she felt so Cornish proud.*

*The Cornish waves,  
Roll into the Cornish bay,  
She saw the Cornish sunset,  
At the end of another Cornish day,  
For she was forever Cornish,  
And forever Cornish she will stay.*

## June 25<sup>th</sup> – Thursday

We had a number of power cuts in the evening yesterday. I am guessing that it is weather related. A quick look at the Internet did not answer the question other than suggesting the hot weather put additional strain on the network from all the fans and coolers running, I presume. The fan above our bed stopped early yesterday morning but I think that was because the small child we have operate it got fed up and went home. We have found in recent times that they are just so ungrateful.

There was no need of a fan today provided that you were standing in the right place. My friend from up the hill was spot on and we had a bit of a breeze blowing in from the east or southeast dependent on which weather station you looked at. Land's End still had it coming in from the north, of course. I had checked yesterday and the BBC had predicted 20 miles per hour winds which, of course, were more like 30 to 35 miles per hour on the day.

It was happily blowing in through the first electric sliding door in The Cove at whatever degrees it was today. I have given up caring – it is overly warm, but we are grateful that it is not as overly warm as the breeze up country. I had forgotten to put the flags out yesterday and today it was too breezy for them. It must have been too breezy because I had my first complaint about it at ten o'clock in the morning. I told him not to worry because it would ease off when the rain arrived.

Again today, we were not at our busiest. The remaining heat and maybe the wind too, slowed our visitors down. We did swap parasols for windbreaks, which was good to see and a bit of a double whammy for us. In a normal week we would sell one or the other to that week's visitors. There were swimsuits going out too and some wetsuits. I think we are seeing some school holiday type sales because the GCSE finishers are here in numbers and out of school early. It is good experience for later when they are all here in abundance.

What was not a good experience was the frozen order turning up this morning just as I had my first mouthful of breakfast. The driver clearly has the best job around at the moment spending half his time in a freezer. Usually, the compressor will shut down after a while when they arrive but this time, it continued throughout the delivery and was very noisy.

The driver was only here five minutes when the pasty delivery (sorry, MS) turned up behind him. Fortunately, the milk man had already been, but it was hard enough getting both deliveries in and away while serving customers at the same time. I stuck most of the ice creams into the bottom of the ice cream freezer so I could sort them out later. I had to empty a couple of the boxes because they would not fit in and it surprised me greatly to note that we had a dog ice cream called Doggy Doggy Yum Yum.

I had made the error of leaving it to the Missus to fill the gap left by the Mars and Snickers varieties of ice cream that we seem to no longer be able to get. There was no recommended retail price on our documentation as there is for the other products, so I looked it up on the Internet to see what other sellers had priced it at. That surprised me greatly, as well, since it was more expensive than our local artisan ice cream for humans. Fair play, though, the ice cream is made by a small Dorset company, so probably counts as artisan itself. We have been asked numerous times for such a product – and now will probably never be asked again. I shaved a bit off the widely advertised price, which I thought excessive, and we shall see how it fares.

Like yesterday, we had a bit of a mini rush in the later afternoon. They cleaned us out of pasties again and I found myself heating some more, just in case. I think that they must have been on an over-long siesta and decided to pile in at the end of the day. We were selling the sort of things that we might have been selling at normal times during the day, such as going home gifts rather than food items for teatime. It being Thursday, I was also trying to force down some tea myself ahead of the Lifeboat exercise.

The exercises are called earlier than previously which gives more time for training, which is not unreasonable. There was sufficient crew for both boats and to launch the Inshore boat twice with different crews. The helms on the Inshore were instructed to stay close because of the expected storm heading our way across The Channel courtesy of the French.

It was a geet lump of heavy rain and thunderstorms and looking at the rain radar, the bulk of it was heading up across Lizard and the middle of The Duchy. We would not get away with it as there was another lump heading up west of us and a string of thunderstorms connecting the two. There was the likelihood that the wind under the storms could flick to 60 miles per hour very quickly and although the big boat could ride it out, the small boat would be in a lot of trouble.

