

DIARY 2023

August 31st – Thursday

So, there I was looking out of the shop window, barely able to see the beach let alone the other side of the bay. I was comforted in the knowledge that this was just an illusion because, in reality, the sun was beating down from a clear blue sky. All I can say is thank the heavens for the Meteorological Office, without which, we would never have known.

It was clearly not just me suffering this delusion. Our visitors were absent from the scene and not just because I could not see them and footfall in the shop was sparse. There was even some heavy rain during the time our bakery and grocery were being delivered, which fortunately I did not have to go outside for. That cleared away in the middle of the morning just leaving our mist – or not as the case may be.

So quiet was it in the morning that our friendly local wagtail felt inclined to come and have a chat. I see him around some mornings and mainly hear the sharp chirp to tell me he is around. This morning he was hanging around by the newspaper bin and when I went out to put away the bread crate, he stayed put. I had a chat with him, and he stepped a little closer, quite comfortable with my presence and came within six inches of my foot. Even when I moved, he was unbothered and we stopped for a good few minutes for a chin wag – well, he wagged his tail instead.

He was still there when I came downstairs again to open the shop. I disappeared into the store room with curtain from the first electric sliding door in The Cove and when I came back the first customer of the morning told me that my friend had stepped inside. My customer was a little flustered at birds close to and set the small bird in flight. I had to ask that she step away from the doorway to allow my friend out, which when she did, he duly left.

It was a visitor who inadvertently alerted me to the fact that the bus timetable changes on Saturday. It will mean that the handy brochure that we keep on the counter to give away will be redundant. It was only today that I noticed that it had been reprinted and the old times removed. More importantly, they had corrected the fairly major faux pas of reversing the clockwise and anti-clockwise titles for the circular bus routes.

It will mean that I must be timely in replacing the one I cobble together for the window and memorise the times it leaves The Cove and in which direction. Before the summer timetable kicked in, both buses arrived at the same time – or at least they were scheduled to do so – and can hardly wait to discover what they have done with it for this winter.

I could, indeed, not wait and in an idle moment later had a geek at the new times. The clockwise route is unchanged save for the addition of a school bus but the anti-

clockwise has changes a few minutes here and there, which is irritating as I will now definitely have to change my sign.

I took the opportunity in the quiet of the morning to continue with the inputting of my geet pile of invoices, which brought me a little delight, as you might imagine, dear reader. I also had time to send my newspaper financial records off to my contact at the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company.

I had sent a note to her moaning about the 12 percent increase in my delivery charges starting on Saturday. I had not heard back from her in a couple of weeks, so I sent another note moaning about the lack of response. She sent one back telling me that last week, one of our busiest, the percentage of delivery charge against retail value looked reasonable. This is why I felt it better to send the figures from weeks where the charge was utterly unreasonable, and we made a loss on those weeks. I have not had a reply.

The rain returned in the afternoon and any busyness that we might have had, evaporated. The mist had cleared out a little during the middle of the day that encouraged some movement around the place and, had I looked properly, some activity on the beach. The Missus had just made it back from The Farm with some additional stock before the heavier rain commenced and the mist returned at around half past four o'clock. It turned somewhat miserable after that, and we had but a few stragglers to keep the shop stirred.

Just for amusement and because I had little else to do, I had a quick geek at the Meteorological Office website again: sunny spells and showers. Radio Pasty's website was not much better but at least they had a little black cloud for their sunny spells.

I returned to Lifeboat training in the evening after a five week absence from such things. It was well attended for a meeting without a launch – the tides are not helpful – and there were four new recruits waiting to be led around the station for a brief familiarisation. In the meanwhile, the Inshore boat launched and was out for about an hour. The rain had eased, and we gathered on the slipway to watch it and wait for its return.

Out to the west, the sun was seeking a gap in the cloud at the horizon to make its glorious exit for the day and had set the cloud on fire on its way down. I took the lull in activity as an opportunity to run the little girl down to the sliver of available beach that was empty save for the Tooltrak vehicle, and we walked back around the block.

I was back to watch the Inshore race across the bay with a backdrop of receding mist clinging to the cliffs. It was not long before it came back in, and we washed down and put it away. Things are returning to what passes for normal around here.

August 30th – Wednesday

It was a busy day down on the beach today, maybe on the premise that there was no rain in the forecast. Not only was there no rain in the forecast, there was no rain, either.

I seem to recall a fair amount of blue sky about when we first stepped out. There was rather more cloud than that during the rest of the day, but it was bright and the cloud high level. There must have been some waves about because earlier in the tide there were surfers everywhere, dotted about from one end of the beach to the other.

It was mid-morning by the time I headed to the gymnasium. Since it was not that busy, I stayed and had the full blistering session. That decision rather grew on me while I was rowing and just kept going when I reached my short version cutoff point. I completed the full circuit too and felt much better for it.

The Cove had come alive to a certain degree in the time I was gone but each day is a little less busier than the last. I wish that it was consistent with the number of pasties (sorry, MS) that sold today in abundance. I had placed my order for tomorrow based on the previous two days, so if we have the same again tomorrow, we shall be in trouble. It is like the beer sales that I have been unable to keep on top of over the last couple of weeks – we have a store room overflowing with beer, now, but at least I do not have to throw those away after a day or two.

One thing that we are running out of is our hooded sweatshirts. They have been selling in geet piles over the last few weeks probably due to the weather when the poor little lambs are feeling the chill. It is pleasing that after so many years of having them, sales are as strong as ever and probably more so. On the last order I had concentrated on the jade colour as it was selling better than all the others but over the busy summer, other colours have gone as well, and we now have some serious gaps.

Since it had gone a bit quiet at around three o'clock, I set to pulling out all the sweatshirts out of the boxes and counting the ones out in the shop. This was going alright for a while, but word soon got around that I was 'doing something' and a host of customers started to descend. A job that should have taken half an hour took more than two hours to complete, but at least it is complete. I have also discovered that we had far more than I thought, although two sizes across two colours have run out completely, so an order is required.

