

## DIARY 2023

May 31<sup>st</sup> – Wednesday

We lost our sunshine for most of the day, which took away our economic edge that we had been relying on since the beginning of the weekend. It prompted a host of complaints that it had suddenly turned cold when in truth, it was the same temperature as yesterday and the same easterly wind was blowing just the same as it had. Certainly, there was no warmth from standing in the sun's direct light, and consequently everyone promptly begged off to St Ives.

That is not to say it was not busy here, just not on the same scale as the previous days. We enjoyed a good trouncing on pasties but perhaps I did regret increasing the numbers for today. The realisation came too late to prevent me from making the same error for the order tomorrow and in fact I exacerbated the problem by adding another ten when someone asked for a going home order.

I was told by several customers through the morning that the weather forecast had pointed to the cloud breaking up and the sunshine bursting through to save the day. Indeed, Radio Pasty had said much the same but had not specified what sort of time that we might be relieved of our cloudy menace. As we went into the afternoon, it was looking less and less likely that the forecasters had been accurate. The breakthrough came at around three o'clock, which was a little too late to properly save the day.

The somewhat enforced slowdown permitted me to respond to a lady from Mother's telephone company who had telephoned her during the morning. It was in relation to the complaint I had raised concerning the length of time it had taken to install her fibre connection and the fact that they were already charging her for it. I expressly asked that the company contact us by electronic mail so that she would not have to deal with it herself over the telephone. So, that worked then.

I called back short of half an hour before the deadline I was given and promptly raised another complaint regarding telephoning instead of our preferred method. The lady I was supposed to talk to was unavailable, so the very pleasant lady I did speak with told me she would call back – on Mother's number! I was tempted to point out the tag line I was met with when I first telephoned, that the company aimed for the highest level of customer service. Still a way to go, then.

This grumpy shopkeeper, of course, maintains an exemplary standard when speaking with his customers. To provide them with not only a memorable service when they buy something but also to give accurate and timely responses to any queries that may arise along the way. So, when a customer who had been here all week asked a question about a product they were buying, I thought long and hard about the answer. We sell sand bottles that the user can fill with sand from the beach as a souvenir of their visit. They had purchased and filled a bottle previously but

wondered why the sand from the Harbour and the Big beaches were different colours. It took me a moment but then was struck by sudden inspiration. I told them that perhaps there was more sewage on one beach than the other. I still do not understand why they suddenly changed their minds about the bottles.

We had coasted for a little time in the middle of the day and had not really been pressed at any time. It was after three o'clock, after the sun came out, that The Cove suddenly became animated and the regularity of customer visits to the counter increased. We sold quite a few pasties, which seemed like an odd time to be selling them, but who knows the eating habits of people east of Camborne. There were all manner of gifts and toys sold but not so much in the way of buckets and spades. Either they had all already been bought or it was not considered much of a beach day. That would ring true, as the times I did managed to have a quick geek down there, the population was much reduced from earlier in the week.

Once more we were busy until the end of the day. We have gone through more beer than a busy night in a German bierkeller and will have to place another grocery order for next week to replenish supplies. Some of the local suppliers are beginning to stutter a bit, one a victim of its own success and the other, recently gone into administration and bought over by another local band. I would have thought that the latter would have had its ducks in a row by now. The other, came into focus last year and has sold exceptionally well since, despite being quite expensive. Word has clearly got around, and we have been going through it at an alarming rate this week. Fortunately, I had in extra stock last week. They have now run short of supply of their very popular pilsner.

I do not think that anyone had a meal indoor during the last week. The evening air has been almost constantly filled with barbeque smoke. If we had the opportunity to choose conditions for this holiday week after a poor performing spring, we could not have done much better than what we had. I just need to clear my pasty surplus and we are set for the weekend.

May 30<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday

Yeeha! I had wondered if our high state of busyness might continue into the week after an exceptional weekend. From today's performance, it looked like it might. We were quiet to start with, which obviously had me on tenterhooks for a while and then, in a suddenness that caught me off guard, it all went off in a rush.

The day started with the tedious monotony that every other day has started in the recent past – sunshine and a bit of an easterly. I was minded to think that it was a tad warmer as I carried the little girl around the block first thing. We have taken to having a little walk in the morning to get her used to the big outdoors and to use up some time that she would otherwise be chewing slippers or tearing up within reach tissues we had missed. The end of her confinement cannot come quickly enough. We have landed ourselves a smart cookie and the environment she is currently

allowed to explore has been explored to exhaustion and occasionally the frustration shows through.

Despite that we managed to wear her out sufficiently yesterday so that she slept well and did not have me out of bed until half past five o'clock. Even then, this was more me than her as there was bottling up and shelf filling to do before we opened. In the past, this might have been done in the evening or the Missus would have slipped down and done it between customers. I have no particular problem with getting up early, and the job is done and out of the way and the only disadvantage is our customers having to be served by a crumpled heap of weary grumpy shopkeeper from about four o'clock onwards.

The day developed very much into a beach day. Even after five o'clock there were a fair few camps littered along the foot of the dunes. These looked like bigger family groups and I would wager that there was a campfire in each of them as they all enjoyed barbeques on the beach. Busy though it was then, it was not a patch on earlier when the top end of the beach looked crowded and busy. We had sold a wealth of windbreaks again today to ward off that east wind and I could see some of them down there.

I had spent most of the day climbing in and out of my jacket as the breeze pushed in through the first electric sliding door in The Cove in varying degrees of strength. Then to really mess with my head, the wind went around to the west at the end of the day. It would have made a big difference to the temperature outside and certainly did for me in the shop but it must have been warm out there anyway given the amount of sun hats and protective lotion we sold during the day.

I had kept our number of pasties the same as yesterday, since we had sold out yesterday with very few asking for more. Plus, I was not sure that we would sell as many today but by the middle of the day, it was looking like we might run out. I ordered some additional ones for tomorrow but at the end of the day today again I still had three left. I could not have got the numbers more right over the weekend and the likelihood is, tomorrow we will have a surplus.

Despite the slow start, the day developed into very much a continuous flow of customers from a little way into the morning through to around half past four o'clock. It was similar to Sunday, but the pace was much slower and I was not quite as pressed as I was then. While I could take no part in humping in the secondary grocery delivery we had, I was able to shift it from the store room floor later in the day. This was rather necessary as I could not get down to the back of the room and it was just luck that I was not called to do so. The store room is still an utter mess but it will need a far more concerted effort than I am able to give it at present.

Once again, we were busy through to the end of the day and it was some relief to close up at seven o'clock. Mother and the in-laws were around all day again today. They had to take the Missus for a check up at the hospital in the morning and poor

Mother had to look after a boisterous ABH for a few hours. The Missus has another week yet of being an invalid as the eye scratch was quite severe and needs longer to heal. She is far more able now, though, and hopefully we can give Mother and the in-laws a rest tomorrow from their support role.

ABH had clearly been worn down over the course of the day and I had a bit of an easy time of it by the time I came upstairs. Naturally, she came alive again when it came to bedtime but there was not a great deal that was going to stand between the bed and putting this crumpled heap of a weary grumpy shopkeeper into it.

May 29<sup>th</sup> – Monday

My peaceful night was shattered at one o'clock by the dulcet tone of my pager going off. It woke the Missus, but the little girl blithely slept through it.

The boat was called to a yacht southwest of Longships that had lost all power and therefore navigation and lights. It was not a fault to be fixed on the sea, so it was towed back to Newlyn. With five hours to go before the boat came back to the station, we all scarpered and went back to our beds. ABH was not even aware that I had gone.

I was awoken again shortly after half past four o'clock to remind me that I might like to go and set up the station for the boat's return, expected at around half past five o'clock. We were a small team of desperates, setting up on the long slipway as the tide ebbed towards low water. The sun was thinking about breaking over Carn Olva, or thereabouts, and there was plenty of light for our work. The job was done and dusted inside three quarters of an hour and with no one but us to witness it, some might say that a textbook recovery did not happen at all today. In fact, some people did not even know that the boat was launched because at night, we do it silently. We are, after all, a very stealthy, very excellent Shore Crew.

It was quite close to my, recent, normal getting up time. I avoided disturbing the little girl and the Missus and went straight to the shop to lay the groundwork for the day. The beer fridge was still empty, just how I left it, which was disappointing, and the soft drinks fridge also had sizeable gaps. I also ran a swift eye over the grocery shelves to make sure that we were not missing any crucial items. We were, so I spent some time topping up those shelves as well. It is the one advantage of being roused early, that I have time for such things.

The day followed much the same appearance as the day before but the easterly breeze that was still present all day, did not get out of its pram in the afternoon and go all hardcore on us. It provided for more of a beach day and we were not quite as fully occupied as we had been yesterday. Oddly, I was less weary through the day yesterday without the gaps. Today, our business came in fits and starts and I found myself grinding through the downtime in between.

After our windbreaks stock was devastated yesterday, we had to ask brother-in-law to drive the Missus up to The Farm for more. It was busy at that time, and I could not be sure just how long they had gone for, but it did seem they were back quite quickly even allowing for the watering of the growing things. We had plenty of everything else, so it was just the windbreaks, and we were practically selling those off the back of the truck when we replenished the stand.

We continued with dribs and drabs (a comparative term – it was still pretty busy) of business into the evening which was turning out to be quite stunning. There were still people camped on the beach but, clearly, people had been drifting away since the late afternoon. I could not say the camps were more numerous than yesterday, because I was not really paying attention.

We had enjoyed a very good business weekend, which was something of a relief. There is the rest of the week, which will be quieter, I am sure, but the weather is doing us no harm at all, and we hope for something that at least resembles a half decent average for the time of year. It has tested our resilience quite well with our new suppliers, which is comforting and I have a list of the things I should have ordered.

Same again tomorrow, then – hopefully after a full night's sleep.

May 28<sup>th</sup> – Sunday

Oh, my goodness. It might have been one of those 'careful what you wish for' situations as I have been bemoaning the quietness we have endured since we opened. Today, we had customers in quite some abundance and the flow was relentless from the moment the doors opened in the morning until around three o'clock, when it all went a bit quieter for a while. I should make it entirely clear that where usually, 'careful what you wish for' is a bit of a warning, I would welcome that kind of busyness any day of the week over the tedium and anxiety of what we had previously.

I am sure that the weather played a large role in our glorious day. The breeze had remained light during the morning and along with a clear blue sky and plenty of sunshine, it had 'beach day' written all over it. Someone had commented early on that it must be our sort of day and I had explained that bright sunshine and warm days only meant that we would be quiet once everyone was on the beach. I told them that ideally we would have a shower of rain in the middle of the day to drive them all into the shop again. We did not have a shower of rain, but it appears a gale of easterly wind is just as efficient when it kicked in during the early afternoon.

As you might imagine, dear reader, I did not have a great opportunity for observation, but I did notice that big beach was more populated than previously this year. Even the after the wind started up, there were a good number of people down

on the beach still, although they might well have found some shelter in the lee of the dunes.

The sea had been calm through the morning, which killed off any hope of serious surfing. It was, however, just the ticket for the mob of merry cavorters wanting to get wet and have a jolly time splashing about. Even after the easterly picked up, all it did was introduce a chop flecked with white horses right across the bay.

I had kept pace with the pasty sales quite successfully and felt quite smug about it. I had even managed to backfill some of the beer when it ran out later in the afternoon, but our wine had also taken a bit of a beating and we had dwindling supplies. I had placed the order in time, but it was due to be delivered on our black Thursday when we had anticipated being in the hospital all day. I had postponed the delivery.

Thinking that it would turn up the following day, I did not bother to follow it up but at close of play it had still not arrived, so I assumed that we would be without for the weekend, which was not ideal. I posted them a message just to be sure that they did not think that the order was cancelled and, very pleasingly, had the reply that they would deliver it today. They certainly win the 'service beyond the call' award this week and saved our wine selling bacon to boot.

We cruised into the final couple of hours, which gave me the opportunity to price and put away the wine. I did not top up the fridge lest we prompted complaints of warm wine. I also took a tour of the gift aisles to see the signs of little fingers at work. There was some, but largely we were not too badly affected. Unsurprisingly, it was the windbreaks that left us the biggest hole in our stock. We had started out with a full complement, if a little short on five pole, due to an arithmetic error on the part of the restocker, and had been left with a few of the smallest. We will need to remedy this situation if the wind is set to continue.

Both the Missus and I were on our knees by the end of the day. Me through the good offices of the shop and she from looking after ABH, who had decided today was an excellent day to test her boundaries, oh, and from cooking the tea for the support crew, the in laws, who were here all day. It was not just we who were looking forward to bed but the little girl, who had been causing havoc all day without a rest, was practically asleep on her feet. Ah, for a peaceful night's sleep.

