

DIARY 2023

June 30th – Friday

Crumbs, dear reader, sacred bleu and nom de plume. The Royal Mail Air Mail stickers saga has come to a sudden and shocking conclusion ... or did it? I shall let the tension percolate across the ether and explain all a little further down the page. No cheating, now, dear reader. Read the in between bits too as they are bound to be very interesting - honest guv.

It was raining this morning for our little jaunt around the little block – see, already rivetting. It was not raining heavily but ABH did not bat an eye lid. We cannot be sure but are reasonably confident that this was the first time she had experienced rain. Apparently, it is nothing to get worked up about.

Perhaps we should tell a few of our visitors that a bit of rain is nothing to get worked up about. It may have been the last day of the holiday for many, but the rest of the week was pretty good, so you would think that there was little to complain about. I had thought that the morning's shower was it, but the rain, such as it was, came and went through the day, some of it quite heavy, accompanied by, on occasion, some mist on the cliffs. Of course, it is alright for me to say it was only a bit of rain, but I was indoors all day.

After yesterday's deluge of customers we had a slow and quiet day today. Despite that I was kept on my toes, at least in the run up to opening, by making sure all the rubbish and cardboard we could generate was packed up and made ready for the bin man arriving. I cleared the deliveries from yesterday and rationalised the packaging as well as topping up the drinks fridge and the beer fridge. The spirits shelf was looking very depleted, which I hoped the delivery that arrived late yesterday would resolve.

There are some suppliers that just ooze quality and care in production and Rosemullion Distillery is one of them. They have a great story to tell as well, making all their own base alcohol from scratch and the end product, especially the gin and malt whisky are definitely top drawer. I have heard that the rum is equally good, but I have tried it and am not a lover of rum. The bottles filled up the empty spaces quite effectively, which made it look much more like we were not giving up with our top shelf just yet.

The Missus took care of the next delivery while I was at the gymnasium. I had a blinding, as well as a blistering session with my rowing timing almost back to normal. I had not even eaten my wheat flakes before I went, either. Moreover, I did not get wet going or coming back.

It was when the Missus had disappeared off to The Farm that I had a call from the Royal Mail customer services team, tasked with setting up our business account. I

spoke with a very pleasant but clearly ill-informed and soon to be even more ill-informed lady. I explained the dilemma I was in and that I required all manner of logins just so that I could purchase stamps and have Air Mail stickers to go with them so that I could sell them to our customers. She agreed that it all sounded very strange but would check with her manager, just to make sure she was saying the right thing.

She was gone for a minute of two and then came back with today's shock announcement that I thought at the time neatly put an end to my quest for Air Mail stickers. She told me that her manager had confirmed that I should not be selling stamps at all. Only Post Offices could sell stamps. There was a long and awkward pause while I collected my jaw from the floor. I told her we had been doing this for 20 years and our predecessors at least a few years before that. It seemed odd that Royal Mail were happy to sell me stamps at a discount if I was just using them for my personal use. She offered no suggestions as to why that might be the case. I had to admit defeat.

It took me quite a while to recover from this veritable bombshell but little by little I seemed to recall some years ago a sea-change in Post Office services that allowed ordinary shops to sell stamps. After 20 years of selling stamps, surely someone officious would have turned up at my door by now to inform me I was doing wrong – or to slap the irons on and cart me away.

Obviously, at times of dire uncertainty the thing to do is to consult with an Internet search engine. A simple query 'who can sell Royal Mail stamps' turned up Royal Mail's own website that was happily promoting retail shops such as ours selling stamps aplenty. I can only assume a fifth column faction in Royal Mail is conspiring to spread misinformation and consternation among its customers.

It is odd how having no customers engenders laziness. I had all afternoon with hardly a customer through the door and yet I did not manage to do any of the chores that I had waiting in the wings. We have orders to place and stock to put out. None of this called to me and I sat with my feet up watching the sea bounce about for the first time in many weeks. It was not until the day started closing on five o'clock that I remembered that was the cut off time for our fancy bread orders.

The small gods of grumpy shopkeepers are ever vigilant for such cracks in the general smooth order of things. The slightest weakness shines like a beacon and immediately attracts their attention. On this occasion, while I urgently poked at the tiny keypad on my smart mobile telephone trying to make it form sensible words in a message to the bread people, the small gods sent customers in abundance. Not just customers, but customers with awkward questions that needed answering.

No ordinary customers at that – argumentative ones who would argue where the start of Stone Chair Lane was. I suggested cutting across the RNLI car park, but no, there was another cut through apparently, so I pointed our customer at the path that

runs up just before the gymnasium but, no, it was not that one either. I clearly needed this explaining to be in short single syllable words with the aid of Internet maps on a mobile telephone.

With time slipping away, we then had customers with groceries, bags to fill and stamps to find. If I made the deadline at all, it was with seconds to spare.

It had turned proper wintry by the time I closed the shop. We had seen a couple of new arrivals collect some rations for the evening but largely, we were devoid of business. I even had the other orders written and waiting for the moment I closed the door.

Taking ABH out at the end of the day to try and drain her of the escalating energy she seems to accumulate during the day, seems to be becoming a regular feature. With the weather looking gloomy, I checked the rain radar, and it was certain another clump of heavier rain was on its way to us. I almost abandoned the plan but given her reaction to the rain this morning, I decided to push the point and go out anyway. The rain was not as heavy as it looked like it might be but we had a hearty northwesterly to content with to go with it. As expected, ABH, hardly seemed to notice at all as she tore around the beach in random patterns, tossing bits of seaweed into the air and burrowing her snout into piles of soft sand.

I considered a wind down might be a clever plan rather than bring her home still bounding, so we headed up the western slip, across the Harbour car park and around Coastguard Row. It seemed to work because she was quite serene, for a five month old puppy, when I brought her home to the Missus. Tomorrow we might see if this was a fluke or the right thing to do. Everyday is a school day, they say.

June 29th – Thursday

I think that we had half the day's customers arrive before we opened today. That was along with the pasty delivery, the frozen order, the greengrocery and the butcher. It must be a conspiracy.

There was sunshine first thing, brightly shining above Carn Olva, or probably more Escalls, come to think. The little girl was a little more respectful of the time she got me out of bed, which was good of her. We took in our small block walk, which is becoming a regular feature. The Missus told me she had been walking around the big block, taking in the Harbour car park and Coastguard Row. I was a bit pressed this morning, but we might try that another day.

It was busier today than I anticipated, even after the initial, pre-opening rush. There was a general scrabble for going home presents and I lost count of the number of postcard boxes of fudge that went out. That shelf would require topping up, for sure, in the morning. The busyness continued through the day and was liberally spread

out, so there was no 'in between' times to do very much, which was most inhibiting and other than serving customers, I could move little else forward.

There also seemed to be a number of schoolboys here on a jolly. I seem to recall a group come each year on licence from school for reasons that probably would elude me even if I knew what they were. They are perfectly polite but today appeared to be at a loose end and were in and out of the shop all afternoon. It is probably best not to think about the amount of sugar consumed per person, but it was an abundance.

We received a delivery of fishing tackle yesterday that I had begun to put out. Since it arrived late, I did not manage to get it all out on display and had intended to do that today. By late in the afternoon the box still sat at the end of the counter, untouched. I had another crack at it but still did not finish it before I ran into the closing down routine and in that time, another delivery arrived. There were orders I meant to do today and those too had to wait.

Only the new bread order got done before we closed, mainly because if it does not get done by five o'clock, we do not get it. Therefore, all the other orders had to wait until after we closed, which made me late for tea and late to the Lifeboat launch that some clever soul organised for seven o'clock.

I did make it to the boathouse before the boat ran down the slipway but pushed me into a back seat for the rest of the show. This I do not mind when I have had a bust day and it is more than useful that others frequently take different roles so that we are all capable across the board. We all equally sat around after the launch and setting up for recovery, as we all need to know how to wait and make cups of tea.

The Inshore boat came back at the appointed time – not that any time had been agreed in advance but we guessed that when it came back, that was the appointed time. The big boat was delayed around at Porthcurno with a problem on one engine. Ironically, Porthcurno is a telecommunications blackspot and the chief mechanic, who had taken the Inshore out for a change, had problems contacting the backup mechanic on the boat to discuss the issue.

Happily, the boat ambled on one engine into a better place to talk and came back using both engines as it was thought to be just a sensor problem. Marginally later than planned, we brought the boat back on the long slipway at around low water in what was clearly a textbook recovery. We are, after all, a very interchangeable, very excellent Shore Crew.

June 28th – Wednesday

Look, I am finding this exceedingly tedious so I do not know why you should get away Scott free, dear reader.

That pesky Royal Mail are out to wind me up good and proper. I reasoned that since they wanted me to have an Online Business Account number that I would apply for one and did so yesterday sometime between the shorts and the fish. I had a reply this morning, which was very timely, refusing my application.

Apparently, the account number I gave them, the one issued when we applied for the Royal Mail shop and the only one I have, was not valid. They advised that I reapply for a business account, that is the shop, not to be confused with the Online Business Account, which is something entirely different. I did try but it told me that I already exist, which a kind of already knew – I think, therefore I am or in this case it may as well be, I'm pink, therefore I'm Spam.

So, to recap, dear reader, in case you are having trouble following the minutiae. I cannot apply for a Royal Mail mail supplies account because I need an Online Business Account. I cannot get an Online Business Account because I need a valid business account number, which I thought I had but apparently not. The only way to get a valid business account number is to re-apply for a business account, which I cannot do because I already have one. I do hope that is clear, dear reader, as I will be asking questions later. It is still not apparent why I need three accounts to order stamps and Air Mail stickers, but I imagine there is a perfectly reasonable explanation. No, you are right, dear reader, not in any form of fantastically outlandish Orwellian nightmare of a bureaucratic society is there anywhere near a reasonable explanation.

The refusal came with a telephone number that I could call, which I did as soon as it was nine o'clock. Happily, for once, there were no customers when I picked up the handset, so I had a clear run at it. I spoke with a very pleasant man who told me that I should really be speaking to a different team – of course I should - but he would start the process that should see us getting all the appropriate logins and numbers. Forgive me for being a little lacking in confidence but I will wait until I am able to order Air Mail stickers and print my invoices before I start celebrating.

For many, the weather was not reason to celebrate either. We were more overcast than yesterday and there was a good bit of mist around. On occasion, there seemed to be some moisture in the air that could have been mizzle or just damping. You could hardly call it rain. The temperature appeared to drop a little too, but I still needed the fan in the shop. All those people over the last couple of weeks telling me it was humid outside and I hardly noticed at all. Now that it probably is not outside, it definitely is in the shop.

It was another day of not being quite as busy as we would have liked. There were fewer people milling about outside than yesterday, so I would reckon that the café took a downturn as well today. The mist rolled in a bit thicker in the latter part of the afternoon and stayed for a while. We did get the rain some forecasters had promised but it really made no difference as the streets cleared anyway.

I took ABH down to the beach again after tea in what has become a regular safety valve exercise. Her energy levels seem to ramp up during the day rather than deplete. She was rushing around the beach with no input at all from me.

We took ourselves away before the gigs came back in. It was good to see them out for a run, the pair of them, and the teams seem to be getting out more regularly now for the first time in a few years. The interest never appears to wane and there is a host of youngsters involved, so there probably will be a future for the sport for some years to come. I have never been tempted, but there again as with many things, it all happens when we are at our busiest. I do not feel too deprived.

June 27th – Tuesday

My woes with Royal Mail and Air Mail stickers go on and on. I had another response from them today. Apparently, we do not have the appropriate business account. We have a business account that allows us to purchase stamps at a slightly discounted price – but not so discounted that we do not make a loss when selling by card payment – but we need a different business account if we want to buy business supplies. STOP PRESS: I have just found out that I need to have three Royal Mail accounts to get my Air Mail stickers, the business account for stamps, an Online Business Account that enables me to apply for a Royal Mail mail supplies account.

This seems utterly nuts. I must buy the international stamps from one account and the Air Mail stickers that are mandatory to go with them from a separate account.

Piling on the misery in this business, I checked to see if I could verify what our business account number was. This used to be printed on the invoice, which was my last recourse since it appears nowhere on the website. When I looked to print an invoice, because they no longer send one with the stamps, I discovered that they had removed the option to print one. I added this to *their* list of woes in my response to them. This has the potential to run and run.

It seems that the weather came out in sympathy with my plight; it was grey and overcast for much of the day. This, of course, produced a litany of complaints about the lack of sunshine. It was dry and warm and reasonably bright as far as I was concerned and therefore good enough, surely. Apparently not. Full on sunshine or nothing.

We were not as busy as we had been for the past two days, so we must admit that the weather, most probably, did have an effect on our business. The other contributing factor, having spoken with a holiday let owner, was that many bookings are for short breaks. This would sit well with the busy weekend and sudden slow down. There still seemed to be a lot of people milling about outside the café next door, but they are nearly always busy when we are not and vice versa. If there are any business analysts that would care to comment on that I would be most interested.