It was knocking on closing time when I had finished the count. I have a large number of children's ones to put out but since the shop was busy, it will wait until tomorrow. I really had little time to devote to it as we had a proper five minutes to closing rush that extended beyond our closing time. There were some significant purchases in that time, which made it all worthwhile and, of course, the white bread I did not order because we had too much, all sold out.

I was a little tardy taking the little girl on her evening run. We could not get on the beach earlier anyway because of the tide and when we did get out and there was a little sand available, it was as busy as any day during the summer. There were water revellers jumping off the wall and generally larking about in the Harbour and plenty of people waiting for a decent sunset to geek at. We gave the beach a miss and continued through the busy car park. We stopped to chat with a few people on Coastguard Row and happily did not have to avoid the resident juvenile gull.

There was just time to read a few pages of my book before bedtime. I will have to practise this putting my feet up in the extra hour I have lark, as I am not very good at it at the moment.

August 29th – Tuesday

It appears that we have been getting parking enforcement all wrong in The Cove all these years. We do not need good old traffic wardens, no Traffic Enforcement Officers, what we need is a team of lady bus drivers.

In a busy shop this morning, while my customer was at the till, a lady bus driver came and stood in the doorway looking very determined. She asked if our customer was the owner of black, Renault car of a certain registration number, which he confirmed that he was. Then she gave him a hard stare and said, "What are you doing parked in a bus turning point?" Flustered, our man looked sheepish and muttered that he did not know. "What, you did not know you do not park on double yellow lines?" came the sharp retort.

A very small man left the shop behind the bus driver, striding back to her bus that was blocking the street.

He might have got away with the public humiliation had he turned up earlier, as the shop had only just started to get busy. For the whole morning it had been like a ghost town, helped along by a good dose of mizzle descending on The Cove from the very outset. It was not unpleasant as ABH and I walked around the block and at least the wind had dropped. The breeze unsettled her a bit yesterday as we walked through the RNLi car park, as it rustled and flapped the bunting left over from the day before. They were all taken down by today, anyway.

The absence of customers during the morning let me get on with doing some invoice inputting. I had only a few prepared but a huge pile waiting to be sorted into date order. These will need to be input during the coming week, so every bit of spare time will be employed on getting shot of them. It is the only quarter where two large lever arch files are required to file them away. It would be impossible to even attempt to do them piecemeal through August month as we are just too busy but here at the end of the month it is a daunting prospect.

I had just finished the small pile that I had ahead of the first bit of busyness in the shop. Shortly afterwards, and just as the shop filled up, the first of the grocery deliveries arrived. The big one was typically late when you could do with it being early, but I had enough time to clear most of the first one and have maximum room left to put the second. It is preferable to have the big delivery out of the way early when I am feeling more inclined to do some physical effort.

The delivery arrived in the early afternoon with the 'dream team', two very efficient men who with a little help from me have the truck unloaded in about ten minutes. The same as a fortnight ago, the delivery came in two parts with the remainder coming in a second van with some of the bulky but light stuff. Had the cash and carry not decided to charge us £50 for each delivery we would have been ordering weekly and smaller amounts. I lose no sleep over the fact that they now have to run two vans instead of one.

We were relatively busy during the afternoon, but I picked away at the delivery, putting out stock that I could easily reach from the counter. This was predominantly sweets. I did this last time and this week I hesitated when it came to the peppermints. The aroma was intense.

I am sure that I ate as many peppermints as the next child when I was one, although I am certain I was not allowed as many as the youths of today get through. I think that the same brands are around today, extra strong mints and polos but I do not recall the smell ever putting me off. When I opened the pack last time the smell fair near bowled me over and it hung about with me the rest of the day despite having put them on the shelf and gone onto other things. I was not keen, but I am made of sterner stuff. The same thing happened today. I will not be touching mints ever again.

We remained quite busy for the rest of the day and the day's total was none too shoddy. We are, after all, still at the tail end of many people's holiday. Despite the majority of our customers wishing to return ahead of going back to school, many still choose to hang on until the bitter end. There were children aplenty today buying toys and especially sweets many of them with their own credit cards to use. In our shop this means they have to spend enough for the payment card limit, which they probably do not understand, but buy more to compensate.

I am sure our limit is an irritation to some, just as shops not taking cash would be an irritation to me. It is surprising, though, just how many people can find a bit of cash when push comes to shove. The numbers of people who tell me they have no cash or 'do not carry cash anymore' who find a hidden fiver about their person when they realise I am not going to roll over on their demands, is legion.

Standing firm on our payment card limit is one thing. Saying no to many other requests that land me in trouble or additional work is another altogether. The leading light at the Sennen Cove Community Centre, otherwise known as the gymnasium or

the hut with the tin roof, collared me the other day asking if I would be part of her committee.

The Centre has for some time been a charity in all but name, a legal requirement it seems for reasons I am not entirely familiar with. The lady is trying to get the whole thing formalised and has done much work in preparing for it. One of the requirements is that there is a management committee and on that they needed a user representative. Since I appear to be the only user of the gymnasium, she asked me and because I am not very good at saying no and because I am the only user, I said yes.

All this came to a head tonight when I had to attend a Extra General Meeting where the constitution was to be agreed. What I also did not appreciate was that part of the being on the committee was also to be a legal trustee under the Charity Commission rules. It all sounds much more official than I would like but I fear I am stuck with it for three years and now that the Charity Commission has my name, does that make me a charity case.

I pondered these great matters as I took ABH down to the beach and around the big block after I got home. She met a friendly dog down on the beach, which is rare to find one that did not mind her constant harrying, and they had great sport for a while. I cooled her off after with a walk around the block.