While the boats were out, we tracked the storms as they came northward. At first, we could see lightning forks over the top of Cove Hill then both to the east and west and then to the north. Very oddly, we had a bit of rain but even though the string pass overhead, we saw nothing of the intense downpours that were shown in them from the rain radar. It looked very dramatic as the heavy clouds passed either side of us and off to the north. The lightning appeared to be passing between the clouds rather

than coming to ground and although it was close to, the thunder was muted. I was wearing my false ears, so it was not that.

Very shortly after that the big boat came charging back into the bay. We had already carried out the crew change for the Inshore boat and recovered it the second time when the big boat eventually came back through the channel. Through some quirk in the rota, I had managed to land myself the winch job. Being the hottest week of the year and being in a confined space with a bleddy geet diesel engine was not the best planning, I have to admit. I was lucky it was breezy and had the winch room fire doors wedged open with a handy fire extinguisher and the side door open. The only downside being that just outside the side door is the engine exhaust outlet which was blowing back in. Still, I was relatively cool while being slowly poisoned.

Despite that, we managed to affect what looked to me like a textbook recovery up the long slip, near low water and under a glowering sky. We are, after all, a very resilient, very excellent Shore Crew.

## June 26<sup>th</sup> – Friday

The mist was back this morning which was a bit disappointing. However, it was much cooler, and a lighter breeze was blowing, this time from the west or thereabouts. It made for a much more comfortable day outside but, for some reason, in the shop, it seemed much warmer and very much not so comfortable.

We had to wait until the middle of the day before the sun burnt off the mist and the medium height cloud cover melted away and turned the day glorious again. We had to wait about the same amount of time before customers in any numbers appeared on the scene. The first customers during the morning made a bit of a dent in the pasty stock (sorry, MS) which was a bit disconcerting since I had bet on there being slow trade again today and possibly a resurgence during the weekend. This week we do not have many spares in the freezer.

It was so quiet during the morning that I decided to top up a few shelves down the grocery aisle. I know, I know, I have these rash moments from time to time. It probably will not last. Anyway, I soon got bored of that and went and paid some invoices that were becoming due and one for a delivery that had not yet turned up. That one almost came to grief when I left the ice delivery out. I was going to attend to it once I had helped bring in everything else but was side tracked. It was a customer standing in front of it a short while later that drew my attention to it when I caught a glimpse of the water running off it. Fortunately, I caught it in time, although I think the bags will need a good bash to break up the lumps.

Things did not speed up that much into the afternoon, either. We bumbled along with sporadic visits of one or two people at a time. We continued to do well on the pasties but everything else was a few groceries, snacks and drinks until well into the later afternoon.

The new arrangement with the public waste bin seemed to pass off without comment. I had enlisted the muscles of one of the very excellent Shore Crew to help me move the bin under the Lifeboat flag to opposite the Ice Cream Kiosk. It is a better position if we are to continue with just the one bin, although when it inevitably overflows because it is not emptied frequently enough, the scattered waste will be more of an issue.

It seemed that it passed the toughest test because the driver of the waste truck that turned up was more grumpy than the grumpy shopkeeper opposite. One of our regular local customers had come in slightly in advance of the truck arriving to tell me that she had been roundly admonished for putting rubbish into the bin that did not comply with his strict definition of 'litter'. Apparently, he has raised his voice at her and threatened to take photographs of the incident and 'shame' her with them. She was clearly shaken when she came into the shop and preferred to stay until the bin men had left.

I know that I am very protective of our locked bins, mainly against damage caused by people trying to pry them open, but I am pretty sure I would do no remonstrating and shouting if I caught someone doing it – especially if they were bigger than me.

I suppose that we were quite busy in the later part of the afternoon. It is sometimes difficult to tell because it comes in fits and starts rather than a mobbing. I should not have been too hard on my expectations because we had been sunshine busy during the week and this was a change-over day. True to form we started seeing some new regular visitors arriving later in the day which is always pleasant catching up.

The day had developed into a proper rip gribbler, probably halfway through the afternoon. A couple of local families came down and occupied the Harbour beach for the evening. Even if I do not see them initially, it becomes clear when we get frequent wet child visits through the closing sequence of the shop. You could not blame them; it was a splendid evening. It was reasonable hot instead of mad bonkers hot and the dead calm sea would have been most welcoming – so I am told. Clearly the surfers would have a different opinion, but we sold some bodyboards during the day, so others were enjoying the water down on the big beach too.

