

DIARY 2023

April 30th – Sunday

The Isles of Scilly were clearly upset by being singled out for the fog, so they kindly shared it with us today. It was in and out but mainly in for most of the day.

This did not coincide well with the Lifeboat exercise that had been planned today with the Gwennap Head National Coastwatch Institute. Usually for such events the boat will drop a buff with the crew's eyes closed and counting to 100 and the NCI will guide the boat back onto it. The crew can open their eyes for that bit. Obviously, that was out of the question today, so they did some radio work instead.

The boat was out for just over an hour. We did not see it until it was just off the shore but had watched it return on our computer screens. Given that we had been given a rough time of arrival, we had set up on the long slipway on the rising tide with significantly more people available to help out than we had yesterday, which was most useful. There was not much movement in the sea at the bottom at the toe and the boat was brought up the long slip in what looked to me like a textbook recovery. We are, after all, a very consistent, very excellent Shore Crew.

Although we could not see much of it for most of the day, we were assured that the bay was in pretty much the same quiet state that it had been on the previous day when we could see it. During one of the away spells for the mist quite early on, there was a couple of surfers out towards North Rocks having a fair time of it, so it was markedly better than yesterday in some places, at least. Darned if I could see anything down there later on, though.

We had a bit of action on our pasties in the afternoon yesterday and I had hoped for something similar today. We had sold more than I had anticipated and reasoned that we may well sell out today. We had some frozen ones salted away, so I took those out to defrost and then watched as hardly anyone bought any – oh, until after I shutdown the warmer and then three people in a row wanted them.

In the same tradition, the mist started to clear half an hour before we closed the shop. It is, of course, impossible to know had the mist cleared sooner whether we might have seen some more business. There certainly was not a shortage of people milling about today, with plenty on the beach and promenading here and there. It is an oddity that if the café next door is busy, we are not and vice versa. They were very busy today.

I was very happy to draw a line under today. Tomorrow we shall start a new page.

April 29th – Saturday

Well, another grey day shaping up to meet the standards of a traditional bank holiday weekend. It seems we were better off than The Islands which were reportedly encased in thick fog. This may not have been quite so bad had it not been the weekend chosen each year for the World Gig Championships.

The Championship usually starts on Friday but had been severely hampered by the same fog then, too. Both the Land's End aeroplane and the Penzance helicopter were shut down yesterday and the day before and the Scillonian was making additional trips. The queue on Thursday stretched from the pier around to Jubilee Pool in atrocious conditions. A friend of mine related how he watched the Scillonian round the headland lumping through the waves and making slow progress. I bet that inspired a few watchers from the queue.

The latest news is that the Steamship Company has given up waiting for help from the Government and will go it alone to finance a new boat. The word is that the boat is so stable you will hardly notice whatever the weather. For the watchers from the queue, I bet that cannot come soon enough.

I was greeted by the smiling visage of F as I went down to prepare the shop for opening this morning. F is a proper Cockney, born within the sound of the Thames and with Bow Bells running in his veins. He is a jolly, irreverent and plain-speaking, large heap of jollity. I would dare anyone not to be uplifted in his presence and as such, he was most welcome this morning.

He used to come down more frequently, but his old Dad died a couple of years ago, which took the wind from his sales a bit. He tells me he is about to be a grandad and intends to be a very naughty and grumpy one, as they all should be, and will be down far more frequently. I told him if he wanted any grumpy hints and tips, I would be glad to help.

I must back track here a little, so please bear with me, dear reader, On Thursday, we had spent the afternoon around at Mother's as her new fibre broadband was to be installed – exceedingly bad timing for us, but there you go. The contractor turned up – this is the one that took 21 messages between me, the housing company and the telecoms company to arrange – to dig the trench from the 'superhighway', or a branch of it, and her front door.

He turned up at around one o'clock in the afternoon with just manual tools and proceeded to dig a two feet deep trench with his trusty spade. He got as far as the tarmac path, around two feet, and told us that he would be back the following day. He clearly had some short shrift from his masters because he resumed work after a telephone call and cut across the path as well but there he ended. He had explained earlier that his job was to cut the trench and install the tube through which the fibre will be blown. Another team will arrive to do that, scheduled after this one was signed off that he had finished, and place a termination box on the outside wall. An inside team would be next to take the cable through the wall and install the kit.

Last night I had a message from the company responsible for the installation telling us that we had been scheduled for 'completion of the remaining private works' on 19th May – three weeks hence. I wrote back asking what was meant by the remainder of 'private works' but at least it indicated that the person that turns up should be finishing what they start. Hopefully, this time it will reach the property.

Radio Pasty told us that the mist here would persist through the day, so, by late morning, the mist cleared away and we had some blue sky make an appearance. It still did not encourage a great influx of visitors, although we had seen a little more action during the morning than during the week. This persisted into the afternoon, which was heartening but somewhat short-lived.

It was curtailed quite abruptly by the pager going off in the middle of serving the end of a bit of a queue. An angling boat had lost all power out by Brisons, which was not far to go, and the Lifeboat was despatched with a view to trying to get it started again or to take it under tow to Newlyn. This presented on shore as a bit of a dilemma as we needed to see which outcome emerged before taking any action. We were further hampered by an extreme shortage of Very Excellent Shore Crew members. Just two of us turned up for the launch.

One other member turned his car to help us from afar not knowing if he would be late, on time or very early. As it turned out he was on time as the casualty vessel was started with a battery pack and escorted to the southern end of the bay where it made its way home under its own power. The Lifeboat turned in towards the station where we had only just managed to get set up with the assistance a spare Deputy Launching Authority lending a hand. Just in the nick of time, our last experienced member arrived, and we brought the boat up the long slip in what was clearly a textbook recovery. We are, after all. A very resourceful, very excellent Shore Crew.

I returned to the shop at just after four o'clock to resume operations. With hardly anyone about, I closed the shop in the interim and do not think that I disappointed too many people. I had expectations of a long and lonely run into closing time but at around quarter to five o'clock we had our little rush of the day. We had a continuous run of customers for a good half an hour and possibly longer. These were definitely staying visitors or those heading back to a billet somewhere as much alcohol was sold.

The last rush and the sale of an abundance of hooded sweatshirts made for a fairly decent day, the first since Easter. Perhaps we dare hope for more.

April 28th – Friday

I do not intend to recount the steps we trod yesterday; it was horrible enough and I never wish to go through that again. If we do get another dog, the timing is such that it is more likely they will be doing that to me rather than the dog.

Last August 24th the little girl was diagnosed with an aggressive form of lymphoma and was given three to six months. Such was her fortitude, she lasted eight with a relatively good quality of life, exceeding all expectations. Later on Wednesday afternoon, we think she suffered a stroke or other episode. She went downhill rapidly after that. We left her to rest overnight to see if she was any better the next day. She was not.

She was loved by many people, probably more than many dogs, mainly because she spent so much time on her bed inside the shop door or lying on the pavement outside. I could not hazard a guess at how many thousand digital photographs of her in the shop doorway there are in albums around the world.

There are many children out there who grew up with her. We have seen little ones initially scared of dogs, brave their first stoke with her as she was so docile. She was largely good with the other dogs who came and went in or by the shop with the exception of most border collies. She had a dust up with when she was little and never forgave the breed since. Mainly, though, she would welcome – or perhaps, suffer – the various dogs who stuck their noses in her bed or dared to jump in with her and was exceptionally good with the little ones as she got older.

During the season we had little opportunity to give her proper walks. Handily, she would go with anyone, and various children took her for walks and some friends who visit The Cove each year would delight in taking her for longer tours. She remembered them fondly each time they arrived. She hated The Farm with a vengeance, perhaps because it took her away from her favourite place in the world, which was the beach. She only suffered me taking her on long inland walks provided we ended up at the beach each time. She has left a big hole for such a little dog.

Even the weather was miserable. It rained with increasing ferocity through the morning and eased into the afternoon. The rain was followed by low cloud that remained through until this morning, when even after it lifted, the day looked bleak. The low cloud returned again by the middle of the day a little thicker and a little lower, eventually filling the bay entirely. It came and went throughout the afternoon but it was just for us. A gentlemen came in at one point and kindly imparted the news that it was clear as a bell just up the road a bit. We had no surf, either but all still better than yesterday.

When I opened our newspaper box this morning it had been filled with deliveries from yesterday. Our dubious drinks supplier had also called that I had forgotten about. I apologised when they called, and they came back again today, which was good of them.

One of the deliveries was an order I had placed for postcards, magnets and mugs. The delivery was a welcome distraction for me and took an hour or two to disassemble and restock the postcard rack and the shelves. I took my time putting away the

drinks stock, too. We have our favourite Sharps Offshore Pilsner back, which disappears regularly during the summer months when it got too busy here for them to service both draught and tinned production lines. It sells like, erm, cold beer on a hot day despite a fairly premium price.

I decided that this year we would dispense with the cheaper of the two national brand lagers that we have traditionally sold. It does not sell all that well, we cannot always get hold of it and need to switch brands every now and then, which is not at all helpful. Instead, I have replaced it with two local brews, so we shall see how that works out by the end of the season.

We had seen some action over the course of the day. We sold far more pasties than I had anticipated and may well have to raid our emergency stock before the end of the weekend. Traditionally, this is not a weekend to write home about, although we still sell a postcard or two such that our visitors might. It does not have to try too hard to be better than it has been all week, or the previous week for that matter – probably combined. We welcome it.

Finally, I must apologise dear reader if today's Diary has not met my usual, exacting high standard of literacy and composition, ahem, or indeed light-heartedness. I have been a tad distracted and the day has taken some effort to traverse – in fact, it has been a right begger. I suspect that it would not been achievable at all without your priceless support to both of us in messages from afar and words of encouragement in person from closer at hand. We thank you dearly.

April 26th – Wednesday

I was very busy in the morning and consequently, it flew past. Not with customers, obviously, but with various things to do. The whole morning routine was to cock anyway because the bleddy hound decided to sleep in again.

I left her this time until she showed some enthusiasm, which today she did with some bounce in her step. She made the whole length of the corridor and at some pace without sitting down halfway and waiting for a lift. A short while ago we were of the notion that she had caught the dread lurgi from us. It is possible, or course, that she has taken longer to shed it than we more robust critters.

By the time the shop opened, we had caught up to a certain degree. I still had some invoices to pay. The payment dates had all coincided, which was inconvenient after a poor few weeks, but it comes out of buying things all at the same time and that is sometimes unavoidable.

The paying is fairly swift, using the clever banking application on my mobile telephone. The time-consuming aspect of the job is the sending of remittance advices, which need to be individually written on my mobile telephone. I have a template on the computer upstairs but since I was in the shop, that did not help very

much. Mostly, though, it is remembering the email addresses to send them to and sometimes I have to look these up, which of course takes even longer.

I had asked the Missus if she would do a dash out to Hayle and our nearest cash and carry there for some top up groceries. There was not enough for it to be shipped in, but it was required nevertheless and collecting ourselves becomes the only option. She was not too unhappy with the proposal because there is a small shopping centre out that was that she had been meaning to go to and was looking for an excuse.

Standing in the way of her going straight away – other than the fact she was not ready – was my gymnasium session, which I was not prepared to miss having missed so many recently. So that the bleddy hound was not stuck down in the shop for longer than necessary, she came down to relieve me in the shop earlier than usual. A blistering, but quicker session ensued.

By the time I came back, the Missus was hot to trot and wasted no time at all in getting going. It was half past three by the time that the bleddy hound got back upstairs again by which time I think she was very ready for it. She does enjoy the watching the world go by and the lying on the cool pavement in between, but there are limits.

It did not take very long to unload the truck. There was not a great deal there but some of it was heavy, like the cases of water. It also did not take very long to get most of it out on the shelf, although there are some over-stock items there too. It was only after this that I found that I had nothing to do, but fortunately it was a good way into the afternoon.