May 27<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

A glorious day, the sun is shining and the birds singing a pretty song. A forecast of record May temperatures across the country and I am selling woolly hats to the few chilly customers in a sharp easterly who have mistakenly braved it this far west. If it was not busy today, I could not even console myself that everyone was in Porthcurno because it would be just as bad there.

It is not all doom and gloom, you will be relieved to hear, dear reader – just most of it. Despite it all there were some good and cheerful moments shining through the bleak fog of depression. Yesterday was better than expected and turned out to be the best business day of the year, so far. We could do with maintaining that through the rest of the week. I was delighted to meet a young lady who when we first met was so shy she could barely look at me for two seconds, but it must be noted that during those two seconds I was awarded the most rewarding smile. She popped up in front of me at the counter yesterday, late afternoon, to buy some milk for the family, all on her own. Lastly, the rock daisies are in bloom, one of my favourites of all wildflowers that bloom in The Cove.

Rock daisy means different things to different people, so to be specific it is an *erigeron glaucus*, part of the Asteraceae family. They grow all along the promenade in some abundance in single clumps or long communities of them. They are magical flowers as you never see them growing, just one day you look out on the road and there they are.

Whoever booked half term for this week, clearly had not consulted their tide book. It will be high water for the main part of the day but luckily, these are neap tide and will only squeeze the available space rather than chase everyone off. Mind, it is not lucky for grumpy shopkeepers who much watch his customers laze around on the beach all day rather than spend their money in his enticing emporium.

It was a typical beach day that I have described before that is fat at either end and thin in the middle. Indeed, we had a good beating in the morning and all the way until nearly the middle of the day when it went very quiet indeed. Since I am consigned to conduct a lonely vigil this week, given the condition of the Missus' eye, perhaps I should welcome the pause in the middle of the day to regroup for the onslaught later on. I did try very hard to view it as a positive but the absence of the ringing of the till was just too much to bear. All the same, it was heartening to see some busyness arrive at last as it has been a long time coming.

The small gods of grumpy shopkeepers clearly decided to have some sympathy for our plight, for which I will pay dearly later, no doubt. It was not long into the morning that the robust easterly dropped away and was replaced by a more benign northwesterly, after visiting every other point of the compass on the way. This paid dividends for everyone except the surfers who got away with a minimal swell yesterday thanks to the easterly wind but with it now onshore the swell came to nothing.

Finally, I must thank one of my last customers for this.

*Young man.*: [Holding up bottle of patently red wine.] “Is this a red or white? I don't know much about wine.”

*Grumpy shopkeeper.*: [After a brief pause to ascertain if the Michael is being taken or not.] “No, indeed.”

May 26<sup>th</sup> – Friday

*Foreign visitor.*: “You don’t do French bread?”

*Grumpy Shopkeeper.*: “Correct, sir. We are a Cornish shop; we have Cornish bread.”

Aye thang yew.

It was a cracking good morning to be a grumpy shopkeeper. The day looked every bit as good as all the others this week but the wind had decamped and moved down to the east a bit. It is surprising the difference this made and I was soon exchanging my shoes for flip flops and wishing I had done the same with my long sleeved mid layer when I did so. I had not worn a short sleeve shirt for some while, so they were a bit fousy. Fortunately, I was not planning on cuddling up to any customers, so I did not concern myself too much.

We were, however, fortunate enough to actually have some customers today. The early morning, which have been dull as a discussion on dried paint for the recent past, was rather animated with customers dropping by for newspapers and various going home type gifts. Where they had been all week will remain a mystery. Right through until early afternoon, the crowds gave a grumpy shopkeeper an inflated mood of optimism – just ripe for a good burst.

Sure enough, the early afternoon settled into quiet solitude as the goers home had gone home and the comers in had not yet arrived. This gave us ample opportunity to bring in the stock that had been waiting all week for the Missus to bring down from The Farm. Brother-in-law took the truck up with the Missus as passenger – I hope – and the pair of them loaded up the reasonably extensive list of beachware goods that I am rather hoping will disappear during the course of next week. The pair of us unloaded and sister-in-law put most of it out on the shelves.

On our way into Penzance yesterday, we had almost come to grief courtesy of some eejit travelling at speed around the corner by the turn off to St Buryan. We rounded a blind bend on the way to the junction to be confronted by this utter goon on our side of the road. He managed to avoid us, but if we had been a few seconds faster it would almost certainly have been a different story.

During the latter half of the morning a very similar car parked opposite the shop. I was reasonably certain it was the same one. I have had a look at our dash cam footage but reading the number plate needs some more attention, although the numbers and letters look remarkably similar to our friend parked across the road. He came into the shop, and I reserved comment. He asked about traffic wardens to which I suggested that if he were concerned that there were two car parks, one at each end of The Cove. He then said that he had just come out of spinal surgery and did not like to walk too far. I was thinking he would either be doing an awful lot of walking or none at all if he carried on driving like he did yesterday.



For most of the period of high water, the bay was flat as a dish. It did not stop around a dozen surfers from giving it a go but come lower tide the minimal swell that there was kicked up a reasonable shore break with a bit more out the back at North Rocks and over at Gwenver. For all our relative busyness today, the beach was still pretty much deserted for most of the day. Apart from the surfers, there were a few walkers taking the air but nothing in the way of windbreaked encampments. I asked for some parasols down from The Farm, so the beggars better want them.

The support team left late in the afternoon. The fast-response team were back with over-night bags and will be staying for the duration, bless 'em. The other team went home again after helping with the restock. It is like a well-oiled machine – you would think they had been practising. Let us hope that they do not have to do it all again anytime soon.

May 25<sup>th</sup> – Thursday

Just going on ten o'clock last night, as the Missus and the little girl had a pre-sleep time tussle, she managed to scrape her cornea with a careless claw. It was her own fault; she should have been wearing her PPE, Puppy Protection Equipment.

This put us in unenviable position of having to attend Treliske Hospital's A&E department this morning, although arguably The Missus' position was more unenviable than mine. Since we could not leave the vicious little girl on her own, I went and collected Mother, early doors, so she could look after her while we were gone. It was not an ideal arrangement, since it was possible it would take some time, but we could not think of another, and we asked a neighbour to drop in to make sure they were both alright.

It was as we set off that the Missus suggested we stop by at West Cornwall hospital. I was not sure that it had emergency facilities, but we were practically passing the door, so it made sense to ask. It was a good call as the hospital has a daytime facility starting at eight o'clock and we were not long after that. Our early arrival paid dividends and we were seen quite quickly. The Missus will have to go to Truro anyway as the wound is relatively severe and needs further treatment, but had we gone there first, we would have been all day.

Meanwhile, the cavalry was coming over the hill in the shape of various members of the Missus' family. First came the fast response emergency team, who arrived mainly to relieve Mother of her lonely vigil with an exuberant little puppy who, promptly on return of the Missus, curled up under the table and fell asleep. Later, they took the Missus up to Truro where she was brought back by the longer term team heading down from east of Camborne. This left Mother home alone with ABH for a further couple of hours, but at least I was able to drop up every now and again to make sure she was alright.

Out of necessity, I had closed the shop during our absence in the morning. I had anticipated being closed all day but since we were able to get help in Penzance, we were back by the middle of the morning. I made sure the Missus was settled and Mother was still in one piece before heading down to open the shop. Given the emptiness in the street, it was entirely possible that no one had noticed that we had not opened at the usual time, except maybe a few early morning newspaper buyers.

It did not get much better as the day went on but the northeasterly breeze, that had relaxed to a light draught in the morning, did. Once again, the breeze increased into the evening, but all told it had been another glorious sunshining day.

There was a Lifeboat launch on training in the evening. I did not take part as I had other things occupying me. It went splash as it was launched and, later, someone pulled it out of the water. It looked remarkably like a textbook recovery, so I can only assume that there were, after all, very available, very excellent Shore Crew in attendance.

The Missus had a late appointment up at Treliske, which was remarkable service from an NHS that we are told is falling apart at the seams. She saw the specialist team and doctor who put a special contact lens over the offending scrape so that the eyelid could operate without irritating it, which had an amazingly recuperative effect. She will go back again on Saturday to check all is well, transported by the in-laws who arrived with her this evening and are staying until the other tag team get back tomorrow. So, ends another day in a month that we would really rather not have had. Erm, things can only get better ... surely.

May 24<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday

What an utterly glorious day we had before us to behold. Sadly, beholding it and being out in it and the bleddy northwesterly wind were two different matters. Still, there were still some people wondering about in shirt sleeves but for the most part, a padded gilet was a bare minimum accessory.

The Missus came down to charge through yesterday's delivery while I went to the gymnasium. The little girl stayed in her basket and slept. She seems to take the hint that nothing is going to happen and that she is not going anywhere. This seems to be the case when the Missus is around, but I still doubt that she would be so settled if it were just me.

By the time I came back from my blistering session and made myself beautiful again – it only takes a few minutes – the Missus was close to finishing the work. It was not our biggest order ever, but it still takes some dedication and skill to go through it that quickly. I picked up the remnants after we felt that ABH had been good for long enough and should be given the opportunity to let her hair down. It was no surprise that she had finished with the delivery so soon even if she had been twice as busy as I was in the afternoon.

It is difficult to fathom quite why it is so quiet. I mention it to a few people today who told me variously that Land's End was heaving and the community farm shop had been buzzing as well. On other days recently we have been told that there is no shortage of people crowding the streets of St Ives. It would be comforting to conclude it is our bleddy north wind that is to blame and given that the forecast has it with us for the rest of our lives – I might exaggerate slightly – we may as well offer our premises to the Edinburgh Woollen Mill and invest the proceeds in a wind farm.

I had another, 'no one uses cash anymore, do they' from a customer with no cash. He got the obligatory 'a third of our customers say otherwise'. I ought to keep count; I have precious little else to do recently. Perhaps I ought to include the frequent, 'you don't have stamps/milk/potatoes/eggs, do you', which gets either, 'who told you that' or 'oh, I thought I walked past them just now. I must be mistaken'. It will keep me amused for hours.

It may have been very quiet and particularly so in the latter part of the afternoon, but it looked very pretty across the bay and down in the beach. There were a few trainee surfers out on the water and maybe a few hopeful ones, but the wind was not at all helpful for such things in the afternoon. It was better in the morning when the wind was a little bit offshore. The beach looked resplendent all day as it basked in the bright sunshine, with wide open spaces through the middle part of the day – wide open spaces with hardly a soul on them.

There may be a pause in the Diary tomorrow. Please do not be alarmed. I will explain later.

May 23<sup>rd</sup> – Tuesday

Radio Pasty this morning was full of elation at just how good the weather was going to be over the next several days, just before they said that there might be a bit of rain later, and the blue skies we had first thing, clouded over and remained that way all day. They did not mention wind and, fair enough, we were back to a light breeze from the northeast but there again, we have been here before. I had my fingers crossed for the rest of the day, which made bringing in the big grocery order a bit tricky.

Being blessed with an even earlier start this morning – because ABH is right on top of her toilet training, mostly – I was on fire with some additional time in the shop before opening. Orders were done, ice creams topped up, new meat delivery put out in the freezer and, just reminded myself, wine fridge stock replenished. I will pay for it later when I run out of steam around three o'clock in the afternoon.

I believe that I mentioned that the much maligned council had announced that its waste collection service would happen much earlier in the morning because the trucks had to go somewhere else to dump, sorry, recycle their collected waste. So

far, the boys have arrived at the same time as usual but I am sure they will arrive early one week when I am least expecting it, so I am prepared.

My job of bringing the bins down from the mews behind us has been much simplified from this week, although it was very complicated getting to that point. I had been informed that the owners of the properties had been served notice that if they operated holiday lets, they must have a commercial waste collection. They have all complied but have chosen, or their agencies have, to have different companies collect. Anyway, the upshot is that I now only have two bins to bring down for the much maligned council collection and today, one of those was empty.

I sent a subtle reminder to our fish man in Penzance asking when we might see the order that I placed around this time last week. Not that he had forgotten it at all, but it arrived in the latter part of the morning and ahead of the grocery order. I put it away in the fridge because as sure as onions, I would have got all the vacuum packing kit out, my gloves on and be knee deep in fresh fish and the van would pull up outside.