Right at the end of Coastguard Row she found the runt gull before I noticed it and jumped on it. It hardly reacted. Despite the best efforts of some visitors feeding it sardines in oil, it appears to be going downhill still. Earlier in the day a customer had asked for a cold sausage roll. She told me it was to feed the gull. I suggested that sausage rolls were probably not its natural food source but on reflection it might have resolved the issue a little quicker. We left the gull sleeping under the rear tyre of a car parked there. Not saying another word.

I was glad to get home. For the first time in a while it was proper chilly out.

August 28th – Monday

I have always been a belt and braces sort of grumpy shopkeeper, when I remember or indeed when I can be bothered. It paid off in spades today when I decided that perhaps I ought to check the opening times on the shop window. It showed that we were due to continue our later opening today as well, which we were not. I hastily changed it but some of the holiday lets will have smaller versions of the times, so I am hoping no one reads the unchanged ones.

I had elected to switch my Monday gymnasium session for a Wednesday so that the Missus would not have to get up early to cover me after her marathon efforts yesterday. I do not know about the Missus getting a lie in, but the little girl was right there ahead of her. I had to abandon my first effort despite her rolling over for a

tummy rub, she was out for the count. I left her half an hour and tried again. She still needed much encouragement, but I was running out of time, and she reluctantly let me lift her out of bed with much growling and gnashing of teeth.

It was a grey, chill and breezy morning for one that followed such a promising evening the day before. The grey, chill and breeze stayed with us the whole day but oddly it did not deter anyone from having a bit of a beach day. There was a string of little camps right across the top of the beach and the sea was crowded with water revellers in the small area where there were any useful waves.

I had not expected very much from today and was pleasantly surprised when it became quite busy in the latter part of the morning and through the afternoon. This was helped in part by some improvement in the weather from grey to a lighter grey. During the extended doldrums of the morning I decided to clear up the soft drinks area in the store room. Part cases were piled up on top of each other and I could not see what was and was not behind them.

There was not a great deal of topping up to be done in the morning before we opened, and I managed to clear some boxed away then. I was hampered by the big bags and boxes thrown in there at the end of Lifeboat Day yesterday, so when the Missus appeared, I cleared those out to the back of the truck. By the time I came back to the shop, there was a constant flow of customers coming and going and no time to do any more clearance. This had to wait until well into the afternoon when I was able to break away from the counter and spend a few minutes between customers moving things about and tidying up. It is now ready to be completely filled again with the incoming order.

This is the trickiest order of the year. Custom will drop like a stone from tomorrow and we have to be careful not to order too much. Conversely, the shop shelves are nigh on empty, so some ordering had to be done and boxes of goods come in specific sizes; you cannot order just a few of something. I have almost certainly over ordered on the beer and cider and will have to put up with cases in the store room that we cannot put away for some time. Although awkward, the beer will last and I can avoid ordering any more. We just have to be careful with things with dates on them. Well, it is done now, so I just have to see how the game plays out.

There was no particular fuss about closing at the earlier time. We had a five minutes to closing rush, so someone must have taken note of the new signs and I place big notices up in the shop to be viewed all day. I was not aware of any disappointed crowds weeping at the first electric sliding door in The Cove later on and I am not about to go back and review the CCTV. There was certainly no one there when I took ABH out much earlier than usual in the evening.

The beach was deserted apart from a local family who are quite regularly there collecting sea glass. We know them reasonably well and they do not make a big fuss of the little girl as she runs rings around them. So, she was able to run and range all

over the beach for twenty minutes until we had enough and continued our journey around the block.

It is quite remarkable the change in The Cove from busy to quiet that happens quite suddenly; it is like turning off a switch. I think that switch has been thrown.

August 27th – Sunday

Lifeboat Day. This will explain the light rain falling on ABH and I as we traversed the little block first thing this morning. It came and went during the morning but worsened in the afternoon into mizzle. It probably reduced the numbers visiting our end of The Cove but, frankly, it would have been hard for it to be much busier.

The organising started just before the shop opened at half past eight o'clock. More volunteers started arriving and our end of The Cove was quite rapidly transformed with bunting, posters and games being set up. As this was happening the shop was starting to bustle with the usual morning goods going out.

I pretty much lost track of the day after that because things started to get busy pretty quickly. The Missus was fully employed fetching and carrying and left ABH on her cushion in the shop doorway. She is in training for this difficult spot but does very well if it is not too busy and there are no loud noises about. So, she was doing very well until the Coast FM radio shack that set up opposite the shop started to broadcast over its loudspeakers. By the end of the morning, it was driving me nuts too, so I could empathise with her. I put her in her travel case on the counter where she was more comfortable with it until Mother and the in-laws arrived a little while later and took her upstairs.

Initially, it seemed quiet enough that I could continue my list making for the cash and carry delivery on Tuesday. That was going alright while there were still gaps between customers but pretty soon there was not, so I had to give up. After that it was flat out serving customers with the occasional dipping out to put more pasties (sorry, MS) in the oven.

With the latter, we did very well but coming on the time to place our order for Monday, we were looking overwhelmed with the cheese variety. By a stroke of good fortune a large group of Indian gentlemen stopped by and asked for a shipping order of cheese pasties. It was very timely, apart from coming at one of the busiest times, and made our remaining number most acceptable.

By three o'clock the party was over in the main. The weather had thrown its worse at us during the last launch of the Lifeboat and although that was viewed by a surprising many of stalwart supporters, they emptied out pretty soon afterwards. The Inshore boat and the Lifeguards' jetski put on an exciting performance in the bay, which was exactly what was needed, and the Lifeboat came back to the short

slipway for an exemplary textbook recovery in front of a packed crowd. We are, after all, a very publicity conscious, very excellent Shore Crew.