There was not exactly a lack of customers coming and going but the downturn allowed me to extract the men's shorts that I asked the Missus to bring down from The Farm. They all needed hangers attached but the Missus had already priced them, which saved a bit of time. They were the other half of the beach clothes consignment that had arrived ahead of the half term that we had been busily selling through.

The timing of completing the shorts worked very nicely as shortly after our fish order arrived. I had been disappointed with the previous delivery that was a bit thin and demonstrated a misunderstanding with the order I sent. I was clearer with this order and hopefully, there was enough fish to see us through a busy summer.

I was fearful that the delivery would arrive late in the afternoon as the last one had. I would have been up half the night packing it had it done so. Luckily, it came in the middle of the afternoon and took me about three hours to sort, vacuum pack and label. It now sits in the store room freezer which run a good ten degrees less than the shop freezers and will go out in the morning.

I finished just in time for tea, which was fortunate, as the Missus had a meeting at the Lifeboat station about fund raising. A couple of years ago she started organising events for the crew such as barbeques on the beach and social gatherings. She has a flair for that sort of thing and was persuaded to do it officially for the station as well. The meeting went on for much of the evening while I ran Mother home and attempted to empty an energy intensive ABH by a visit to the weed strewn Harbour beach.

There has been a moderate swell in the bay for the last couple of days but I did not think it sufficient to be tearing up weed. I suppose, the loosened growth would have been just hanging around out there waiting for the slightest movement to carry it away and where we might have had a little at a time in normal conditions, this has come all at once. It did not inhibit our play too much and the little girl did not take too much notice of it, thankfully.

I terminated our games when she ran up the slipway for the third time and I thought she might be heading off. She is now pretty good on recall and returned on the previous forays up the slope. I did not want to risk another, so we left. She surprised me by turning right at the top of the slip and we went around the short block home meeting a few acquaintances on the way.

She was not at all herself when we eventually got home, a bit deflated at the absence of the Missus. We will not break her of this attachment until I have more time with her upstairs and that will have to wait until winter. A couple of hours with me in the meanwhile, did her no harm at all, although she might have told you different if you asked her. Happily, no one did.

June 26th – Monday

I was quite grateful for the little girl barking in my ear 'ole at my normal waking up time. I would have overslept else. I do not know what she was barking at, but she was staring in earnest at the bedroom door. The bleddy hound used to do similar out in the dark. I found it was best not to think about it too hard.

There was a lot going on during the morning with deliveries from our new supplier of bread and the usual lot as well. The pasty man upset the apple cart by turning up very early in the morning. Thankfully, I had finished my cup of tea and was by the window, so I saw him. Conversely, the milkman was late, but fortunately we did not have much of an order from them today.

Our busyness continued from quite early on during our open ours. I had only just put away the first lot of deliveries when opening time came around and we were into our first customers almost straight away. It was picking up during the morning too when I broke away for a blistering session at the gymnasium while I still could. We had noticed the temperature drop quite a bit overnight, but it was still warm enough at the gymnasium and warmer still stepping outside afterwards.

The morning sunshine slipped away during the day and the cloud thickened as the afternoon went on. To my mind it was still a very decent day but there were a few disappointed that the sunshine had gone away. We sold a few hooded sweatshirts thanks to the westerly breeze, but I think shorts and parasols will have to take a back seat for a spell.

I noted today that the Scottish company that is overseeing the roll out of the Scottish Deposit Return Scheme has gone into administration. It was being bank-rolled by two UK drinks industry companies which had a vested interest in the recycling of used drinks containers. Those two companies pulled out last week citing the utter shambles that the DRS scheme in Scotland was. It probably has implications for the English plan which I think had been mooted for 2025 and quite sensibly a retailers' association had suggested it would be more sensible to have the same scheme across the Union.

Speaking for small business grumpy shopkeepers everywhere, I think a scheme will be troublesome for small shops with limited storage space. I am still smarting from the battery recycling scheme. After five years of collecting, I was still only a fifth of the way to the weight required before a recycling truck would come down and pick them up. No one said anything about minimum weights when the scheme started.

I was oddly pressed for most of the day. It was busy but not so busy that there should not have been some lulls here and there. Whatever happened it left me with the deliveries that turned up later in the morning still to be cleared. They will have to be done in the morning and ABH will have to look sharp about getting me up on time.

June 25th – Sunday

I saw the signs for it last night, so for the first time in however many years I was aware that the pirate race that runs from Land's End to Cape Cornwall and back was today. The run also incorporates going up and down Gwenver cliff because obviously a simple run to Cape Cornwall and back would be hardly worth the effort of getting out of bed in the morning.

It seems that even with the Gwenver cliff inclusion, the run was not worth getting out of bed in the morning. For the first time in the run's history, I have had a connection to a couple of the runners, so was able to get the inside track. It is as close as I was every likely to get, of indeed want to get, to actually running the thing. I am told that this year they struggled to get people involved and that there were plenty of vacancies even by the start of the race. My only surprise is that they have attracted so many people in the past. Not only is it a pretty gruelling race, and the couple I knew confirmed this with grimaces, it is run at one of the potentially hottest times of the year, and to add insult to injury they want £30 off you to do it.

The runners were blessed this year because in the middle of the run a weather front moved across the bay, shrouding us with mist and dropping a cloud of mizzle on the assembled company scattered about the street. The assembled company scattered off the street pretty quickly along with my hopes of having a second consecutive day of lively business. While a sudden drop in temperature and a welcome dowsing of cooling wet might have been useful for the runner, it would have also made it greasy under foot and somewhat hazardous on the uneven terrain.

Our clouded skies only hung around for an hour or so before brightening again into the afternoon. It was probably just as busy as it was yesterday, apart from the little hiatus the weather brought along. The breeze had switched to westerly at some point in the day. This did no favours at all for the surfers who saw the first bit of decent swell in a few weeks appear during the afternoon. Still, a few rushing waves were at least different from what they had for the last several weeks.

As the sun returned, so did our customers. We had quite a buoyant afternoon of it and saw quitter a few regulars returning this week along with a few who had not been here since before the dreaded lurgi.

Along with the upturn in business we have seen a downturn in the level of our stock. Odd that. I explained that I had been cautious up until now with our spending but with precious few weeks to go until the hordes are upon us, it might be the time to do something about having something to sell.

I took the little girl down to the deserted Harbour beach in the evening while the Missus was taking Mother home. There was good reason why it was deserted – a howling westerly banging across it. The sand was not quite dry or fine enough to be blowing up into her eyes, but she was not as impressed today as she was the

previous night and there was no one else to play with but me. She took herself up the slipway in the end and I managed to get her to walk a little way around the block. She even walked past our steps and around the corner to the mews behind us. On the way back we spotted the Missus returning and went back around to the RNLI car park to meet her.

The forthcoming week is set to be changeable, if the forecast is to be believed, so we shall see what that does for our walks out and our customers walking in.

June 24th – Saturday

The annual visit of my joke telling regular visitor went a little awry today. He told me that he had no joke today because he had been distracted by the news that some naughty Russian soldiers had some argument with some other naughty Russian soldiers. It was not clear which Russian soldiers were the naughtiest or if there were good Russian soldiers and bad Russian soldiers, but it sounded serious.

He proceeded to ask if I was concerned that, should matters escalate, that our neck of the woods would be inundated by refugees from the South East of the land. I suggested that probably not as we were likely more of a strategic target with our international fibre optic cables and air station nearby. We were quiet for a moment and then thought, that on the whole, he had best come up with a joke tomorrow morning – if there was one – a joke, that is, and a tomorrow morning.

Well, it was probably best then that we chose this morning to sport our Paul's Bread, the local artisan who won gold at the World Bread Awards last year. I did try not to go overboard as I thought that it would be pricey, which would limit its appeal. I do not know if his reputation precedes him, or people just know good bread when they see it but three of the four sliced loaves I ordered went in the first half an hour. I am sure I will get used to it as I have done with the pasties, but the smell of fresh bread cursed me for the entire day. It was only by virtue of the fact that we do not have a toaster in the shop that I avoided eating the entire consignment of teacakes.

Like yesterday, we were cloudy here and there in the morning, but the afternoon blossomed into something magnificent. Warm and dry though it was during the morning we did get callers asking where the sun was to. I thought that they might come back later in the afternoon telling us it was too hot.

Quite what it was that drove a surge in busyness during the morning will remain a mystery, but it was pleasing enough. You might argue that it was last minute leaving presents, but these were people who I had not seen all week and it is unlikely that they came here especially for going home presents. Perhaps they had been hiding all week behind Tesmorburys deliveries and only just discovered the veritable delights of shopping locally.

Though not quite as intense, we were busy through to the afternoon, which has been unheard of on a Saturday since we opened. It would be good to think that this is the start of a general picking up of trade in the run up to the main season. I shall not break open the grand cru just yet.

We are back to having an easterly breeze, thankfully not on the scale of the easterlies we were having a few weeks ago, and this time producing a pleasing cooling draught. While it was not dramatic, there was also a mediocre swell that set up a few waves over at North Rocks and attracted a couple of dozen desperate surfers during the afternoon as the tide declined. There were a fair few revellers on the beach but the dwellings down there were sparse considering the weather and how busy we had been. I would say if you had elected to spend the day down there today, you would have been pretty comfortable.

We were busy in fits and starts during the rest of the afternoon. I do not know what was happening, but I liked it. Some more of the artisan bread went and we are just left with the teacakes and the muffins, which were the outliers in the experiment. I suspect that we might steer away from those in future.

With everything going so well, a Lifeboat launch was the last thing on my mind and the least welcome turn of events. The pre-launch page had gone off to the Deputy Launch Authorities and the key Boat Crew. Because they were in and around the station at the time, I discovered the event was brewing and a couple of others had seen crew cars heading past and joined in the hue and cry. I was busy at the time, of course, with errant small children running about the place; a shout would have been most inopportune. Happily, the only page I got was one telling me that the launch was cancelled.

The breeze had been steadily increasing all afternoon and by the time I closed, it was quite noticeable. ABH was in an escalating spiral of restlessness throughout much of the day and by teatime, she was insatiable. Thankfully, the Harbour beach was quiet for a change, despite the loveliness of the evening, so I took her down to give the Missus a break. It was a shame that I dare not take her off her lead as she was keen to run about at break-neck speed and was doing her best even with the short lead we had attached. I was concerned that let go, the slightest fright would have her bolt for home up the slip and around the blind corner of the Lifeboat station into the road.

Nevertheless, she was having the time of her life and was not at all phased by a small whippet who took an interest. We had a paddle but quite how her paws got wet at the speed she entered and left the water will remain a mystery of science. Twenty minutes later the Missus arrived with a towel, and I let the little girl off the lead. We did running around, swimming and some more running around for another twenty minutes.

She was still bouncing off the walls when we got back home, but with less vigour. It took a good towelling down and the shock of her first introduction to the hair dryer to slow her down; she definitely does not like the hair dryer. She was back again at bed time, but sufficiently docile to be beaten into submission a short time later. I am of a mind that says Disney was wrong about Tiggers being the only one.

June 23rd – Friday

I managed to get my full gymnasium session in this morning, which was a bonus. The fact that it was a few degrees cooler in the hut with a tin roof was even more welcome, although after about ten minutes I did not notice any more.

We were looking a bit grey and overcast in the morning, which brought out a few grumbles and a few requests for me to say that it would be brighter later. So, I said it would be brighter later and, because grumpy shopkeepers have just as much chance of predicting the weather as the people on the television and radio who are paid to do it, it was, indeed, brighter later. Unfortunately, this did not translate into a wealth of business coming our way because many people had gone home and a whole host of other influencing factors that I may never be privy to. It was, however, a day for making momentous decisions, so I made one.

The bakery that we get our pasties from has long since stopped making its own white and brown sliced loaves. Instead, it orders them in from another bakery. Over the last couple of years, the supply has been fraught and more and more we had no idea whether we would get bread or not and if we did, how many. We could not go on like that, so we started buying from the milkman and the greengrocer both of which sell the commercial loaves that small Yorkshire boys push up Dorset hills on a bike. They are bread, dear reader, but not as they should be.

A local man brings his artisan bread to the café next door every morning and I have, for a while, been meaning to make enquiries because word on the street says that the bread is very good. I know that we cannot use it to replace the sliced bread we do because volumes might be problematic, and it costs too much. The intention is to sprinkle a little quality about our bread and cake display and to offer a wider choice during our busy times. The pinnacle of this will be the reintroduction of croissants that we are asked for regularly but could not, until now, get. We will henceforth, never be asked for croissants again, of course.

Although we were not that busy today, we have still had a surprising number of foreign visitors, mainly Europeans, although this week we have had a group of Americans from America and several Australians, where the pasties are dire and need to be eaten with sauce. Many of them - the visitors, that is, not the pasties which clearly do not travel - and probably a higher percentage than UK visitors, like to purchase a postcard or two to send home. For this very purpose we keep a number of postage stamps of the correct value to send a postcard internationally. Up until

last year, or possibly the year before, Royal Mail furnished us with sheets of Air Mail stickers when we purchased the stamps. More recently, they do not.