As it turned out – of course - I probably could have squeezed it in because the grocery delivery was very tardy indeed. If they do that high season they will be bringing it in by themselves. I left the accumulated boxes piled up in the store room for the Missus to attack tomorrow while I am at the gymnasium, as this is traditional. Also, I would not have been able to do the grocery order and the fish, so I put away the cases of beer to give myself some room and set up for the fish processing.

Even being gloved up with wet fish all about me did not encourage a big rush of customers, so you can see how bad things really are, dear reader. I managed to bag it all before I saw one customer and had commenced the vacuum packing, for which I do not need my fishy gloves, before I saw a few turn up. I managed to complete the whole process and clean up without too much molestation at all. (What a strange looking word 'molestation' is. It makes me think of a place where small, subterranean mammals might meet.) The fish was a timely arrival because someone bought the last of it over the weekend. We will have replenished stock in the freezer tomorrow.

The slightly dull day looked a little better for a short while in the afternoon when the sun forced its way through some thin cloud. It did not last very long and out toward Brisons and Cape it looked hazy, and I almost forgot to mention that the wind picked up again, though not quite as robust as yesterday. We just seem not to be able to rid ourselves of it.

It came as no surprise that when Mother's telephone bill turned up, they had already started charging for the service that had not yet been installed. Despite that, they had not implemented the lower telephone cost and the whole bill was complicated by a price increase at the end of March. It was difficult to make head nor tail of, so I took some wretched 'chat' agent to task over it. By using the chat feature I can pretend that I am Mother and play heavily on the fact I am 94, on a pension, vulnerable and cannot afford their outrageous prices. It did some good and she will have some

compensation when it is all sorted out. They also knew that Mother found it unacceptable that her installation had taken three months and still not finished. I would have felt sorry for the agent but consoled myself that she would have had it much worse if Mother was doing it herself.

May 22<sup>nd</sup> – Monday

While the little girl is getting into more of a night time routine, she is still keen to be up at first light and therefore so am I. Having had a breakfast and, erm, help me put out the shop display, she gets to go back to bed again with the Missus. There is something very wrong here if I could only put my finger on it.

That northeasterly wind is becoming quite the irritation. It creeps up during the day and by the evening time it is blowing a fair hooley. There was a good bit of swell in the bay and with a bit of offshore wind, the surfers were having a ball. So too was a traditional windsurfer even while being out paced by a wing surfers on a hydrofoil but both were going at some speed across the bay.

We, on the other hand, in the shop were not having a very good day at all. Yesterday had been a little hint at better things to come and then we were let down sorely by a distinct lack of customers today. I think that the wind has much to do with it.

The lack of customers enabled the Missus to power through the flip flops and shorts that were the last of the beachware deliveries. It took her until the middle of the afternoon but allowed me to get to the gymnasium for a blistering session and to then spend a couple of hours with the little girl upstairs. She had been sleeping peacefully when I came back from the gymnasium but as soon as I had her upstairs, she started into everything she was and was not allowed to do. It kept me on my toes for the duration.

The Missus and I swapped places after she had finished her bit and we left ABH upstairs while we exchanged. I went up later for a cup of tea and discovered that the little girl had fallen asleep and the Missus was casually doing a jigsaw puzzle. A pattern seems to be emerging.

As we have a sizeable grocery delivery arriving tomorrow, I had to clear the remaining delivery still in the store room. This was three large boxes of our hooded sweatshirts but fortunately an uncomplicated order mainly of the two colours that had been selling strongly. It did not take a very long time to label them up in sizes and squeeze them into the boxes on the store room shelves that we have reserved for them. Nevertheless, the operation required some dedication and as soon as I set to on the work, we started to see some customers arrive. I expected nothing less.

As closing time drew on, I discovered to my sheer delight that not only had the wind increased a knot or five but had also crept around to the northwest where it could bang in without any pesky cliffs getting in the way. It scatted the remaining

Mesembryanthemum that had been sitting out on our newspaper box, across the street. Thanks to one of our regular visitors who was in the shop at the time, we arrested the flight before it reached the OS in component parts.

There was still some swell to the sea as it headed towards high water but the bay was more notable for the chop, flicked up by that punchy wind. In the grand scheme of things, it was probably not that cold but the temperatures we could have had over the last few days have been seriously held back by that breeze. It was very noticeable as I started to close up the shop for the day, which meant stepping outside. I rather think that I was not alone in this opinion as the street was empty and our five minutes to closing rush was one person. Oh to be a grumpy shopkeeper now that spring is here.

May 21<sup>st</sup> – Sunday

We threw back the virtual curtains on another spectacular day and one with the same northerly breeze as before. Anyone with any sense found somewhere in the sun, sheltered from the wind and I had heard reports that it was almost too hot in such places. Here on the chilly side of the road, it looked glorious and felt, well, chilly.

The little girl once more quivered through her visit to the shop in the morning but we will persevere. I think it will be much better once we can set her down so she can explore by herself. At present, with her vaccinations a work in progress, we have to keep her off the ground where other dogs have been. I put the outside display out one handed while I held her under my jacket.

She gets up with the daylight, so I have some additional time to get other things done. It is a compromise as some of that addition time is taken up by herself, but we are finding our routine slowly.

The day turned out to be one of our typical beach day profiles, fat at both ends and thin in the middle. We find that our customers come in early for items they may need on the beach or wherever they are going to be. We will be busy through to middle or late morning and then are left alone through the main part of the day only to see them all again as they return from where they have been. In the middle part of the day, we may be lucky to see our customers for top ups but largely the gap is because they are too far away to come back.

The sea was a little more welcoming for those who wanted to use it. The fishing fleet was back out again in the early morning, there were still enough waves for the surfers and a large area of sand bank that allowed the paddlers to head out a fair distance into the bay at mid tide.

It may have been a beach day profile for our business but that did not translate to many people actually on the beach. I would wager that Porthcurno was probably

packed and the detritus from our sales will be found responsibly placed in one of their waste bins. The big beach in The Cove was mainly deserted with maybe two or three windbreaks to be spotted in the lee of the dunes. I had been surprised in the morning for a request for parasols and even more surprised that we had left some in the store room from last year. We sold the lot – which sounds good until I tell you we had four parasols in the store room – better than none, though.

The Missus went off to The Farm via St Buryan to pick up Mother and ABH spent the afternoon up there trying to escape the cabin. ABH was fit to snooze when she came back again until the moment I was given clearance to go upstairs with her for a bit of a snooze. We reached the top of the stairs at which moment she came alive and wanted to play for the next hour.

While I was preoccupied, the Missus bagged up the mixed lettuce leaves she had picked. We have 14 bags in the dairy fridge at the end of the shop, which are likely to disappear just as quickly as the spinach did last week. Despite having worked on the new fridge in the store room to resolve the sub-zero temperature in the crisper drawn, she was taking no chances with this consignment.

It was closing in on six o'clock when the last of the families left the Harbour beach where they had been for most of the day. The lion's share of our business drifted away a little earlier, but it had been a better than recently usual day. I had not managed to even start on the hooded sweatshirts in the store room but had been diverted instead into doing a grocery order from our main cash and carry. It was not strictly necessary this week but if we had left it until next week when it certainly would have been, the delivery would have arrived in the middle of a, hopefully, busy week.

It had been quite a full day one way or another and I was quite worn out. It was very tempting to go upstairs and put my feet up for the evening, but I rather think I would have to lock myself in the bathroom to do that, and that did not seem too appealing. Instead, we sat and had our tea and watched a lone hydrofoil wing surfer cut a dash across the bay, driven on by the brisk northeasterly that had been increasing all day. ABH might have calmed down in two to three years, so I will look forward to putting my feet up then.

May 20<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

I risked my shorts and flip flops again today but had better luck – the sun was shining and did so all day. This not only reduced the chill factor in the shop from the much-reduced northerly – at least in the morning - but had the additional benefit of inducing a few more visitors into The Cove. The effect was marginal, given that it was a change-over day, but it was better than yesterday and that is what counts.

The sea state had continued overnight, and the swell was such that in the morning it was lumping over the Harbour wall. Halfway through the morning there was a decent

enough swell to encourage a cohort of surfers in. There were quite a few down on the beach, mainly traversing between the car park and the water, and only a small encampment had been established under the Beach complex. The freshening northerly was once again playing a part in that, I suspect.

We are slowly getting used to enforced early starts, which provide for a less rushed morning schedule. I had allowed myself some extra time this morning downstairs to process the newspapers, which turned out to be fortuitous. A couple of days ago I had lowered the 50 pence sweet stand that hangs off the crisps baskets adjacent to the till. It was a little high up for the little ones but in lowering it, I clearly upset some fine balance. A minute or two after I slipped the newspaper table in behind the crisp baskets this morning, the whole lot fell forward.

There were crisps and small 50 pence packets of sweets all over the floor. Fortunately, many of the sweet stayed on the hooks, so at least I could see where each went back. The clean-up operation swallowed up all the time that I had to spare, which was probably better than having it happen when I did not have time to spare. I have put the display back up higher again and secured the crisp baskets to the tier behind it with cable ties to give it better stability. The small kiddiwinks will just have to grow quicker if they want sweets from the top row.

It was a day of mixed fortunes: the visitors were fortunate that it was sunny and dry all day, although a tad breezy and cool, and grumpy shopkeepers were unfortunate that there were not enough of them. There were customers, of course, but with sufficient gap between them for me to put out most of the contents of our deliveries. The Missus came down to price, unwrapped and hanger up, with the little girl and ensconced themselves in the store room with a board across the door. She was very well behaved, which is quite astounding, and even took herself to bed when she felt she had enough. The dog was pretty good too.

We are being cautious with what we are buying in at present until we see what half term looks like. Nevertheless, we had some crucial gaps in our offering such as shorts and swimsuits, which may well be needed for the half term if the weather holds. Despite being circumspect, things like shorts and swimsuits need to cover all the sizes and therefore come as quite numerous. It would be very handy if we could pick and choose sizes, for some reason size 16 shorts for the ladies do not sell here, so we are accumulating quite an abundance. Hats, that we also had to order, mainly come in one or two sizes and are much easier to manage. That is why I started on those and had most of them finished by the time the Missus came down.

It was late in the afternoon when the Missus called it a day and headed back up the stairs with ABH. There are still some shorts to finish off and then there are the hooded sweatshirts that we have not even started on yet. It may have been wishful thinking, but it did look like there was a bit of an influx of visitors toward the end of the day. This, I assumed, was new arrivals as provisions were starting to shift. I am not sure, but I assume some schools will be on holiday this coming week even if the



majority are the week after. We might just see some customers and all I have to do is remember what to do with them.

We have to admit that there can be no pretence any longer that we might settle down for a relax after a hard day at the tin stope. The little girl is very good when we sit down for a meal but after that we are both fair game for a play. There is an aim on our side to wear her down before bedtime. It is a war of attrition in which we are on the losing side.

May 19<sup>th</sup> – Friday

Our sunshine had disappeared by the time we all awoke this morning. I used to be up first, largely arranged by the bleddy hound, followed by the Missus some time later. Since the little girl has been here, I am not singled out and she delights in waking us both up without preference.

We have placed her in her carry case for sleeping but clearly she was not overjoyed by the prospect of keeping up this practise. The Missus had got out of bed, and I had awoken at some stage during the night and found a little head poke out from between the pillows. The Missus told me she had got out of her case some while ago and started sleeping on the spare pillow above the Missus's head. In the mornings, I had put her there while I went downstairs. She had clearly found it comfortable.

It was disappointing to see that the delivery boxes were all still in the shop and in the store room, untouched. Those German shoemakers of old did not know they were born. I managed to plough through a bit of it before I headed to the gymnasium then plough through a bit more when I came back. It is utterly disheartening having made a reasonable dent in the pile only to be swamped by another three deliveries in the middle of the day and early afternoon. The store room is now just as full as it was when I started and quite possibly fuller.

On the basis that the weather had been quite kind over the last few days and that Radio Pasty promised some sunny spells in the afternoon, I slipped into something more comfortable when I came back from the gymnasium. The small gods of grumpy shopkeepers are pretty unforgiving when grumpy shopkeepers make assumptions about the weather. Not only did the sunny spells not arrive but a robust northerly breeze kicked up and persisted through the rest of the day. By closing time, I was nicely chilled but not in a good way.

The combination, along with it being a change-over day as well, sent our business back to barely ticking over. It had been comparatively lively during the last few days, so this was something of a disappointment, especially as I had raised the stakes with the number of pasties we had ordered in after nearly running out last week. Perhaps we will bounce back at the weekend.

With the increasing bluster from the north, the sea state became increasingly choppy. By high water and into the evening there was a bit of a swell coming back which made yesterday's at the toe of the long slip seem like small beer. The fishermen who were out today are likely to have a day off tomorrow.