In the interim we had seen a good bit of business and there were more people milling about than there had been all week. On the occasions I stepped outside the shop, it struck me that it was actually reasonable warm and for the first time for a while I dispensed with my woolly jacket behind the counter. Oddly, there was a short period when the wind started up again and instantly the temperature changed from comfortable to bleddy cold.

We had noticed the placidness of the sea in the bay right from the outset this morning. Despite the breeze getting up now and again, there was hardly a ripple on the surface and not a wave in sight from Brisons right around to Cowloe. Flat as a dish, for certain.

In the quietness of the last knockings of the day, my unoccupied mind turned to the shenanigans of the much maligned council and their shiny new waste collection policy. I had been meaning to mention it for some time as it has cropped up on Radio Pasty on a couple of occasions. The first was to tell everyone that the new fortnightly collections of general waste and recycling would be phased in from March alongside weekly food waste collections. How exciting, we thought, especially as the much

maligned council bought a fleet of brand new trucks in 2019 – I think – and awarded the contract to our least favourite waste collector in 2020. The contract commenced in February 2021 and the contractor has been driving around in its, then, new trucks ever since.

Three years after the contract was awarded, we are told that the new service was about to start, probably just as the trucks were nearing end of life, I would not be surprised. There then followed a long pregnant pause when nothing at all happened.

The next I hear is another much maligned council person is about to appear on Radio Pasty telling us all the latest. I was too busy and missed the interview, but the headlines were that the new waste collection service was not going to start in March, after all. I do not know exactly what happened or who explained what to whom, but I imagine it went something like this.

Bloke in the pub has a chat with his much maligned council Councillor.

Bloke in pub (BIP): “Ere, Councillor, when is this ere new waste food collection going to start?”

Much Maligned Council Councillor (MMCC): “We will phase it in from March, area by area. We will let that area know and issue a special box for them to put waste food.”

BIP: “Where’s all that waste food going to go, then?”

MMCC: “It will be picked up by our nearly new much maligned council trucks, collected by our contractor.”

BIP: “I mean, where is all the food waste going to end up?”

MMCC: “Well, it will be used to generate electricity or turned into something useful at a special facility, I expect.”

BIP: “Where’s that special facility to, then?”

MMCC: “Well, it’s, erm, um ... excuse me just a minute, I think I just need to make a phone call.”

Three years in the planning and whole lot longer, we might hope, and no one had thought about where the waste food was going to end up. The headlines on that day of the interview were full of bits about location, how long it might take to construct and whether planning permission had been given for it. I did hear mention of completion in 2025, but as I said, I was busy and may well have misheard. There is a rumour that in order to prevent further delay, the food waste will be shipped to Devon in the interim. From The Cove, that is an extra 120 food miles at least.

I keep telling myself, it was not like that really and that there was plan in place for food waste processing but something unexpected and unpredictable got in the way. It is like planning a skiing trip then forgetting you should have gone somewhere snowy. I am really hoping that someone can put me right because otherwise it is just too silly for words.

Our last hour was exceedingly quiet. One couple turned up near closing and I told them I was grateful to see them as I thought I might be in one of those apocalyptic movies where you are the only one left. Thankfully, there were also a few people on the beach, which meant I was not completely alone.

After a blazing start, the bleddy hound slowed down a good deal in the afternoon. Let us hope she has a peaceful night. Especially after she had just perfected her van driver, arm out of the window look.

April 25th – Tuesday

It gave me great feeling of retribution to haul the bleddy hound from her bed first thing. It was nowhere near as first thing as the times she had hauled me out of bed against my will, but it would have to do.

I had left her about as long as I could without abandoning her altogether to go and open the shop. She took a little cajoling after I had eased her out of her pit, but I imagine the chilly wind, gone around to the east again, would have given her a kick. It certainly woke me up.

Chill wind aside, it was not a bad looking day from the other side of a sheet of glass. I had very little going out to do today, after putting the bins away, and the wind was in such a place as to not squirt into the shop at me - just yet anyway. Radio Pasty had it that the clouds would darken, thicken and bring some rain later and happily if it did, it waited until after nightfall to do all that.

I have reported – constantly – that we have been very quiet of late. Each week I keep a record of the sales data for our newspapers. I started this a few years ago as I was keen to see what damage the £40 per week delivery charge was doing. From the data, I concluded that we would not start doing newspapers until business picked up each year and then not at all at Christmas. Since then, electricity prices have shot up and we decided not to open at all until close to Easter for the combined reasons. So, it was something of a surprise when I recorded the figures this week and noted that we made a seven percent loss on newspapers last week. I think we can definitely say, it is very quiet at the moment.

It may well be the unseasonable cold not helping, as a couple of visitors said that St Ives was heaving. We do try hard not to dwell on such morbid news because we all know that the good times are just around the corner and that every cloud has a silver lining and we all know how to turn those frowns upside down, do we not boys and girls. Yes, we drink heavily.

Before I did that, it seemed sensible to unpack the four, big box delivery that we had in the afternoon. There is more and more that we cannot get from our big cash and carry, so we have had to look for alternatives. One of these is our stationery supplier that happily does quite a bit of non-food items. More delightfully, many of these items

are at lower prices than we had been able to get from the Tesmorburys owned cash and carry. The only issue is that a fairly sizeable minimum order is required and if we order in a wrong item, they charge a punitive restocking fee. In other words, no returns.

It took most of the afternoon to work through the boxes. Some of the items were small and many and all of them required pricing ahead of going on the shelf or into the stock room. Being an afternoon and one where I had work to do, we had an abundance of customers – in relative terms – so progress was slow. It did, however, pass the time and before I knew it, closing time was almost upon us. All the while, that naughty easterly had been ramping up and however much I was moving about pricing things, I was getting a little chilly. Most of our customers made comment about it as they came in. Mind, it did no harm at all to our woolly hat sales.

We will settle for that, and some bleddy 'ansum pasties for tea.

April 24th – Monday

It was looking pretty good through the window first thing. Sunshine pouring through the windows from a sun rising above Sunny Corner Lane – where else – and a scattering of cloud. Stepping outside the door took the edge off a little as we were still on the receiving end of that irritating northwesterly, although it had run out of puff a little bit. None of these conditions did very much for the sea state that underlying the wind would haven been flat as a dish. The punchy onshore did for any decent surfing as well.

Radio Pasty informed us that it would get a little cloudier towards the end of the day, which it did for a while, mainly to the north. I cannot see to the south unless I step outside, but it was apparent that the south was less cloudy because the sun was still brightly shining now and then. Later, in the middle of the afternoon, the cloud defied the Radio Pasty forecast and cleared to the north as well for a while, at least.

My fear of having nothing much to do today was relieved when a let owner, whom we have known for many years, asked if I knew anyone to help with odd jobs. To help she explained that it was to help with one of those garden boxes, similar to the one we have at the front of the shop to keep our newspaper in. It came flat packed and needed to be constructed.

I gave some suggestions as to who might help but it was not really something that you called a tradesman in to do. It was still on my mind when I went to the gymnasium a little later and as I rowed a little more swiftly than last time through 4,000 metres, I pondered the conundrum. I quite often ponder conundrums while rowing because it passes the time and let us face it, rowing 4,000 metres is a bit tedious if it is all inside. Anyway, it occurred to me that if our neighbour could drop the kit around at the shop, I could construct it there and wheel it around to the house down by the Harbour Car Park after we closed.

I called in on the way back from the gymnasium and my offer was gratefully accepted almost as much as I gratefully had something to do to fill the time in between customers. The kit was delivered not long after I had returned to the shop around the middle of the day.

It goes without saying, although I will say it anyway, that no sooner was the kit shipped into the shop than customers started to arrive out of the woodwork. The unit was a tad bigger than I imagined and I placed it on the floor in front of the ice cream freezer, thinking that it would be out of the way. I had only just placed the first side flat on the floor as per the instructions, when a customer came in and called me to the counter. Busy serving this customer I did not have sufficient time to hail a warning at a young lady who stepped into the shop and turned left just where the unit's first side was lying. She did not see it and stepped right into it, snapping one of the ribs.

Fortunately, the damage was not material and was easily resolved with a bit of glue. In between other customers who proliferated through the next few hours, I slowly snapped the various sides and parts together. There was screwing in required of such things as the latch and the smart hydraulic arms, which it was suggested required two people but was equally manageable with clamps holding the lid in place while I fetched the screws.

It was also a good bit larger than I had anticipated and needed to be finished off outside. My master plan was to use one of our dollies to wheel it around to the car park and then heave it over the wall. I know that I was only in that direction on Sunday morning, but I was not thinking about getting over the wall at that stage. I decided that it might be a jolly spiffing idea to go and have a quick geek before committing to going that route. Since in the later afternoon it was very quiet, I closed the first electric sliding door in The Cove to and went to have a reconnoitre.

When I got there, the wall was also a good bit higher than I had remembered and the box was looking a lot less liftable, to boot. This left the steps leading down from the elevated rear of the garden but to do that I would need a hand. Given the Missus was the only hand available, we coordinated a rendezvous at the rear gate after I had heaved it up the hill and down the rough stones of Coastguard Row. I have never quite had the hang of using ratchet straps and today was no different. I had used them to hold the box on the dolly and just before I got to Coastguard Row – when they would have been most useful – they slipped off. Getting it up the rest of the way was interesting, shall we say.

I had been spotted by the owner as I unceremoniously dropped the box by the rear gate. She came after me to the shop where she said that she would help me down to the garden with it, so I stood down the Missus. Between us we very unprofessionally bounced and dragged it down the twisting granite steps. It was testament to the build quality that the box did not fall apart during the operation, in my opinion. It is nicely

situated in the bottom part of the garden now. Clearly, it would have been far better to construct it in situ, but I really did not fancy doing it after we closed for the day.

Our evenings seem to disappear very quickly. I watch very little television now as there simply is not an hour to fit in a programme and there are not many at half an hour worth watching. A drama series in half hour chunks is interminable – I had tried it – so I simply do not bother, and I really do not think I am missing very much. I am reading considerably more than I have ever done and thank heavens for the second-hand bookstore I use, as I would never be able to afford it, else. Thankfully, I have been through and dispensed with my pipe phase, but I reckon I will need those slippers that zip up the front soon. Sadly, the bleddy hound is a bit old and creaky to bring them to me, else the picture of 1950s aged bliss would be complete.

April 23rd – Sunday

It was not the best of mornings but it was not the worst, either, so we will take that, thank you very much. It was exceedingly quiet out, hardly a soul about bar a couple of fishermen late to the party; the others had gone out some time before.

The bleddy hound does not get very far these days, so I took myself around the block this morning. There was no real purpose to it but just because I had not been that way in some time, and I like to keep apprised of changes. Nothing much had changed, of course, unless you care to include the repainting of the lines in the Harbour car park.

Spring had sprung on the corner by the restart of the non-urban part of the Coast Path. Here the usual spot for tri-cornered leeks and Spanish bluebells was awake with an abundance of both, but mainly leeks, and the air was filled with the mild scent of garlic. A little further on, I note that no work has yet started on the old Coastguard office in Betty's garden. Someone, though, is caring a bit for the garden, keeping back the weeds and trimming the rose bushes along the fence at the top. They have even brutally pruned back the Chrysanthemum bush to mere stumps and the Hottentot Figs have been somewhat tamed. Even so, it is a long way off Betty's standards.

Just when you think it is safe to stick your head out of the shop door, we get another shower of rain. I had hoped for better today and so too had the Meteorological Office it seems who had not forecast it, but the BBC clearly had better information. Perhaps I should have looked there first. That is the advantage of having so many different forecasts: one of them is bound to be correct.