It was only when we sat down to tea that I looked out over the bay. The sea was the sort of stunning blue reserved for Caribbean and tropic beaches and transparent so that we could see the submerged rocks and weed. There was not much of the beach on view but in the upper reaches the sand was bleached white. The colours of the heather, marram grass and scrub stood out starkly on the cliffs, contrasted by a couple of light coloured crop fields near the top of the cliffs here and there.

The Missus went up to The Farm in the evening with ABH and I stayed with the sore BB at home. It was too hot to go up during the day for both the girls and Mother. We understand that the weather and temperatures will moderate in the coming week

with a couple of weather fronts passing over us on Sunday morning. I am sure many people will have made short notice booking on the basis of the weather this week. I cannot imagine it will take long before I am asked what I have done with the weather.

## June 27<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

I genuinely thought that I had all my terrapins in a row this morning (they are easier to put in a row than ducks that keep moving about) as I got down to the shop early. We had a big soft drinks delivery yesterday – the one where I left the ice out in the heat of the shop – and I was aware that much of the order was needed in the soft drinks fridge. It took me far longer than I had imagined and by the time I had finished I had not left enough time to do the newspapers.

It was not a huge disaster as we only had a few customers in the first half hour of opening. It allowed me time to try and sort out the shortage of the Saturday Telegraph. They sent two last week out of six and this week they sent none at all. This usually means that the title is running late rather than having been subject to a mistake. The only way of finding out is if the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company had issued a message about the absence on the newspaper 'app'.

I duly logged in to check only to discover that the facility was not working. I could see the headlines and one of them stated a late something, but I could not open the message to see the detail. I was left with no choice but to submit a credit request for all of them and sort the issue out if they turned up – which they did not.

Yesterday, I had a response from the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company regarding the complaint I placed at the start of the week. I had raised the issue of continually being shorted on titles and the shoddy quality of some of the newspapers supplied. Five days after lodging my complaint I get a message from the company telling me they had received my complaint and had forwarded it to the correct department. Clearly, for the company whose sole raison d'être is providing newspapers to retailers, it is not a priority to resolve problems with providing newspapers to this retailer.

I am willing to believe that cash money is a dead concept to whichever generation late teenager to early 20s people fall into. This year, and much to the detriment of the business and my own chagrin, I have allowed myself to be beaten into submission, permitting payments down to a basement of one pound on a payment card. The pound limit is my final red line and a hill I am prepared to topple off of should someone challenge me on my mixed metaphors. Even having taken such a drastic step, we are still, with frightening frequency, asked to accept cards for less and particularly by young people of the age group I previously mentioned.

Having reached my lowest point, I thought that I could be tested no further until today. A young man who had taken some time to select a 65 pence postcard off our

stand, having used his smart mobile telephone to photograph many others of them. He then brought it to the counter to proffer payment for the item – again, using his smart mobile telephone. I explained politely that we did not take electronic payments for such a pilfering amount (get a grip man, for heaven's sake and use a bleddy pound coin).

I have long since given up suggesting that cash would be an acceptable alternative mainly through the proliferation of blank stares of incomprehension I have been receiving in response. Consequently, there followed an embarrassing silence while the young man considered what might be a sensible way forward. At last, he asked where he might acquire some 'change'. It was my turn to look uncomprehending.

Our young man had, perhaps, seen people with little shiny tokens in their hands, exchanging it for goods and calling it 'change'. The problem was, he had no notion of how it might be acquired. I told him that we had plenty of change. I explained that the concept of change was something you got after providing an excess of payment, in cash, for a good of a lower value than the money offered. It was back to my customer for the uncomprehending look. He gave up at that point, unsure how to proceed.

I could have suggested purchasing another card or a low value item from the shop to make his purchase greater than a pound and therefore eligible for payment by some electronic means. I did not because it sounded a bit patronising. How it had not occurred to the young man, I do not know. The really scary thing is that it is this young man or people like him who will be running the country in a few years. Come to think, many of them already are.