I struggled on in the shop while the Missus went about clearing up with some of the other volunteers. The hog roast, a first for this year, had been very successful and provided for my tea as well and probably breakfast, too. It will take a while before the enormity of the success, despite the weather, becomes apparent and we shall hope for better next year. A big hoorah for all those who dedicated their time to providing it and a huge cheer to those who braved the weather to attend and spend their hard-earned.

It was the last of our late closures and I hung on until the bitter end, well, there may have been a few minutes in it, and closed the first electric sliding door in The Cove on another summer season. Typically, the weather has started to improve after the Lifeboat Day was over and by the time I closed it was looking like a half decent evening.

The Missus had run off to the OS with ABH for the after gig party, where all the crew dressed formally in their new shirts and ties. The St Buryan Choir attended as well to provide some entertainment and the Missus stepped up to pay the bill before heading home at nine o'clock. She did look a bit frayed around the edges after such a long and busy day, so I asked her where my tea was. She still had a bit of a sense of humour left because I was still able to walk to bed.

All change tomorrow.

August 26th – Saturday

I must say that the opening picture of Cove weather was not all that inspiring. There was a heavy covering of cloud some of which was an unkind dark colour, which did not bode well for the day.

ABH and I escaped unscathed for our morning walk, and it was not all unpleasant but there was definitely more chill in the air than any of the previous days. By the time the milkman arrived, early for the first time in quite a while, it was raining. It did not last very long but threatened for the rest of the morning between some very occasional sunny bits.

Whatever the weather, we were much busier than we were yesterday. There was a marked decrease in the numbers from the week leading up to now, but hopefully yesterday's complete emptiness was a temporary glitch in proceedings.

Yesterday, a geet skip was delivered to the courtyard of the Lifeboat station. Last year, they ran a very successful 'dunk the crewman' enterprise, permitting small children to throw footballs into a hole on a board and if successful it would drop a drysuited crew person into the water. Today, there was a frenetic hive of industry

over there of hammering, filling and constructing the superstructure for the dunk tank. The Missus appeared toward the end and took orders for breakfast baps for the workers, the funding from which comes from our visitors' kind donations in the shop, thank you very much.

The tides are all wrong for beach dwelling this week, so the beach probably looked a bit more crowded than it actually was in the early afternoon today. It looked packed. There were a few waves about, but high water was not the best for trying them out. It improved for the surfers a little later into the afternoon, but it was close to teatime and only the most dedicated and less hungry were left to enjoy it. Out in the bay, the waters became quite choppy in the strengthening breeze but only encouraged one paddleboarder to be right out in the middle causing some concern to a bunch of Lifeboat volunteers still working across the road.

I would have missed it, but one of our fellow traders from the Round House remarked how busy the road was. We supposed that the Harbour car park must have been full causing the traffic to quickly cycle through. For that to happen, there needed to be some increased traffic in the first place and after she mentioned it, I noticed that it was indeed busier than normal. Of course, soon after I noticed it stopped being busy altogether.

That did not happen in the shop. During the afternoon we ramped up busyness and by four o'clock we were flying. I had let the pasties (sorry, MS) dwindle away to a bare minimum in the warmer but found I was fighting a rear-guard action to heat some more in a hurry as demand picked up again. By five o'clock it was largely all over, but it had been a good run.

I am not a big wildlife fanatic, although I appreciate what is around me. I will not be joining any ban the anything marches any time soon. I find gulls good to look at, which is as far as it goes. Problems we have with them are largely by our own hand. I did, however, take exception when a small child was having sport chasing a herring gull while its juvenile offspring called alarm, unable to get to its mother. The family looked on amused, so, probably ill-advisedly, I intervened.

Serving me right for being a silly begger, the juvenile gull would still not bleddy shut up its squeaking after it was back with mum. It sounded like a trolley with an uncoiled wheel, and I would happily have wrung its neck if it got close enough.

I had started my grocery list, which I would normally do on a Sunday, when it was quiet earlier on but had abandoned it when it got busy. I started again after that rush and started again at five o'clock or thereabouts. It was not half an hour later that it got busy again, so I gave it up altogether and will finish it tomorrow.

I took the little girl down to the Harbour beach again in the evening. It was disappointing to see that a pram had been left at the foot of the slipway and a whole apron of buckets, spades and rubbish spread out for a couple of metres around it.

What I did not notice until ABH jumped back suddenly was the unattended disposable barbeque sitting on a pile of rocks.

There was a young man and a boy further down the beach. The man paid attention to ABH, but the boy jumped around frightened of her. This did not stop the man paying attention to the little girl and the more the boy jumped around the more she chased him, thinking it a game and the more the man encouraged her. We had to hook up and leave as it was just too daft for words.

The Missus was putting the final touches to her great art works for the Lifeboat Day when we returned. The paddling pool for 'hook a duck' is now inflated, the ducks all have hooks in their heads and the wire buzzer game has new batteries. What could possibly go wrong.

August 25th – Friday

There was more coolness to thar air this morning and it was just as deathly quiet as it was the previous morning. All it needed was a bit of mist to be proper creepy but as it was, it was just plain peaceful. You could almost hear The Cove breathe a sign of relief from the pell-mell of summer madness.

We seemed to retain the light grey cloud for the remainder of the day today, but later on, from the middle of the day, it was bright and warm and there were some parties lured to the beach. They were pretty stalwart if they remained after the first of the showers passed through. They were not very heavy but enough to deter the weak willed. Overall, it was the quietest morning in the shop that we have had for a while, which despite the obvious economic impact, was actually quite a relief to a ragged grumpy shopkeeper sucking on his last reserves.

A quiet morning was one thing, but it unfortunately extended to be a particularly quiet rest of the day and there is only so much relief that ragged grumpy shopkeepers can bear. It was becoming abundantly clear that our visitors had gone home and not been replaced by an equal influx and that mixed with a very shoddy forecast from certain providers, spelled today's death knell.