In an already quiet day, it was the last thing we needed. I spoke with our neighbour in the Ice Cream Kiosk who brightened my day by saying she had never seen it so quiet. I went back and checked our numbers for last year, the Easter that in my view

just had not happened. It seems that it happened a lot better than this one, even though it seemed busier, and the weeks around it were better too. I am now very happy that I did not invest too much in advance.

We saw a little more action in the afternoon, but we were not bowled over in the rush. The Missus went off with the bleddy hound to collect Mother and to drop at The Farm to do some watering on the way back. She was still absent when our pagers went off to launch the Inshore boat to a couple of paddle borders caught in a rip or more likely blown out by the robust northwesterly breeze.

Shortly after our call to arms on the Inshore boat we had another pager to launch the big boat as well. Since only two of us responded initially, I took on the big boat and my colleague the Tooltrak for the Inshore boat. I was joined by a second crew member just before the big boat launched from inside the house in a speedy response.

We anticipated that it would not take long to resolve the issue and so we commenced setting up the long slipway for recover almost as soon as the boat went. We had some help from one of the Deputy Launching Authorities and we had the job done in no time. With the boats likely to be a fair few minutes away, I returned to the shop to serve some of the customers I had rather brusquely closed the door on earlier. By the time I got back to the shop, however, the Missus had beaten me to it.

The boats had arrived at Porthcurno to discover that the paddleboarders had found their own way back to shore and that all was well. By the time we heard that the boats were on the way back, we had a tidy number waiting to help bring the boats back in again. One of our number were diverted to the Inshore boat – we used one of the Boat crew as banksman – and the Tooltrak waded out in the small gap still available to it at low water.

We were right at the bottom of the tide when the boats hove back into The Bay. This made it slightly tricky for the Tooltak, as described, and forced us at the bottom of the long slipway onto the rocks beyond the end of the slip walkway. The wind was knocking us about a bit on the way down but thankfully we seemed to get some shelter at the bottom. It all concluded in a textbook recovery of both boats in slightly challenging conditions, and we hauled the big boat into the boathouse for refuelling. We are, after all, a very synchronised, very excellent Shore Crew.

The shop was still at its busiest for the day when I returned. This was supplemented by the arrival of around twenty youths doing their Duke of Edinburgh's Silver Award, which includes consuming vast quantities of soft drinks, pasties and ice creams. All of them did remarkably well, and most of them returned for seconds as well. I was very happy to sign them all off on that particular module of their programme.

After they all left at around half past three o'clock, it all went quiet again save for the occasional passer-by. One of those pointed out another boarder out in the bay on a

foil making it look exceedingly hard going. It might have been considered not the best of conditions to be going out but at least on this side the wind was blowing you back into shore. More importantly, he launched off a Lifeguarded beach, and when I called them to give some assurance to our passer-by, they were well aware of our friend making a big struggle of coming back in.

As we pushed towards closing time, the weather became more wild and unreasonable than was strictly necessary. As it introduced the return of a little rain, I decided to pull in the outside display a little earlier than I might otherwise have done. The rain did not amount to very much but at least I was ahead of the posse when closing time did come around. Naturally, the sun broke through the cloud as it sank towards the west but that northwesterly was just plain uncomfortable.

April 22nd – Saturday

The rain we missed yesterday arrived today. The bleddy hound was late on parade after getting us up again at half past three o'clock, so I went down and pulled the gear out at the front of the shop on my own. It had just started to dampen a bit then and was a little harder when eventually the bleddy hound could be roused.

I left her upstairs for the morning since it was raining, and she gave me a hard look to tell me she disapproved. She was waiting by the door when I went up later, so I had to bring her down. Thankfully, by then, the rain had eased.

The morning weather did us no favours at all, apart from giving me some peace to eat my first bacon roll from next door since we opened. The rest of it was very pedestrian even though the rain was not particularly heavy. It gave me time to update the prices that our man from the beer company had formulated for us. Some are still a bit cheeky but there are other suppliers we can get some of them from, luckily. When I went onto their online system to arrange our order, the website had not been changed to reflect the new prices. I am hoping that will have changed for tomorrow, else we will have to spend another week without.

Of the very few customers we did have, the grumpy shopkeeper excelled in upsetting one of them. In my defence, I thought it was a truthful answer to a straight question. I can see though that it may have sounded a bit smart and was clearly not the answer that was wanted. Asked where Land's End fudge may be purchased, I replied, Land's End. Cue one withering look.

The rain persisted well into the afternoon despite the Meteorological Office's best efforts to assure us that it would end at midday. There were times when it almost faded away but then returned a little while later with renewed vigour. Add to this inhibiting environment an untimely power outage. For short power cuts we are normally back within seconds, if it goes on longer than that, then it is usually much longer term. On that basis, I had assumed this one would be longer lived.

In a stunning display of appalling luck, I had just pressed the button on the water boiler to make a cup of tea and the power cut had come before it even got started. I returned downstairs and locked the shop with the notion that I could at least settle down and read a book for the duration. It was just after I shut the front door behind me that our printer sprang back into life indicating a return of our power. It had been off for about two minutes. I collected my tea and returned to the shop.

I ground my way through the remains of the day having exhausted even the smallest and most menial of jobs around the shop. Faded labels had been renewed, shelves restocked, and sweet bags replenished. I even dusted a few shelves and would have shampooed the goldfish - if we had one. It was that sort of day.

I am rather hoping we shall be a bit busier tomorrow because I have now run out of things I can do.

April 21st – Friday

The day commenced in the same mould as yesterday with stunning blue skies and glorious brightness, topped off with a good helping of bitter easterlies. Once again, I found myself the centrepiece of a bit of performance art representing an icicle. Adrian Piper would be proud. No, I never heard of him either, but I thought it might make me sound a bit more intellectual – oh, he is a her. Spoilt it.

Happily, things went a little more smoothly today and I was able to get to the gymnasium for another blistering session working up to my usual circuit that I was forcibly removed from some weeks ago. Out of the wind, despite the hut with a tin roof being a few degrees cooler than the ambient outside temperature, it was actually quite reasonable in there today. I am still not up to spec' but I am getting closer.

There was a bit more animation in The Cove today, although it was marginal and none more so when the representative of our drinks supplier turned up, which is par for the course. I was looking forward to his visit because I had uncovered some evidence that he had been somewhat economical with the truth about the old Skinner's beers that his company was flogging off at a premium rate when they bought it for shirt buttons. He was good enough to admit his mistake and he is a pleasant enough character anyway, so we parted on reasonable terms.

I was warned by a few publicans for whom I have had the pleasure of working with over the years to be very wary of men from the beer trade. I was told to meticulously check numbers on the dray delivery notes against what had been delivered and in what state. It rather looks like things have not changed too much.

Despite not being very busy for the last week, there are some holes in our provision that are irksome. Pocket tissues are a glaring omission as are kitchen towels and sun factor lip balm. The latter two are due to not being available at our suppliers but

the latter is my own fault for missing it off the last stationery order. Unfortunately, once done it cannot be undone or ordered again until we have sufficient to make a minimum sized order with that supplier again. Having perused our shelves, I reckoned I could probably cobble together a big enough order from the lack of things we now had.

If nothing else, it filled in some time in an otherwise very quiet afternoon. It is, of course, a going home day and most of the week's temporary residents went home by the middle of the day. The stock I was chasing was predominantly toiletries and pharmaceuticals, which even now seem to be problematic on occasion getting hold of. The lip balm must be made somewhere unobtainable as it has been missing from three suppliers for weeks now. Unfortunately, it is much sought after and as far as I know there does not seem to be an alternative product. On the positive side, I was able to get their last package of kitchen towel that was not available from our main grocery cash and carry and the pocket tissues, which inexplicably have doubled in price. We selected a cheaper alternative.

Mother told me over tea that rain had been forecast for the afternoon, as we gazed across our perfectly still bay in the sepia hues of the setting sun. I looked up on the rain radar to see if anywhere had any rain and to be fair, we had seen some dark and threatening clouds nearby during the afternoon. St Just and Pendeen seemed to be copping a deluge, naturally, but the rest of the large rain area was up in North Cornwall and East Devon.

I do not think it would have made much difference to our business during most of the afternoon. We did see a few people at last knockings who I presumed were arrivals for the coming week or possibly just the weekend. I do not think we will set the world alight again this weekend but it pick up slowly – if I can contain my boredom that long.

April 20th – Thursday

Alright, before we go any further let me just clear up Little Gwenver for you, dear reader. It was a chance meeting a little way into the morning with a gentleman who is the closest thing to a Cover that it should – but probably does – make no difference. I asked him the question on how to spell the small beach name and he arrived at byghn, pronounced be-an, except he called it Gwenver Byghn but my other friend, who was a Cover, without question, called it Escalls Byghn and, I swear, both of them had a bit of an 's' sound appended that confused me no end.

Congratulations are due to TL who spotted my, ahem, deliberate error about The Who. It was of course, the Rollings Stones who sang Mother's Little Helper, written by the band's lead singer, Pete (Lips) Townsend. It is good to know that someone out there is paying attention – or just reading it to be honest.

It was a cracking good day for getting a name right. The skies started off blue and wide, the sun bright as a button lighting up the strange shapes in the sand on the big beach. The stream that runs out of Vellandreath Valley must be in full flight despite the lack of rain, as it is managing a three pronged route to the sea. There is a huge sandbank that runs from North Rocks to just past the Lifeguard hut, which had caused the stream to divert. The easy routes are north and south along a natural crease where the sandbar ends toward the back of the beach. The northern arm runs out of steam just past the black huts of Carn Keys but the southern turns and runs to the sea just under the Lifeguard hut. The third, which turned out to be quite brief, ran right over the sandbank and down to the sea. When I looked again, the sea had receded, and the stream gave up and petered out but then came back again a little later.

As the tide receded some more, an even stranger feature revealed itself. Two sandbars extend from the bank, one over by North Rocks and the other closer to us. These appear to join up, submerged, possibly 100 metres from the shore and in the centre is a deep pool. It is a quite remarkable sight, especially with the colours bright and deep in the sunshine.

The only spoiler to this perfect set up was the brisk easterly wind that continued to blow at me behind the counter. These are winds we would normally expect in March when we used to open earlier than we do now. By April we were into wet southwesterlies. The breeze plagued me for much of the day, although it moderated – if that is the word – in the afternoon and was only very wearing. It did some good, however, by driving in some pasty business, which was very welcome.

For the first time in many weeks the sea conditions and tides permitted a training Lifeboat launch. Even though the breeze had dropped a fair bit by then, it still made setting up on the short slip a tad uncomfortable. It also affects the station doors, pushing them against the runners at the top. Along with the doors not having been used for a few weeks this made them exceedingly hard to open, the east facing ones particularly, but we are a hardy bunch – well some of us are and we selected them to open the doors.

The slip hook that we unleash the boat with was also a tad stiff to operate and needed a strong tug to get open and the boat was away. With a good showing of crew on both sides, we launched both boats during the session and they were away for an hour and a half up beyond Cape Cornwall on this occasion.

That pushy breeze had diminished by the time the boat returned at near eight o'clock. There was still plenty of light from the setting sun that we had no need of floodlights, although I noticed that someone must have leant against the switch at our post training de-briefing because they were on into the night. The tide was two hours after high water that dictated that we had set up the short slipway on this occasion and we brought the boat up that in what was clearly the first textbook recovery in some weeks.

The inshore boat was recovered by the Tooltrak vehicle in a similarly exemplary operation by one of our newly sanctioned operatives on his first real mission. We took time to wash down and tuck up the boats in our professional manner before retiring for the night. We are, after all, a very fastidious, very excellent Shore Crew.