If this is a typical example of how the upcoming generation think, I have no doubt now that cash is doomed. I truly feel sorry for them. They will never feel the excitement of opening their first wage packet and seeing the crisp notes therein – or indeed the disappointment of discovering just how much the taxman removed before they got there; or the swagger of walking out on a Saturday night with a bulging roll of notes in their pocket and impressing their friends at just how much they got paid that week; or, if they were ever lucky enough to be a grumpy shopkeeper, to throw that day's earnings on the bed and roll around in it – rolling around on credit slips is just not the same.

We would probably not be doing much rolling around in cash tonight, however. We had some busyness during the day but overall, it was a little understated. I had expected better on a lovely sunny day. It was not until halfway through the afternoon that someone mentioned that it was Mazey Day in Penzance. That will have drawn quite a crowd of both visitors and locals away from The Cove. I do now recall being asked for taxi numbers by a couple who had planned to take the bus in and come back by taxi. That is a trick that would have been impossible the other way around.

I would say that it might have been a tad uncomfortable in the big city, there. While we had lost the comparatively severe heat of the week it was still very hot and in the press of the streets of Penzance it cannot have been overly comfortable. The one saving grace was a punchy southerly breeze charging across the bay at 30 miles per hour. It was a breeze that we in The Cove were deriving little benefit from, it seemed.

I had spent the last part of the afternoon surviving on the occasional customer visit and watching the clock run down until closing. I had looked up and down the street at five minutes to closing and had seen it mainly empty; there was absolutely no danger of a five minutes to closing rush – especially since five minutes to closing had already elapsed. I did a lap of the shop to ensure fridge doors were closed and lights were off and came back to the first electric sliding door in The Cove to slide it closed. It was at that moment I was bowled over by a small crowd of customers entering the shop. I had discovered a new concept – a five seconds to closing rush.

As the afternoon drew on, our cloud cover increased until the sun was blotted out completely. The weather fronts that had originally been pencilled in for tomorrow morning were coming in early and were now expected over us in the middle of the night. Rain would be arriving during the evening.

During the evening, some rain arrived. It very kindly waited until it was time to take ABH out for her last walk. Happily, it was only very light drizzle and not unwelcome at all after the hot day in the shop and quite refreshing before retiring for the night.

## June 28<sup>th</sup> – Sunday

It was a day for meeting people today. Of course, I meet people every day which is an integral part of being a grumpy shopkeeper and, of course, they are all extraordinary in some manner or way. The ones I am talking about stood out amongst these for some reason or other.

The first, a couple, announced themselves by discussing between themselves whether I was who they thought that I was. The Aged Parent had pre-warned me to expect some acquaintances of his at some point this week. Apparently, they agreed that not only did I resemble the Aged Parent, but I also sounded like him as well. We had a very pleasant conversation between me serving other customers as they came and went. Before they left, I suggested that they might wish to note when they reported back that while I did share some of the Aged Parent's visual attributes, I had clearly improved upon them.

A little while later I was distracted by a gentleman who arrived at the shop counter. He had the familiar face of a regular visitor and was of senior years. He remembered me, too, and asked how many years I had been a grumpy shopkeeper. The number was quickly irrelevant once he explained that this was his 92<sup>nd</sup> visit. He also told me that he had driven 300 or more miles to get here and he looked perfectly capable of doing so.

The day had commenced in a very understated sort of way. There were still remnants of the overnight cloud, although very little evidence that we had any sort of noticeable rain. We had a few customers stop by for newspapers that for once had arrived complete in numbers and all in saleable quality. I had indicated to the Lifeboat management that I would again be missing the launch organised for the morning. Again, it was a struggle forming a shore crew and once again some late comers solved the problem which would not have been a problem had they signalled their intentions earlier.

The boat launched at around half past nine o'clock for a joint exercise with Gwennap Head National Coastwatch Institute. Two of the members of their station were on the boat while the others based at the station directed the boat to a previously dropped buff. The boat was gone for just over an hour by which time the slipway had been prepared for their return. I did not see it, but I was reliably informed later that it was, indeed, a textbook recovery up the long slip just ahead of low water. We are, after all, a very last minute, very excellent Shore Crew.