I amused myself for a little while with unwrapping the shoes that the Missus brought down from The Farm yesterday. They were the last items that needed to be put out in the shop and took a little while to do. There was then some new salsa from the same people who do our preserves and chutneys. Stupidly I had convinced myself we needed two boxes of each, when at this point in the season one would have been better, especially as salsa is not a big seller for us. We have a year of sell-by date to go before I have to develop a strong liking for the stuff.

We ticked over for the rest of the afternoon, which was quite abysmal. I am not used to this, and it takes a long time to acclimatise. It perhaps would not be so bad if the drop was not so sudden. I think next year I will ask our visitors to depart in a

staggered manner over several days, if they would not mind, awfully. I know that some left early because the railway people have decided they would rather not work tomorrow and the roadworks up near Truro are scaring people, too. I cannot even blame the quiet on people wishing to go abroad; the pilots for the Isles of Scilly flights did not want to work either.

There was little in the way of topping up to do in the evening, which is just as well because Niece and partner were leaving after tea. She did drop down and offer to do it, but it seemed churlish on a last day and, as I say, there was little to do anyway. They departed just as it was turning dark, which I know some people prefer but these days I am not so keen on driving any distance in the dark.

I had taken the little girl around as soon as we finished tea, so that we did not miss the goodbyes but were delayed when we found that the Harbour beach was pleasantly empty. ABH had a mad twenty minutes chasing whatever she finds to chase and ranging all over the beach before a sizeable crowd came and called a end to the games. We finished off with a walk around the big block, avoiding meetings with unhappy gulls and made it back just as our guests were departing.

While we have hope that there might be a few more people around tomorrow, I suspect the curtain has dropped on this year's performance aided and abetted by the change in our weather fortunes. All aboard the Autumn express.

August 24th – Thursday

The air was practically jumping into our nostrils with freshness this morning after last night's rain and the utter silence of the morning was deafening. I would not have known it had rained other than the street was wet and, looking at the grey cloud above, only recently stopped. ABH delighted in the smells of the roadside flora, which must smell significantly different after a bit of rain because she spends much time sniffing on each blade of grass as we go around.

She is most put out that someone has cleaned up the RNLI car park as there is not a frond or blade of grass to be seen there anymore. The work was done ahead of the Lifeboat Day on Sunday, which will see the car park used for all many of entertainments. All cars will be turned out of the space and parking for the crew will be permitted in the Harbour car park – as long as they get there early enough.

While the car parks have been full early door for the last several days, it is likely not to be the case on Sunday. The forecasters have painted a gloomy picture for the day with high winds and showers. I have not looked to see which direction the wind is from but will stick my head out of the door on the day and see what it is like. The forecast alone will deter people from attending and many will have gone home the day before. I might mention to the powers that be that the previous weekend might be a better bet next year as it is usually busier even if the weather is pants.

Our day broke into full on gorgeousness by and by, which was encouraging but did not attract the sort of numbers or busyness that we had the previous few days. That is not to say we were without the occasional frenetic shopping moments and especially towards the end of the morning, there were quite a few.

The Missus had made her intention clear that she would head to The Farm early on to collect the list of stock I would prepare during the morning. The first sparrow in that particular bird bath was that the Missus did not make it down the stairs until much later than the 'early' I had in my head. The second squirrel in the nut feeder was that I did not have time to write the list, well, not all of it at least.

When she did come down, the shop was a picture of mayhem: families at the counter with a delivery driver trying to get past with arms full of drinks cases and, by a stroke of fortunate timing, the frozen order arrived at that moment, too. Had the frozen arrived earlier, I would have been on my own, pinned behind the counter and any later, the Missus would have gone and I would have been on my own, pinned behind the counter. It was not the end of deliveries for the day but at least when the others came, we were not so hard pressed.

One of the reasons that the Missus wanted to head off to The Farm was to finish off one of the banners for the Lifeboat Day. She had made good progress, but ABH was intent on hampering progress by any number of means at her disposal. Up at The Farm, she entertains herself by wandering hither and thither and diving into manure buckets. It was a good plan, but she discovered it was too windy up there to be able to work, so she packed up the list of stock and headed back again.

By another stroke of good fortune, Niece had put in an appearance while the Missus was away and was there when the truck arrived back laden with stuff. We were busy again in the shop at the time and when we had all taken part in unloading the truck, Niece took the lion's share of processing all the boxes while I repelled all boarders at the counter.

Another delivery piled in while we were at the last, this time the slightly delayed top up to our sun lotion supplies. I fancy that it is too late, although the last of the existing stock did not completely run out until the day before. I am sure we will have days when it is still needed through to the end of September at least, despite the Meteorological Office trying its pessimistic best to suggest that there would be no further good weather this year. How they can issue daft statements like that when they still cannot get the following day right, I have no idea.

Niece came down again at the last knockings to top up the drinks fridge again. After she had finished, I reviewed the store room and the mountain of cardboard we have generated just this week. Thankfully, the waste collection comes tomorrow and it will all be gone. I had put some of the big cardboard out by the bin during the week as it was just too much for the small store room. Someone must have discovered a use

for it as it was gone when I took some more out today. Perhaps I should leave more out.

It was busy again for our run around the big block later in the evening – the sunset was a bit more viewable. It was, however, quiet along Coastguard Row and I had relaxed a little with ABH dancing along. Very suddenly she too a lunge to the left that took me off-guard. She had spotted the not so well juvenile gull sitting opposite the end of the Row and almost blending into the stony path. It was the bird's alarm squawk that woke me up and I just pulled the little girl back from that sharp beak in time.

Quite what is wrong with the bird it is hard to tell. I initially thought of bird flu, but it has been a while since it was first spotted. I rather think it might be a runt, abandoned to its fate, if gulls have such a thing, as no parent is in evidence. If so, it is doing better than expected, although I suspect it is just prolonging a certain fate.