The new girl had been in the shop for some of the morning while I went to the gymnasium. She then spent some time in the cabin with Mother while the Missus unloaded the latest consignment into the store and watered the plants. The girl, like the bleddy hound seems to have a natural affinity with Mother and gravitates to her when we are all together. We seem to have chosen another 'Nanny's dog'.

When the Missus took Mother home in the middle of the evening, she went into overdrive. She has discovered a liking for a small ABH size ball and will play with it for ages even by herself. This progressed to exploring where she should not and scating up the new sofa, which she should also not. The Missus started the long process of training, starting with 'sit', which did not go all that well, but it was the first lesson. By the time for bed, she was still hyper and it took ages to calm her into sleeping. It is clearly a work in progress but, despite being old dogs, I dare say she will have us trained to her needs soon enough.

May 18<sup>th</sup> – Thursday

Another day of sublime weather and another day with my head stuck in a cardboard box. The fun and frolic that this epitomised had the Missus hankering to do a bit herself and she joined me in the middle of the day, starting with the boxes we put in the truck yesterday.

I could have rounded off the Diary just there and it would not be an inaccurate reflection of the day. I shall not, of course, dear reader, as I do like to try and give you your money's worth. You did not pay? Oh, you will, dear reader, you will.

I had brought the little girl downstairs again this morning and left her in her carry case while I put out the shop display. The more she gets used to being in that position the better, even if it was before we opened. She complained about it yesterday and she complained about it today but hopefully, day by day, she will get better. Unfortunately, she had almost learnt how to get out of the carry case, meaning that it is no longer a secure haven. I discovered this in the middle of the night when she laned on my tummy with her rear legs hanging inside the case.

Leaving her in bed with the Missus, I came down to open the shop as there is much to do and I would not be able to keep an eye on her. When I had done all the regular things and opened the shop, I made a start on the delivery that came at the last knockings of yesterday's hours.

These were the little bags of sweets that are so popular with the youngsters and little ones, and they eat them in abundance. They may be sugary but at least the packets

are small and now there are lots more of them. It takes a while to put them out and generates a lot of waste cardboard and also a fair few boxes over. Then we find that there is no room for the spare boxes in the store room, so the Cornish savoury biscuits needed to be refreshed on the shelf to make some space. At least that was a necessary job done but did distract from starting on the big bulky order that was cluttering up the space.

I was just finishing off the last of the sweets when the Missus came down to start on yesterday's bulk delivery. Between us we ploughed through much of it but the whole process was not helped by the delivery of a further four large boxes from our beach clothing supplier. Another hindrance to the whole operation was ABH who made it perfectly clear she did not like being on her throne and in her carry case.

Ex-head launcher turned up during the morning and was keen to meet the girl. When I went upstairs to fetch her, we were very quiet but when I arrived back downstairs, there was a veritable welcoming committee lined up. The poor mite was somewhat overwhelmed, which I think put her off for the rest of the day. The Missus made a small error when telling me her age. She is 14 weeks old and for all of that time she has been in the cloistered environs of her home with her mother, brothers and other hounds. Here, she is perfectly comfortable upstairs in the living room, but it has taken until today when she has felt brave enough to follow us down the corridor and into other rooms. I have not told her that it is half term in a week and much busier, just to make her feel better.

All in all, it was not the little girl's day. The Missus had to break off from processing the delivery to take her to the veterinary doctor where she was due to be chipped and pinned with her first vaccination. I do hope the Missus took treats with her, but we are as yet to discover what she considers a special treat to be. Currently, it is just food and she eats ravenously.

The Missus had not returned by the time I closed the shop and headed over to the Lifeboat station for an early training launch. The Inshore boat had already gone, seeking to whizz out on a longer than usual journey and to take the 'dead Fred' dummy that the big boat had to track down. The remainder of us launched the big boat at around quarter past six o'clock with a big splash and set up the short slipway for it to come back again – and then commenced the wait.

Since I had arrived late, I had not been informed that the RNLI head honcho was visiting. He was dressed casually so I did not attach any importance at all to the man who seemed to ask a lot of questions about how the job was and if I thought there were any apparent issues with the Institution. If I am still Head Launcher tomorrow, we shall know that I did not upset him too much.

The boat returned so late after the agreed time that we had to flip back to the long slipway for recovery. The sea had looked reasonably placid all day, but as the tide dropped away it kicked up a bit of swell as we waited for the boat to come astern on

us. It is never right to leave the bottom of the slipway with wet wellies, so I made someone else go down and catch the heaving line. As it happened, it flew over his head on the third attempt where I caught it and handed it down between waves.

I had arranged the cable the exact length that was required and when the winch engaged it almost immediately tugged the boat back on the slipway toe. That was quite the exemplar of a textbook recovery, even though I have to say it myself, largely because no one else will – and in front of the big boss, too. We are, after all, a very smug, very excellent Shore Crew.

May 17<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday

Meet the new boss, same as the old boss. I could very satisfactorily live my life in song lyrics. The new girl is ruling the roost, although, fair play, she slept through the night – or rather we did and did not notice. I did notice when she was awake and wanting attention at five o'clock this morning.

We also discovered that she will make an eminently fine meeter and greeter, sitting on the bleddy hound's throne in the shop doorway – essential when you have a grumpy shopkeeper behind the counter. We have barely had her a day and she climbed out of her carry case and onto the bed. Here she lounged and slept in alternate measures between being fussed by strangers. And so it begins. Little does she know what is in store, so to speak, for her in the years to come. She has big shoes to fill.

It was a glorious day to be looking out on from the outset and it stayed that way all through until evening, when it stayed that way some more. It was a day for promenading, for hitting the beach, for having a dip and all sorts of things else. By the end of the day and the end of school time, the young ones were heading off the Harbour wall into the largely placid waters. There were three surfers out near our closing time, though heaven knows what they had in mind because there was scarcely a ripple by that time. Perhaps they were checking that their surfboards floated.

Almost certainly due to the weather, we were a tad busier in the shop than we had been. Monday was a bit poor, probably down to that irritating northerly but we did better again today than yesterday and that was not too shabby. I had placed an order with our main beachware supplier yesterday, aiming to top up our displays just before the half term. The last thing I expected was for thirty boxes to arrive today unannounced, which they duly did on the middle of the day.

It was not the sort of order where everything can be pushed off to our storage at The Farm. This was a delivery with all sorts of different items, some of which would be handy on the shelves almost immediately. Therefore, all thirty boxes needed to be sorted into what was staying and what was going, and since that included part boxes, items needed to be extracted and priced.

By half past four o'clock it was clear that I was not going to finish the job, not with all these pesky customers keep coming in and disturbing me. As the boxes would have been in the way of putting away the outside display, we decided to heave the lot into the truck and heave them back out tomorrow to finish it off. What a great plan that was until the Doing Parcels Dreadfully company turned up at ten minutes to closing with three more large boxes and put them in the space that we had cleared. Mind, they might have turned up ten minutes after we had closed, which would have been worse.

Lastly, a very big thank you, dear reader, for your kind wishes regarding the new pup. I would love to have written to you both individually, but oddly, the hours in the day have inexplicably shortened and spare time has completely evaporated. We must also thank providence that I was able to post the Diary at all this morning – ABH has not yet found the crucial cable to pull out or chew through.

May 16<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday

It was a spectacle of a day, one that just cannot help but give a person high hopes. Even the dread breeze from the north had eased to a whisper. The sea was relatively calm and bright blue under a clear sky and the wide beach resplendent in the sunshine. It was the sort of day where a grumpy shopkeeper felt that he should set out around the block before the fight started just to check that his legs could still propel in him a forward motion rather than just prop him up behind the shop counter.

I dropped down to the Harbour beach to get some sand on my shoes. This provides for better grip, I find, just in case there was some tricky going on my epic journey. Going down to the beach obviously meant going back up again, which was rather the point, to stretch the calf muscles a bit. The waste water boys are back to do their periodic maintenance of the waterworks in the car park and had half of it cordoned off.

It did not occur to me that I would have very much company, but the route was thriving with happy visitors. Apart from the work team in the car park, there were also three motorbikes parked up for a little natter. On the rise up to Coastguard Row, there were a couple of dog walkers and another gentleman who looked like he was either finished with a bit of a stank up the hill or was aiming for a run down through The Cove. I then stopped for a chat with a neighbour taking the air on their doorstep with a small child dangling on another lady's knee, happy as a sand, erm, girl. I shall have to go earlier if I want a solitary sojourn.

There were the usual early morning shoppers picking up newspapers, breakfast goods and snacks for the trail that has now reverted to be a footpath again. It took a while after that for business to pick up but not as long as we have been used to. I had said quite a lot more than usual, 'good mornings' and certainly many more than yesterday in the same period. It was not hugely busy, but we were steady for a

longer period than we had seen for a while indicating that the weather may have had a hand in yesterday's lull.

The Missus had some shopping to do and some errands to run in the afternoon. She was gone quite a while and came back with a small dog.

The Missus and I agreed that the place was far too clean and tidy, and our lives too empty and rudderless without. We were supposed to go and see one yesterday afternoon but had been let down by the seller at the last minute. Quite by chance the Missus stumbled across this one in Helston, but we cannot hold that against it. The girl will be known as Tali, which is Cornish, or more regularly in the Diary under the translation, ABH for short – another bleddy hound.

May 15<sup>th</sup> – Monday

I did not have long to wait to discover why it felt a little chill in the bedroom when I got up this morning. Our belter of a northerly wind was back again, with a good showing of sunshine, just to tease us. I was frozen in my shoes until I went to the gymnasium and only when I got back did I think about closing the first electric sliding door in The Cove. By that time, I was warm as toast.

I should have taken more note of my blistering session at the gymnasium because it turned out to be the highlight of the day. I might have revelled in the arrival of the frozen order that was out of date before it got here but was at the gymnasium at the time. I should have placed the order today, really, because there were a couple of items that we sold in abundance over the weekend that I could have added to it.

There was a bit of a road trip on the cards for later, but plans change. Rather than disappoint Mother further, the Missus took her out for coffee up at Land's End airport. It is not exactly a regular haunt, but Mother likes to watch the comings and goings and the aeroplanes taking off when it is not foggy – hence the irregularity of the visits. She came back for the tea we would have had on the hoof had things not gone awry.

By the middle of the afternoon, I too would like to have been ensconced in the living room as it was warm up there and cold again in the shop. Slipping into shorts and flip flops had not even crossed my mind when I came back from the gymnasium. This is just as well because I could feel the chill creeping into my toes with shoes and socks on.

We had clearly been spoilt for business at the weekend and the number of customers we had today nosedived. We did sell a few pasties, which was something, especially as they had arrived very late in the morning. I was told the van had broken down, which was unfortunate but they arrived just before the pasty peak. That pasty peak was short lived, as was all the core business of the day. The lull in the afternoon allowed me to conclude a few orders to fill some gaps in our provision for

half term, which is ... oh begger, next week. No, just checked – the week after.  
Phew!

I bade a fond farewell to our Americans from America in the later part of the afternoon. They have been a most friendly bunch and we have got to know a few of them quite well. They walked back from Minack today, which is no slouch for any age group, but these ladies and gentlemen seemed to lap it up, even if there were a few packets of Ibuprofen going out on their final shop. We do wish them well and I for one will miss their friendly demeanour.

May 14<sup>th</sup> – Sunday

Well, that was summer come and gone. I might have said that last week after our rather 'ansum looking Sunday. The payback today was not quite as severe as last Monday where we pretty much had to pay in blood for a half decent Sunday's trading. We could see the haze gathering yesterday toward the end and today there was a mixture of total cloud cover at reasonably high level and a pervading mistiness. However, it was temperate and dry, and we can do temperate and dry, I am sure.

The Missus was up with the lark, a tardy one, perhaps, as there were things afoot at the Lifeboat station. Each year there is a cycle run to raise money for the charity where a bunch of hardy boys and girls take to two wheels to cycle between Lifeboat stations in the Far West. Our station was being included for the first time this year in quite a long while, for historic reasons – and there is a big hill to cycle up when you leave here. This year the Missus had it by the scruff of the neck to provide a water station and first aid point outside the station for the circa 80 riders involved.

The Institution organisers went all out and provided half a dozen bottles of water and a similar number of energy bars, signage, and a single box of plasters – the first aid station. A good number of the Crew turned out to help with additional water supplied by a tap in the Lifeboat station and energy bars from, ahem, a local shop.