I wrote to Royal Mail last year to ask about Air Mail stickers and how to get them. I was told they are no longer supplied by the ordering process, and we would have to get them from a Post Office. Easily said, but there are very few main Post Offices now and the local ones do not carry enough Air Mail stickers to let us have them. The Missus had to furtively swag them from the biggest Post Office locally, which is in Penzance, but it is still not a main Post Office, as that closed a couple of years ago.

I wrote again to the Royal Mail a few weeks ago, as the situation is ridiculous. The Royal Mail website insists that Air Mail stickers on international post are mandatory and yet will not supply them. I pointed this out in my letter, along with the fact that they are not easily available locally, either. The reply I had was simplistic. I was told that the reason I did not get Air Mail stickers with my order was because I had not ordered them. Darn, why had I not thought of that. Ah, yes, I remember now: there is no facility on the website to order them and when I ran a search for Air Mail stickers, it told me the page was not found.

I explained the small flaw in the respondent's reasoning in a second message and received a reply yesterday. This was even more simplistic. In order to get any Royal Mail supplies, I need to be a Royal Mail business customer. It went on to list how I could apply. I took a few deep breaths before writing back, as clearly the second respondent had not bothered to read my message let alone the previous correspondence that was included in the message thread. We are already business customers.

I pointed out that we were selling postage stamps on behalf of the Royal Mail to facilitate its customers using its services correctly. I urged that they might consider some support in this endeavour. I await further developments, but I suspect that the next instruction will be to go to a main Post Office and ask there for Air Mail stickers. There's a hole in my bucket, dear Liza.

The clouds rolled back in for the evening performance, which made the Harbour and all its offerings a much less alluring place than the evening before. There were far fewer children diving off the slipway and the Harbour wall and, when I looked later, the beach, the little of it that the tide allowed, was sparsely occupied.

I did walk ABH out, the RNLI car park being about the extent of her explorative daring, and she was keen to run around. I would have taken her down on the slipway and let her loose but without the Missus there, I suspect she would have bolted for home. We spent long enough in the car park for the Missus to return from taking Mother home, which allowed her to run across the car park to meet her like a long lost relative. The tide will be kinder soon, so we will have a better run on the beach to

try and wear her out before bedtime. It is a war of attrition and I am fed up with being on the losing side.

June 22nd – Thursday

If I had booked a surfing holiday these past few weeks, I would have gone home by now. This morning, there was not even a breath of wind to add more than a shimmer to the surface of the sea right across the bay. I spoke with a couple this morning who had taken their kayak across to Cape Cornwall yesterday, sensibly noting a bit of onshore breeze, and had been so becalmed there, had stopped to make a cup of tea on board. Fret not, dear reader. I do not believe there was any boiling of a kettle on a hastily erected primus stove; they had taken a flask of hot water should the opportunity arise to use it.

ABH had awoken half an hour ahead of the preferred time this morning and had me at the Round House a short time later. It is part of our mission to make her see the great outdoors as her convenience, so we cannot be too picky about timing at present. At that time in the morning, despite the sun beating down, there was still some pleasant coolness to the air that I enjoyed immensely. We were successful on this occasion followed by a mad dash back home to sit in her cage, the current place for such procedures, to look guilty, bless her.

Despite getting up half an hour early, I was still down in the shop at the usual time. In the company of the little girl, time seems to evaporate. I took time to clear some of the backlog in the store room and clear a space for the pasties to be delivered into. During the remainder of the day, I continued to peck away at it and had the sunglasses, an abundance that we have each year, all cleared of their packaging and in the bags we keep them in for easy access.

The clearing of the groceries and sunglasses left sufficient space for the next grocery order that came in during the morning. I was back to a full store room and started again with my clearing out. I did not get all that far because we got a little busier. I also had some scallops to weigh and pack. I had declined to order them with our fish order in the hope I would then meet the £50 minimum order with our other supplier so I could get some smoked mackerel as well. When it came to it the mackerel was too expensive, so I declined. I wish I had also decided against the smoked duck breast I had ordered instead as it was twice the price that it was last year, and it was expensive then. There must be a national shortage of ducks.

Just when I thought that I was making some progress in the store room again, an order of fudge boxes turned up. This was delayed because of a shortage of one of the components and arrived today unexpectedly. This had to be cleared because it sat in the shop in the way. As is always the case, some of the space allocated to the fudge boxes had been used by something else, so that had to be found a new home, first. As is always the case, all the other spaces were occupied by other things,

which is why the space that is allocated to the fudge had been used in the first place. It was a work of compromise and an utter joy to undertake. Honest, guv.

The day had assumed a typical beach day format where were busier in the morning and the afternoon drifted into solitude. There were the occasional visits from customers, which diverted my attention from the clearing of the store room. Into the afternoon void stepped a lady from the North, though not as far north as our friends from The North last week.

Northern lady.: “Do you sell stamps?”

Grumpy shopkeeper.: “Yes, madam, what sort would you like and how many?”

Northern lady.: “Oh, I don’t know.”

Grumpy shopkeeper.: [Keen to help things along, knowing that life is short] “Well, is it first class or second class you would like?”

Northern lady.: “Oh, definitely first class.”

Grumpy shopkeeper.: [sensing victory] “And how many of those would you like?”

Northern lady.: “Oh, I don’t know. I’ll have a book.”

Grumpy shopkeeper.: “We sell stamps individually and do not have books. So, how many first class stamps would you like?”

Northern Lady.: “I don’t know.”

Grumpy shopkeeper.: [A little less confident of completion.] “Alright, how many did you expect the book of stamps you wanted to have in it?”

Northern lady.: “About six.”

Grumpy shopkeeper.: [Celebrating on the home stretch] “Shall we say six first class, then?”

Northern lady.: [worrying pause] “Yes, alright, then.”

Talking of Northern folk, we have a regular visitor here who is from Yorkshire. He is definitely from Yorkshire because protecting his thin-haired pate from the searing effects of the sun was his Yorkshire flat cap.

Happy to arrive at the end of the shop day, I took a brief break to eat something before heading to the Lifeboat station as someone had taken the near perfect evening to be an ideal one to have a training launch.

We pushed the boat out into the perfect blue sea, making a big white splash to delight the numerous lookers on. First, we had to rid the sea of errant snorkelers who would have made a dreadful mess of the front of the boat and small children using the slipways as a diving platform.

As we waited on the boat’s return we entertained a visitor who is on a mission to write and perform the first RNLI musical. He is several years into the project – apparently these things take time to gather all the right resources and support – and he is trying to find funding now. We had great sport with him and do trust that some of the things we told him do not find their way into the script.

Both boats had launched, the Inshore being the tricky one as the Harbour berach wa crowded with revellers. It was still pretty busy when the boat came back at around eight o'clock. We deployed two bankspersons to assist in driving small children and family members from the tracks of the Tooktrak as a safety measure, although if we do run anyone over, we have a pump on board so that we can inflate them back into shape after being flattened.

The big boat returned shortly after and was brought up the short slip in what was clearly a textbook recovery and one that will obviously be used as the example for RNLI, the musical when it comes out. We are, after all, a very thespian, very excellent Shore Crew.

June 21st – Wednesday

I have never met an Australian yet who has not asked for some sort of sauce with his pasty. Their pasties must be some rotten. I am educating them one pasty at a time. I deserve a medal.

It was a cracking little day from start to finish, despite the threat of thunderstorms hanging over us. One of the delivery drivers asked if I had heard the rain in the night as apparently it had been some heavy. If it rained here, I missed it, and if it had come through the skylight that was wide open, I must have been very deep indeed.

I had come down to the shop early so that I could rearrange the refrigerated stock into its appropriate fridges now that our dairy fridge was working again. The engineers had turned up late yesterday afternoon and spent some time trying to track down the fault. They put it down to a hole through which water was blowing and getting into the lights. Using some of our Blu Tack to plug the hole, they left the lights disconnected as they were still full of water when they left.

I am not exactly enamoured by the performance of our new £1,800 fridge. It is incapable of keeping an even temperature throughout, the doors do not shut properly, and it is now held together with Blu Tac. I have to book the engineer to come back and reconnect the lights after they have had a chance to dry. It still may be that the three light units will need to be replaced – with other not waterproof ones.

There was just about enough time to top up the drinks fridge. It had taken longer than usual because all the drinks I needed were at the back of the store room buried in the grocery delivery that came in yesterday. I had just about finished when the pasty man turned up. I thought it fortunate at the time that I had not ordered that many, so I was not delayed too long in opening. I discovered later that it was not that fortunate that I had not ordered too many pasties as we ran out early into the afternoon.

I think it may have been last Wednesday that I suggested that Wednesdays were often quieter than other days of the week. It seems the exception occurs when the

previous two days were inclement and the things people do on Wednesdays, they did then. There are probably other exceptions too for other Wednesdays that are busy. We were busy this Wednesday, especially for pasties and by the time I realised it was not a flash in the pan, it was too late to drag the reserves out of the freezer.

A short while ago, something I was eating bit back and hurt my tooth. It did not appear at the time to have caused any damage but a couple of days ago, the discomfort returned. It was not overly painful but with summer season close at hand, I could not afford to risk a problem developing in the middle of August when I could do nothing about it.

I decided that I would grasp the nettle, as biting the bullet did not seem at all appropriate, and get myself to the dentist. Given the problems I had securing an appointment at the NHS dentist in town and already discovering that they had their telephone permanently engaged, I decided to try the dentist that the Missus used – at great expense – last time. I called yesterday to go on the emergency list and was called while in the middle of my blistering session.

It is all over now. The dentist was a revelation, with a television to watch while being drilled and injected, although I was not keen on the programme they were showing and there was no sound. That might have been extra, but I did not ask; it had already cost an eye-watering fortune. It was a needs must situation as I would have had to go into town to do battle with the receptionists at the other dentist and then have to wait for an appointment. On the face of it, we have had better and cheaper weeks.

I had left the Missus with a delivery of beach towels and sun glasses to deal with and by the time I came back it was all priced and ready to be shipped out to The Farm. The store room is still full of groceries, so we will have to chip away at that. It is not a huge problem at the moment, as I have uncovered most of the drinks that we needed. We just need to avoid any more big deliveries. Like the one I placed in the evening for delivery tomorrow.

For the last few days we have had a proper five minutes to closing rush. It must be the customers we have this week, although I cannot claim to have seen the same ones two days running. Monday was the busiest, when I was bowled over by a maniacal wave of shoppers which I put down to retribution for closing for an hour or so while I did Lifeboat things. Tonight was the least busy, but in every case the customers have appeared from an empty street, at least the one I looked at a few minutes before when I was pulling in the outside display.

The evening was one of those not to be missed and many people cavorting in the Harbour though so too. Despite the lack of sand due to the high tide, revellers were packed into the only available corner with more dotted along the Harbour wall and several, including a Newfoundland dog wearing a buoyancy aid, in the water engaged in various pastimes.

It had completely eluded me that it was the longest day even as I took the little girl out for a distracting walk into the RNLI car park. She met up with a distant cousin and had they not been constrained by leads, I think they would have worn each other out in ten minutes. It was a missed opportunity as ABH will not stray very far from home at the moment, which limits the potential for nighttime exhaustion – at least for the girl. I am there already when I close the shop door at six o'clock.

June 20th – Tuesday

What a fun morning I did have, well, maybe not much fun, but different anyway.

We were lucky enough to have the big cash and carry order delivered before we opened, which got that out of the way. I am siding towards things happening for a reason now because the pasty delivery was late, and that too was very fortunate, so I better explain why.

In between the grocery delivery and the pasty delivery, I discovered that some eejit had left the new fridge door open at some point yesterday. I had looked into the fridge to make it ready for the pasty delivery and it was then that I saw the back plate all iced up and smelled a rat. It was probably not actually a rat, in fact the smell was entirely metaphoric, which was a relief, but pasties that resided there at not their best temperature for however long. Moreover, and probably more importantly, the crab that was delivered yesterday was also in there.

Normally, I label and freeze the crab the day it arrives, but various distractions and a Lifeboat shout had diverted me, and the crab had remained in the fridge. It now remains in the bin, as we cannot take any chances with shellfish, and proved that leaving the door open was a very costly mistake. I would fire the eejit but we are very close and eejit though he is, I need him to run the shop.

On the upside, the weather and the open topped bus threw us a bit of a bonus. Many people do not realise just how chilly it can get perched on the top deck open to the breeze mixed with the air rushing at you from the heady speed of the bus. We often meet with cold and bedraggled creatures, battered from the journey from St Ives, though having left it behind must be some consolation.

Today, we entertained a group of ladies from Glasgow, if my accentometer is working correctly, who were straight off the bus from St Ives. Like many, they had confused The Cove for the end of the line and Land's End but luckily found themselves in the welcoming arms of a grumpy shopkeeper whose sole existence is to give succour to lost travellers – and sell them thing or two. Without the slightest encouragement from me, they found our hooded sweatshirts and between them bought six. The fact that they now looked like a reluctant team from a company motivational training course was probably best left unspoken.

They were not overly keen on continuing their journey on foot but thought to give it a go, anyway. There were not five minutes out of the door when one of the showers that had blighted the morning trade arrived. I had them back in the shop seeking some waterproofs, so I pointed them at our range of reasonably priced rain ponchos designed for the very purpose. I have always liked the ladies of Glasgow, have I not, hen.