The incident did nothing to calm the ABH mood and she remained in game mode long after we returned home. I will read my book another night, maybe.

August 23rd – Wednesday

This year's prize for most fragmented pasty order (sorry, MS) goes to the lady who turned up this afternoon. She ordered one sausage roll, which I turned to bag up from the oven and by the time I turned around, there was a pasty to be added to it.

We are used to people turning up with apparently no idea what pasties they want and then consulting the rest of the family one by one, but this lady takes the biscuit. As I was bagging the sausage roll, she telephoned her family to see what they wanted, hence the pasty being added. There were a further four pasties after that. One at a time. I mean, if you are telephoning a Chinese takeaway for your family meal, I doubt very much that you pick up the telephone, engage the person taking you order with one item and then turn to the rest of the family to ask what they want.

It was almost as baffling as the boy who came in and pointed at our pasties in our full pasty warmer and asked if we had any pasties. In fairness to the lad, he was probably told to come to the shop and ask if we had any pasties. Despite the evidence of his own eyes, he had to stick to the script.

There could not have been a better day for selling such delectable comestibles, too. The sun had lit up the eastern high cloud, setting it on fire but had not crested Sunny Corner Lane yet when I eventually managed to get ABH out of bed. There was a cool breeze blowing in from the east that was exceeding pleasant. The nights here have been very stuffy and humid and made worse by the fact we must have our bedroom door closed with guests in the house.

It must have been a hot day as well. The easterly breeze seemed to increase during the morning, which would have given some relief but by the end of the afternoon it had gone completely leaving it warm and sultry. I was even feeling it in the shop, which is unusual, and my clever fan without a blade was making little impact, although I did notice when the timer ran out. I have been setting the timer for fear of leaving it running all night as it makes little noise and I get very used to the breeze it puts out.

The profile of business was much the same as yesterday but with slightly less people. This was very apparent at the time, despite being kept busy from start to finish. It took a little while for some light high-level cloud to clear out in the morning and reveal that it was indeed going to be a beach day but after that, things started to move. I was happy to see some windbreaks going out as the last stock up had made the stand extremely heavy to move. When I shifted it later in the evening, it was much more manageable.

I did get a few opportunities to look at the beach and it was as busy as yesterday, probably. The waves, however, that our surfers have revelled in for the last few days was all gone. The sea was flat as a dish and suitable only for paddleboarders and our man with his zippy, powered hydrofoil. He was out there for so long that I now reckon that he has a long cable plugged in at the beach café.

My home help went to the big beach all afternoon with her partner leaving me with the arrival of our postcard fudge boxes and rock in several big boxes. They stayed at the end of the counter until an hour before closing time when there was enough break in the traffic to ship them into the store room and onto shelves there. Niece was still not back by the time I closed the shop so I debated whether I should fill up the soft drinks then or in the morning. I elected to do it then but went upstairs to change.

When I came down again, Niece and partner were waiting at the door to lend a hand and within half an hour, the fridge was topped up again. There is still a good amount left to do including a trip to The Farm for stock from up there. It is, however, disappointing to see that there are quite a few items that can only come from the cash and carry at Hayle. I clearly did not anticipate this level of trouncing when I placed the previous order and now we are left wanting.

The worst of the shortfalls is the large water bottles that I can get from nowhere else. We either rely on lots of small ones or have to despatch the Missus to Hayle. Those cases are heavy, twelve kilogrammes each, and we probably need eight. I will scout around tomorrow to see if we can find alternatives.

After all the ordering was complete, I was very late coming up from the shop. Tea was later still, so there was no taking the little girl around in the evening. We may have had a clear run at it, too, as there was no glorious sunset to gaze at as cloud was starting to roll in. Rain coming.

August 22nd – Tuesday

It became pretty obvious early on that we were going to be a tad busy today. Just how busy it did become was not written in those particular runes and I ended up chained to the counter and the pasty oven (sorry, MS).

It was an early start for the Missus. She was taking Mother to the hospital to have the facelift she had eventually decided upon and to have her English rose tattoo removed after the poor performance by the England ladies football team. She was only in for a short while and the Missus was back in the middle of the afternoon, which proved useful.

My intention was to leave the little girl upstairs by herself until after the pasty man (sorry, MS) had been. It did not quite work out like that because the pasty man (sorry, MS) was late and by the time I had packed them all away, the shop was starting to busy up. The only excuse I had for leaving the till was to put more pasties (sorry, MS) into the oven. Otherwise, it was eyes down, look in, key numbers into the till, repeat for the next four and a half hours.

Fortunately, ABH is quite comfortable on her own, although I have not asked her directly. At least she does not howl the place down or tear anything apart. She was having a whimper but that was when I was still there and due to the Missus going off and leaving her. Something she will have to change or get used to. It was not that long after I had left her in the lurch that I heard Niece get up – heralded by thumping across the floor from one party or the other.

The shop went from busy, to very busy to crikey, some help would be handy in the space of about half an hour and stayed in the latter condition for several hours. I was very pleased that the shop was well stocked and even happier that we had seen fit to move some body boards down from The Farm on Sunday, I think it was. It meant that I did not have to worry about running out of anything and not being able to replenish it and I could concentrate on the job at hand.

I was also fortunate that when our pagers went off at half past two o'clock in the afternoon, business had slowed sufficiently that we only had a half dozen customers in the shop at the time.

The initial call was for the Inshore boat and on the understanding that I was about the last man standing able to drive it, ran (it is a relative term) up to the Inshore boathouse. As it turned out, one of my colleagues that I understood to be unwell, had recovered sufficiently to attend. He acted as my banksman – he is a man, so I can say that – until half way down the slipway, our pagers went off again to signal the All Weather Boat to launch as well. Our boy broke ranks to go and launch the big boat while I proceeded down the slipway with a substitute banksperson to ensure I did not flatten any small children on the way.