The run started at half past seven o'clock at Penlee in Newlyn and would go onto St Ives and come back via St Just. For some reason, the Missus and the Crew were told to be on stand-by from quarter past eight o'clock. Perhaps whoever wrote the programme had expected motorbikes. I think that the first riders came through around two hours after they started, although I was not particularly paying attention.

I had been distracted earlier by my commitment to provide our American friends from America some hot pasties for the trail. There was some indecision as to whether they wanted them hot or cold, concerned that they were not going to eat them until a couple of hours into the walk. I assured them that there would indeed be some warmth in the pasties even had I not wrapped them. In the end I double wrapped them in foil and baking sheet straight from the oven. Pasties tend to keep their heat quite a while. I would wager they would still be pleasantly warm come croust time. I

found out later that they were 'room temperature', so I am guessing they had them later than I imagined, but the consensus was they were still very welcome.

The haze vanished toward the middle of the afternoon and the day brightened considerably. The middle of the day high water had pushed most of the people off the beach and the lack of significant swell and an onshore breeze discouraged any surfing unless either side of the high tide. We were busy enough but not on the scale of yesterday and my fears of not having enough pasties, having baked all our frozen stock, were unfounded.

The Missus headed into town on an errand and then over to Mother's to bring her home for tea. She dropped into the national chain that sells car bits as one of our brake lights has gone pop. I am surprised that she did not fix it herself after her top performance yesterday. Our friend who had borrowed the tractor to do a neighbouring field a favour – one that did not elicit a murmur of thanks and will not happen again – had inadvertently run the tank empty and clogged up the fuel filter. We had thrown ourselves on the mercy of the Lifeboat mechanic, who will do pretty much anything for anyone and is therefore up to his eyes in it most of the time. Unable to wait any longer, the Missus, did an engineering degree online by watching videos of fuel filter cleaning for tractors. She did that in about half an hour yesterday and the tractor is working perfectly again. What a smarty pants.

I spent half an hour trying both new brake light bulbs and it still did not work.

I let the failure fester in my bosom while plans and alternatives wrestled for attention. When I could bear it no more, I looked for a device I could use to keep the brake pedal depressed while I worked on the problem. Having tried various things I found a length of timber and a plastic box – very useful those plastic boxes as one is supporting the ailing windbreak stand – which worked magnificently. I broke out the multimeter and took the light cluster off again for the fourth time. As I was removing the bulb to test the connectors. The bulb sprang to life. All it had needed was a little wiggle. The begger.

It seems that the Americans from America are staying around for a few days before moving on to Penzance in the middle of the week and Lizard after that. I had a chat with a couple who had dropped in for provisions and gin in the later afternoon. It is quite refreshing having them in The Cove as we are more used to seeing Europeans, particularly Germans. The latter have returned, I am informed as someone saw their coaches up at Land's End. We had a coach down in The Cove yesterday but saw no Germans. Perhaps the Americans chased them away.

The Cove fell into peaceful slumber in the later stages of the afternoon and allowed me to contemplate what stock had been depleted. The Americans from America, despite staying in the hotel, I think, are buying provisions, especially cheese at an alarming rate. Do they have cheese in America? I seem to vaguely remember a conversation about a lack of traditional cheese but perhaps I am imagining it.



Anyway, we have sold a lot, even though we can only get mature cheddar at the moment.

Just to show how lucky we were during the day the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers organised a short shower of rain just before we closed. Duly noted.

May 13<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

There was a little more haze about in the morning but otherwise the look of it was about the same stamp as yesterday. We were, however, blessed that the northerly breeze had dropped to a mere waft first thing, although it was doing its best to blow a little harder as we moved into the day.

Into all this gloriousness came a group of Americans from America, not that day, obviously, but in the recent enough past that they still had a noticeable accent. They were walking the Coast 'Trail', as we are bound to call it, and had clearly all been to the same trail outfitters before they set off.

We had a jovial time of it, and I think that they were intrigued to meet a grumpy shopkeeper in the flesh who told them that apples were in the apple fridge and kindly gift wrapped them at the counter. Sadly, we did not have time to discover where they were from as the shop was busy at the time – yes, busy, dear reader – but I would wager that it was probably a very long way west of Camborne.

As we had hoped, The Cove came alive in the late morning and stayed buoyant until well into the afternoon. I noted yesterday that I had taken the risk of ordering in a few more pasties and I added to that with some more green grocery items that arrived in the morning. By the middle of the day, it was starting to look like we would be out of pasties by the end of the day and even some of the grocery lines were taking a battering.

Some, indeed, quite a bit of the problem was a second wave of Americans from America that descended a good couple of hours after the advance party. The first lot looked prepared and keen to be on the trail. The second lot looked more inclined to follow the trail on the map while taking brunch but they were a mixed bunch this time around. There was a little more time to chat and I discovered that they, or sixteen of them at least, hailed from the east of America in the Appalachians but we were interrupted before we nailed it down further than that.

There was much buying of cheese and there was much buying of scones on their own. At last, one couple came to the counter with scones, jam and ... peanut butter. I had to laugh; I had heard of the peculiarity of jello and peanut butter in a sandwich, but this was a jello and peanut butter cream tea – here in The Cove. There was, of course, the question hanging in the air as to which went on the scone first.

I explained that some regions do the jam and cream the wrong way around and then claim that they are right – the outrage of it. This apparently does not even come into question in America, and they thought it strange that anyone would make a fuss out of such a trifling thing. We can forgive, or course, that they would indeed be blissfully unaware of the psychological damage that could be wrought by receiving a cream tea dressed the wrong way. The jello and peanut butter approach may require some acclimatisation, but I think this could be the ‘next big thing’. We just need to establish which way around it is.

The arrival of the Americans along with a host of other visitors from closer to home prompted a run on our pasties. We have been open for seven weeks and not one of those weekends we have needed more than 30 pasties, except the Easter weekend where we needed 32. Today we went through 30 in the blink of an eye and some on top of that. Yes, the weather was good but so was last Sunday, so we were well and truly caught out. There will be tears tomorrow, thinking of all the pasties I would have sold.

It was toward the latter part of the afternoon that the second wave of Americans started to arrive back in The Cove. They had indeed hit the trail and looked as fit as the time that they left. I take back my earlier comment about them being armchair adventurers, especially when one of them told me that they had walked to Porthcurno. It may not actually have been that far given the time he was back but he said that he had done five miles and that I believe.

Our crowds started to drift away towards four o’clock and why should they remain, after all, there were no pasties left. The usual local suspects were down on the Harbour beach, and we had been overrun once or twice by the little scamps, representing, if not quite the crème de la crème of village yooof, perhaps the curdled remains. They all have their pennies and their ideas of just how far pennies should go, which sometimes is so unrealistic that adjustments have to be made – usually on my part, but not very often.

I am sure the kiddiwinks were on that beach until they were dragged away for their tea. They appear to have boundless energy shored up by sweets and sugary drinks. I was putting the outside display into the shop when the last of them came in for the evening. They were no more than a blur as they passed me on the way to the drinks fridge. On the summery days these children have a charmed existence, which I am sure they will remember long after they have left the wards of childhood behind and are tending to their own flock. Ah, halcyon days.

May 12<sup>th</sup> – Friday

We were fortunate enough to be issued with a spangly and bright, blue skied sunny day. Clearly, it would not have done to allow us to have a bright, pleasant and warm day without some sort of sacrifice, so we had a chilly and robust northly breeze to go with it. People did not seem to worry too much that they had to throw a winter coat

and woolly hat on over their t-shirts to sit out across the road while they had their snacks and coffees.

I held onto my inner warmth from the gymnasium for as long as I could before going to get my own jacket from upstairs a little way into the afternoon. It had crossed my mind that it might be time to don the shorts and flip flops, but I am rather glad that I did not now. At least I did not have to put on a pair of wellies to get into the gymnasium this morning. There was still a small puddle under the hole that had to be mopped up, but everywhere else had dried properly. My timing for my 5.000 metre row was now only 15 seconds short of my worst time before my enforced break, which I put down to the lack of water friction – but we will not say a word about it being overland.

The plants I put out at the front of the shop turned out to be Mesembryanthemum rather than Chrysanthus. A sharp eyed, horticulturalist reader who probably also supplied the seeds for them, PW, alerted me to my faux pas early this morning. I put it down to my false ears not working as well as they should and not hearing the Missus properly when she told me what they were. I was told they are a relation of the Hottentot fig, which grows like wildfire if left to itself. If our plants are half as prolific, they are an absolute bargain at that price.

For the first time since last Sunday that brought us some cheer, we were actually as busy as we might have expected given the time of year and the day's weather. It was most heartening. We had some notable sales of mugs and other gifts and if we see some more of this during the weekend, I might just believe that this no was flash in the pan.

Today was also notable because the 3 years old cockerpoo, regular these past two weeks, gave some glimmer of raising her paw for treats. She has been visiting with regular visitors who have been coming long enough to be friends. It is a response that we have made almost obligatory for dogs to perform to get their treats when they come into the shop. I have been working on this one for two weeks and this was her penultimate day. She verily made my heart sing when I saw just the slightest movement this morning when we went through the ritual. Their appearance two weeks ago was most timely, and their daily visit has been quite the tonic. I will be sorry to see them go.

The Missus headed off to The Farm again with her lawn mower battery now charged. It may seem quite incongruous to have a lawn mower on a three-acre field and quite probably is. However, it does a good job of clearing up the mulch left over from the strimming and for area immediately in front of the cabin and down to the barn and greenhouse, makes it easier to traverse.

We were still relatively busy in the shop when they returned. For the last couple of weeks, the busyness, such as it was, was confined to an hour or so at the middle of the day. This meant that we burned through a few more pasties in our traditional

selling slot in the early to middle afternoon. I must now fret that we have enough for the weekend, although I did take a punt that we might get a little busier this weekend and ordered a few more. We are also seeing some compliments made about our wine selection, one customer noting that it was not only worthy but significantly cheaper than the £30 a bottle in the hotel they were staying at. We rely on our new suppliers, so it is most gratifying to see they are doing well for us.

That glorious weather stuck with us into the evening and the big beach looked magnificent in the softening light. There were a fair few people out for a wonder as well, probably just the evening for a promenade if you did not mind wrapping up. I am not counting my chickens, which is difficult anyway these days with them all cooped up, but I am holding out for a little glimmer of hope this weekend. Wish us luck.

May 11<sup>th</sup> – Thursday

I could quite happily have remained in my bed this morning. Perhaps it was the effort in box shifting or the excitement of seeing customers again that tired me so. I spent the rest of the morning yawning and trying to keep awake.

Joining the Missus up at The Farm would have woken me up. The westerly wind had perked up again, although much of that perception was because it had moved around to the northwest. She had gone off to finish her strimming and had taken Mother with her, not that Mother was instrumental in any of the strimmer activity – at least, I hope not but there again would not have put it past her.

It might seem a little niche, but the Missus admitted to watching Internet videos of people strimming. She discovered that the professionals all seem to do away with the protective guard but there was no explanation as to why. She discovered quite by chance after her guard fell off that the strimming covered a bigger area without the guard. She has now turned pro and wears steel toe boots.

Meanwhile, back at the shop, we actually got to see some customers for a short while. At one point the area near the door was quite crowded as people vied to buy postcards, which was about the highlight of the purchasing today. It was disappointing because the weather was doing its best, being bright and sunny in longish spells. By early afternoon, the street that was humming with activity was largely empty. Naturally, after seeing a bit of pasty action, I slipped a few more into the warmer for the early afternoon rush, but it never happened.

The beach was not doing much better. There were a couple of hopeful surfers out just after high water but with the wind onshore there was never going to be much in the way of entertainment out of it. The swell early on had been quite robust and as the tide diminished, so did the strength of the waves. They came back again not as hearty in the later afternoon and the evening which was too late to save any thought of Lifeboat launching.

The Missus returned late in the day covered head to toe in grass bits. The missing guard in her strimmer was obviously working well. She also returned with our first crop of mix leaf lettuce and not so baby leaf spinach, which will find itself onto the shop fridge shelf at some point tomorrow just ahead of, hopefully, a busy weekend.

At the very last knockings a young man with dirty hands bounded into the shop. It was not clear what he was made of but it put me in mind of a six foot assembly of Tiggers. This was the man we made enquiries with regarding the windbreak stand. He was all over it in seconds and told me how he might proceed, which was just fine with me. I got the impression that we will end up with something well-made and robust and as long as I can shift it in and out of the shop, he is welcome to make it how he wishes.

He was on his way to fix a digger up at the top somewhere. Not only does he make things, he fixes mechanical things as well. I think he will be a very useful man to know.