The rain cleared through by the late afternoon but not before claiming a few more surprised casualties looking for emergency protection. It did not take long before you would not know that it had rained at all, as the street was as dry as a South West Water reservoir. As a slight aside, I was amused to read the Daily Mail headline during the week, "First Hosepipe Ban of the Year" when South East Water announced theirs. We have been under a ban since last August and it has not been rescinded. Clearly, according to the national newspapers, unless it happens in London and the Southeast, it does not happen at all.

I was less amused by a lady customer who bought a size six aqua shoe to the counter, telling me she was lucky to be able to fit into a child's shoe. She argued the price when I told her and insisted I come and look at the shoe display. I already knew what our display looked like but was intrigued about how she managed to deduce that the large shoe she brought to the counter was a child's size. It came down to labelling.

We have across the top of the display a single card showing child, teenage and adult sizes – one each. She pointed to the child size sign and told me that clearly everything in the column below it must therefore fall into that category, regardless that there were two size six in the column, one clearly a child and one clearly an adult. I did ask what then she would call the other smaller size six in the same column, but she was off on one by then. She decided against a purchase but she left behind a most bemused grumpy shopkeeper.

I had sent the Missus off to The Farm yesterday with a list to top up our shoes and a few other bits. I suggested that we did not unload when she returned yesterday because I would have to leave the store room clear for the grocery delivery today. Despite the groceries still packing out the store room, when she returned from her errands today she suggested that she unpack the truck but put the goods directly out on the shelf, which was about the only viable plan. It took the best part of an hour but, the job is done and the shoes, including both child and adult size six are proudly on display – if you can spot the difference.

We were not the busiest today. The rain probably did for us from early on and infected the rest of the day. Other than the Glaswegian ladies, the rest of the day was pasties, cold drinks and snacks in the main. It is at times like this that it helps to have some other amusement such as receiving an electronic mail from our fudge bag supplier. The message, from a marketing type person, told me that they wanted to send us information regarding new products and flavours, which I am sure was a

very good idea. Also in the message, sent to my inbox, it asked what my inbox address was so that they could send it. Erm.

By the later afternoon I even ran out of little things that might amuse me, so I knew it was time to give up.

I should leave you in the hands of the Aged Parent who, at some mighty age, has decided to become Lord Byron – or it might be he is channelling Spike Milligan. This was rather good, I thought.

National Service

*Called form our homes at eighteen,
Most of us had never been
Further than the local shops.*

*So overnight to Padgate, then to our new estate,
But breakfast of cornflakes, fish and mash
Was naught to celebrate.*

*Tears were shed in uncomfortable beds,
Harsh tongues lashed while squares were bashed,
And the rifle and Bren made of us men,
And what a fine body we are.*

June 19th – Monday

Who knew that our rather perfect evening was a prelude to some smashing weather during the day today. I woke up, very late indeed, to the sun streaming through the window and the knowledge that I had overslept for the first time in a very long time. I had dispensed with my alarm setting when the little girl arrived; there seemed no need. Although she had not woken me for a fair few days, I was still awake well before the alarm time. I am not sure what happened today, but I was lucky that it was gymnasium day, which cuts my getting ready time in half.

Talking of the gymnasium, we are about to get an upgrade. No longer will it be the hut with a tin roof, it will be the two storey, purpose build building with a roof covering of choice. The roof has been in a poor state of repair for some time and funding, or at least match funding, had been given the green light for its replacement. I think thanks to some very dedicated people on the trustee committee, funding streams have been approved that together with some funding campaigns will permit a complete replacement of the building.

This is very good news and will herald the end of frozen sessions during the winter and a purpose-built room for gymnasium use. There will also be a wet room for the surfing body and rooms above for meetings and Life Saving training. There are two

regrets from my side: the parlous state of repair has meant that I have had mainly exclusive access and have not had to worry about booking time or clashing over use of the equipment as no one else was daft enough to use it; secondly, I will have no gymnasium for the duration of the build, which could run into months. I will turn my mind to a solution when I know more of the timing.

The weather brought out an increased number of visitors and we were busier than we have been of late for much of the day. The Missus had a queue when I came back from my blistering session at the gymnasium. I went upstairs to fetch her a coffee and when I came back, she suggested that we might have a problem. The lights were on but the ring main had tripped, suggesting an electrical problem with one of the fridges. I reset the board in the hope that it was a one off glitch but it went again soon after. I commence the fault finding with the dairy fridge, leaving that unplugged while the others came back on. This was the only stroke of luck I had, selecting the right fridge first time.

I called the maintenance company and told them that the fridge that they had just serviced a week ago, was now on its back and could they come and fix it. Unfortunately, we will have to wait until tomorrow, so this involved a rapid rear-guard action of emptying the fridge into available spaces in the drinks fridge and fruit fridge and adjusting the temperature of both accordingly. As luck would have it, the OS near cleared us out of milk in the morning, having forgotten to order their own, and there was not a huge level of stock of anything else, not being full summer visitor numbers.

I am still irked that the fridge was not operating to our expectations. It is a commercial fridge and should easily be able to achieve 5 degrees throughout. We should not have needed to reduce the target temperature to 1.5 degrees so that the bottom managed to attain the correct temperature and I am rather concerned that it was this action that caused it to fail.

It seemed a busy day but the streets emptied at around four o'clock again, which was probably just as well because at half past four our pagers went off for a yacht in trouble in the bay. We could see it drifting in towards Porth Navern and both boats were launched in a timely manner to go and assist.

The yacht had run out of fuel in the tank and although it had additional fuel on board, they could not get the engine restarted again. One day, someone will invent a method of harnessing the wind to make a boat move, which will dispense with such irksome difficulties. Until then, the Lifeboat is on call to tow the casualty vessel back to Newlyn, our nearest port.

A robustly manned crew on the shore had arrived to see the boats off. We remained until it was certain that the yacht was going under tow when we closed the door and retired until it came back again. We estimated that might be around eight o'clock but it was around twenty minutes to nine that the boat hove into view around Pedn-men-

du. It could be said that we were somewhat over-manned on the shore, so two of us took a back seat, observatory role for the duration. As we had some public viewing, it might have been helpful had we clipboards and stop watches, so that our role looked a little less non-contributory. Well, it was sufficient for us to know we were essential.

The most important decision was which slipway to use, since the state of the tide was such it could have been either not knowing exactly when the boat would arrive back. I elected the short slipway and the boat was recovered in what looked like – in my important observatory role – a classic textbook recovery, washed down and made ready for the next launch. We are, after all, a very numerous, very excellent Shore Crew.

June 18th – Sunday

It was looking most encouraging for a bright and sunny day as I stepped out early in the morning with the little girl. I had managed to prise her from her bed because this morning I was having no truck with that lying in lark. Although she still is a scared little mouse about venturing into the unknown, she managed to do what she was supposed to do on the run back from where I had dropped her. This might look like progress but was probably more desperate necessity.

The day did not fulfil its promise and remained overcast and somewhat grey throughout. I was told that it was humid again, although, once again, I was not greatly affected. Quite possibly with full sunshine our visitors might have been more encouraged to come to The Cove, but we were busy enough on average.

Our busiest time, as is nearly always the case, was in the afternoon. Forearmed with this knowledge, I set about completing our grocery order as soon as I could in the morning. It can take some time, especially if we are interrupted by serving customers or even having browsers in the aisle which we need to frequent to establish what is missing from the shelves. We could very possibly have lasted out another week, but we were close to running out of lager beer, which made a full order essential.

Despite starting early, it took most of the day. I did have two other orders to do alongside it which included sending off a revised wine order. I should be mindful not to do it ahead of the weekend because the state of the stock can change rapidly over Friday and Saturday night as it did this weekend. We had a group of visitors clean us out of a couple of lines which I had not ordered or had not ordered enough of.

While the sun was not shining as fiercely as it might, we sold a few hats during the day. New this year is a ladies straw fedora, although it is essentially a man's design, it is very fashionable for the ladies to wear – so I am told. It is a most alluring hat and has sold very well. We had a more mature lady come to the counter with one today. She tried it on to show her husband who was across the road at one of our tables. I told her she looked debonaire but then wondered if that term was solely used for men. It is the sort of hat that a lady might wear, along with a trouser suit, from 1930s

Chicago as she machined gunned down members of an opposing faction, so perhaps it has a maleness about it.

At a loose moment later, I asked the Internet but found no definitive answer. I think, on balance it is more associated with the male but since it is essentially a man's hat, I think that the word goes with it.

Any semblance of busyness evaporated at around four o'clock. Whether those that disappeared had some idea that it would rain half an hour later or whether it was luck, who can tell. It was not exactly rain rain, there were no stair rods involved, but more a light sprinkling of dampness. Not that this made any difference to the shop floor that ended up swimming with sea water after a troop of small lads, hot from Harbour antics piled into the shop for drinks and biscuits. I think that the smart ones work out early that a packet of biscuits is better value than bags of sweets for the hunger/energy ratio. They are all polite and well-behaved boys and quickly learning about card limits and what they can afford. I followed them around with a mop after they had gone and hoped that I was right about the hunger/energy ratio and that it did not expire before I closed the shop.

When our new windbreak stand arrived, I commented that the wheels were a bit small. I let it go until after I had tested moving it and found that difficult. As the days have gone by, it is becoming increasingly fraught dragging the unit inside the shop. In the short time since delivery, the tyre on one of the wheels has shredded making it even worse to move. It snags on the footpath tiles, the rubber ramps and the carpet bringing it in. He has agreed to replace the wheels with bigger ones and as the days go by, that cannot come soon enough.

The newspapers had been wrapped up and put out for collection and I had brought in some of the outside display. It was then that the wet girls turned up to drip on the floor that had just about dried from the boys' visit. I did not bother with the mop, it will dry overnight, and I will have seven year old girl footprints all along the food aisle to the drinks fridge. It is what you get in a seaside shop. It was just short of half an hour out from closing time, and it had been a fair day, I reflected.

I then brought in the big bin in which sit the tiddler nets and parasols. I as lifted it into the shop that was a soft crack from below as the rotten dolly attached to the bottom split neatly in two. Well, I said it was a fair day, not perfect.

It ended on a more delightful note than that, thankfully. The Missus had taken Mother home and had left me with a boisterous ABH to contend with. She has taken, in her quieter moments, to repose on the bleddy hound's throne in the window and it was from here that she spotted the Missus returning home. I slipped her into her harness with the idea that we would meet the Missus on the street but were a little satrpy and met her on the steps instead.

Seeing what a wizard idea it was to step out into a much more summery evening than we had day, we headed for the deserted Harbour beach with the tide just vacating the upper reaches. Here she cavorted and raced about the sand – no ball required, although we had brought one with us. Another group arrived ten minutes later which our girl took delight in chasing until one decided to chase her, which scared her a bit. We tarried for about twenty minutes, which seem about right and left shortly after ABH got a semi-enforced swim in. She gets very cold straight after, so it is time to wrap her up and take her home. She will last a bit longer with some meat on her bones.

It was closing on bedtime when we got back. Any hope that we had put a dent in her energy levels evaporated as soon as we came back in the door. It was a valiant effort on our part but we will have to try harder.

June 17th – Saturday

It had rained during the night, quite how heavily I had no idea, but the street was still damp when I stepped out early doors. I was alone, mainly because ABH would not be shifted. She was fast asleep first time and each subsequent time I tried to rouse her, she rolled over and closed her eyes. I got the message after the fourth attempt and left her there with the Missus.

They were not the only ones not keen on meeting the day. I only saw two people in the street when I went to down to the shop to prepare for the day and one of them was delivering. Our first customer through the first electric sliding door in The Cove was the driver of the early bus, looking for a pasty which we did not have. He complained that the café did not open until ten o'clock, which on the face of it is a bit late for a café to open. He conceded the point when we looked up and down the street and the only people in view were us.

There were not that many more later in the morning, although we had seen some goings away with presents for home that cheered things up a little. Looking out across the bay it looked like it might be a tad disappointing for any hardened surfers as well. The sea was flat as a dish at just gone high water. Things bucked up a bit for a short period around low water when there looked to be some decent waves around North Rocks and a few more in the middle of the beach. I think the latter is largely due to the sand having been scoured out from the lower sections of the beach leaving a big bank at the rear leading up to the dunes. There was quite an army of surfers out towards North Rocks just after the middle of the day, while the schools stayed in the middle.

Our friends from The North headed off early this morning. Happily, I was at a loose end waiting on newspapers when they called to say goodbye and I was able to run down and commit our farewells in person. I suspect a good many people were leaving early to make their way home as there would be some major disruption up at Chiverton roundabout over the weekend. Heading east the detour is not too bad but

coming west, travellers are directed off the A30 at Carland Cross and down through Truro and back up to the A30 just short of Stithians. It is one pickle of a diversion and not for the fainthearted.

Despite the thinness of the crowd, we did quite well on pasties and picked up steady trade from just before the middle of the day through until later afternoon. We do take bookings from people fearful that they will miss out. Thankfully not too many because when we are very busy, it can be difficult to manage especially when it involves larger numbers because we cannot keep them warm and have enough in the warmer for the normal throughput.