It was later that I discovered that some children had swam out to a rock off Nanjizal and decided that they could not get back. Both boats were launched because communications all along that stretch of coast are fraught. As we expected, the boats were not gone that long, and we hurried to set up the long slipway for recovery. As we were doing so, we had the message that boat boats were on the way back and so, after we finished, I repaired to the Tooltrak again to be ready for the return of the Inshore boat.

On days like these we have to make a lot of noise to alert people that the vehicles and boats are on the move. We even had a special loudspeaker arrangement that can be broadcast from the station, although the wording is not always completely relevant. There is limited noise that the Tooltrak can make so bankspeople are essential for safety and at busy times like these, the more the merrier. Even then, there seems to be a reticence among some members of the public to take any notice at all, whether by obstinance or general distraction.

The big boat was brought up the long slipway at dead low water in what looked like – out of the corner of my eye as I was driving at the time – a textbook recovery. Fortunately, we are coming off spring tides and the level of water in the Harbour was sufficient to bring in the Inshore boat without having to venture the Tooltrak out too far. The numbers of revellers were also relatively sparse on the beach and the boat was brought up the slipway for a washdown and then into the RNLI car park to its boathouse just as the big boat was being fitted into its. We are, after all, a very coordinated, very excellent Shore Crew

The Missus had returned home shortly after the launch and reopened the shop on what turned out to be our busiest day of the year, so far. It has taken a while to get here and I might have been better able for it at the start of the season. Toward the end, things are getting a bit tattered around the edges, and I am very grateful for the assistance of Niece who, once again, did her thing today.

Our walk around the block was not quite as peaceful as it had been the previous night; the place was packed. Lots of gawping going on at the cracking little sunset in progress as we went. Another week and we will be too late for it altogether.

(Sorry, MS). I should explain, dear reader, that within the fury of the national 'gawpgate' scandal the other reader was somewhat agitated by the frequency of pasty (sorry, MS) mentions. It is a subject difficult to avoid, so I thought it best to apologise for the references rather than try an avoid them all.

August 21st – Monday

Well, today was come and gone in a flash and I have really no idea where it went. I recall being a Whirling Dervish in the shop before it opened with such a lot to do. It was remarkable really that there was anything at all to do given then Niece had been

topping up all day yesterday. As I reported, she had omitted the drinks at the end of the day because she could not get near the drinks fridge, so there was that to do. I also had to top up the beer fridge and clean up the pasty fridge after that. I am sure there were other things, because the previous mentioned are near enough part of the daily routine. Anyway, I found myself having just about finished all that when it was time to open the shop.

We were not immediately bowled over with customers, but it did not take them long to start appearing in numbers. By the time I left for the gymnasium, it was warming up nicely and by the time I came back after a blistering session, the shop was heaving. This appeared to be the shape of things to come, and I was relatively busy through the day in a steady flow that took up most of my time.

Just before I changed over with the Missus again, she told me she was going shopping. I suggested she might like to go over to Hayle as I had noticed earlier that our national brand of cider had been depleted to the last case. I had put some effort into the branded lager because it was selling at an astounding rate and had at last stabilised the stock volumes. The cider was bubbling along just nicely with the same numbers week after week until this week, when sales went barmy.

The Missus came back laden, as she mainly went to collect things for the Lifeboat Day this coming Sunday. She did a bit with it last year and it seems was so emboldened by the experience that she is throwing the whole cutlery drawer at it this year, with hog roast, various new games as well as the old favourites that have been present before. The living room is festooned with banners, advertising hoopla and all sorts and there are blackboards too, all of which no doubt have an organised place somewhere on the day. I have kept my head down throughout lest it gets in the way and will be doing so again on the day as someone has to run the shop.

I had been wondering if you were still there, dear reader. Recently I crafted what was possibly my finest tern pun and the reaction was a wall of silence. Then, it was some naughtiness about ladies' football, not a single cry of foul. But replace 'gawp' with 'gorp' – lordy, the world is set on fire. While I am gratified that you are, indeed, still there, dear reader, it is slightly disappointing to note it is on the basis of waiting for me to slip on my next banana skin.

Still licking my wounds very late in the shop day, I realised that I had not looked out of the window or if I had, I could not remember what the beach had looked like. I had been a little preoccupied with the general flow of customers and, later on, the fishing tackle consignment arrived.

It took ages to unpick and to price, mainly because I could not dedicate time to it but also the very pleasant man I had spoken to on the telephone had been as good as his word and included a few extra lures and jigs. It all looked very reasonable as a package and a selection, but I needed to price it all from scratch, looking at margins and reasonableness. We have had quite an increase in the number of local lads

taking up fishing this year and it was mainly they who had stripped the stock from the shelves over the last week. The new lures and jigs are quite expensive, so I have had to be more careful with price than I might otherwise have been.

Niece rolled up a little earlier in the evening today, anxious to avoid the five minutes to closing rush. She managed to top up the drinks fridge this time without issue and had earlier refreshed the sunglasses stand. I had noted over the last few days that we are very short of sun lotion, too. We would have run out by now had the first three weeks of the holiday been up to muster. It is late in the day, but we will have to order some more in with a few other things that are running thin.

Toward the end of the shop day, the brightness of the day slipped away to be replaced by a layer of cloud and the arrival of some mist around the bay. It was not unpleasant for a walk around the block, but there was not the usual crowd gathered to, ahem, gawp at the sunset. Instead, I interested myself by observing the six separate bags someone had left out for recycling. Surely, we can make it easier for people than that.

August 20th – Sunday

It was a very strange sort of morning, although it had started out well. At least ABH did not shout at me for getting her out of bed in the morning and the walk around the small block was extremely pleasant in the bright early morning with a bay fringed with mist.