We had some additional interest from a bunch of Germans towards the end of the day and we sold many stamps. We also had a shower of rain, just to round things off that nicely damped down the plants that the Missus had just put on our newspaper bin. Some plans seem to come together.

There was a good gathering for Lifeboat training in the evening. We welcomed W from the Trevedra campsite who represented a triumvirate of campsites – about four of them – who had collected money for the three Lifeboat stations in the area, which was very good of them. Since the sea had unexpectedly calmed sufficiently, we also launched the Inshore boat. I slipped away, there being sufficient of everyone for everything as there were some work things that needed to be done. It is like that sometimes.

May 10<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday

I was looking at the picture of serenity suggested by the Meteorological Office website and enjoying the prospect of a day of glorious sunshine without a hint of rain about it. Radio Pasty then reported that the boys and girls at the MO were most dissatisfied with their lot and had joined the rest of the working population on strike. I too would go on strike if I thought that anyone would notice, particularly over the last couple of days when there hardly a customer to my name.

There was a little bit of light rain in the beginning part of the morning, but we saw nothing subsequently, so perhaps the MO did know a thing or two. It was largely grey, however, now and again, patches of blue appeared aloft but usually in the wrong place. The stiff breeze that had kicked off yesterday afternoon was largely absent by the morning, although it could have moved around a bit.

As is usual on a Wednesday, I headed for the gymnasium as soon as the Missus appeared. This time I took a mop and bucket, and it was much needed. The first ten minutes of my blistering session was mopping up a veritable lake off the floor and opening the windows to help dry the damp remains. I did report the state to a member of the management team, although I know that they are waiting on the availability of a work person to replace the roof. He made the suggestion that if it got too bad and threatened the structure of the roof, they would have to close the building. I told him I would keep an eye on it but rather think that I would be sitting rowing amongst the rubble before I let them close it on me.

When I returned, the Missus was knee deep in boxes from the delivery we had yesterday. She is the epitome of efficiency when it comes to such things and mashes through the work in no time. This is quite handy because before she finished, another 31 boxes of wet shoes, wetsuits, snorkels and body boards turned up. We had been given little notice of the delivery, the company for some reason being unable to provide any information in advance or enquire with us whether the day is convenient.

The delivery, by Doing Parcels Dreadfully, turned up in one consignment for a change and we piled it up outside. There were a few items that needed to stay in the shop but since all of the boxes were labelled with something else, I had to open most but the obvious ones to find what I was looking for. I had thought to check the shoes off against the invoice, but they were mostly packed loose and would mean emptying each box to count them and then put them all back again. Frankly, life is far too short for such tediousness and if we have been shorted by a couple of pairs of shoes, which is highly unlikely, I will live with it.

We saw a little more custom today; we could hardly have seen less. The sea that had joined in with the general insurrection in the weather yesterday, began to calm down during lower water but offered nothing to the few surfers out and about on the beach, probably due to the onshore winds. Anyone else regarded it as a day for loitering about outside the café or braving a trip to Land's End but it was all jackets and scarves.

The swell came back as strongly as it had before as we approached high water making a Lifeboat launch on training night unlikely. I had two customers during the day enquire about it and the shop. We are usually informed late on about training launches for varying reasons and it is sometime difficult to convey to an eager Lifeboat following why I do not know or why they might be disappointed that we would not be going out.

It is, however, impossible for me to convey the reasons why the shop is closed when it should be open, as well, mainly because I am not informed. I can guess it is because of a lack of volunteers but I had been told that a recent recruitment drive was very successful. Perhaps they were all only available on the same day.

Another mystery is why customers who have failed to see our sign about a minimum card payment and have brought a 75 pence packet of crisps to the counter always say “no one carried cash anymore, do they” when they are told we do not accept a card for such a small amount. I counter with, ‘a third of our customers seem to’, which is roughly the division of cash to card payments. It seems to me that it is just sensible to carry some cash about you, just in case but I know that in more urban areas a great many stores only take card and I can understand that people living there become used to it. Also, I know that I rarely carry a card with me and would be caught out if I ever visited the city and would probably ask, “does no one carry cash anymore?”.

May 9<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday

The forecasters usually put a big damper on days like these and paint them as black as possible only for the actual event to be nowhere near as bad. They have either changed their policy or got it very wrong for today.

I have to admit that I lost all track of time, so I cannot rightly remember when it started raining. It must have been mid-morning sometime, but it felt like it had been raining forever. Radio Pasty had a weather warning out for heavy rain and thunderstorms and, boy, were they ever right about that. We already had one lump through that lasted a few hours and was heavy enough, thank you very much. A second wave hit us, deep red on the rain radar and some black, and that smoked through for a good half an hour. It was followed by some bright flashes of lightning and thunder that indicating it was not that far away. We have definitely had better days.

If I were looking for good things to say about today, I would note that the cash and carry delivery turned up before the rain came. The van came with two crew and between us we had the van emptied in short order. For the want of something better to do, I started to work through some of it, putting away the cases of beer that cover a good bit of the floor. This provides some space to get at everything else and I emptied all the cartons of biscuits because of everything we were missing, they were the most obvious.

I had quite forgotten about pasties when someone came in and ordered three. I made out that we were only doing them to order today, to save my embarrassment and they waited until I had warmed some up. After they went, it occurred to me that not doing pasties was probably a sensible idea but heating them up to order does take a while and puts people off. I compromised by just doing a few – and that is just about all we sold today.

I made the decision to try out the new website software and let the company know that I would sign up for it. It was available almost immediately and by the middle of the day, I had some – actually quite a lot of - time to try it out.

I had quite forgotten how frustrating it is trying out new software. There does not seem to be an intuitive approach and there is a lack of help available. It took a while but I cobbled together a fair facsimile of the current home page. There is far too much white space between sections, and I cannot work out how to reduce it, so I think I may have to start again, which I think I might be doing a lot. The problem with that is I cannot work out how to delete what I have done. I had to stop after an hour or so as I think I might have thrown my laptop out of the window.

I am going to have to limit my level of expectation because the software I use at the moment is much more powerful. I have learnt to code quite a bit to fill in for what is not there for me. In the new software, that is there but not quite how I would like it. It is a learning experience, I am sure.

It has taken a while to nail down our new builder to a date for an initial meeting. In fairness that was not all down to him as our dreaded lurgi intervened at a crucial moment. He had been away after that and eventually we settled on today. We have a better chance with this one as he is connected to the Highly Professional Craftsperson, so unless we fall out, we should be alright this time around – fingers and toes crossed.

Talking of the builder reminded me that I contacted the fabricator that I had hoped would be able to make us a custom windbreak stand. When I spoke with him, I realised why his name sounded familiar - he was the chap who was going to supply the steels for our build. He was most helpful in pointing us to another engineer as he only now deals with the big stuff and does not have time for smaller projects. He gave me a name of someone else but did not have a contact number.

I consulted the font of all human knowledge, the Internet search engine, and discovered that our man had a listing but only on something called Instagram, which I had heard of but that was as far as it went. However, to make contact with our man I needed to join Instagram, which I really did not want to do. It asked me all manner of personal questions, such as my name, and then asked if I wanted to login using my Facebook credentials, which do not exist.

On further enquiry, the man had a Facebook site as well and since the Missus has one too, I asked her to send him a message. She told me to do it using the Old Boathouse Facebook account, which was even more of a challenge than trying to set up an Instagram account. Happily, in the end, his Facebook page that I could see without logging in revealed a telephone number that could call. I can do telephone calls. He will drop by sometime over the next few days to have a look at the requirements.

The rain stopped at around half past three o'clock and a while later, the sun popped out. So too did a lively breeze from the west that became livelier as the afternoon came to a close. We had a small rush of customers over the period of an hour or so. I say, rush, it was very much comparative to the small scattering of drowned articles



that had come through the door during the rest of the day. I might have mentioned how grateful I was for their patronage but held myself back from kissing their feet.

The Missus had a meeting at the Lifeboat station after tea. She is nominated person to try and drum up some money by organising things and as such must attend management team meetings, this being her first. This meant that it was down to me to take Mother home. I do hope that the carriage was up to her normal standard. She did not say anything but perhaps she was concentrating on gripping the arm of the seat.

It was pleasant to get out for a run, to be honest. The hedges are bursting into life and encroaching on the road, there is an abundance of tri-corner leeks and bluebells in amongst them and alexanders on all sides. There were also large amounts of standing water that obliterate the windscreen view if you catch them wrong. It is all a bit wild, this nature stuff. Best I stay behind my shop counter.

May 8<sup>th</sup> – Monday

Oh dear. The small gods of grumpy shopkeepers giveth with one hand and taketh away with the other two. Yesterday's bumper harvest was today washed away in the flood.

It was some consolation that it ceased raining while I headed for the gymnasium but that is where the compensation ended. There is a, now, sizeable hole in the tin of the hut with a tin roof that lets the rain in. There used to be a few drips and a small puddle but now, the intrusion is such that the water runs across the uneven floor and pools under my rowing machine. Looking on the bright side, it added a level of realism to my 5,000 metre row today. Disappointingly, although it had felt a bit faster than the previous effort, I ended with the same time. I will put it down to the friction of the water. Still, it was a blistering session, nevertheless.

I had just got back from the gymnasium when the Missus called me back downstairs again. I had quite forgotten that our late International Correspondent, MM's son was dropping by at sometime this month to say hello. It was a pleasure to meet him and his wife in person and to chat about The Cove that his mother felt very at home in. He too had visited before but was very young and could remember little about it. They stayed a while to look around and left a couple of hours later blessed with two of our pasties. It was a very fine drawing of a curtain over the relationship we had and what she had added to the Diary over the years. We wish her family well into the future.

It was just as they were leaving that the rain returned. They had to run the length of The Cove to get back to their car in the Beach car park. They must have been soaked by the time they got there as the rain today was not mucking about. It persisted in one level of heaviness or another for the rest of the afternoon and lightened into the evening.

I spent the quietness of the afternoon wishing I could close. No, well partially, perhaps. What I did do was spent my spare time clearing the accumulated detritus from the store room floor so that the grocery delivery tomorrow has somewhere to go. I find it incredible that I do this clean-up operation each time there is a delivery and almost immediately after it is done with, it is cluttered up again. It should not be too much of a surprise since I am generally the only one using it, although there is a box on the floor that is full of seeds for The Farm and that is definitely not down to me.

There was no particular need to hurry at it, and the clear up also involved topping up the drinks fridge so that I could move some of the cases of drink from the floor. We also had a delivery of beer and some long-awaited cans of cider. There are two top cider makers that I am aware of, one we generally have on our shelves from St Ives, multi-award winning and 'best cider in the world' at one point. Another, we used to have exclusively by the name of Cornish Orchards, but we would have to buy in bulk and that became awkward after a while.

I looked again at the latter product because delivery has improved though our rather dodgy drinks wholesaler. I noted that the producers had brought out a mini can that I thought would sell rather well, and we had some space in the bottom of our beer fridge. It took some time to negotiate a decent price, but it arrived today and we hope for the best. My expectation is that it will fly out during the summer, when we get some sunny days.

I spent a very long time in the afternoon chatting online to someone from a technology supplier. For a while now I have acknowledged that the software we use for our website on shop is very expensive to maintain. The online shop, particularly, is much more professional and has many more features than we need for our small offering. We do not have sufficient time to make it bigger and our seasonal nature also works against us. It was time to do something about it.

I have returned to a company we used to use and still have links to which now have a website and webshop building facility. It is all online, so I do not have to be at my pc to make changes, which will be a huge benefit. I spent a long while asking questions and making sure that the new software will do all we need it to, mainly show a few items for sale and for you, dear reader, to display the daily Diary.

It will be a huge learning curve and trying to fit in the development with running the shop during the summer and while we are moved out during our building works, but I have until February before the next bill comes in for the existing system. What could possibly go wrong.

Well, there is nothing quite like setting oneself a challenge. Let us hope we do not have too many more long, quiet, wet days for me to dream up stupid ideas.

May 7<sup>th</sup> – Sunday

It was one of those will it or will it not mornings where we were unsure whether the mist was going to clear or not. It was not helping in that assessment, one minute yielding to blue skies above and the next sweeping back in off the cliffs and obscuring the sky and scotching our hopes of deliverance into brightness. The blue sky had the best of it in the end, but it took a while. It celebrated its glorious triumph for the rest of the day. Bleddy show off.

We were not blessed with the same run of business as we were yesterday in the early morning. People today were clearly taking their time or clearing their heads, apart from one couple who had run here from somewhere looking super-fit even after they had arrived. I told them that we were open all day and that had been no need to be in such a rush. I sure they were grateful for the advice.