April 19th – Wednesday

The Who had it spot on with, 'What a drag it is getting old' as the bleddy hound is finding out much to our cost; she had us up half the night with her grumbles and groans. Clearly, a youngster such as myself has a long way to go before I need worry, but I faced a very tired day ahead. The bleddy hound slept for most of it.

Yesterday it must have been practising to be cloudy because it got it right today. It also tried its hand at a bit of mist but did not quite manage to obscure Cape Cornwall and Brisons that were just visible through the murk. There was even a little light rain at some point late in the morning, but it did no more than dampen the ground.

The tides this week are relatively big and the current formation of the sand on the beach allows for clear walking passage to Gwenver at low water. Today, that way was walkable for at least an hour. There was also quite a feast of sand on Escalls Byghn (like many things it came to me by word of mouth, and I wish I knew how that was actually spelt) or Little Gwenver, which does not sound so genuine. The sand there comes and goes, and I do not recall seeing so much in quite some time.

I was pondering such great things when Prof dropped in for a visit. It is always such a joy to see Prof and no less so when I am bored off my pectorals. She was explaining that she is returning to Leeds, which is north of Camborne and how it would take nine hours to get there. No doubt, in a hundred years from now, when HS2 is finished, this will be looked back on with amusement, like we do with stagecoach journeys of the past. With advances in medical science and being a bit younger than me, she could be doing that in eight hours 55 minutes.

The weather really did for us today, at least in the morning. It was far more inclement than I had anticipated, not that I had looked at a forecast, and it made for very slim pickin's indeed. I am now rather glad that I did not have the opportunity to ramp up our stock of pasties in response to yesterday's haul which turned out to be a flash in the pan. Even in the afternoon, when the skies brightened and it looked a little more presentable, the pleasantness was overwhelmed by a vicious increase in the easterly draught that made it very chilly indeed standing behind the counter.

It was that vicious easterly, I am sure, that did for one of our flags of St Piran that we hang from the front of the shop. These were from the rather excellent custom flag company Parr Flags that inexplicably moved north and called itself The Sail Loft, I think. They subsequently lowered without trace, so I had to look anew for a

comparable high quality custom flag company since it is easily ten years since we last renewed.

- I could look back on The Diary to tell me exactly how long it was, as I recall I postulated whether the previous tattered ones should not be hung in some venerable abbey. If only I had taken a week or two at the end of each year to index them. -

I found a company that looked a little more professional than some and spoke with a very pleasant lady on the telephone. I told her our bespoke requirements and she asked most helpful questions. It seemed that our tricky requirement for it to fit over a specific diameter tube, was nothing new to her and she asked that we send some photographs and a description, which I duly did. We will have a quote shortly and hopefully new flags flying before Whitsun.

Despite the lack of a run on pasties, we did sell a respectably number so will not be left with too many for tomorrow. I have ordered slightly more in case there is some going homers requiring them for the journey or folks at home. It will not happen like that, of course, but if I have not done it, it would.

That easterly breeze upped its game during the remainder of the afternoon. I stood it about as long as I could then switched on the first electric sliding door in The Cove for some warmth and comfort. That lasted all of half an hour before the bleddy hound decided she wanted to stay down after her latest walk out. She is not quite as animated as she used to be, but the door is sensitive – I am sure they all are - and a careless turn of her head set it off. I switched the first electric sliding door in The Cove to manual.

That easterly is hanging around some more for tomorrow, I am told. I will find a thicker vest and a fur lined bodice.

April 18th – Tuesday

I thought that we had our day of summer and now it was autumn when we stepped out first thing this morning. There was a fair amount of grey about and a fierce easterly whistling down my neck. When I looked again, hope was springing out of the west in the form of blue sky, but it was unclear if it was coming or going. It turned out it was a bit of both.

I was kept on my toes as the pasty man arrived early. Happily, I had finished my cup of tea and the delivery was very small. As it brought it in, I imagined that having cut the order to the bone we would suddenly have a rush on pasties. We did not. Not even the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers could be fagged larking about with that one.

So, I commenced my lonely vigil that continued largely uninterrupted all day long. I would bring down a book, but I tend to get involved in books like I do films, and each

customer interruption would irk me, which is not a good look for a grumpy shopkeeper. Instead, I topped up the drinks fridge, which took all of 30 minutes and dusted some shelves. It is quite remarkable how quickly the dust settles and is very visible on the light beige shelves. I do not dwell too much on where it comes from as it is clearly in the air, and I would rather not know.

Oops! I stand corrected. Someone just came in and bought all the pasties, leaving the two people in the queue behind them looking somewhat nonplussed. That will teach me to call into question the commitment of the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers. The order for tomorrow is done now, so I will probably have a repeat.

Rather fortuitously our frozen order arrived around the middle of the day and gave me something to do. It is not something that can be strung out, however, and it was also not a very big order. We do now have a fullish complement of ice creams but still not dog ice cream – I mean for heaven's sake – nor have I changed my view on keeping vegan ice creams. We much prefer the ones from this country.

We also like our sunny days but today just could not make up its mind. Half the day was blue sky and sunshine and the other half was overcast and grey with the threat of the haze turning to mist. It was not like it was half and half, either. One minute was cloudy and the next was sunshine and sweetness.

We have been selling suncream ever since we opened, really. It is clear that many visitors are wise to the strength of the sunshine down here even in the shoulder months. There was plenty of beach for them to cavort on during the earlier part of the day but by half past three or perhaps slightly earlier, the beach was closed off by the tide. At least in the afternoon it was relatively benign – if you discount a little flogging over the Harbour wall. In the morning, an hour or so after high water, the sea looked pretty stirred up again. There remained a bit of swell later during low water for a bit of surfing, but that early punchiness had gone away.

Once again, we waded through the last two quiet hours of shop opening. If I ever want to be a monk in a silent order then I will have had good training – unless that includes not talking to yourself, in which case I am beggered.

April 17th – Monday

What a corker of a day it turned out to be. If it were not for a naughty little easterly breeze, I am sure we would have mistaken it for a summer's day.

It was just the sort of day to get back into the saddle of going to the gymnasium again. I had quite forgotten that prior to the three weeks I just missed, I was recovering from having a dickie shoulder and had not gone for a week or so then. I had only been the once in the intervening time and that was when the dreaded lurgi was starting to kick in – tough, ain't I. Various bits of my had started to complain at the lack of exercise, so I must conclude that it is doing some good. I must also

conclude that I cannot now stop else I will collapse in a ragged heap after a shorter and shorter period.

I knew that I would not get through a full session today, nor would I come close to any of my world beating times, not that anyone will ever know, you will just have to believe me, dear reader. What I did aim for, and probably over-achieved, was a good honest blistering session that demonstrated just how knacked I truly was. The other thing that I noticed is that my appetite had been severely diminished since being poorly. When I arrived back from the gymnasium today, I could have eaten a scabby dunkey between two bread bins. Sadly, we were all out of scabby dunkeys.

Talking of food, and I really should not tease myself like that, we had our first delivery from the new fruit and vegetable supplier. You will recall, dear reader, that I was getting somewhat irked by the high prices being charged by our traditional supplier and our neighbour had suggested the new company. I knew that we were being over-charged, but I did not realise that they were profiteering. It may just be because I am the new boy and they are trying to impress, but the new company's prices are way kinder. For the first time in as long as I can remember, we can sell red peppers at less than a pound and they are currently not at their cheapest.

At this time of the year, lovely days do not necessarily translate as busy days. Today was no exception and we plodded through the day with a customer here and there. As usual, there is a preponderance of Coast Path walkers that will purchase a postcard or two as they pass through or some refreshments, maybe. There are always various nationalities of Europeans popping in as well. I do not know how their holidays work, but we see families now and also after our own children go back at the end of the summer. Because we are not very busy there is always time to chat and to find out where people come from and what journeys they have done today or where they are heading on to. It is like having an adventure by proxy.

I needed a bit of an adventure whichever way it came as I had exhausted all my extra-curricular shop type activities yesterday and it is only Monday. Fortunately, the Missus remembered to bring down the contents of the list that I had given her the day before. This occupied me for a good hour. It is still only Monday and I have nothing on the list to do tomorrow.

Failing all else. I could always gaze purposelessly out of the window, that I have now cleaned. I tried this out in the last fifteen minutes before we closed and it was most satisfying for that brief amount of time. There is no more than a gentle swell traversing the bay and a small amount of white water making a scene over at Creagle and Aire Point. This was at high water, of course, with a few waves churning onto the beach and giving some small joy to a handful of surfers close in. That bright sunshine shone into the evening, lighting up the dunes and the cliffs in the most resplendent way. Even the annoying southeasterly had ventured round to the east which meant it was no longer blowing in the doorway.

It was a cracking little evening for sitting on the bench opposite with a beer and a cake. I made do with sitting around our dining table with Mother and the Missus for cold meat and pickle. It will be gruel next week if business does not pick up.

April 16th – Sunday

By the close of play yesterday, the cloud had rolled in and everything went a little grey. The forecast had suggested a continuation of this for today, but something went amiss and we ended up with cloud lower than expected and a good dose of mizzle to go with it.

We were slightly better off than that when we ventured out at early o'clock. It was not quite as early o'clock as some of our previous days and the bleddy hound had kindly waited for my alarm to go off before she stirred today. That is still quite early enough, thank you very much.

I do not think that the inclemency of the weather had much to do with the lack of human life circulating on the streets. It was still doing a pretty fair impression of the day after an apocalypse by the middle of the day. The good old fashioned early start to get the newspapers is definitely a thing of the past, either that or there was nobody staying here.

Since I had anticipated such a dull beginning to the day, I lined up a few chores to do around the shop. The sunglasses took a bit of a beating over Easter, presumably to keep the rain out of our visitors' eyes, so I spent half an hour topping those up from our generous stock we had left over from our second order of them last year. It was not actually the job that I had thought about at three o'clock in the morning while I pondered what was to be done, that was the surf jewellery stand, which was looking a bit empty too.

We had a little stock in the store room of some of the groups of items but there were still a fair few that I had no spares of at all. This triggered a spending spree, going through the extensive lists on the supplier website and randomly picking items. It is quite tricky as there are many hundreds of items that look broadly similar, so it is confusing as to how many of what sort I had already bought. Even having arrived at the conclusion and looked at the 'shopping basket', by the time you reach the bottom of the list I cannot remember what was at the top. I just pressed the go button and we shall see what turns up.

I also wrote a list of goodies that we have at The Farm that need to be brought down. The Missus was not overjoyed with the request as it interrupts her concentration on planting and growing things. She headed up there again today with Mother and the bleddy hound, this time to plant spinach of which we sell quite a quantity during the year. She also had a request from a neighbouring field to run the topper over it after the work team had been through strimming. We have a friend who rather likes

jumping on our tractor given the slightest excuse and he will be up there today doing that.

The afternoon was a little more animated but not by much. Even though the weather moderated a good deal, there was still precious little action down in The Cove. I had hoped that the vintage bus day might bring a few in, especially since it is the one day a year that we have a half decent bus service. Having said that I did hear that one broke down on the hill and the passengers had to walk up the rest of the way. I had thought that I would see the buses a good bit earlier than the middle of the day, unless I missed them, but I can usually hear the squeal of the brakes when they stop to turn around.

There was some activity out on the water, which had started even before the bleddy hound and I got out this morning. The fishermen were out early doors to check on their pots - if they could find the ends. By high water, the bay was the calmest that we had seen it in some days. Looking down on the beach earlier, before the tide had its way, the sand was covered in large areas of weed. It is usual a couple of days after big seas that the weeds wrenched up from the deep by the vigorous waves ends up strewn over one beach or another. The bleddy hound and I were down on the Harbour beach earlier and it had got away light this time.