During the course of the exercise, the weather cleared completely to a proper rip gribbler complete with blue skies and plenty of sunshine. The temperatures did not soar into the uncomfortable but were relatively normal for the time of year. The southerly wind from yesterday went around to the west and remained almost as strong, providing some cooling for those down on the beach along with sand in their eyes and pasties (sorry, MS). There were, however, waves, they were not much use for surfing with a strong onshore wind behind them, but they were waves, nonetheless.

Talking of pasties, we did not do too badly with the numbers this week. I did not have to fall back on the uncooked frozen I had and although we had some left over, it was not that many. The cheese pasties I had spot on. The sausage rolls were the only disappointment of the trio, but they will freeze, and I will modify the numbers for next week – when we will, no doubt, run out.

Another disappointment was trade through the afternoon that was lacklustre to say the least. There was a sporadic flow of customers throughout, but the numbers could have been better for a sunny afternoon. I know at least one of them was nursing a hangover from Mazey Day, so perhaps that was true for all of them.

At one point, a customer asked for kebab sticks. Quite some years ago we purchased a box of, must have been a few hundred, and the Missus spent ages winding them into pink and blue candy stripe paper bags in sixes but never finished off the box. I have used the colour coding as a standing joke over the years that when people request for them, I ask if they want female or male ones.

I have no idea how many packs we ended up with, but they were put at the back of a shelf out of the way and consequently it was only people who asked for them, got

them. If you were looking you would never find them. We have had them for years and are only just now running out.

Having sold the penultimate pack during the afternoon I went in search for the balance which were in the store room at one stage. As I looked, I started to find boxes of gifts that I had noticed that we were short of in the shop, such as the little snow globes I had been meaning to put out for ages. On my way back I noticed other gaps that we had overstock to fill and went on to find playing cards, towels and novelty pens. Usually, I would have forgotten where I started but by some quirk of fate, I recalled that I had been searching for the kebab sticks, concluded they were no longer there and added them to the cash and cash list.

The cash and carry list was where I had started in the morning. We are about to run out of cans of cider. We might have sufficient to get us to the end of the week, but it will be very close. I could despatch the Missus to the cash and carry to get some, but I thought that we might just be able to scrape together a minimum order and get them delivered next Saturday. Given that I would need to notify the cash and carry early in the week, I decided that I had better find out about the minimum order sooner rather than later, so started compiling the list.

I had got a long way into it when we started getting busy for the day. Part of the process is to fill up the grocery shelves, so, as a by-product, we have full shelves as well. I completed the rest between customers during the rest of the day. I have yet to input it and will do that tomorrow.

We, of course, got busier towards the end of the day in an extended five minutes to closing rush. This lasted until we closed although there was not 'pushing the envelope' by leaving it until the last few seconds today. The press stopped me completing my evening orders and I was so distracted earlier that I missed the deadline for bread. We will have some but no rolls which appear to be the mainstay of bread sales at the moment; they will have to eat cake – well, white cobs, instead.

The Missus had decided that we would have a barbeque instead of roast dinner this evening. She manages to do this on our flat roof by leaning out of the porch window. It nicely fills the living room with thick, pungent smoke. I used to enjoy a barbeque, probably because it generated a bit of a party atmosphere and involved beer. More recently I just think of it as an awkward way of putting burnt meat on a plate and a bit of a faff at that – not to mention having to eat it in a smoky front room. It is never as bad as I imagine but the imagining has already happened and is therefore a bit of a self-fulfilling prophesy. Never mind, I got fed and am just being grumpy.

The Missus went up to The Farm after with ABH in tow. I stayed back and looked after the ailing BB. She is not ailing too much but is feeling sorry for herself. We have always thought that ABH just put up with a lot of teasing from the little one, having her ears and tail pulled and such. She has never showed anything but toleration. It was when she came back that the mask well and truly slipped. The Missus said she

could not wait to get back to the flat and when she did, she went mad for her little pal. She had been putting it on all the while. Who would have thought.