Another early couple brought some disturbing news regarding the OS policy of suggesting a tip at the end of a meal. Apparently, the machine does provide an alternative to the default amount of 12.5 percent, either an amount of your choice or nothing. I am not sure if waiting staff are now taxed on their tips whether they have had them or not but even so, 12.5 percent does seem a little steep on top of what is already a pricy meal.

It has been a while since we have eaten out - we eat very well at home - and I would have no qualm about providing a tip commensurate with the level of service I have received. I think my objection lies in the subliminal suggestion that by choosing an option that is not the default put in front of you, you are being somehow, erm, tight – even if it is true in my case.

It was later in the morning that things began to take shape. We had customers coming out of nowhere on all sides and we started to see animation that we had last seen in the closing stages of last year. Happily, this lasted most of the day and the till was trilling away with hardly a pause. It was also the first day this year that I would have felt more comfortable in shorts and flip flops, so warm was it.

Once again, we had a good level of interest in our hooded sweatshirts – jade again, suffering heavy losses. One familiar family were back to purchase replacements, the original purchase having worn out through over-use. This was good news. It is a retailer's worst nightmare having products that last too long. There is, of course, an optimum. Too soon, the product is deemed poor quality and not worthy of replacement and too long does not provide for decent repeat business. This is quite pleasing with the sweatshirts as I have not yet had to resort to the fag of loosening the stitching to help them along a bit.

I would not say that it was the best surf in the bay today but there was a little knot of surfers out by North Rocks trying their luck out the back. The beach was suitably busy given the weather and there were plenty of revellers in at the shallow end

playing about. There were not that many windbreaks and beach tents or little camps of any sort, which I put down mainly to lack of expectation. We knew that this would be the better day of the weekend, but the weather today was the best we had seen in a while.

All this busyness rather tipped the scales on our indecision on whether or not to do a grocery order with the cash and carry. The shelves had been looking a bit thin in places, but I had hoped to give it another week to allow our cashflow position to improve after such a long period of lacklustre business. Needs must, however, so I took to my clipboard and biro and pencilled down an order, which turned out to be quite substantial. While we have not been that busy any action that we have seen has been predominantly in the grocery aisle, so it should have been no surprise that it was here we were so depleted.

Despite the fairly continuous level of business, I managed to complete the list and key in the order before we closed. I had the Missus check it when she got back from The Farm, as I usually miss some crucial item.

The Missus had decided that such a pleasant day deserved the addition of a bit a strimming to clear some of the spring growth up at The Farm. Not much happens during the winter but in spring, the weeds come forth with an explosion of enthusiasm. We have to wonder why our crops do not grow like that. She must have had some success because she returned covered, head to toe, in bits of grass and aching arms. For some reason, the strimmer takes some effort to start. She has messed with the choke in different positions and even after the strimmer has been running for a while, a restart still takes more than a few pulls of the cord.

It is probably fair to say we shall both sleep well tonight.

May 6<sup>th</sup> – Saturday

The road to an even more grumpy shopkeeper is paved with good intentions.

I discovered this because I had fully intended to commission a bespoke windbreak stand from one of the engineering firms that litter the fishing areas around Penzance and Newlyn harbours. The stand we use was meant for lightweight buckets and spades and we repurposed it. It lasted only a few months before the fixings worked loose and I had to address the inherent weakness in the frame with a ratchet strap. This morning, a crucial bolt sheared. It is the end of the road for this stand.

In fairness, it had done very well and lasted all last season and very possibly the season before – the passage of time eludes me. It had been bought from one of our existing suppliers as an expeditious solution to a mid-season problem when the previous one met its demise. The supplier was the only one that did anything remotely close to what we needed but even they now do not do one. In short, we are stuffed, and I will have to do some deep thinking for a solution.

We had a very busy morning. Well, very busy by comparison to all our other mornings, that is. We were inundated almost from the moment we opened. It was almost as if people wanted to rush away for some event that they did not want to miss. I was flummoxed and I was very lonely for the rest of the morning and into the early afternoon.

Before I went into isolation, one of our neighbours stopped in for some postage on the letters she was brandishing. She said she would wait with me, if I did not mind, for the café next door to open. Since I had not anticipated a conversation, I scrambled for the thing most fresh in my mind which just happened to be the windbreak stand. I explained what had happened and that we were looking for a fabricator to which she replied, perhaps the one she was using might be able to help! I now have his number and my fingers crossed.

I just need to be able to wheel our current stand back into the shop without it falling to pieces.

We had started out wrapped in grey but as the day wore on, blue sky appeared and it became quite appealing. The mist that had clung to the tops of the cliffs all around The Cove, retreated to Carn Glouce and Cape Cornwall where it stayed for a while. As the sun took hold in The Cove, we started to see a few clumps of people on the beach and a few more gathering on the café tables across the road. Then the mist came back again.

Mist or no, at around half past two I was released from my lonely vigil as the television watchers hit the street filled with coronation cheer – and other victuals, by the look of it. We did a brisk trade for a while in pasties, fridge magnets and hooded sweatshirts but only in jade and heather grey, of course. It was the busiest that we had been in weeks – for just short of an hour, at least. I am certainly not knocking it as it shows some potential and, in the desert, every drop of rain is precious. Sorry, that was a presumption, as I would not know having never been in a desert – although it got a bit tricky in my local once when the dray men were on strike.

Our little rush lasted less than an hour. The mist closed in and the street emptied. The cessation of hostilities gave me sufficient time to devote to a 'fix' for our ailing windbreak stand, after all, we have all the necessary items to see it right for a bit. I wrapped some newspaper twine around the two disjointed limbs and wrapped some gaffer tape around it to stop the twine unravelling. Good for another couple of years, I reckon, that.

Just when you think you have crafted a suitable last paragraph to the day's Diary, your pager goes off just as you are finishing your tea.

In what was a most déjà vu moment to last week's episode, we were called, just before seven o'clock, to a couple of paddleboarders in trouble down at Porthcurno.

Had they run into trouble earlier, the Lifeguards would have had them as I think they have now started down there, too. With a good response to the shout, the boat launched from inside the house in a swift and timely operation.

There was quite a bit of swell down there at high water and the boarders were unable to get to shore. It seems they had been out in trouble for some time and were getting cold, seriously so. The Lifeboat picked them and their boards out of the water and hurriedly brought them back to the station. Here they were given mildly warm showers and looked at by our crew doctor who has recently joined the team. It seems we got there with not too much time to spare. The assessment was that this was certainly lives saved today.

From the shore, we had followed the progress and has set up for a swift operation when the boat returned. There was no time wasted in bringing the boat in on the short slip in what was a super-slick, no frills, textbook recovery with plenty of hands to make it run smoothly. We are, after all, a very level-headed, very excellent Shore Crew.

May 5<sup>th</sup> – Friday

On the face of it the day appeared to be a marked improvement on the previous model when I stepped out to welcome the day and put out our alluring shop display. I had got as far as sitting down at my desk with a cup of tea when I heard some rapid, rhythmic drumming outside. Looking out there was rain hammering down in orderly vertical lines the density of which might have been reminiscent of a volley of arrows at Agincourt had I been there to witness it. I missed it by a couple of minutes – the shower, not Agincourt - almost worthy of a bleddy hound achievement award for shower dodging.

The day stayed rather pretty looking, with much blue sky interchanged with white cloud on and off during the day. The wind was rather less robust that the previous days and was pushing in from the southwest, which would account for the showers. It was just the sort of day to head for the gymnasium and another blistering session. I am getting better at it, the results seem to show, and I managed my full 5,000 metres, although at a slightly less respectably time than I might have done previously. That time is closing, too, and we are down to just 30 seconds to push back on.

I had quite forgotten that I had expected a visitor today. One of my favourite distillers had pursued me to be in on the launch of their latest product, a tequila or more precisely, a mezcal. I very quickly had to learn the differences between the two to ensure I had the label correct. It appears that to be tequila it is made from only blue weber agave whereas mescal can be made from any or all of the other 40 varieties of agave plant.

So, you might wonder, why do we have a Mexican interloper among our collection of Cornish born spirits that have done rather well over the years that we have had them. I am sure that you are aware that the Cornish travelled the world, wherever their hard rock mining skills were needed. One of these far flung corners was in Mexico where the incomers revived the silver mines, most notably in Real del Monte. Not only did they continue their mining traditions, but some bright spark used some gash equipment to make a still and distil some local spirit. The mezcal delivered to us today is a descendant of that original brew.

Phew, I am so glad I was able to get that across so succinctly.

Due to the improvement in the weather, there was an immeasurable increase in the number of visitors to The Cove today. Alright, the increase was probably measurable but I just did not bother to measure it, so by the time I wrote that, it was immeasurable because it was too late to measure it. The difference it made to our level of busyness was not great, but I sold three times the pasties that I did yesterday – six. We also sold a jade coloured hooded sweatshirt – it must be this year's colour, surely.

The Missus took off into town just after the middle of the day. The main effort was to transfer some of the money from our mattress to the bank now that the panic over Credit Suisse and that one in Silicon Valley that no one had heard of before that nearly brought the world to an end, seems to have died down. It means I will be able to sleep again tonight without my nose pressed to the ceiling.

Talking of money, I thought I would leave you on a high note, dear reader, and with hope in your hearts for a bright future. I have mentioned before the abundance of ibuprofen and paracetamol tablets that we sell is quite astounding. Both of these products are just under one pound to purchase. Today, I had visitors from Switzerland enter the shop and they spent some time perusing our shelves. After all that they came to the counter with a packet of ibuprofen and the appropriate coin with which to purchase it. They told me that in Switzerland, such products are ten times the cost and may only be acquired from a pharmacy. It is heartening to know that despite our trade woes and financial troubles of recent years we are still better than Europe at doing cheap drugs.

May 4<sup>th</sup> – Thursday

Well, we have seen better days. Much better days. In fact, for the time of year, it would be rare to see one much worse. I had some fun with our jovial, eternal optimist newspaper delivery man this morning. I noted the greyness out to the west, but he pointed to the east and the brightness there. I looked and told him, 'Yes, rain coming.' He had to laugh.

It was not long before my jestful prediction came to be, rain moving in from the middle of the morning onwards. Even before the rain, there was very little in the way of customers. The incessant rain did nothing to improve matters.

Just before the rain cut in properly, our friend, ex-Head Launcher, turned up for a chat. We were joined by others by and by, on and off and the Missus stopped by with refreshments. It passed the time but I could not tell you what we talked about, but I expect it was very interesting.

With nothing particularly to stop me, I unpacked the mugs that arrived yesterday and cleared the excess cardboard. Without the arrival of an invoice it will not yet be possible to price them properly. I did have a look at what they might be, and it is quite a hike from the current prices. I have put them aside for now and will revisit the job after the invoice arrives.

My aim really was to try and clear some space in the store room that is looking very cluttered and untidy. The cardboard will go tomorrow with the waste collection that will help quite a bit and there is a pile of soft drink cases which I hope will be collected tomorrow. They are for the coronation party that the local community at the top of the hill has organised. It is not so much a street party as it probably would have been frowned upon to shut the A30 but will be held in the Churchtown Hall and its garden if the weather is favourable on Sunday. On the last one for the Jubilee, they all came away with the dreaded lurgi, so we hope for better this year.

I have been meaning for some time to check the stock of our hooded sweatshirts. Amongst the quietness lately we have been lucky enough to sell quite a few of these and one colour and type seemed to have been more popular than the others. Looking in the box, the stock seemed quite depleted. Oddly, with a whole lot of time on my hands, it is remarkably difficult to motivate myself to actually go and do something. It somehow seems preferable to continue sitting and twiddling my thumbs. It took a supreme effort to go and do it.

Sadly, it does not take that long, although it does mean unpacking all the boxes to the bottom to check the numbers of each size. Usually, we have a reasonably even spread of depletion across the colour range and some sizes are always more popular. At the end of the count only two colours had sold in any numbers and required refreshing, although the sizes followed expectations. I think we have enough for a reorder but it is an odd arrangement. What is wrong with the others, I must wonder or are Jade and Heather Grey just à la mode this year, darling.

It is not often that I find myself willing the clock to move a little quicker towards closing time but today, I made an exception. It was a particularly tedious day.

Not so our meeting at the Lifeboat station in the evening. While the big boat did not go out for one reason or another, it was decided to give the Inshore boat a good run as there had been some issue with the engine that needed checking out. It also gave



us the opportunity of testing the newly acquired skills of our Tooltrak operators and we set one of them loose on it today. It was good training as the boat launched multiple times to give the trainee crew practise at launch and recovery.