Pasty ordering can be quite a ritual for some, and it can be amusing to observe. Many times we have the head of the family arrive at the counter, establish that we do indeed sell pasties and only then work out if any other member of the family unit actually wants one and if they do, what sort. This may involve multiple enquiries and waiting for other smaller groups to turn up so that they can be asked as well.

It happens in bars too. I recall working in a busy ale house in Twickenhan on rugby day. People who had spent ten minutes trying to fight their way to the bar when asked what they want then turn to their pals a few rows behind to ask for an order. They are less than politely told to go away and come back when they are ready, most often by the person behind them in the queue who knows exactly what he wants.

Another bemusing trait is asking how many pasties we have left. This I might understand if the asker is after a larger number of pasties than he can see on display but very often the end result is the sale of one pasty. This question may evoke the playful side of the grumpy shopkeeper who might just ask 'how many did you want' or if the timing is right, tell the asker that we have 80 and then ask if they needed more than that.

We seemed to build up momentum as the afternoon wore on. We had a very pleasing number of foreign visitors and at one point a whole group of Australian ladies, walking the Coast Path and stopping in for essential supplies. One lady asked the question about did we sell maps of the Coast Path, which we do not. It is a tricky map to produce being 600 and odd miles long and very narrow. It is also very well marked, so the usefulness of a map might be questioned unless it is very detailed to show nuances in the route. The path can be changed from time to time as well due to erosion and local works. The maps do exist but not everyone wants the whole thing to carry around as most often the path is done in stages. I shied away from such things as being far too difficult to manage.

Our busyness continued almost through to the end of the afternoon, which was comforting. The weather had not improved much from a relatively cloudy start, although there were moments of brightness offering some hope and it did not rain. It was good enough to fill the Harbour with wall jumpers and cold water swimmers in the

latter stages of the day, which was probably best on a day that many people told me was humid and uncomfortable. It did not affect me terribly much; I do not get out much.

June 16th – Friday

Today was going swimmingly until I left ABH alone in the living room while I went and took a shower after my blistering session at the gymnasium. When I returned, she had found herself on a sunlit plateau that she had erstwhile not managed to attain, where she found sport in disassembling my hearing aids.

I found her in a tableau of quiet contemplation on the sofa, one of my hearing aids hanging from her mouth. My immediate thought, after 'what a little blighter', was whether the battery was still in place, and it was. I breathed a sigh of relief, but it was only momentary as I remembered that there were two. The other was missing completely but emerged after a brief search but more worrying was that it was minus its battery.

The Missus and I both had a good sweep to see if we could find it. It is a tiny thing and could be lodged anywhere in the fabric of the sofa. Then again, which was our major worry, the little minx could have swallowed it. She spent the next couple of hours at the veterinary doctor being x-rayed and prodded.

The x-ray found nothing, which was a blessed relief for us and probable utter bemusement for the little girl. There is still a loose battery around somewhere and I hope we find it before she does.

Anyway, it had started out as a pleasant day. We had lost the full on sunshine and it had turned a bit more hazy and cloudy, even from the off. Radio Pasty had mentioned something about rain but had cited the Isles of Scilly and said nothing about the far west. I was still not surprised when it started to rain in the early afternoon soon after ABH was packed off to the doctor. It pretty much killed off any trade that there might have been save for the initial flurry of people finding shelter when it first started.

I actually turned a bit of work out in the ensuing lull. The bone china mugs had been depleted during half term and since and were looking a bit thin on the shelf and needed topping up. I had already spent some time crafting the best price I could from the new stock that was subject to an energy surcharge this year. It creates a bit of a confusing gap between two of the same style mugs on the same shelf, a couple of pounds apart. I think I will be spending a bit of time explaining myself.

There were other things too that had been outstanding for a while, so at least I felt that I had achieved something even if we did not earn anything from it. It then cost me to order online the bits of hearing aid that ABH had done in. I did look for special puppy proof ones, but they did not have them.

We were quiet right until closing time. There had been a few comings and goings and, thankfully, some of these were present buying runs before leaving tomorrow, which turned a shilling or two. The rain had largely disappeared and a big lump that was heading in from the southwest, split up before it got to us. The sky remained looking threatening for the rest of the evening. We shall hope for better tomorrow.

June 15th – Thursday

We have always been a couple of scats behind everyone else down here in the Far West, well, maybe not always, sometimes we are streets ahead. Alright, let me try that again. Sometimes we are a couple of scats behind everyone else down here in the Far West, the most recent example of which is the weather. We are hot and sunny a good week after the party started and just shortly before a bit of rain comes in.

I learnt this morning that we may well be ahead of the posse on recycling our milk bottles. We may well be behind, and I just have not heard of it but all our semi-skimmed milk that arrived today had white lids. It is the way of it now, apparently, or soon will be because, we are told, the coloured lids are more difficult to recycle into food grade reusable plastic. Since the dairy industry is required to use milk bottles with at least 30 percent recycled plastic in them or be taxed, so they are keen to make the process simpler. It does, however, make it much harder for the milkman to distinguish between types and I am sure it will lead to a little confusion in the shop, but it is all in a good cause, so we will put up with it.

Mother's fibre broadband is at last installed in her home. Not that it has made a noticeable difference to her lifestyle, but her bills should soften a bit and she will get them back dated to when the installation should have taken place. The lady who was charged with following up on my complaint sent me a message yesterday asking if I was now happy with the result. She sent another message today asking if I had the previous message and if I had, she would be grateful for a response.

It crossed my mind to delay a little, since Mother had been waiting so long for the installation to be carried out but really could not be fagged to mess around. Instead, I expressed the irony of being chivvied along by a company that that taken four months to do a job that should have taken, at most four weeks. I almost left it at that and the fact that Mother was now very happy – or would be when she had the rebate – but added a cheap shot wishing the company every luck in achieving its target of replacing all copper by 2025.

Here, in The Cove, we had a typical beach day. There was some interest in the shop during the morning period and were left alone for a long portion of the afternoon while everyone enjoyed the beach or sitting in their gardens. The enforced quiet enabled me to do those things that have been waiting, such as staring aimlessly out of the window and wondering when it might get a little busier. I also managed to

finish off topping up the jewellery stand and improve the signage on the t-shirts to discourage people from ripping open the packaging when samples of each size hang along side the baskets where they are available.

Down on the beach, those who had elected to spend their day on the sand were being squeezed into the dunes by the high tide around the middle of the afternoon. The spring tides are not yet upon us, but the neaps are a little way behind and the waves did not leave much sand to cling onto. The dwellers looked to be quite numerous, all bunched up like that, but in reality, we are still not overrun with visitors.

It was such a spiffing evening that some clever person decided that it would be a wizard prang to have a Lifeboat exercise. I had already had several enquiries through the morning, indeed, through the week from various small children excited at the prospect. As is often the case, I do not get notice of such things myself until close to the event and I am the one called upon to launch it.

I discussed the notice situation with one of the team head honchos and suggested that social media might be employed to make the process more dynamic. He was not overjoyed at the thought until I mentioned that he had school aged children who would run rings around such a process. It only struck me afterwards that it would be mums and dads the recipients of such messages and they may well be at a loss for making the technology work too – there again, their six year olds would help, no doubt.

We gathered shortly before seven o'clock and launched the big boat into the azure brightness of the bay. Whoops went up from the assembled watchers along the railings and on the beach and top hats thrown with abandon into the air. It might well have been fitting to have gay bunting fluttering in the breeze along the length of the slipway had we had some – bunting or breeze, that is. The slipway has been there for some time.

We sat around enjoying the late evening sunshine and warm sea breeze while the boat exercised its new trainee coxswain. On the shore we swop around roles, so that we are all able to slip in where needed. It also add variety to a job that can be a bit samey when it is conducted seamlessly each time. So, I found myself in the winch room, buddying a crew member who is seeking to be passed out in the role, while others attended to the various tasks required to meet our primary objective of bringing both boats home.

From where I was in the winch room eerie, I had a clear view of the operation and I can categorically state that we executed a textbook recovery of the big boat up the long slipway at going on for half past eight o'clock. As we were washing down, I could see a similarly exemplary recovery of the inshore Lifeboat on the Harbour beach. We are, after all, a very consistent, very excellent Shore Crew.

June 14th – Wednesday

I am the very model of a helpful grumpy shopkeeper. Our visitors come to me with all manner of problems. For the main part, I am able to help them and find solutions or alternatives. It is not just visitors I respond to, but local work people sometimes come to the shop with their woes. Only today, a manual labourer complained that he was far too hot. He was doing some pointing and the sun was beating down on him. Always ready with helpful advice, I told him to go and point a wall somewhere else. I am sure he went away delighted.

From this you will know, dear reader, that our misty woes were behind us. It was touch and go first thing in the morning and we did not know what to expect; the forecast was not helpful in this regard at all. Certainly, by mid-morning the mist had predominantly cleared and the sky and sea were more blue than grey. It was still a little hazy, but we can forgive it that. I did consider telling people that it was as thick as a bag over at Porthcurno but thought I might have been easily rumbled.

Our surf jewellery company played a bit of a blinder. I placed the order around midday yesterday and it arrived here just after one o'clock today. It arrived when I was at a loose end, so I opened it straight away and started to put it out. I sold the first item ten minutes later. That has to be some sort of record. I was amazed that the company had packed it so quickly because there were 47 different products. The picker's hands must have been a blur.

It certainly took me longer to unpack it and get it out on the stand. I had completed quite a bit when the preserves and chutneys turned up from Mr Sisley and Mr Crelow – that was a bit of an assumption as they might both be ladies and then again, they might still be Misters. We had run out of strawberry jam, a major sin, a week or so ago and Sisley and Crelow do not turn orders around like our surf jewellery company do. We now have an abundance of strawberry preserve and for the first time in two years we also have raspberry preserve at the same price.

I think it was two years ago that the crop failed, and we could either not get raspberry anything or it was very expensive. It still is more expensive from the mainstream companies but clearly it does not have to be any longer, which is probably the case for many things out there.

The sparkling day persisted right through to the end. It did not make it very much busier than yesterday but oddly Wednesday is often the quietest day of the week. I think it is the day when everyone chooses to wander off elsewhere.

The Missus and I thought it might be a good idea if we took the little girl out with another dog. She stalwartly refuses to 'go' outside and holds on until we get home where she dutifully goes in her cage, the assigned place. We thought that she might get an education out with another more enlightened hound but, alas, all she wanted to do was play and he did not want anything to do with her. We struggle on.

June 13th – Tuesday

It was a day of forgetfulness divine. There was no special reason for it, just the sort of day it was.

For one thing, the mist forgot that it was probably supposed to be here early in the morning, as mists generally are and came back in the middle of the day, instead. It had all started a bit grey and not very noteworthy at all. It was even a bit cool to start with and when the mist came in later, it was cool again. It came and went for a bit to start with and then came back thicker, and only for the parish benefit – St Buryan and southern facing slopes need not apply.

The Missus was out of the door reasonably early today with designs on going to The Farm with Mother. She had ABH with her when I asked where she was going, and I reminded her that she had agreed to outsource dog sitting to our friends from The North for the day. I had caught her just right because it only meant packing a few more items and she was good to be packed off for the day. Our friends from The North used to take the bleddy hound on longer walks when we were all a bit more capable of such things. The little girl is not doing longer walks anyway yet and her being separated from the Missus works toward the master plan of making her a little less reliant and attached. It was a good idea all around.

Since we were not rushed off our feet today, once the early morning orders were out of the way I concentrated on some outstanding tasks that I had left far too long. Chief amongst these was refreshing the surf jewellery stand that had been largely emptied during the half term and picked clean since. It is a good line for us and having the stand empty is not good for business. Today, I managed to pull out the overstock from the store room and discovered that there was not as much as I had hoped in there.

I resorted to going onto the company website and commencing an order. It is a mainly random act, just selecting from a huge list of bracelets and anklets and before you know it, you have accumulated quite a princely order. It was no different this time around. One princely order will be with us by the end of the week.

I am able to keep pace with my electronic mail by using my smart mobile telephone. Ain't technology a pain in the bottom. I do not constantly check for new messages, so I was blissfully unaware that Mother's telecommunication company engineer had left a message in the middle of the morning announcing his imminent arrival. I had kicked up a bit of a fuss about the length of time it had taken to have the upgraded fibre service installed, so missing the installation might have been a tad embarrassing – or justice, but would not serve Mother well. The complaint had come to nothing – reading between the lines, it said 'hard cheese'. They had told me the installation had been arranged for 13th June, today by my reckoning, and that of the engineer who sent the message and also the day that Mother and the Missus were up at The Farm all day.

There was a bit of scrabbling about while I tried, and initially failed, to contact the Missus. Eventually, I got hold of her and they packed up and headed back to St Buryan. Luckily, the engineer had left a mobile telephone number by which to contact him and I established that he had not already been and was on track to be there later in the afternoon.