By the middle of the afternoon it was so quiet that I sat outside on our box in front of the shop. It was testament to the sudden mildness of the air that I felt most comfortable sitting there and watching small children whizz by on their scooters and their parents wobble by in the opposite direction, having a go. Any wind at all was coming from the south today and presented in The Cove as a mere waft here and there. I would have sat there a bit more, but the Missus came back at that moment without the contents of my list. Apparently, she will do it tomorrow. That begged up my plans as I was hoping it would give me something to do.

The last hour or two, I do not know which because I clearly zoned out, was just about as dead as the morning. There was a mini rush at the end of the day for wine and beer and our shop Internet signal decided to play up and make the car payment machine upset. At least I will have a wine order and a card machine to put right in the morning to give me something to do and, unless something else goes wrong, the first gymnasium session in about three weeks. Now that will be interesting.

April 15th – Saturday

It should have been no surprise that there was a pleasant blue sky awaiting our early morning run out this morning. It was bright enough when we closed the day yesterday and I had heard nothing but good from the weather people about the forthcoming few days. We had, at that time at least, not got to the warming up bit and it was every bit as chilly as yesterday and there was still a bit of breeze from somewhere up in the north.

I suppose it would not be unfair to say that it was close to a perfect sort of morning, if you like that sort of thing. The reflected blue of the bay set off the white surf and plumes against the cliffs and gave a stunning backdrop to the day. It was therefore no surprise that I was gloriously let down by the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company, which, the same as every year, randomly change my volumes and availability based on no logic whatever.

The missing *Western Morning News* (did I ever tell you I once had a review ...) would have been more understandable during the week as they rarely sell but at weekends we have a bit more luck with them. *The Daily Mail*, once our biggest seller and difficult to get enough copies, I had reduced to eight and regularly send five back. Today, our wonderful supplier decided to up the number to fifteen and for good measure add the Star, which I have never sold one of – ever. I will drop our contact a copy of the message I sent her last year to save me writing a new one.

We certainly did not need fifteen copies of *The Daily Mail* today or very much of anything. It may have looked busy out on the café tables for much of the day but for us, we perambulated along with very big gaps between customers. Much of our trade came a little later in the day when we sold a few beers and teatime goods. It is no great surprise as the end of Easter is very much the same every year and we simply pull in our spending necks until Whitsun time.

With the marked improvement in the weather, the Missus was inspired to head up to The Farm with Mother and the bleddy hound and set to work in the polytunnel. She basked in the tropical conditions for several hours planting the seedling lettuces of various types that will form the basis for our very popular mix leaf bags a little later in the year. She would have had to spend some time ahead of the planting, weeding the raised beds as even the one I weeded was probably under attack again.

It was as late as yesterday that I noticed that the invoices were building up on the printer, on top of my filing boxes and in the basket in the shop that we use for the invoices that come over the counter. Since yesterday morning had been quite quiet, I thought I might use the time to input the data into the system that I just had to fork out another year for. I missed yesterday morning but put in a concerted effort to gather all the papers together for today.

It took probably half an hour to put them all in date order and then a further couple of hours to key them all in. They are not all simple transcriptions, some need to be broken down into categories of expense and it is that which takes all the time. Occasionally, VAT needs to be calculated if it is not shown on the invoice and for some expenses, we only claim a percentage of the VAT if some of the expense is personal, like vehicle fuel and telephone bills.

I finished the lot, all 90 invoices, and filed them away. Perhaps I should have paced myself because I now have nothing to entertain me tomorrow morning. I will have to be creative – or just give in to lethargy.

April 14th – Friday

The bleddy hound had us up a couple of hours before my alarm went off and I was compelled to take her out in the heavy mizzle. Any more of that nonsense and we will have to get her a commode. It did not place me in the best of humours when she decided that despite the earlier excursion, to wake up at the normal early time, ten minutes before my alarm went off. It probably does not matter too much, but in such circumstances I am prone to forget to reset the alarm for the following morning having cancelled it.

At least the rain had gone when we went out again into the morning, this time in daylight. There was hardly a breath of wind at the time and I had quite forgotten someone said that another gale of wind was on the way. We waited until mid morning for that to arrive and when it did, it came in first from the northwest and then the north and was chilly as a reindeer's socks.

We had paid the extra for the fridge delivery people to install the new fridge and decommission the old one. This was not going to be necessary, but it was the only option the company had that meant they would take away the packing from the new one. I had no intention of waiting for them to arrive and went ahead and pulled the old fridge freezer out of its place so that I could clean underneath.

That fridge/freezer had been there for 19 years and probably well before that too. There was absolutely nothing wrong with it other than the fact it was too small for our summer pasty needs. I know that we had moved it before to clean underneath but that was only once, and it was not recent. Not only was there a grim pile of rubbish under the fridge but the side of it and the side of the freezer it was next to were covered in black mould. I did not bother with the old one, but I cleaned the freezer that was staying out and that took a fair while.

When the boys with the new unit turned up, the wind had just kicked into gear. They had a joyous time removing the packing in a northerly breeze heading in the direction of 30 to 40 mile per hour. Obviously, it had been quiet all morning until the point they arrived and then two families decided to do a bit of shopping and the waste collection man turned up. The latter was just in time because I had put out all our waste cardboard earlier when it was calm and it was just starting to fall over and migrate down the road.

It was a bit of a helter-skelter but the fridge was unpacked, shipped in and placed in its spot, the customers served and the waste collected all roughly at once. I told the delivery boys to leave the commissioning because the power lead was not going to be long enough. I had discovered – or possibly rediscovered – that the existing fridge had an extension wired in. I had unwired it and now needed to rewire the new unit to the extension before we could use it.

The fridge is very grand, or it is at the moment, and will just about meet our needs at the very peak of our busyness. Given that it was Friday and we had just had our weekend delivery, albeit for a quieter weekend, it was a good test to see how many pasties we could fit on which shelves.

That naughty breeze persisted through the afternoon. I resorted to wearing my new woolly hat as it was getting a little Arctic in the shop by the middle of the afternoon. Despite that it all looked very lovely with blue skies and fluffy white clouds. There were fewer people down on the beach today and not even windbreaks were going to make this chill wind any better. There were even fewer in the water larking about, but it was not right for surfing, really.

The Missus went to fetch Mother in the early afternoon for the first fishy Friday in several weeks. It was also the first time this year that it was light all the way through to Mother going home again. I would love to say that it was a taste of summer but I was frozen to the bone in the shop by the end of day. We are not putting the electric blanket away for a while yet.

April 13th – Thursday

I learnt something valuable today: unless you have a big pile of money, look after your teeth and gums because the NHS – in Cornwall, at least – has now disowned you. I was not able to determine all the very complex rules about who can see a dentist and who cannot, but from what I did discern, the future for teeth in Cornwall is very bleak indeed.

I had managed to elicit an appointment to see the dentist by using wiles, corruption and promising certain aspects of my afterlife to some shady character with horns and a crooked smile – I did not have a first born readily to hand and anyway, he probably would have objected. After seeing the dentist today, I do feel somewhat short-changed.

Without needing to share any unsavoury detail, I had a very specific issue that was sporadic and did not involve any pain. The latter was a bit of a barrier to acquiring the appointment as you could not possibly need a dentist unless you were on your knees and writhing about in agony. Having broken through and come face to face with the dentist herself – a very pleasant French lady – she very quickly establish after an x-ray that there was no continuing problem, just some crumbling bone probably, usual in a man of my age. It was at this juncture that she explained that she could do no more.

It appears that mouth health and prevention or problems are no longer part of the NHS service and if I wanted to be assured that I had no gum disease or other lurking issue, I would need to fork out to go private. Furthermore, if such a check-up discovered work that needed to be done, I could not bounce back to the NHS but would need to contract privately to have it done.

It is £88 for a check-up and any ensuing work could cost thousands and certainly several hundreds.

I would benefit from seeing a hygienist, I was advised. How much for one of those, I asked and she told me £89, though how much of a check-up you get from a hygienist was unclear.

What is abundantly clear, however, is that unless you know your exact problem it could get very expensive indeed. I do not know if there are special dispensations for those truly in need because we really do not want to be heading to the place where all the peasants have blackened, tombstone teeth and only the toffs can afford to smile. I would suggest it is incumbent on each of us to do what we can to avoid going in the first place.

The previous dentist I had seen at the practice some four years ago, must have seen all this coming. She told me to use an electric toothbrush for the proscribed time and follow up with interdental brushes and flossing. She said if I did that then in theory, I would never have to see a dentist for decay or filling issues again and, so far, that seems to have worked out very well.

We were delighted to note that the big winds of yesterday were gone by the morning and we were back to a soft and gentle breeze. The sea had returned to a more normal condition but with still some swell in evidence right through the tides. I met one of the fisherman as we opened the shop who was keen to get back out again to see where his pots had got to after such a melee. The road into Penzance was open again, although I was stopped by a much maligned council work team clearing up where the trees much have come down.

I had been concerned earlier because the presenter on Radio Pasty told us that the A30 was blocked in both directions, but he failed to mention where. I had to call up and ask because it was up to date information and would not have been on any of the usual websites. Fortunately for me, it was further up the line.

I was gone for a few hours and included a few errands while I was in town. In my shock after speaking with the dentist I inadvertently did a runner from the clinic without paying and had to be called back. As it was, they were not equipped with any change and I had to make a return trip after visiting the bank to break down a note. While I was gone, the Missus emptied the freezer part of the fridge freezer we currently use to keep our pasties chilled. After my conversation with the boss lady at the bakery, we had selected and purchased a large fridge. It will only be used to capacity once a week during the peak season, but we had little choice. It will be useful when we have fish deliveries, too, so it will not be entirely wasted.

We had a buoyant afternoon. As is often the case after a spell of bad weather, visitors pent up in the house for hours or days are keen to get out and spread their

wings. It was a good day to be released with bright sunshine for most of the day interrupted by the occasional shower. There was still quite a chill in the air and we did a good trade on woolly hats and hooded sweatshirts and the pasties started to shift again.

The beach was busy for the first time since the weekend. There was not much in the way of surfing but people were having a good time larking about in the surfy shallows. At least there was some beach to day as the tide was permitted to go out and the Lifeguards could display their pretty coloured flags again. I had not checked but our neighbour who dropped by in the mid morning told me the sand had been scoured out again. Ah well, we had it for Easter and we must be grateful for small mercies, so we should – I have most of my teeth, so there.

April 12th – Wednesday

The bleddy hound and I had the best of it at half past six o'clock this morning. It was still bright and the wind was in practise for a proper blow a little later on, blowing just 40 to 50 miles per hour around the corner of the Lifeboat station.

That wind was the main feature of the day, although it did come in later laced with heavy rain, smoking along the road. The rain was mixed with sea water thrown into the air as it launched around Pedn Men Du and over the Harbour wall. The wind had started off in the west but by the middle of the day had edged around to the northwest or close to it and straight in at us. Had the rain been much worse we would have been flooded out as it squirted under the door and window frames. It is an enduring regret that I did not ask them to seal the gap. They had left it so that any flood water could be brushed out but for us it would always be one way traffic in the opposite direction.

I had left the door open for most of the morning but as the wind came around and the rain arrived, I switched the first electric sliding door in The Cove to automatic. The bleddy hound was much better at not triggering the door but even so, I had to move her away because customers were disturbing her when they came and went. She spent most of her day in the shop today as the Missus had variously made arrangements for a new tattoo and to take Mother shopping in the afternoon.

Mother must have got the to the pretty desperate stage for shopping as first me and then the Missus having the dreaded lurgi curtailed contact for a bit. It is highly likely that the Missus was also suffering withdrawal from not going into a shop for three weeks as well. It is fortunate that we have a shop downstairs and also that the Missus has a habit of buying in bulk, else we would have been stuck for meals during our confinement.