This does only involve one of the very excellent Shore Crew, of course, although the rest of us milled about providing positive criticism from the top of the slipway. Despite the inclement day, the sea had remained relatively calm and we watched the almost glassy pool in the Harbour as the tide receded cut up by the occasional coming and going of the Inshore. While the boat was always and the water calm, large fish were jumping – on the opposite side to the angler fishing off the wall. We reckoned they could be mullet, although it is a little late in the season for them.

We were standing there a little longer than expected but at last the boat came in and we hauled out the hose for one of us to use while the rest of us looked on. Our winchman is a nosy sole and poked around in the back of the Tooltrak. The machine is designed to be half submerged for short periods and is fitted with a bilge pump to extract the water from the engine compartment. We noticed that the pump was working a little more than usual. After our man's investigation, he discovered that several of the grommets in tray at the bottom of the compartment had eroded away allowing more water than was good for it to seep in. Chewing gum and gaffer tape, I reckon. We are, after all, a very innovative, very excellent Shore Crew.

May 3<sup>rd</sup> – Wednesday

I should really learn to expect the unexpected in this shopkeeping lark because joining in with a cerebral discussion on semantics, was indeed the last thing I expected today.

Actually, the conversation was not that cerebral, just a tad confusing and was triggered by our sign in the window that announces, "Hot Pasties ...from Prima Bakery" I had my head in the freezer when our man walked into the shop and asked where the bakery was.

*Grumpy Shopkeeper.*: "Very sorry, sir, there is no bakery around here. You will need to go into Penzance, probably. What was it you were after?"

*Customer.*: "It says 'bakery' in the window."

*Grumpy Shopkeeper.*: [Sports best confused expression.] "Really?"

*Customer.*: [Points at pasty sign in window.] "There, it says you are a bakery."

*Grumpy Shopkeeper.*: "Ah yes, that sign does indeed have the word 'Bakery' on it, so I do apologise. It should also be noted, however, that it seeks to clarify that our hot pasties are 'from' the bakery that goes by the name of Prima."

*Customer.*: "It says 'bakery', that's why I thought you were a bakery."

*Grumpy Shopkeeper.*: [Resisting the urge to point out that we also have a sign that says HM Coastguard but we were not that, either.] "Would you like a pasty, sir."

*Customer.*: "Yes, what have you got?"

*Grumpy Shopkeeper.*: "We have traditional Cornish pasties or a cheese pasty."

*Customer.*: “Oh, haven’t you got any steak pasties?”

*Grumpy Shopkeeper.*: [Wondering if selling this pasty was really going to be worth it in the end.]

He did have a Cornish pasty after I explained that ‘steak pasty’ and ‘Cornish pasty’ were interchangeable. On his way out he admonished me regarding my signage, telling me that it was ambiguous, and it was an easy mistake for anyone to make if I were to use confusing language like that. I have reviewed the sign and I am not sure that there will be enough room to write, “from the bakery called Prima Bakeries, which is not here but 25 miles up the road in a place called Scorrier, where they bake our pasties and bring them to us in a van so that we can sell them in the shop. PS. We are not a bakery.”

I had a little more luck with our German lady who returned today. We had a bit of a language barrier the last time she came in, she could not speak English and I cannot speak German, although in fairness, her broken English was better than my non-existent German. After she went, I sought a solution in the form of an ‘app’ for my mobile telephone. I tested it as far as I could but there was no way of telling if the translated text and speech was accurate or not. It did strike me that some wag may have created an app that translates, ‘Hello Madam, how may I help you?’ into ‘You have the face of a blueberry and smell like a drain.’

I took the plunge today when she came in asking if we had sparkling water. I had already determined that was what she wanted as she brought a bottle of still water to the counter that put me on the right track. I used the app to ask if sparkling water was what she wanted and she confirmed that was indeed the translation she received – or at least she found it in her not to give me a slap for being rude.

Well, that is the two customers I had today discussed. Most of the rest of the visiting population stayed away, much probably to do with the weather. We have seen much worse, but our blue skies were replaced by a covering of bright cloud and the easterly breeze decided to get all muscly today. Thankfully, it was only slightly to the southeast for much of the day and did not bother me too much in the shop. I also reckon that the ambient temperature was probably quite comfortable and that out of the wind completely, you would have been quite warm.

Whether it was the weather or not, it was a very quiet day. I do not think that the Missus was particularly bothered with customers when I went down to the gymnasium in the middle part of the morning. I arrived back after a slightly more blistering sessions than the one before it and she had not even bothered to put the pasty warmer on let alone heat up some pasties to sell to the people who were not there. I decided against a pasty order for tomorrow. We will run out of bread, but it is better than throwing it away as I did with four loaves a couple of days ago. Naturally, three groups of customers in the later afternoon purchase more bread than we sold in the last few days combined.

It would have been a particularly tedious day had it not been for a delivery of goods in the middle of the day that needed unpacking. We placed an order for some 'Sennen Cove' bespoke gifts toward the end of last year with one of our suppliers, and this arrived today. We have all manner of goods with 'Sennen Cove' emblazoned upon them, which will please no end those parents and grandparents with children and grandchildren who have been christened the village's name. It has been asked by some if we had products with just 'Sennen' on them to match the name more precisely. I counter with the suggestion that they might consider adding a middle name of 'Cove' to resolve the issue.

Because we need to purchase these bespoke good in some considerable bulk, most of the delivery will be salted away in our store. Some, probably most of the items, will last multiple years given the volume. Providing no bright spark discovers that a Mr Sennen Cove in the 15<sup>th</sup> century did unspeakable things with goldfish and therefore in the name of decency we should expunge his memory from history and the name of the village with it, then we should be good for stock for a year or two.

Right at the last knockings – I had already closed the first electric sliding door in The Cove – a delivery arrived. These are the long awaited top quality bone china mugs that, due to the energy price increase, have attracted a 12 percent surcharge. The manufacture is an energy intensive process, so I fully understand the requirement. Whether our customers will, because we cannot absorb such an increase, is another matter. They are expensive already but they are exceptional quality too, as I can vouch as I finish my tea from one. This will be tricky, but will wait until tomorrow when I am fresh and tricky may be brushed away like biscuit crumbs in your lap – very carefully.

May 2<sup>nd</sup> – Tuesday

There was not a hint of grey about the morning at all, it was all blue sky and brightness. There was a draught coming in from somewhere in the east that put a chill into the air and later, had me running for a jacket in the shop. It is the time of year when I would have been most comfortable without it on the other side of the road in the direct sunlight. On the poor side of the street, we were condemned to the atmosphere of refrigeration.

If I was expecting the good weather to give us a bit of a boost today, which I was not to save my disappointment, I would have been disappointed. It did give us a particularly fine view of the bay, however, it all its gloriousness. So that was something.

The bay was predominantly flat for much of the day. Our regular visitor – he spends half his time here and the other half at home abroad – likes a bit of casual surfing. I saw him on Sunday morning just before the fog rolled in and he went out again on Monday. On both days there was good enough surf in the shore break over at North Rocks for a bit of action, although he said that Monday was a bit more robust and

getting outside his comfort zone. I do not recall anyone being out there at all today but there again, I might have been distracted at the crucial moment.

There are occasions where filling the Diary's empty spaces becomes something of a challenge. Slow and uneventful days are a curse but usually something comes along to save the day.

Enter a friend of ours who had been visiting longer than even he can remember. Over the years I have gleaned some useful advice from his experience and knowledge. Today was no different. He came in to purchase an ice cream, one of the big branded names, and shared some exclusive information that he had read in one of the newspapers. He informed me that due to the fact that it is frozen, the ice cream does not carry a scent. Clearly, the makers and their cohort of experts felt that it would sell better if it smelled of chocolate, so they embedded in the packaging a palatable pong suggestive of the chocolate inside. Well, I never did, is all I can say to that.

Another probably better known fact is that the Missus and I find it better that we do not communicate at all. It has led to a marriage of a blissful silence for 25 years, after all, and without a single argument. Therefore, it should have not been the big surprise that it was when a lady turned up with two big boxes of books.

The lady, who volunteers at the Lifeboat Station explained that she had a conversation with the Missus as to whether we would like her collection of books that she had read and was now finding it difficult to find houseroom for them. We keep second hand books for the purpose of feeding our counter-top collection jar and it does very well for us. Our benefactress was aware of the details subsequent to her conversation with the Missus and was delighted that we would take the books. What I believe neither the Missus nor I appreciated was that the two large crates that the lady brought into the shop were just the tip of a fairly large, erm, bookberg.

Initially, I brought out two shop baskets to transfer the books into and then another two when the lady and the young man who was with her brought in some more crates. When they went out for the third time, I thought it would be best to go and fetch the shop trolley. I think we may have enough books to last us the rest of the year and some of the next. We should say, of course, that we deeply appreciate the donation, which the Missus will be sorting out tomorrow morning while I am at the gymnasium – I have not bothered telling her, of course.

The remainder of the day fell to its usual pace leaving me in quiet solitude. While I do appreciate a bit of peace and quiet, I do not think that it is at all appropriate when the shop is supposed to be ramping up for the season. It gave me the opportunity to survey the shelves and the contents of the fridges to understand that we are selling some things and an order or two were required to restock, which is slightly encouraging. I shall leave it until the end of May before I fret properly.

Given the want of something to do, I also cleared some space on the bookshelf for the Missus tomorrow. Instead, I should have looked about for space where I could put another bookcase. I was just tidying up and preparing for our end of day when a lady dropped by. She asked if there was anywhere she could leave used books ...

May 1<sup>st</sup> – Monday

It is always uplifting to meet someone who is enjoying their day. This morning, I was introduced to a young man who was going to struggle to make his day even better than the zenith to which it has arrived. Already this morning he had seen a tractor and a bus and in the shop he was perusing our stunning display of diggers and dumper trucks. Then, to cap it all, there was a picture of a bus on the front of the bus timetable on the counter. Well, job done; day made. Just part of the everyday service at The Old Boathouse Stores.

The lad's bright mood was clearly infectious because soon after he left, the morning's grey demeanour lifted and the sun broke through. Apparently, the Islands were very grateful that we took their fog from them yesterday so that they could finish off the World Gig Championships with a bit of clarity. They had it back today. Helford Ladies won for the first time in a long while, I understand, and the Men's winners were, I think, Looe. It is notoriously hard to determine who won what straight at the end of the race as the news takes time to filter out in written form. Unfortunately, the social media page only gives the boat name and unless you know where there are from, it is difficult to tell. Never mind. I am sure they all had a jolly wheeze – well, the slight less fit ones probably did.

Towards the middle of the day, we started to see some customers, which was heartening. Early on it was still relatively quiet, so I took myself off to the gymnasium to see if I could make any improvement on the stuttering steps I had made to get back to full speed again. It would appear that I still have some way to go but I still scraped a blistering session out of it, I am sure you are relieved to hear, dear reader.

It, of course, set me up for the rest of the day and our renewed, albeit short-lived, busyness. We carved through many more pasty sales than we did yesterday to the extent that I had to revise my order for tomorrow. I had cancelled any further delivery on the basis that we would have plenty for the two days but by fifteen minutes before the cutoff, we had sold so many that I had to call them back. Cue a sudden cessation in pasty sales.

While that may have sound like a glib joke, it did actually go very quiet in the afternoon. By two o'clock the street was deserted for a while. An hour later anyone down there was being pushed off the beach by the tide, so it was not sunbathing that was keeping them away. The Beach car park looked a little busy but certainly not packed, so there may have been a fair bit of going home going on. I noticed a gathering of local folk slowing growing on the Harbour beach, where there was some sand afforded by the neap tide.

The Missus took time today to demonstrate her technical wizardry. She discovered that the washing machine, not long fixed from its underwire through a hose problem, was not draining the water completely. She had set to fixing it herself in the afternoon with an array of screwdrivers and a set of waders. There was no cascade of water into the shop, so that in itself was a minor success and when I went upstairs for a cup of tea later in the afternoon, she announced that she had fixed it. Another crisis averted.

I was entertained in the shop by a group of a dozen small local children of competing ages. The families are intertwined by friendships at parental level and the children all get along, the older ones acting as guides and mentors to a certain extent. They made frequent forays into the shop, some were reconnaissance runs and some were actual purchases. Where one had bought something different it would trigger a response of some of the others coming back to buy the same thing. I think there were two occasions where they all arrived together and filled the shop, spreading out in a bunch. They at least made the later afternoon seem quite busy.

Lovely day for a May Day.