## June 29<sup>th</sup> – Monday

The sea was still pretty upset over something this morning. It was flushing over the Harbour wall and thumping in on the beach. We are back to having a couple of low pressure systems out to the west and the far northwest again after a week or two without any movement at all. It was most likely responsible for our covering of cloud which was, thankfully, high enough to let some brightness in.

So, it was not the weather that brought everything to a standstill this morning. It was warm enough without being overbearingly hot with only a gentle breeze from somewhere in the west. Nevertheless, business never really got off the ground this morning and where people had been clamouring for pasties (sorry, MS) from early morning all last week, we sold the first one near the middle of the day today.

While it was still quiet, I took the opportunity to start keying the cash and carry order. With hardly any interruptions it did not take very long at all. With some minor alterations we just about scraped through with a minimum order value. I upped the number of cases of cider by a good margin which will ensure sales of them will decline rapidly. I panicked a bit when my search for kebab sticks came up blank; I was sure they would have them. It then occurred to me that they were probably called skewers, which they were and came in a much more sensible box of 200. That is still more than 30 male and female packs, but I think the previous box was 500, so it is still an improvement.

The other product that I thought we had better stock up with is vapes. It is an utter minefield of various brands and types with a myriad of different flavours for each. Even having narrowed it down to one brand – and I have changed the name - I was faced with choosing from 'glo pod', 'glo bar kit', 'glo box kit' and 'glo max kit'. I mean, what is a poor boy to do. Even looking at the company website with its pages and pages of information, I was no better off at the end of it. I took a punt and can send them back if I have the wrong thing.

As well as the new legislation about having to collect used vapes because we sell them, the Government want to start a whole new licensing system for them. We have already had to register for something called 'track and trace' for cigarettes and cannot buy them unless we provide the registration numbers to the supplier. That itself is a sort of licensing system. Quite why we have to have a completely different system on top of that which I will, no doubt have to pay a fee for, is quite astounding.

I have not yet sent the order off although I have notified the depot that we will require delivery on Saturday. I will post it later in the week when we might have some additions.

It was knocking on towards two o'clock before we started to see some busyness and then it was sustained for a good couple of hours or more. Pasty sales were such that I started to be concerned that we would not have enough for tomorrow. I had based my order on the deserted streets we had up until the order deadline. Fortunately, the demand tailed off before we came to future grief. Whether it had any bearing on it, but the change came when the cloud cover broke for a while and we started to see some sunshine. I do not seriously believe that our visitors suddenly came out with the sunshine, but it was quite a coincidence.

One of the afternoon arrivals was a gentleman who is sadly losing his sight to glaucoma. This year he came armed with a white stick which he was using as an essential aid. He has always been a jovial sort, and his worsening condition does not seem to have dented his joie de vie, and if it is a show, it is a very brave one. I stood him next to one of the wire stands as a reference point and other customers just had to work around him. We had a chat between customers, but it was very busy at the time which made it difficult.

As he struggled through the doorway and headed precariously down the ramp outside, I was minded to think that we could benefit from a railing along the side of it. While the ramp is, no doubt, a boon to wheelchair users, it causes havoc for the unsteady of foot and several people have struggled to negotiate it.

I had a quick trawl of the Internet between customers, and the world of ramp railings appears to be complicated by the sheer number of options and different types of material. The pricing varies widely, too. It clearly needs to be practical but I would prefer we spent some attention to the aesthetics as well. The uprights will need to be perpendicular to the ground rather than the slope which mean matching the angle of it somehow. That complicates things no end. I had hoped that it was something I could do myself, but it rather looks like I will have to get someone in who knows what he is doing. Enquiries are ongoing.

Unfortunately, this, the busyness and all the other distractions conspired to make me miss my bread ordering deadline. It is the second day in a row, and we will not now have bread tomorrow. Our neighbour will also berate me vigorously for forgetting her order for her holiday let customers, so I will be in a heap of trouble tomorrow morning.

As if that were not enough misery for one night, it was raining when I stepped out with the girls last thing. It was not raining hard, thankfully, but it was warning enough, I felt, that I must try harder.