The Missus returned just in time to take the bleddy hound to the veterinary doctor. She needs a bit more attention and shoring up in her old age and her visits are a bit more regular than they were, which, for her, is unfortunate because she goes into

meltdown from the top of the hill when it is clear she is heading in that direction. Despite her discomfort, I was glad to see the back of her because it was not only windy outside. I just hope the few customers we had did not think it was me.

Moving swiftly on, that wind just kept increasing as the day progressed. Taking a pick of some of the local weather stations, it looked like the wind gusts had peaked in the late 70s in miles per hour. Gwennap Head was nearer 90 miles per hour, but I am always dubious that theirs is not the product of local anomaly as the wind bursts up the cliff. Whatever the numbers were, the wind made a mess of the bay. It was not easy to see through the salt encrusted windows, but it was white from one side to the other. I do not believe that the tide was able to go out at all during low water and I am sure the Lifeguards would have red flagged the beach if did not fear losing their flags up the dunes.

The Missus reported some trouble in waiting as she came back from her shopping expedition. Near the village of Drift, a tree was slowly making its way through a hedge, the stones being the only thing holding it up. Further on, a big bough hung precariously over the road. It was not long after she came back that she hear the report that the road had been closed and she had to return via St Just on the Newbridge road. I am hoping it will be clear for the morning as I have a run into town myself.

For the first time in weeks, Mother stopped by for tea. We sat and watched the churned up whiteness of the bay in the brightness of the sinking sun. We could see slightly better through the living room windows and it was, indeed, spectacular. I had seen a fairly constant stream of cars passing the shop door all day, heading for the car park and a quick geek at the storm. I suspect that many stayed as long as they dared without getting a ticket and quickly left again having said they had seen it. What a day.

April 11th – Tuesday

The forecast for today was even worse than it was for yesterday, so I did not expect very much and was not disappointed. I had put some early effort into preparing just in case our grocery delivery turned up early, which of course it did not and neither did anyone else for that matter. A mass exodus, a poor forecast and actual poor weather will do that to a grumpy shopkeeper.

The bleddy hound and I were alright, however, when we stepped out in the morning. The weather had not arrived at that time, although it was still clear at that stage there was damp in the air and a bit of a vicious wind blowing in from somewhere westerly. The bleddy hound insisted on going down the slipway, with the wind in our faces and then discovering that she actually might prefer to be carried back up again.

It was an unsurprisingly quiet morning, with just a few close by visitors picking up morning goods and a few things for a lunch. I had plenty of time to place a few

telephone calls including ordering in some more firewood that I am beleaguered by requests for. I ventured to put a few pasties on, just in case, and I am glad I did.

Of the very few customers we did have one was a rather delightful girl from east Asia somewhere. She had been in yesterday, interested in a Cornish pasty but had not long eaten, so she told me she would be in today and true to her word she was. She had a Cornish pasty, a cheese pasty and a sausage roll and avidly took pictures of them with her mobile telephone. She was super excited and even more so when she saw our Cornish ice cream and she just had to have one each of those. Leaving me to pack them away, she returned from the bottom of the shop with a big tub of Trewithen natural yoghurt. I had imagined a group of her friends gathering around to sample all things comestibly Cornish but then she asked what she would do if she could not manage it all in one sitting, pointing to the pasties. It rather took me aback that all this was for her, but goodness me, what a gal.

After the big deliveries arrived, the Missus came down to work through them. It was not the biggest order of the year and it took only two or three hours to tear apart and put out either in the shop or in the store room. It was even easier when there were no customers about. Usually, the Missus has to vie for space in the grocery aisle with her trolley full of stock. Today, I do not think she had to move out of the way for one customer. No wonder it was done in record time.

When the call came in from the bakery for an order for tomorrow, I declined. We will have enough of everything to last probably two days without adding to it. Prior to the call I had another message from the bakery regarding pasty deliveries. This was from the owner's wife, I think, and was quite apologetic but offered no help. The content was quite worrying really. Last year, the bakery decided not to bake bread and outsourced the supply. This year they appear to be trying to outsource pasty baking to their customers. I had done a quick calculation and discovered that it would take us more than six hours to bake the pasties we would need for a busy day in our small oven.

I have drafted a reply. We will buy a bigger fridge to resolve the problem but before we do I want some assurance that it is not their intention to give up the baking altogether. If it is, we will need to jump ship as the alternative would be to have to buy a big and fast oven and those things costs thousands of pounds not to mention the electricity they would eat up. Welcome to the £10 pasty!

The rain set in properly in the early afternoon and any trade that might have been became even more sporadic. By the middle of the afternoon it started to rain properly and much more heavily. There was no sign of the high winds we were promised in a much advertised weather warning. It was going to be southwesterly so we should not have been too badly affected by it.

So, obviously, it came in westerly and late. We did not see much until at least four o'clock and then it started to kick in a bit. We had customers arriving after that

looking very windswept indeed and despite the ambient temperature increasing two degrees since the morning, it felt very cold. I had held off because the bleddy hound was on her perch, but as soon as she went upstairs, I turned on the first electric sliding door in The Cove and put a hat on. It is quite remarkable how much difference the closed door makes and the sound of the gusting wind and rushing tide were shut out completely.

We had a bit of a rush toward closing, word obviously spreading quickly, and spent the last hour managing the awe-struck customers and swooning ladies as they wondered at the first electric sliding door in The Cove in full majestic operation.

April 10th – Monday

There was a grey start to the day, courtesy of the poor weather the night before. That rain had cleared through by late evening and I have no idea if it rained after that. The weather front had obviously not cleared completely by early o'clock but by mid morning the sky brightened and by the middle of the day it was all blue skies and loveliness. The only wasp in the beehive was a bit of bluster from the southwest that ruffled a few hairdos and sold us a few woolly hats.

The sea had decided a few days' orderly surf was quite enough and let go of all restraint. The bleddy hound decided it was a good plan to go have a geek from the top of the Harbour slipway and sat there and watched the waves break over the Harbour wall. A couple of days ago, walking any more than a few yards would have been beyond her. We think she caught a dose of the dreaded lurgi that knocked her off her feet, quite literally. Yesterday in the afternoon, she rallied, and her walking since then has been back to where it was. It never affected her appetite or her need to hard stare me in the evening into giving her treats.

There were only two ways today was going to go. Either those arriving for the weekend were staying the week and we would be in for a reasonably busy time, or they were just here for the weekend, begging off during the day, and I was going to be left holding the baby until seven o'clock. How perceptive of you, dear reader, to so accurately determine that it was the latter. There was a definite lull in proceedings in the early afternoon after another buoyant start but just when I thought that the party was over, there was a bit of resurgence that lasted until the later afternoon.

The drop off in business for today might well have been that the forecast for the day was pretty abysmal, which had turned out to be very incorrect - again. Quite a few people commented in the morning about how surprised they were. In the end, though, I think it was pretty clear that there had been a major exodus and a lady who had arrived from Exeter towards the end of the afternoon confirmed that the traffic going back the other way was solid.

I had not stinted on pasties for the day because if it was going to be busy, I did not want to run out. There was no chance of that, although we did relatively well. As I

have to order early, we will have far too many for tomorrow but it will sort itself out by the end of the week, without a doubt.

Earlier, I had sent a message to the pasty company regarding bread availability but more particularly about the not delivering on Saturday. I had a reply back today from a lady who was clearly in the know. There will be no Saturday deliveries even during the summer, which really drops us in it. We do not have the facility to store those sorts of numbers of pasties in appropriate conditions and while we can probably get away with short periods at this time of year when the store room is still cool, during the summer it will be impossible.

She suggested that we could have frozen pasties delivered on the Saturday. Frozen pasties would be of no use to us since we could not bake sufficient numbers in the time available to us, nor would we want to. We selected a baker for our pasties because we wanted them baked. If we wanted them frozen, we would have gone to a food service company and told her so.

The choices are pretty stark: buy a bigger fridge and a bigger store room to put it in; find some sort of insulated boxes – big ones; find a baker that bakes pasties six days a week. The latter one is throwing the baby out with the bathwater since the pasties, when they are baking them, are some of the best around and reasonably priced. We have a little time to sort this out as we will not be having the volumes that cause us problems until at least Whitsun.

Oddly, the last two hours of opening, despite being desperately quiet, passed quite quickly. I had spent a little time clearing the large wine delivery we had and tucking it away and then setting to clearing up the store room floor ahead of the big grocery delivery tomorrow. It will be useful if that came in early, but we are in the hands of the supplier and they will deliver when they choose but it will be tomorrow, for sure. We also have the exciting anticipation of what will not arrive. Many things on their order website are not available when it comes to delivery and it is always a guessing game as to what important items will be left off or shorted.

As we moved back towards high water, the sea kicked back in again. It had never really gone away during low tide with quite a turbulent rip running up the middle of the beach, surfers to either side of it. In the evening, the bay was flecked with white water here and there. There was some crashing going on against the footings of the cliffs, but it would seem there was not a lot of ground sea driving in the waves this time. Something of a flash in the pan, like our extended opening hours, and will be gone tomorrow.

April 9th – Easter Sunday

The weather stuck the boot into proceedings toward the end of the afternoon. It brought to a sharp end what was a very busy day, certainly compared to the Easter we had last year, which will remain a mysterious anomaly.

It had not started out too brightly, either. Everything looked a little grey when I took the bleddy hound out for her walk. On the other hand, the breeze had gone and the air was still, proving that we just cannot have it all, all at once. I think another day of freezing behind the counter might have tested my resilience just a little too far, so I was most grateful for that, at least. Perhaps I should also be grateful it came to an early end because I would have run out of pasties, else.

Whether our guests had factored the forecast into their day, I would not know, but the busyness of the day started early, as if to compensate. I was run ragged almost from the moment we opened and as the morning drew on, it just got busier. There were less fits and starts today and more consistence giving me my first multi hour breakfast of the season.

Somehow, in between serving customers, I managed to place our ancillary grocery order and another for stationery and toiletries that we could not get from our cash and carry supplier. I left the main order to the Missus.

We are still facing random shortages and I have already explained the pricing anomalies which I believe are due to the cash and carry being owned by Tesmorburys. Brown sauce is inexplicably missing for the second order in a row over the period of three weeks. I suggested that the Missus see if we would be better off ordering from our alternative cash and carry company but having gone through only half the list found that we were worse off with them – even if they did have brown sauce. We were reasonably successful last year alternating orders as comparing them each order is far too time consuming in the season. This does not work when one of the suppliers has a critical item on the week that you are ordering from the other.

With all the busyness today and the fact that it is the holidays, we have had a preponderance of children in the shop. I had quite forgotten the delights of the patter of tiny feet running around our aisles. My first visitor of the day brought it all back. I have no idea how old a person is that only comes up to my knee but she was able to walk, quite briskly. She also was also quite dextrous, amply demonstrated by the number of small things she was able to remove from shelves. The parent was far too busy trying on sunglasses to be the least concerned about what his offspring was up to.

I will give the child her due, almost everything she picked up she brought to me at the counter. I dutifully piled it up as clearly the parent was allowing this. He was therefore quite surprised about the size of the bill I presented him with. I told him that since he had not intervened in his daughter's collection of goods, I had assumed them to be legitimate purchases. I am not sure that the subtly of my reproach was at all effective, but he did surprise me by buying most of the assembled pile. Next time I will add a few more things with better margins. If I am going to babysit, I may as well be paid for it.

Children and adults stayed away from us by the time the rain started at around half past four o'clock. We had the occasional visit for postcards and a few night time snacks. The last of the logs went, which is going to be a real problem looking ahead as we have limited storage and can only get them once a week, short of the Missus running off to get them.