Even that led to a minor disaster because the Missus had agreed to collect ABH between two o'clock and three o'clock and it was at least the latter when the engineer was in the middle of the installation work. Since we had no contact number for our friends from The North, the Missus had to leave Mother looking after the telecoms engineer while the Missus dashed back for the little girl. Later on, she was lying dazed on the living room floor – ABH, not the Missus who when dazed, remains upright. We shall have to learn what friends from The North do to wear out small dogs.

What wore me out in the latter stages of the day was the constant stream of returning visitors telling me how lovely and sunny in was in Porthcurno, Penzance, Praa Sands and anywhere else that was not here. I am very much hoping that I do not see another raven in The Cove but if I do, I am definitely taking it seriously.

June 12th – Monday

What a morning. I saw a raven the other day. A most unusual sight in The Cove. It dwarfed the jackdaws it was standing beside. I thought at the time, I should have sacrificed a virgin. A good job I do not live in Redruth. I had the morning from Hades and all before half past nine o'clock.

The milk and the pasties were both late. Not that it mattered too much because we were not busy. It was just that the frozen order turned up while I was in the middle of putting away the milk and while I was diverted to that, the new windbreak stand arrived. I had just transferred the windbreaks when the pasties got here and while I was trying to empty the pasties crates, two customers turned up and I was interrupted serving them with the green grocery delivery. How was your morning, dear reader.

Our haze that we started the day with cleared to rather less hazy blue sky and brightness. It still looked a bit thick out towards the east, but we did not let that worry us too much since it did not appear to be coming back again. Nevertheless, the brightness came and went which was a lot better than the forecast gave us.

We were still not the busiest place on Earth. We have been predominantly slow during the morning and the early afternoon that seems to be traditionally busier than any other during the day, was not that much better. There were a fair few people about, they were just not shopping.

You would think that all that quietness would give me a whole heap of time to clear our deliveries and tidy up the waste cardboard. Well, it would have done had the Missus not gone shopping and left me to look after ABH. I looked dubious but the Missus assured me that when she was looking after ABH in the shop she slept thorough the whole session. I did suggest that was because the Missus was there and not eight miles away, shopping, but my protests apparently held no water.

I must be satisfied with a little pyric 'I told you so' by the time the Missus came back three hours later. I had been plagued, plagued, I tell you by a nine inches high bundle of high energy intent on causing mayhem. Had I been busy I would have been in real trouble. It did not help that she enlisted the assistance of every person who came into the shop by acting the sweet, butter would not melt, look how cute I am game, which encouraged every one of them to make a fuss of her as she attempted to climb out of her basket. She slept for about twenty minutes at one point until another dog started whining outside, which started her off all over again.

When the Missus came back, after sorting out the shopping, she took the little girl down to the beach for an hour. I did not harbour any hope that this might curb her energetic enthusiasm later in the evening, because I knew that it would not. She was a little subdued for a while and I was able to read more than a chapter of my book in one go. We paid for that at bed time when she decided it was time for games.

There, I almost forgot until our friend and neighbour – no, a different one – told me about our builders' merchant up St Just not doing concrete anymore. This reminded me that I had not shown off our new windbreak stand to anyone yet. Our newly found engineer and fabricator had designed it based on the old one and fabricated the steelwork before sending it off to be galvanised against the salt air. It is a beauty and built like a brickwork outhouse. It will probably outlast me, which is probably a little understated now. I am a little concerned about the size of the wheels, which will almost certainly be the first to go, as they are tiny. I will give it a bit of a stress test and see how we go.

June 11th – Sunday

The fog that had made a fleeting appearance yesterday afternoon was back with all its mates this morning and crowded into The Cove so tightly, you could hardly see across to Gwenver. It lifted a little and there must have been some big blue patches above it because it brightened as the morning went on. There was some rain about that must have dropped in the early hours and there was some light rain about when I took the shop front display out. It was gone before we opened or it might have been soon after.

We had been open for a short while before the newspapers arrived today. Not only were they late because of the football, the delivery had run into a traffic accident somewhere on the journey that delayed it even further. There were hardly any

people about at all at that time and I managed to get ready the necessary papers for those who did turn up quite seamlessly.

It was not quite the rip-roaring day that we had hoped for, blighted by the mist that hung around in one thickness or another all day. We were not inundated with business and from time to time there were long lulls but, conversely, there were also moments of activity, just not as many as we would have liked. Amongst the various visitors were those we have met before and are regulars in The Cove, some now markedly elderly and frail.

Once such lady arrived in the middle of the afternoon and I welcomed her kindly. She was very pleased to be back in The Cove again, but the journey here was arduous and more so due to a train strike that necessitated arriving by coach. She told me that her husband would have driven previously but he had shuffled off just after their last visit at Christmas. Her woes were added to by having Parkinson's disease, cataracts and debilitating arthritis. 'So,' I asked, by way of being cheerful, apart from that, is everything alright?' She is a dear old soul and was always pragmatic, as far as I recall. Despite her troubles she was very positive, and it was a pleasure to see her again.

The Missus eventually made it up to The Farm to do some farming, having been diverted from her purpose by her injury. There had been some cursory watering that had saved the lettuce but some of the greenhouse stock had not survived. The growing areas in the polytunnel for the tomatoes, spring onions and cucumbers are filled with weeds almost overarching the lettuce in the middle. We will get through one year without disaster, I am sure of it, and things were going so well with the raised beds, too.

Things became very quiet in the run up to closing, although we did have some notable sales now and then, and closing the shop was a kindness, like shooting an injured horse. The evening after that perked up a little and the mist thinned to something like a soft focus photograph. It looked just the sort of evening to take ABH onto the Harbour beach and maybe for a little dip, had I remembered to take a towel.

We took our time traversing the beach because sand is still very new and there is quite a lot of it for a very small hound to push around with her nose. The gig was out in the bay, something I had not seen in quite a while, and the rattle of the oars in the rowlocks and the slap of the paddles against the water drew the little girl's attention through the stillness of the evening. Having assessed it to be far enough away not to be a threat she continued her nosing and we eventually made it to the water at about the same time the gig made the beach.

It was not so much the activity around the boat as the crew disembarked and some helpers brought down the transport wheels but the sudden appearance of a big collie, barking it head off that made ABH take fright. She pulled me up the beach in short order and up the slipway. There is one thing for certain, other than the outside

world can be big and scary (I am no pup and I still feel that), but the little girl definitely knows her way home.

June 10th – Saturday

Gad, the heat, the flies. Day two of our somewhat clandestine heatwave and we are striving to stay, erm, temperate. So much so that I thought it a bright idea that I take the little girl down to the beach where it would be cooler, or, in our case, out of the continuing easterly draft – although that was much diminished today.

I do not think that ABH had done anymore than look at the beach from the top of the slipway before. Now I was trying to walk her down to it, the experience became a little too daunting and I had to carry her the rest of the way and place her on the firm sand. This, too, was not all it was cracked up to be apparently and she was off up the slipway again. Persevering, I took her to the loose sand, cut in furrows by the tractor wheels and boat keels. Now, we were talking turkey – the stuff moves if you press it with you nose! We will have to move onto probably being best to dig with our paws but for now it is super good fun digging with one's nose.

After the fear and alarm of earlier, I had to drag her away from her new play area because the shop needed to be prepared, and that was no fun at all. I tied her lead to the anchor point on the wall outside, the one for small children that everyone appears to find amusing – I was in earnest – but she got in the way while I was trying to get the outside display out of the shop. I put her in her bed by the door on the bleddy hound's throne, but that was somehow worse. I was quick thereafter before she decided to jump down and cause mayhem. It remains inside for the morning routine, however.

I had mentioned the softening of the easterly breeze that was most welcome. It was a clear morning, but frightfully grey. The newspapers were late in arriving and I recalled an ignored note that mentioned football and lateness, so I got on with the dairy delivery and the wealth of fudge and biscuits that I had noticed had dwindled to nothing over the last week or so.

I kept my eye on the front so that I could see the shadow of the newspaper van arriving through the curtains, but it had failed to materialise by the time I got to the end of the biscuits. When I went back outside to put the bread crate in our box, I was met with a grey blanket and could not see beyond the railings opposite. I had not been that long about the fudge and biscuits, so that fog must have come in pretty quickly. It took longer to go, but that is another story.

When the newspapers arrived, I mentioned the football and was told that was tomorrow. He was late because he had van trouble. Maybe I should read the notices I get sent, but there again, late is late and makes no difference to me what the reason is or whether I am expecting or no. I have long since stopped worrying about their timeliness.

With the weather not being exactly in our favour to start with, we were not very busy for most of the morning, although we did have a small flow of leavers. We could certainly expect our arriviers of last night to be taking a rest after their long journeys here and be late on parade. It was closing in on the middle of the day when the numbers started to pick up a bit, mainly as people were enjoying the delights of the café next door. At certain times of the day, we do ride off the back of our neighbours quite a bit. It is called economies of scale; I learnt something at school, see.

By the later part of the afternoon, the easterly breeze dropped away to light airs from the southeast. The idea of a heatwave that Radio Pasty had been banging on about for the last couple of days started to gain some traction and some real warmth introduced itself to The Cove. The fog that had lifted on The Cove quite quickly had disappeared from the top of the hill as well by that time. There were even a few waves for the surfers over at North Rocks.

Like with the rain, Radio Pasty were a couple of scats ahead of the curve with their weather advice and I was beginning to wonder if we had not found ourselves in a kink of the space/time continuum and were getting radio broadcasts two to three days before they happened. If true, I can absolutely nail my pasty orders.

After a shaky start and a bit of poor weather, our business perked up about from the middle of the day. We were not raving busy but for an arrivals and departure day and the attendant weather, we did not do too badly at all. Amongst our arrivals were our friends from the North, proper North at that, who demanded an immediate audience with ABH while I finalised the grocery order they had sent ahead.

It was not long after that the party seemed to end, and the street emptied for the last hour or so. The mist started to creep back into The Cove and the temperature started to drop for a time. Quite oddly, the mist vanished in a blink of an eye and left a warm and pleasant evening and one just right for small pups to have their first sea dipping experience.

We walked her down to the Harbour beach after tea where it was indeed warm and very bright, and the sea lapped gently on the shore about a third up the beach. It was ideal for a first paddle and our little water baby took to it straight away, although I would say that the cold was not all that to her liking. We had omitted to get a towel and when I return with one a few minutes later, she was cavorting all over the sand.

Since she is so attached to the Missus we assessed the risk of flight to be minimal, and let her off the lead to give her a bit more room, which she used. She is very quick on long gangly legs and had she decided to run off, not even Mr Bolt could have caught her. We found this with the bleddy hound that no matter how much sand she rolled in, it just disappeared. By the time we reached our steps, ABH was completely sand free, which is more than could be said for the Missus and I who needed to rinse our feet before we stepped up.

ABH had been running all over the beach, paddling chasing things and digging sand (with her nose). Before we went down, she had spent almost the entire day playing with the Missus. When we got back, she wanted to play some more. I am beginning to think the Missus and I need to find ten years younger from somewhere to keep up.

June 9th – Friday

I have to admit that I was having a hard time reconciling the heat warning for today with the howling easterly wind, laced with heavy lumps of rain that were washing through The Cove first thing. Much stranger things have happened, I am sure, so I was not about to dismiss it, after all, the rain Radio Pasty had promised for the last three days had arrived – eventually.

It seemed like a good idea to rush ABH out of the door for her morning constitutional when I found that she was awake, since she is now allowed out. She had a good sniff around but waited until she got home before taking advantage of the temporary facilities there. It is a work in progress.

It took a while for our pasties to arrive in the morning, so I knew something was amiss. The driver told me that he had been turned away from the Scillonian due to paperwork, which could have easily been corrected then and there but the stevedore was having none of it and sent him away. It was resolved eventually, but it made him very late to us.

Not that it mattered very much but it did mean I was tied up with customers when I should have been putting pasties in our refrigerator. I was a bit concerned about delaying him still further, so I tried to serve the customers as quickly as I could. I need not have worried. When I returned to the store room, our driver had stacked the pasties in the fridge while I was serving, bless him. I could not let him get away with that Scott free, so I told him he had put them in the wrong way 'round.

With the Missus well on the road to recovery, I chanced my arm with a trip down to the gymnasium. Clearly, this is ill-advised in the middle of a heatwave as it might be injurious to my health, but I risked it anyway. I made sure to take regular trips out into the forty miles per hour easterly blowing our 16 degrees of heatwave around to cool myself down. It was a blistering session, for sure.

When I returned downstairs having made myself ready for the rest of the shop day, ABH was lording it from her carry case on the counter. She waited for me to arrive before acting up – I seem to have this effect on the ladies. Fortunately, it was short lived before she was whisked away to go shopping with the Missus.

We had not intended a shopping trip, but we discovered that our toilet was blocked last night. It happens infrequently, but we have previously been able to clear it with our aging plunger. This time, the blockage seems more severe or the plunger less

effective that it was. I checked with our plumber friend who recommended sticking with the plunger but upgrading to a decent one – hence the Missus changing her mind about shopping.

It was not the most dynamic day that the shop has ever seen. In fact, it was reminiscent of the weeks before the half term holiday, which was unfortunate. Our lack of sunshine, the easterly blast that refused to damp down and the occasional shower all played their part in our demise for the day. We were not alone with our noses out of joint, there were no waves again, either and the desperate ones down there had taken to their paddleboards.