June 30<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday

We got wet this morning which was not in today's plan. I had made the mistake of looking out the front window and assessing that it looked just fine, thank you very

much. What I had not bargained for was the weather coming up from behind. It was fearful dark above the cliff, and we had barely made the Round House when we felt the first spots. By the time we reached the end of the Harbour car park, it was raining properly. It was quite fine rain but heavy with it and we got proper wet all three of us.

I towelled the girls down when we got home but there was no one to towel me down, which was remiss. Happily, my jacket will dry very quickly on the back of the chair, and I was wearing my sloppy shorts not my working ones. It could have been so much worse, and I shall pay better attention next time.

I was told a little later in the morning, long after the early rain had gone, that the expectation was that we would have rain all morning. Since I had not looked at a forecast, I gave my usual advice of looking out of the window in the morning – although that did not quite work out for me, first thing. I checked the rain radar for the customer and told her rain was on the way and she should expect it in an hour or so. It was much slower moving than I had thought, and it did not arrive until well into the morning. It filled the bay with mizzle and hung about for the best part of an hour.

Like yesterday, we saw very little in the way of trade until into the afternoon. This time it seemed more likely that it was the weather keeping the customers away but after yesterday, I could not be entirely sure. When we did start seeing people, it escalated quite quickly. Again, it coincided with an improvement in the weather. The cloud broke up and expanses of blue sky emerged letting the sunshine run riot all over the bay.

The sea state was still disturbed but perhaps not quite as disturbed as yesterday. I thought that I heard it coming over the Harbour wall just after high water in the morning, but I really was not paying much attention. It was not until later in the early part of the afternoon that I stopped to have a look. There was a fair amount of white water washing in on the beach and any surfers with serious intent were way out the back. There was not much for them at the lower reaches of the tide, and I was not looking later when it came back in again. While there was white water under the cliffs, it was not attacking them with any force, so I surmised that much of the swell had dissipated. I was wrong, it was just resting.

In the quite of the morning, I did some further searches for our ramp railings and came up trumps. It was exactly the right thing custom made to size for our ramp for not a king's ransom. I had passed the idea across one of the boys working on the house down the road. He had previously helped me take roofing sheets up to The Farm when I was building the greenhouse. He passed a blessing on the kit that I had selected, and I ordered it a bit later. He will come and install it at a mutually convenient time which might have to be the end of the season, but we shall see. He reckons it will not take more than half an hour.

While I was at doing constructive things, I emptied the till of newspaper tokens. They had been building up since we started doing newspapers at the end of May. More

recently, we had been seeing rather a lot of them, and I since I have an arbitrary six week cycle, it was high time I counted them and sent them off. The Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company want them done weekly but they can whistle for that. It is a tedious and cumbersome job and should really be done online. After 23 years, there is the same paper form – it can be downloaded, now – and the same process of filling it out and sending all the tickets in to be recounted and verified. Tis done now.

Since we are on the subject of the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company, I still have not heard back from them regarding my complaint about the accuracy and quality of their deliveries. I have, however, noticed that my delivery notes that come with each bundle have started acquiring a handwritten 'checked' note and signature and they have been correct so far this week. Perhaps actions speak louder than words.

I still have not heard back from the much maligned council, either and I am beginning to suspect that they are run by the same people. Mind, we are getting the checks done and we have not had our bins back, so the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company are one up so far.

Also done was the bread order. It was looking shaky at one point when the Missus arrived back at the crucial time with Mother. I might have been distracted then but held my concentration. Luckily – if you were after bread in the morning – I had no further interruptions from four o'clock until I sent the order in.

In fact, we fell quiet in the latter part of the afternoon thanks to an untimely shower of rain. It was not much to speak of, but it cleared the street and that was that. The skies had clouded over earlier, so the onset of another spell of rain was well telegraphed. The wind freshened, too, after being almost pleasant through much of the day – I thought. Someone dropped in late in the day and told me it had been very windy. The wind may have come around the corner a bit more, but I never thought to check.

I certainly did not need to check when I took the girls around later. It was indeed breezy as we headed across the car park. The Harbour beach was available but BB is still not yet out of the woods in respect of her war wound, so we must yet behave. She does not agree and it is currently a battle of wills in which I have a small edge. Give it a week and you will find me lost.