The beer fridge was also emptied, and we are now very short of beer supplies and no chance of replenishment of the national brands until Tuesday. Thankfully, local ales in cans and bottles will be arriving tomorrow, which will be of some relief and besides, we have now decided to stock more local beer than national brands so it will be easier to restock from now on. Worse still was the white wine provision. I have yet to become accustomed to the ordering and delivery schedule from the new supplier. My fault, I know, but I was ill prepared for the inability to react quickly to a sudden increase in demand. We are feeling the loss of our local cash and carry very keenly.

It usually takes a few weeks to settle into the routine and this year's assimilation was interrupted by the dreaded lurgi. With the addition of several new suppliers to get used to, it may be Whitsun before we iron out the problems. We wonder what else the year will throw at us. Exciting, ent it.

April 8th – Saturday

We were blessed with another morning out of the good morning book of how mornings are supposed to be. I sensed a bit more movement in the bay, which was not severe but gave way to some reasonable surfing conditions later. The fishing boats still managed to get out but that breeze persisting from the southeasterly would have plagued them a bit. It certainly plagued me, so I went and got a hat to wear behind the counter.

We only did a cut down starter order from our main cash and carry before we opened, which was two weeks ago now, although it seems much longer. It means that we are due an order this coming Tuesday but because it was super quiet for most of those open days, some of which we were closed altogether, I thought that we might get away with sending the Missus out to pick up some bits to tide us over.

With this in mind I did a quick shopping list just to see how much we needed and, unfortunately, the requirements ran to a whole page. Some of this was due to the cash and carry not having the goods last time we ordered, which did not help. Last year we alternated cash and carry suppliers for that very reason, so we will probably do the same this year to increase the probability of getting a full list of stock.

I spoke with our neighbour in the café next door who has similar issues with greengrocery. Not so much on availability but on price and he has played his two suppliers off against each other to drive down his prices. We do not have the same

buying power, but I had been considering changing our supplier as their prices are bordering on profiteering. The conversation has convinced me that we indeed should jump ship and I will move to do so next week. It should be unnecessary as suppliers we have used for years should play fair and it is very disappointing and troublesome when they do not.

The bit of swell we had earlier in the bay seemed to drop away a bit during the middle of the day and into the afternoon. It made for good conditions for the two dive boats that went out to have a look at the Beaumaris. There were several young ladies in the party and we had a chat when they came in for pasties later in the day. Visibility was good down there and although there was plenty of sand covering the wreck, there was enough exposed to make it interesting. I wish that I had listed more intently or known to question a little more because she told me there were some scorpion fish down there. It did not mean very much at the time until I went to look it up. I do not think that the species there were the feared poisonous variety found in the Pacific or Indian Oceans but there is an Atlantic sub breed, which I guess is what she saw. Another excellent reason for staying dry.

I may not be alone in that opinion but there were plenty on the beach in the later afternoon that thought different. Most of the surfers who were left appeared to be novices and remained in the shallows with just one or two out further waiting on big waves. The rest were bodyboarders or merely revellers intent on getting wet and not much more while on the beach, there were equal numbers either waiting to join them or just watching and waiting and pushed ever further back by the advancing tide.

There had been a thin haze in the bay for most of the day, softening any sunshine that may have dared to brighten the day. Even into the evening when quite often the sun will break through from the horizon, it stayed resolutely shuttered away. The cloud had slowly and imperceptibly thickened and our brief, if cold, summer, had gone. Bet it was lively at the OS, though, in front of the fire – if they still have one in there or has its conversion to clinical and homogeneous pub chain been completed now.

April 7th – Good Friday

I paid a bit more attention to my surroundings when I went out first this morning. It was hard to ignore the perfect sky with a light glow out to the east and the rest looking deeply blue and velvety. The bay was filled, high water on a spring tide, but the sea was placid enough for the fishing boats to head out on a trip later in the morning. At the time we were out, though, all was very peaceful.

Signs of life waited until the middle of the morning and even then it was sporadic. There was a bit of breakfasting going on around late morning but as usual, all the action waited until into the afternoon. This made for a tedious few hours after clearing the morning deliveries, some of which were late running in. It took a while to put the bakery order away which was the product of them not delivering Saturdays,

finding a few nooks and crannies in which to secret pasties until I could get to sell a few.

Once again it was not all that warm in the shop. Yesterday, the northwesterly air flowed straight into the shop but at least it was not in my face. It was much worse today as the wind had gone around to the southeast. Due to that peculiar phenomenon of the wind from that direction being redirected through the Valley, it was coming right at me. By the middle of the afternoon, I was a living icicle – just. Short of closing the first electric sliding door in The Cove and convincing everyone we were closed, there was nothing much to be done but suffer.

The increased tempo of the jangling of the till helped to distract me. We had moments of quite busy here and there, but it was never sustained. There were also some notable sales and our hooded sweatshirts took another beating thanks to the cool air of the day. Since I had not expected very much from this Easter, it was a pleasant surprise to see a reasonable upturn in trade.

After such excitement, the much quieter hours at the end of the afternoon ground by. With three hours to go, I was already regretting thinking that extended hours just for the weekend was a good idea. Next year it will be normal hours all the way through to Whitsun. If I were to get all scientific, I might calculate how much the lighting and an hour more drinks fridge cooling costs and see if it is worthwhile. I certainly had the time to do it.

Faith was restored a little bit when we had a fairly decent five minutes to closing rush. Trouble is, we probably would have had that five minutes to closing rush an hour earlier had I not extended the time. It is only an hour but it feels like an eternity when it is not that busy and it makes a great difference after I have closed and sat down. By the time I have had tea, it is bedtime. No, it definitely has to go.

Still, with all that thumb twiddling time at least I could look out at the cliffs all the way to Cape Cornwall lit up by the dipping sun. There were bursts of white sea crashing on the rocks out toward Creagle and Aire Point from an otherwise fairly benign sea. Earlier in the tide, there were some decent enough waves here and there to provide some long surf runs in on the beach – I am sure there is a surf name for that that ends with, dude. Certainly not a bad Good Friday.

April 6th – Thursday

It was too gloomy and I was too sleepy to notice what the day looked like when I first took the bleddy hound out for a stager. The dear of her, she does not do running any more. When I looked out again, it was a bright and clear sky morning with a bit more cloud out to the east preventing the sun from reaching its full, early morning potential. A bit of breeze had kicked up, this time from the northwest, just to keep things interesting.

As with most mornings, it was quiet right through until the middle of the day. We have precious few people eager to pick up the latest newspaper and I wonder even more about the value of stocking them at all. In the excitement of the previous evening, I had forgotten to send back the papers from yesterday and had to do the count and packing before I unpacked today's. Mostly, the numbers I sent back were the numbers that had arrived.

This did not change very much even though the afternoon took off a little. The sunshine was drawing in the crowds, although it could not be called exactly warm – unless you found a sheltered spot in the sun - but no one seemed to mind too much. The tides are much kinder for beach dwelling during the lion's share of the day but the majority of people there today were more interested in getting off the beach and into the water. I am guessing that it probably was not all too comfortable down there with a sharp northwesterly in your face.

It was not that toasty in the shop today, either. It was a good job that I had a few chores to do and plenty of customers at times to keep me running about. One of the chores that fell to me was doing a supermarket sweep for Mother. With the Missus still confined to barracks, poor Mother had been without Red Cross parcels for the best part of a fortnight as well as the warm embrace of her best beloved. We could do nothing about the latter but there are neighbours on both sides of us who make regular trips out to St Buryan. The Missus fell upon the kind services of one of them to drop a bag over when she went back that way, thus averting a major humanitarian crisis. To my mind, it was not yet desperate; I am pretty sure she still had gin.

The afternoon tailing off took a little longer than it had during the previous days of the week. This suggested an influx of residents in The Cove, particularly as they were buying beer and crisps, traditional evening products. Little bits of business continued toward closing time, so I upped my dairy and greengrocery orders accordingly. It will give me something to look forward to in the morning. It might be a bit lively this weekend.

April 5th – Wednesday

We seem to be falling into a bit of a routine for the mornings, which suits me. As long as the bleddy hound does not get it onto her head to mix things up, we shall be fine for a while, I reckon.

I had expected a bit of rain around when we went out, but we were lucky. It was wet, but I was not sure if that was from rain or just high humidity and condensation in the night. We were promised some monsoonal rain later in the morning, which never happened. This ceases to be a surprise after a while but bless them, the rain missed us by a whisker and piled up the middle of Cornwall. We got grey and mizzly instead.

It probably made no difference to trade anyway, since everyone was expecting rain and stayed away or went to St Ives. There were a few die-hards floating about and

out of a bad day we did not do too badly. I had reduced pasty numbers in our order yesterday but not by nearly enough and had already placed the order for the following day. This will iron itself out by the weekend.

Our pasty company is still holding back from delivering on a Saturday, which is a right pain but I can understand that they are just trying to control costs like everyone else. At present we are just about on the limit of the numbers we can take to cover both Friday and the weekend and it will ease back down after Easter. If they are still reticent into the summer, we may have to find an alternative solution, whatever that may look like.

The weather closed in during the afternoon and made a poor day even worse. Not even the surf out the in the bay was playing fair like it did yesterday and there were no more than half a dozen out there in the latter stages of the tide. The spring tides have begun, so there was no walking down on the beach either as the waves had inundated most of the sandy bits.

Some good news that broke about a month ago is that the Skinners Brewery had been reopened, or rather purchased by another Cornish brewery based out near Victoria. The boss was interviewed on Radio Pasty, which alerted me to the development. He had all the recipes for the original brews and had hired one of the previous head brewers, so that is all looking good. I got in contact as soon as the programme was over and the company was very responsive. They said that they would be in production within a month and true to their word, they were.

The only maggot in the apple is where to get it from. My least favourite provider is doing all the distribution. They appear to have individual prices per customer that you have to negotiate with your representative. Initially, this company had a job lot of the remaining Skinners stock, which they clearly would have purchased at a knock down price. It was a good fiver a case more expensive than I would once have got it direct from Skinners, and new. The company has previous for such behaviour which has done little to endear itself to me. Fortunately, our new representative seems to be a solid character and has given us some decent prices on other beers. I have sent a message to him regarding the Skinners new stock and am hoping for the best. Unlikely we will get our first delivery, though, until after Easter and I may have left ordering our other beers a bit late too. Whoops.

Talking of which, after such a dour day we, of course, had a five minutes to closing rush. These were in the main young couples from the orient, China maybe or Korea of which we have a surprising number visiting The Cove. One young lady enquired how she might pull a packet of our preserved squid bait off the backing card, so I advised that she should pull sharply, which she did. It was quite fortunate that her male friend decided it might be prudent to check that it was food before his friend ate it! My, we had a little chuckle over that one.

That left two girls at last knockings, caught out by the vagaries of rural bus services and found themselves stranded and not blessed with a surplus of funds. They were intelligent girls and had worked out that they could get another bus but were not sure where it was, Mr Google suggested that it was close by. It does seem that if Mr Google finds a location and that there is no other transport to it, the program defaults to walking to it regardless of the distance.

I looked at her mobile telephone but the location was not obvious but had the bus route name, Tin Coast, that runs along the north coast and back through St Just. I looked at the timetable and after a bit of detective work established that it was St Just Bus station. They would not make that bus, but there was one an hour later that they should get to no problem. They had already worked out that they would take a taxi to St Just which would be cheaper than taking it to Penzance. I arranged the taxi for them and left them with the choice to change their minds to extend the journey to Penzance for an extra £10. It was already £20 to St Just.

The bus timetables here changed last weekend but when I checked, the Coaster was not affected at all when I had hoped it might run a little later in the evening back to Penzance. They may have dropped the price to make it more attractive but a cheaper bus that is not there is no help at all.

I was very happy that the late afternoon rain that we had cleared away before we shut. Not only did the girls not have to wait in the rain but a more mature lady camper who had come through in the thick of it, I had told the rain would stop by the time she came to pitch her tent in less than an hour from then. We love it when a plan comes together.