I did not think it could get much quieter but at four o'clock, the street was near enough deserted. The Missus returned from shopping with bags full, which was not bad going for a shopping trip that was not supposed to happen, and Mother in tow. She had to drop in to see our favourite fishmonger in Penzance as today is fishy Friday and we had run out of fish in the shop. I placed another order but with it being spring tides this week there would be a shortage of netted fish. We will have to wait until the middle of next week for anything decent, I suspect.

The Missus had visited the professional plumbing shop on the trading estate for a plunger and, unbelievably, they did not have one. She did bring back a drain clearing snake that I tried later but appeared to be ineffective – other than making marks in the porcelain in the toilet bowl. I went at it again with renewed vigour with our old plunger and between the two, the blockage is now clear, I am sure you are delighted to know, dear reader.

It all adds up to just another normal day of jolly unexpectedness in The Cove that keeps you guessing.

June 8th – Thursday

It was an action-packed day down in The Cove this morning, or at least our little corner of it. I had already played host to our pasty man and the man who comes and gives our fire extinguishers a cursory glance, signs the little panel on each and charges us a small fortune.

I had popped around to the café next door to return an invoice that had been erroneously given to us and when I got back our humbled and proud, friend and neighbour was waiting for me behind the till. I think he was trying it out for size. Anyway, the humbled and proud comes from having mentioned him before a few days ago, which I will no doubt now have to extend because I have mentioned him twice in the same year. He had come to tell me he was going home again – he does this randomly throughout the year – both going home and telling me – and left again without buying anything. I find it a particular sort of comforting in a relationship when a humbled and proud, friend and neighbour feels at home enough to visit and leave

without a purchase. It is also very pleasing that there is just the one, though, dear reader.

The robust easterly breeze had continued all the way through the night and was still easterly and robust in the morning. So robust was it that I had to tie the wheelie bin to its bigger pal to stop it migrating to the Harbour and I also had to abandon any hope of putting out our flags, one old and one new.

The replacement flags had turned into a big of a saga. I do have the second but the custom sleeve I asked for is too small for the pole it has to accommodate. The first, second replacement had arrived with a black sleeve when I had asked for a white one, but I had not got as far as checking its size, which had I done so might have avoided the second, second replacement arriving with a sleeve that was too tight at the aperture to receive the pole.

I did feel a little like I could have born some of the responsibility for the problem as I had signed off the proof and the 19.5 millimetre wide sleeve. However, on the article that arrived, while the upper part may have been 19.5 millimetres wide, the aperture certainly was not. In addition, I had also made the point that it might have been immensely difficult to sew to such precise measurements and that I would understand if the sleeve was not precise as long as it erred on the side of caution and was bigger rather than smaller than specified. The lady with who I have been corresponding has offered a complete replacement and I do not have to send back the wrong one again, which is a sterling response.

Next up was the man from the refrigeration company who comes every six months to demonstrate that the money we are paying for a maintenance contract actually buys us something. He puts a temperature gauge into each of our units and pronounces them working. Today, I got him to look at our shiny new dairy fridge that was not keeping its temperature in all parts of the fridge the same and the milk at the bottom was getting warmer than it should.

He adjusted the doors, which needed adjusting and would give a better seal but that was not the whole story. He went on to tell me that it would be warmer at the bottom of my very expensive commercial fridge because that is where the compressor was. I suggested that since it was a very expensive commercial fridge it should be the same temperature throughout regardless, which is why we purchased a very expensive commercial fridge with a fan in the first place.

Flailing around for solutions, he suggested we move the milk up to the middle of the fridge, so I asked what weight the shelves were rated for and if they would cope with around 50 kilograms of milk on one of them, to which he thought probably not. I also asked if we should then dispense with putting anything on the bottom shelf, because I did not recall anything in the sales documents suggesting that only certain parts of the fridge were usable.

In the end, with our discussions leading nowhere, we turned the temperature gauge down as low as it would go and hoped that the temperature average would do the trick. We live in hope as I think the warranty expired at Easter.

We were not as busy as the other days this week. That vicious wind was almost certainly to blame. It was not a whole barrel of laughs being behind the counter with it gusting in every now and again, but I would not have chosen to be out and about in it for very long.

By the middle of the afternoon, we still had not seen any signs of the clouding over Radio Pasty had talked about yesterday and again today. I was beginning to doubt that I had heard it correctly but surely I could not have been mistaken two days in a row. The BBC's website with which Radio Pasty's forecasters are associated, show a completely different picture to the story they were telling. Confusion abounds.

In the prettiness of the day, no matter what it felt like, the beach looked clean and inviting, primarily because there was hardly a soul on it. In the late afternoon, the light, soft through the light haze hanging above the bay, was matched by the pastel colours of the sand and the broad reach of shallow water stretched across the width of the beach. There were a few people in the water, taking a thigh deep paddle but even the paddleboarders could not be bothered to be out there battling the breeze.

We had a Lifeboat gather in the evening but there was no launch. We could launch into conditions such as these but recovery then becomes a bit of an issue. While not impossible, it introduces a risk and we try and avoid risks while training. Instead, a very pleasant man from Cornwall's paramedics turned up to demonstrate the use of a defibrillator machine and refresh us all in the gentle art of CPR. He brought along a number of 'resuci-Annies' to practise on, which was immense fun and jolly useful too. While we have all done this before, the frequent refreshers are more likely to bring it home should we need to use the skill in anger.

On less serious news, the little girl had her first walk out today on a lead. Her vaccination has reached its full potential and we can now take her abroad to get used to living in the big wide world. We had hoped to introduce her to the sea but it was unkindly choppy in the Harbour and we did not want to put her off before we got started. The first thing she did was head for the steps to go back upstairs again. I cannot say I blame her.

June 7th – Wednesday

It was not a week ago that the weather forecasters on Radio Pasty were telling us that there was no sign of rain until the middle of the month at least. There was not a hint of humble pie today when they announced that rain was on the way in the next couple of days. I had to chuckle because it was the first time in a while that I heard that the rain was especially singled out for the Far West and the Isles of Scilly.

Wherever the wind was hailing from during the day, and I have given up looking, it was blowing straight at me behind the counter. It did give me a break during the middle of the day when it must have moved somewhere else, but it came back again in the middle of the afternoon and forced me into a jacket again. That wind freshened in the latter part of the afternoon to around 30 miles per hour or more, which made the fellow pushing his kayak towards the Harbour about to do something most ill-advised if he intended to launch it. I did not see him, but I probably would have missed it since he would have been at Land's End in the blink of an eye. He did look like he knew what he was about, on reflection, and was probably just pushing it home.

The business day was probably not quite as busy as yesterday, which was not quite as busy as the day before. It was still not as poor as the days prior to the half term, and there are still a good number of people about spending money like good visitors should – open your wallets and say after me, “help yourself”.

Before the wind took hold, a couple of young men stopped by and bought some of our new snorkel and mask sets without tearing open the packaging first. In fact, they did not bother looking very hard at all and were most happy to part with their shillings and get going. They did not even ask to leave the packaging behind, quickly locating and using the bin down by the Lifeboat station. That was most refreshing.

The Missus was whisked off to hospital first thing, which was better than it sounds. It was hopefully her last appointment regarding her eye and so it worked out. She has been given the nod to drive again, so the in-laws who have been down here a week and a half with no notice at all, were able to go home. Without them we would have been in very tricky territory, so thank you very much.

It was a bit helter-skelter in the morning. The little girl was glued to her bed and the Missus and I only managed to drag her out for the necessary before she headed back in there again. Previously, we would have been up an hour and I would have given her some breakfast as she would have let me know that she was hungry. With so little time between ABH coming awake and me going downstairs, I do not get around to the feeding bit. It was not until her second meal of the day at the end of the afternoon that the Missus and I worked out she had not had the first. She did not seem to mind or kick up a fuss and it certainly did not stop her leading Mother a merry dance while the Missus was away up Truro.

Tomorrow she is let out on an unsuspecting world as her vaccination reaches its full potential. She is a proper water baby and we have had to set up a bowl in the shower where she can splash around and get wet – she upsets her drinking bowl else and splashes in that. I suspect that first call will be down to the beach and see how she gets on with big water. Look out, world, here comes Tali.

June 6th – Tuesday

I could not separate the little girl from the big girl this morning, so I left them both languishing in bed. ABH had wrapped herself around the Missus' head and I could not get at her without disturbing the other and I could not do that because I value my soft bits.

The pesky wind had got up again during the night. I heard later that it was colder up North, and I should be grateful. I am grateful of course, but also cold, though not as cold as I would be oop t'North. The temperature was not helped either by the big dark cloud that blotted out the morning sun. That did not take long to disappear and left us with another smashing (or it might have been glorious) day and one that I was later able to dispense with my coat.

I had a telephone call early in the day from a lady who asked if I remembered her. She said she was the lady from Nottingham. I did not respond immediately as the conversation rapidly moved to saving her a newspaper and to tell me about her recently demised husband. She asked again if I remembered her and I said, 'of course, you're the lady from Nottingham.' She sounded very pleased that I remembered her. I was glad, too.

The big grocery delivery used to come first thing in the morning. They understood that later on it would become more difficult as we were more likely to be busy and parking might be a little fraught. All the old team have long since gone and the van arrived in the middle of the afternoon. It was busy and parking was fraught, and it was a lot more difficult than it would have been first thing. We struggle on.

While the groceries were being delivered, the Missus was up at The Farm collecting a list full of beachware to restock with after the half term clear out. She reported back that someone had scat down one of our walls while trying to get to a water pipe, also ours but no longer in use, and had left after being unsuccessful. Through some enquiry and complaint we have nailed it down to the new owner of a field further along. It is the same field that the Missus kindly mowed and had not a word of thanks. Apparently, they asked again – unsuccessfully. We do not hope for any response or satisfaction, therefore. For a few years we have been blissfully alone up there but now it seems to be getting busy and we will have to keep a better eye out, which is such a shame.

With the store room already full of groceries, the stock piled up and spilled into the shop. Much of it went out onto the shop shelves as intended but we have discovered that the snorkels and masks are now boxed, whereas before they hung in display cases off the slat wall. It is an effort to be eco green and sustainable all at the same time, the plastic display cases are gone and the product now cannot be seen. This will very likely occasion boxes to be torn apart and even if one is already torn apart, another will have to be torn apart to make sure it is the same as the one already torn apart. It is the way of things.

ABH had been down in the shop a while, as the Missus dug into the grocery delivery. She behaved for a while and welcomed many of her new adoring public, which of course is her job, but it all got a bit too much after a while and she started to protest. We are certain that Camborne was not built in a day, so we gave the little girl some latitude and the Missus took her upstairs.

I continued where the Missus left off for a while but was interrupted more often as the afternoon wore on. It seems to be a feature of this week that our five minutes to closing rush starts an hour or so before closing and continues often until five minutes to closing. I was unable to make much of a dent in the grocery pile from then on but I did get most of the snorkel and masks out in the shop by combining our plastic boats and throwing one of the boxes out.

The Missus has her last, hopefully, hospital appointment tomorrow morning, which is when she would have been finishing the grocery delivery off while I was at the gymnasium. Neither of those things will now happen and while I will not going to be attempting to go to the gymnasium in the evening, the Missus was keen to give the groceries a go after tea.

This left me in charge of ABH, which went well for a while but she soon noticed that the Missus was not coming back and started pining. We are going to have to soften that link before it becomes problematic, but with me working in the shop all day that might be a bit of a challenge. It may have to wait until winter when I can take her off for longer walks in between projects at The Farm. It does rather look like we will be busy for a long while to come yet. Whose bright idea was it to get another bleddy hound?

June 5th – Monday

Once again, someone had selected a morning from the 'really nice ones' section of the mornings catalogue. This time they had chosen one with rather less easterly breeze, which was good of them.

For the first time in a while, I had not needed a jacket to go downstairs with first thing and I did not need one later in the day, either. It was a first rate morning that very much suited going to the gymnasium for the first time since the Missus had her eye poked out. She was feeling upbeat about doing another shop session after covering for the Lifeboat launch yesterday and who was I to gain say her. I duly trundled off down the road and had myself a proper blistering session. It was disappointing that I dropped ten seconds off my rowing time, but it was a week or more since I last went. I did not think too badly of myself but might on Wednesday if it does not improve.

The Missus had settled the little girl on the shop counter in her travel case. It seemed unfair to shift her, so we did the shift change and left the small pup where she was. She seems to have settled into a routine of being sluggish in the morning and would stay in bed if she could, to being much more active in the afternoon and evening. This

coincides with one knackered, grumpy shopkeeper heading up the stairs and ready to collapse in a heap. Not a chance.

Quite coincidentally, we received a communique from our International Correspondent in Tasmania, south of Camborne. He is living the high life, living on his farm during the last couple of months while his house in the suburbs is being painted. We are not entirely sure – I presume that our correspondent is – of what is grown on the farm, but my guess is whatever it is will be huge. He sent me some pictures of the ferns that grow there, you know, dear reader, the plants that you whack aside with your stick as you walk through the undergrowth in leafy areas. You would need a particularly robust stick to have any sort of impact on these beefy samples. Anyway, we are glad to hear that he is in good form and the crane to lift his broccoli out of the ground is still working.