April 4th – Tuesday

I was woken on time this morning. There was a vague attempt at having a go a little shy of the alarm, but she did not put much effort into it and ignoring the bleddy hound seemed to work. The alarm goes off right on the cusp of daylight creeping into the room at present and by the time we go outside, the flood lights are almost now superfluous. I put them on just for a bit of additional light while I am putting out the frontage display but I imagine I could get away without.

The way the morning looked suggested that we might be in for a bit of a good day. It was half right. The morning looked and felt a lot like spring. There was a bit of cold in the air but it was the sort of chill air that spoke of spring and freshness and had not the bitter bite of winter. It helped not having a breeze but occasionally in the afternoon it swirled around a bit from the south and the cloud increased leaving fewer gaps for the sun to break through. On balance, though, it was the sort of day that brought out the crowds and, for a little while, it did.

I cannot have been the only one to appreciate the kindness of the day. The beach was more crowded than since the holidays started, which probably was not to say a

lot but there was a fair number down there. It helped that there was some decent surf about now that the sea had decided to behave itself. I had thought it had looked quite benign at low water but as the tide pushed in, that surf became quite substantial and reasonably clean. There were probably a dozen more experienced surfers a little further out but three times that number in the wash closer in, messing about.

We were busy later into the afternoon than we had been so far. Even slightly improved weather can make a marked difference as it did today. Today, we were busy all afternoon right up until the last knockings that has now been fixed at six o'clock. I have changed the sign on the door and notice on the website to suit. We will open later over the Easter weekend and will probably take a look to see what happens after that. My expectation is that the additional hour will not be needed but will be flexible about when we close.

We have, quite naturally, seen an upsurge in the number of children visiting the shop, either alone or with families. This is mainly a delight although occasionally entertaining and/or fascinating and sometimes, mercifully rarely, a form of torture. One of the things that seems timeless is that many of the children, particularly the younger ones, have pocket money. This is quite often held by the parent in a separate purse or sometimes in some sort of virtual bank that mum, usually, has charge of. It is a source of mystery to me because mum seems to be able to hold each child's balance in her head regardless of the number of offspring there are. More of a wonder is the checks and balances that occur because child A has borrowed from child B's virtual account or from mum or dad's account. Sometimes mum or dad borrow from the child's account, at which point not only is the account monitored by mum, but the child now acts as auditor, to ensure that such sums are not forgotten, usually on a minute by minute basis, and repaid in a timely manner.

The spending of the funds in these accounts also seem to be subject to a range of controls, varying in severity according to arbitrary family rules. At one end of the scale, the child is left to get on with it, purchasing whatever they wish, however ill advised, until all the money is gone. For some, this may be on the first day of the holiday and I do not know what sort of backroom deals are done after that. Others are 'advised' to the degree that they can only really purchase what the parent has chosen for them, which must be a bit like getting your pocket money in book vouchers for a bookshop that only has one book. I make no comment as to which may be right or if there is a wrong – I just smile and take the money.

April 3rd – Monday

The bleddy hound excelled herself this morning and would have had me up a good forty minutes before my alarm had I not been made of sterner stuff. I left her to it after lifting her down from the bed. I found her on her throne when I eventually got up, a position she has to be helped into when I am in the room with her.

The viciousness in the breeze over the last few days has now gone. It may be far more gentle on the legs in the morning but it was coming from the east, for us, southeast for everyone else, and therefore a tad chilly. It made the day, when it arrived, quite fresh but at least at first it was very pretty looking. They told us that the Isles of Scilly might be the only place with a bit of cloud, and I think we were affected by that for a while.

The mornings tend to be the time to get things done before the main event each day. It is also a time to catch up with the locals as to what is going on around and about – if I see any. Today, I caught up with our local hero Bobby and defender of the free world, well, our bit of it anyway. I had seen him chatting with the lamppost maintenance man the other day and had wondered what the outcome was since it was the first opportunity since then. The revelations were eye watering.

The man had indeed been despatched to make sure that lampposts are in fine working order. He assured our hero that all the wires were in the right place and that there was a bulb in the lamp and that it should work, so he was surprised to hear that it did not. Given that it is his job to make sure that it is working, this was a more than a tad concerning.

Now, you see this is where I should not make comment about things that I clearly have no understanding about. The lamp, within the bounds of the responsibility of the engineer, was, or at least had the potential to, work correctly. Just because the power company had failed in its duty to provide electricity to the device should not impinge upon the success criteria of the engineer's role.

Our intrepid battler went further and contacted the appropriate much maligned council department to ask what was afoot. First, his was told that wayleave permission was outstanding from a householder, the permission required to run a cable. Neither of us could understand who might have been asked, so our man went back to his contact who explained that the household could not be identified but he was told power was available either from up behind the shop or from up on Stone Chair Lane, neither of which seemed to us to be a particularly viable or cost effective solution.

I have just spent ten minutes struggling to find the right words here. There was something swirling around in my head about draining swamps before you were up to your neck in alligators. It is like digging a hole in the desert, calling it a well and calling it complete because you were just asked to provide a well – water was someone else's job, right. I might not have worried about it too much had it not been a profligate waste of my hard earned and probably not the only example to be had across the Duchy.

I switched my focus to earning my hard earned after the clock flipped to the afternoon. The busy period is very brief it seems from the experience of Saturday and Sunday and now, today. Despite that we managed to get through a good swathe

of the remaining pasties, which was a relief, before the pasty warmed reverted to its original task of keeping my back warm as I leant against it. The days are beginning to look like a rerun of last Easter and I am very glad I did not invest heavily in the holiday.

Of the diminished number of customers we did have, there was a couple of groups of treasure hunters armed with a list of clues. Someone had done their research from afar and some of the clues were difficult to interpret. One of them concerned the 'centre of smuggling' in these parts, which foxed me for a while but eventually concluded the question master meant the F&L and the character associated with it was Annie, although Dionysus Williams was probably more accurate.

Another was 'cliff's edge' in Cornish, which I did not have a clue about. After the team had left, I had a look at my Cornish dictionary which showed two words, cliff and edge being possibly *alsyow* or *kelgrow* and *amal* or *emlow* for the edge. I suspect neither of those options were in the question master's mind and I now wonder what she meant, which is frustrating. I would love to be there for the answers.

The treasure teams came back in the middle of the afternoon just when I had given up hope of selling the last tranche of pasties I had put into the warmer. They bought nearly all of them, which saved them from the bin later.

I closed early again. Ordinarily, the Missus would give me a bit of a break on the longer stints but since she is still confined, there is no break. I have already made a note that we will not do extended hours next year as there is clearly no need.

April 2nd – Sunday

I do not recall when I reported that the sand had once again been taken away from the big beach, leaving a big apron of exposed rocks up against the dunes, but it was not that long ago. Yesterday, I had wondered if the Lifeguard's truck had been able to get down to the beach and it was this that drew my attention to the big beach in the bright morning sunlight. I caught the truck exploring its new domain and the sand is back. Not all the rocks to the dunes have been covered and the Lifeguards will still struggle to get their quadbike up to the hut if they wished to, but a significant amount of sand has been dropped back in again.

Any indications of a brighter day were an hour or two off when the bleddy hound decided it was time to shift, which was ahead of the already very early time my alarm is set for. The aim is to leave her dozing while I get ready for the day, but I have learnt to adapt dynamically to her little whims and fancies. That breeze was still very evident, although I think that it may have gone to the north and now carried a bit more of a chill with it. This was very evident in the shop later as I stood and chilled through. I was grateful that it diminished to a light breeze as the day went on.

It took until the middle of the afternoon for us to hit cruising speed. Up until that point custom had been ramshackle and sporadic. That was either because the sun had gone in or the beach had flooded because the tides are all wrong for beach dwelling this week. Of course, it might also have been because that is the way it is. Whatever it was, it helped shift the mountain of pasties that I had ordered which would have included a number in expectation of opening on Friday. We made a good fist of it, but it was not exactly a pasty fest going on in The Cove today.

This month's manager of the OS came and introduced himself today, which was good of him. Actually, he said that he was one of the new managers, which does not surprise me, they must need a few to ensure continuity. He took my gentle ribbing regarding the high turnover rate at the OS in good humour and told me he hoped to be there a bit longer than the average – as indeed they all do. He would not be pressed on why he thought that the managers never seemed to stay very long, so it will be a continuing mystery for now.

Trade died off very suddenly toward half past three o'clock, which was odd. One minute the street was teeming and the next deserted. I wondered if there was a wild animal on the loose and no one had told me, which would not veer too wildly from belief – the not telling me bit rather than the wild animal.

I had to twiddle my thumbs a bit after that because I had done the rest of the unpacking in the morning. I must say there was some alluring kit there to be had including the coasters and mugs with our new image on. There is also a range of art cards and notelets that incorporate a spot of lambs' wool in a strategic place in the image: a rabbit's tail; coloured blossom on a tree, or a duck's down. We are hoping for great things from these additions, like customers buying them. Some might even find their way onto our web shop, which you bypass, dear reader, on your way to read the latest Diary page. I would tell you more, dear reader, but I cannot imagine you to be very interested in such things.

With the Missus still confined, there is no hope of having even a minor break during the day. Once again, therefore, I put up an early closing sign on the first electric sliding door in The Cove and closed at six o'clock. I do not think that would be sustainable through the rest of the week and I do not like going against our advertised hours. On the other hand, I think it would be a very lonely vigil for that last hour given the business we have had on a weekend in the last two hours. I will find out tomorrow.

April 1st – Saturday

Well, if I was going to cast off the shackles of the last few days, may as well do it on an extended twelve hour working day. It was hard going to start with and I had all those shoes and spades to unpack from yesterday first thing, which took a bit of effort. It was later in the morning, the influx of some customers and the jangling of the till that had me back on course again.

The morning was grey and breezy but by the middle of the day there was some blue sky breaking to the north and west but by the time it got over us it was mostly cloud again, albeit thinner than before. We even had some sunshine here and there but mostly there and gone and the breeze set in all day. There was one good thing about that: we sold quite a few hats. It was not a day to set the world on fire but at least we took more than we did yesterday.

The Missus told me to take it easy, sit on my rear end and do very little. Sadly, there was the stock from The Farm to put out and the remnants of some deliveries still to be arranged out in the shop somewhere. I knew I could not sit and let those gnaw away at me, so I took my time and went through the boxes getting most of it out on the shelves. We have some alluring new mugs and coasters from a local artist I met at the trade show. He did a Cove image just for us, so we are very excited to see how it does. We also had the new cards arrive that should have come on Wednesday if only the driver could work out how to climb our steps.

Towards the later afternoon the weather changed again. The fairly robust northwest wind that had been at us all day, brought some damp initially then sneaked in some heavy mizzle. Lined up behind it was a serious looking line of heavy showers but according to the forecasters, they were not going to reach us. The sea state had been pretty rough all day. It looked like it would remain so tomorrow and enough to postpone a Lifeboat exercise with the Cape Cornwall NCI but, have no fear, because the Lifeguards are back.

I saw their shiny truck parked up in the RNLI car park yesterday when I came back from The Farm. I also saw it head down the road this morning but forgot to check whether it could actually get on the beach this year. I rather think not due to the rocks at the bottom of the OS slipway where we struggled to get the Tooltrak down earlier in the year. I cannot imagine they had their work cut out for them today as it was hardly surfing conditions with the waves being largely blown out halfway across the bay.

I pulled the plug on shop opening an hour before we were due to close. While it may be debatable, I think I did well to get through to our usual closing time and with the weather not being exactly inviting, I supposed we would not have been overrun in the last hour. I will have less of an excuse tomorrow unless this dreaded lurgi has a habit of coming back for a last hurrah before it beggers off. I hope not because I will be very glad to see the back of it.