We do not have many big things at home, although we probably do rather better in the sub-tropical climate that Cornwall has to offer than some other parts of the UK. Also not big in this part of the country was the swell again. Our surfers have been bereft for at least a couple of weeks of any decent action and we wonder what they do with themselves in the interim. I spotted two paddle boarders out there in the late afternoon, so that cannot be all that fun for those that like living on the edge. We have sold a few snorkel and masks in the last few days, which I am sure offers an interesting alternative. There was one person out there later in the day with a bright orange float – well, I am assuming there was a snorkeler at the end of it. In the evening there were three or four, almost a shoal.

Then, almost at the last knockings, our friend and neighbour from up the back came in with the question that catches me out at this time every year. He pointed to a large number of big yachts piling around Land's End and heading north. I suggested he dig out the back pages of The Diary from this time twelve months ago, because it would be in there and had I done the same myself I could have cut and pasted the same paragraph and saved myself some finger work.

It is the Normandy Channel Race that starts at the mouth of the Orne River at Quistreham. The boats race around the Isle of Wight, along the south England coast, around Land's End and go north. I seem to remember they swing around an island, Tuskar, on the south east Irish coast, around Fastnet on the south west coast, and head back again, ending up back where they started – at least that being the plan. The website tells you that at the time of writing, the race was being led by La Manche Evidence Nautique, a French boat from France. The nearest token Brit was 2.2 nautical miles behind in eight place.

STOP PRESS. (I checked again in the morning when they were fast approaching Tuskar and Alla Grande Pirelli was out in the lead, yesterday's leader in eight and the Brits had dropped to fifteenth – thrilling, ent it.)

June 4th – Sunday

ABH had me up in the very early hours of the morning, acting up for apparently no reason at all. Just a mad half hour before settling again. We would have had words in the morning, but she had a lie in.

It was once again a glorious morning. There must be another word as this will become very tedious very quickly, as these days are set to continue. I found it a brae bit chilly on our side of the street and continued to do so until into the afternoon. It was that pesky easterly breeze that had unsettled me but a quick visit to the sunny side of the street showed that a cooling breeze was probably quite welcome.

The Missus has recovered sufficiently to be able to work behind the counter again. This was most beneficial as someone had chosen today to run a Lifeboat exercise with the Cape Cornwall National Coastwatch Institute. The exercise followed the same format as the exercise with Gwennap Head NCI where a 'dead Fred' is dropped in the water and the shore based watchers guide the boat onto it. Not only is it great training for both organisations but it is also a jolly wheeze and a few of the NCI people get to come out on the boat.

We launched them into an azure sea with a bit of a white foamy splash close to low water. By the time the boat came back, just over an hour later, some more sea had drained away from the bottom of the slipway and one of our brave crew had to step out on the slippery rocks – not me, obviously. The boat came and settled in the crystal clear pool at the toe of the slip and the crew threw their heaving line. The easterly breeze, although not all that severe dropped their throws short of their mark – our man standing with his arms out. A less kind Diarist might have said that the Boat Crew failed to compensate for the easterly breeze and fluffed the operation. Fortunately, I am not that sort of Diarist.

I moved our man to a rocky outcrop nearer to the boat to assist in making it easier for the Boat Crew, so they immediately placed their second throw to the rock he had just vacated. Other than that, and in fact everything our side of the back of the boat, could well be described as a textbook recovery up the long slip at very close to an hour short of low water. We are, after all, a very forgiving, very excellent Shore Crew.

There were a fair few people milling about when I headed back from the Lifeboat station. There was a veritable crowd in the shop, too, and business through most of the day was brisk helped along by some proper warmth and sunshine. We made a good dent in the remaining pasties, but we did not come close to running them out, which is more than can be said for the beer as the evening approached.

It was locals' day down on the Harbour beach and while I did not see it, I imagine that there was a proper party going on down there. Most everyone knew each other and many grew up together. Children abounded and towards the latter part of the afternoon beer began to flow – and the adults probably had some too, followed swiftly by pasties to soak it all up. I had wondered why the wall jumping had not

started but as I closed the shop there was a crew of half a dozen older lads diving quite serenely off the wall.

Apparently, it had been the hottest day of the year so far. I was camped behind the counter in a jacket again and the lamb hotpot the Missus had lined up for tea, though incongruous on such a red letter day, was most welcome.

June 3rd – Saturday

I had woken at five o'clock simply because it does not take long to condition me into a new routine. ABH remained asleep until six o'clock and even then I had to drag her kicking and screaming from the bed to perform her morning duty. Because the time had long passed that I could reasonably play with her and give her breakfast, I left her to the Missus while I got ready to head down to the shop. Just before I headed downstairs, I stuck my head around the bedroom door only to find that the little girl had gone back to bed again and was curled up on her pillow asleep.

I stepped out into a sublime morning, as if the evening before had just paused and carried on at first light. There was no breeze from the east as there had been on every other morning during the holiday, which was about right. The breeze did come back again later in the morning, but I had enjoyed it for a time without, and that was enough for me. I put my jacket back on and got on with it.

There was a heartening resurgence in pasty buying, given that I had purchased what I thought was going to be a huge surplus. There were quite a few large orders for going home with and then some buying of the hot variety started. As sometimes happens, we went from zero interest in our pasties, to the world, his same sex partner and surrogate children all wanting a pasty at the same time. Fortunately, I was able to slam some additional pasties into the oven and catch up with the suddenly inflated demand shortly afterwards. It fluctuated during the day but by the end of it, I was wondering if I had enough for tomorrow.

We were busy enough by having had the remaining exodus of holiday makers but there were sufficient gaps between customers to assess our shelves. The Missus had done a full topping up a couple of days ago, so we knew roughly what was missing from the store room and what to order in. I whistled through the new grocery list between customers, which will need to be keyed in at some point before the end of tomorrow.

The Missus will be arranging to be taken up to The Farm tomorrow. This is partially to do the watering up there but also gives up the opportunity of bringing back beachware stock to replace all that taken during the week. That was the other list I did in the gaps between customers when I was not doing the grocery list. You may be wondering, dear reader, how I determine which gap is assigned to which list writing. It is a very complex algorithm, obviously, and would take to the end of the page to explain, so suffice it to say that it took a while to master it and now that I

have, it is very much second nature. I understand that it sounds a little far-fetched, dear reader, but both lists are now complete, so I must be in earnest.

The gloriousness of the day ebbed away a bit during the day as some naughty cloud arrived, blotting out the warm sunshine. In the middle of the afternoon, the waveless sea arrived near the top end of the beach, squeezing the assembled company there into the dunes. It just exposes the frailty of modern holiday making and the challenges our visitors face on a daily basis. It is a wonder that they still come in such numbers. They must be a hardy breed.

We drifted into our new earlier closing time with a dwindling number of customers. After the café closed, a small group gathered on the benches opposite enjoying ice creams from the kiosk on the other side of us. Once again the day evolved into a proper summer evening with couples taking the air, promenading and strolling around the fringes of the beaches. If Laura Knight had her brushes still, she would have painted it.

June 2nd – Friday

I am a bit slow on the uptake and I clearly do learn from lessons of the past because I over-ordered on everything for this morning. Many people will have left for home in the early hours of the morning and even more during the day. Sure, there will be some going tomorrow, too, but we will be a severely reduced population in The Cove today. I just cannot break myself of the habit. Thankfully we have a freezer.

Whether it was because of the extreme volumes I had indented for or some other reason, both the milkman and the pasty man were late arriving. Fortunately, I was not hit by a big rush of customers until after they had left, although it was a close run thing with the pasties. I was selling those out of the crate they arrived in.

It gave me a bit of heart that there were so many people milling about and buying pasties so early in the morning. Then came the buying of last minute going home presents and it became clear that this was a short-lived bit of busyness by the going homers, and there were quite a lot of them. The raid lasted until close on the middle of the day, which was very welcome. The late deliveries and the early customers had put a sharp stick in the eye of having any sort of breakfast but all the same, it was good business to have, and I was sorry to see our visitors go.

There was still a decent trade floating about in the afternoon but the downturn was very noticeable. I am sure it was not helped by a thick cloud covering that we were told was going lift but by four o'clock still had not and even if it had then, it would have been too late to make a difference anyway. There was nothing for the surfer, either. The sea had been flat calm for several days in a row, although there was probably enough of a shore break for the surf schools to ply their trade.

Even though we had witnessed a mass exodus, there was still enough of a crowd to make the beach look busy and especially so near high water with them bunched up by the dunes. Paddle boarding was game of the day, though there was precious little of that even and earlier during the morning a wing surfer cut speedily across the bay on his hydrofoil. On the whole, it looked pretty empty out there for most of the day and the Lifeguards must have been bored witless.

The Missus took off with Mother and the in-laws in the middle of the afternoon. Mother had an appointment in the big city, and everyone went with her including ABH. It would have been difficult leaving her with me as she is still very much attached to the Missus, I just do not pass muster as second best. They were gone for quite some time, so I do not know what the little girl made of it. She travels very well, unlike the bleddy hound did initially, but this was her longest journey so far, but I am told she took it in her stride and slept through it all – both ways.

We probably could have got away with closing at six o'clock in the evening, but it is difficult to tell what it will be like when I do the shop times in the middle of March. I will certainly have less beer to top up in the morning and even the soft drinks did not take too much of a battering. From tomorrow, after the last of the half-termers leave, it will be back to walkers, childless couples or those with pre-school age and those holding – not too tightly, we hope – to the silver pound.

June 1st – Thursday

The little girl is learning how to cope with shop life over the last couple days. The Missus, who is slowly recovering and also losing her mind with boredom up in the flat, has been clearing the store room. This by necessity means bringing ABH to work with her.

We started by putting a barrier across the store room entrance, which worked well enough until I realised I could not get in and out to put pasties in oven. A few trials and errors later, we dropped her bed into the shopping trolley and slipped her into that. It worked so well that the Missus wheels her around the shop while she tops up the shelves. This, of course, had led to ABH meeting her adoring public for the very first time. Oh gosh, the oohs and aaahs.

There was a spectacular start to the day. The sun creeping over the cliff as I took the little girl around the block to waste some time before breakfast. Happily, it is not raining as that would scupper a good time waste. We were blown across the Harbour car park by a robust easterly – again – and had in it our faces coming back along Coastguard Row. Oddly, the wind reversed again in the later afternoon, which must be a local effect of hot land and cool sea. I do not think that ABH was too concerned, and she is much more comfortable coming around with me, tucked up in my jacket as long as she does not get the impression that is how 'walking' is done. She had her second injection in the afternoon and will soon be released upon an unsuspecting world.

The sun shining in the sky and not a cloud to get in its way, we had a typical beach day, especially as the punchy wind abated by late morning. It must have got warm down there, mainly because everyone was so closely packed together. They were even more packed together when the tide came in toward the latter part of the afternoon and the tide is heading towards springs, so there is more of it. We managed to get in early with a good sale of windbreaks and had a buoyant session all the way until the early afternoon.

We did slow down a bit during the afternoon, but we cannot expect a sustained level of business as it was at the start of the week. There was much buying of going home gifts, too, which bolstered sales, and some people were packing up for an early start tomorrow. We wish them all a fond farewell. We had seen many of the usual suspects, long time visitors and families, many of whom we count as friends – whether that is reciprocal or not, we shall leave in the air.

We also have the usual embarrassing question or two, such as ‘what time do you run out of pasties?’ which elicits the response, ‘shortly after we sell the last one’. For some people this goes over their heads, but the lady in question this time realised as soon as she said it and was fearful that she might find herself in *The Diary*. Fortunately, I am sensitive to such things and would, of course, not dream of mentioning it. Oh, oops, sorry.

The in-laws made a fleeting appearance outside the shop to pick up the Missus and the little girl for her visit to the veterinary doctor and her injection. They headed off to the shops after that and were gone for some time. While they were gone we slipped into barbeque shopping and the purchasing of associated foods. It usually works quite well as we have burgers and sausages and rib eye steaks, which go down well. The only issue is that they are frozen as we do not have the throughput to keep fresh meat and this becomes problematic for those who are doing a barbeque on the fly – as bargeques often are. We already throw away too much out of date food and our meat is too expensive to run the risk.

It was such a perfect evening with the onshore breeze dropping away that the only sensible thing to do with it was to have a Lifeboat exercise. I counted myself out on this one as the shop was still open but an eager team, those that were fit enough, joined the fray. The boat launched close to seven o'clock to an audience lined up against the railings opposite the shop, waving and cheering and throwing their top hats in the air – well, metaphysically speaking. Then they all begged off.

I was having some tea when the boat returned at around half past eight o'clock. I could not see the slipway from the sofa and it sounded a little off. I got up to see what was going on and concluded that a trainee Lifeboat driver was having a go at going astern onto the toe. They call it astern because it is very serious.

On the last approach it appeared to me to be a textbook recovery up the long slipway in perfect conditions. We are, after all, a very well-practised, very excellent Shore Crew.