There was still a heavy swell in the bay and not ideal conditions for our fishing punts to head out, so I was quite surprised to see one bobbing about during the morning. He is clearly a man who likes living on the edge and would not let a little ground sea spoil his day. I saw him rolling in later, so that was alright.

We were unusually busy from first opening this morning that rather took me off-guard. I just had a first mouthful of breakfast when the fight started, and the remainder took the rest of the morning. It was proper busy, too, and no flash in the pan, with breakfasts, surf jewellery, body boards and gifts all going into the shopping frenzy. I had spotted the signs early, thankfully, and had our pasties ready before it all happened. I am not entirely sure that was worthy of celebration as we sold three before I would normally have put them out.

Then, without any warning at all, the whole street went very quiet. There was hardly a soul about, save for a few families having a bit of breakfast outside the café. One of my more informed customers said that he had heard there were some girls having a football kick around in a park somewhere that had caused a bit of a stir. That was nonsense, of course, because everyone knows girls play netball.

I have never had a great interest in football, which might have had much to do with cold winter mornings on the school playing fields and despotic games teachers. Or

maybe it was having to climb through the barbed wire to get the ball back when Biffo kicked it a bit hard. I do recall a bit of the euphoria around a couple of world cups and the merchandising. The last being collecting little metal discs from petrol stations with the England players on for the 1970 Mexico games, I believe, which took forever as the Aged Parent only had a bicycle.

Today's match was a bit of a disappointment, by all accounts, especially after all the hyperbole. The England Ladies Football Team did a sterling job in getting to the final and must be congratulated for that alone. I understand it was a bit of a grudge match after beating them in 1588. Some people just cannot let go.

I do not know what the weather was like in Italy for the football, but here by the middle of the day it had turned into a proper rip gribbler of a day. The beach looked resplendent under the glare of the sun at low water and the beach had filled up rapidly during the morning despite the footy.

The sand had changed the shape of the beach yet again, with a broader sand bar running out from near the OS end. With the swell the way it was, this made for better general surfing in this area and so the swimmers and bodyboarders were moved further along. Beyond that, closer to North Rocks, some more serious surfers had set up their stall and it looked to be enjoying themselves.

Further out in the bay, requiring no waves at all was a hydrofoil boarder and given that he had no sail or wing, was making a good speed across the water. The two surfers at the counter who pointed him out to me both agreed that it was cheating. I think I probably agree but it did look rather fun and would put stand up paddleboarding on a glassy sea into the shade. I think the motor must have been running off a car battery because he was out there for ages.

We were busy throughout the afternoon, a steady flow rather than a manic charge, and for most of that time Niece ran around topping up the shelves as they were dismantled by customers. She did very well but I think the customers won in the end.

She was last seen with a trolley full of soft drinks during the five minutes to closing rush that seemed to go on forever. I told her she had no chance of getting anywhere near the drinks fridge until after we closed, so she left it for me in the morning. As it happened, she would have had no chance *after* we closed because there were shoppers in until well gone closing time.

There was another spectacular sunset to gorp* at as we headed around the block for the usual, ABH and me. Again, the Harbour wall seemed busy but the Harbour beach almost empty. We could have had a run down there but for the fact the sea was right in, which was probably the reason it was empty. Still, a pleasant stank, nonetheless that I find remarkably peaceful after a frantic day.

*Gorp: this threw up a spelling check in my clever word processor. It suggested 'grope' which I certainly did not mean. I realise that it is English slang, but the Internet told me almost exclusively that it was a mix of fruit and raisins or nuts more commonly known in America as 'trail mix'. So there.

August 19th – Saturday

That adorable little ball of fur, exuding cuteness for the whole world has a dark side. She proper snarled at me this morning when I came to get her out of bed for a walk around the block. There was no way she was getting out of bed for anything. We will be having words later. She can act like that with her pals in playground, but she will not be talking to me like that again.

It was not a bad morning for walking the block either and by the time we opened the shop, it was getting better. When the café next door opened an hour later, there were blue skies above us with sun burning through the haze out to the east. The sea was still roaring some and bursting up the Nanjulian Cliffs opposite, still showing some bravado after last night's storm.

In The Cove, we had been blissfully unaware that there was a storm. Since I had not looked properly at the forecast, I knew nothing about Betty, only that there was a bit of breeze about. Apparently, the sea state on the south was a bit more fierce than we had here in the bay but we hardly noticed the howling wind coming in from the south west. Perhaps I should pay more attention.

It took a while for the morning to get going. In fact, it took until the afternoon for the morning to get going and by that time, it was too late – it was the afternoon. Whether it was because our new visitors took a while getting here or the ones already here could not quite believe their eyes, it is hard to tell. There was no major rush to the beach, although it was busier down there than yesterday – no real surprise there. There were quite a few in the water and as there was still a significant swell, the Lifeguards put the jet ski out to patrol for developing rips. Most of the novices were on top of the sand bar running out from the middle of the beach. The more experienced ones were over towards North Rocks where the waves were a bit more serious. One surfer dropped by the shop later to tell me that the surf was amazing – better than Portugal where he had been recently.

While not taking very much notice of weather forecasts, I had noted that the weekend was forecast to be fair, which did influence my pasty buying a bit. So far it had lived up to expectations even if the crowds had not. Pasty sales started unusually late and were in one and twos. Unless we have a supercharged pasty day tomorrow, we will be overstocked.

Talking of stocking, Niece did her usual and drifted into the shop during the afternoon to restock our shelves. She is very handy to have about for a week, but it is a shame that it is not a cash and carry week. Every year she ensures that shelves are stacked full and berates me for stock not being available in the store room for her to do so. Already, I have been on to two of our suppliers begging for

deliveries just to relieve the constant reminding. She even spurred the Missus into action first thing (definitions of 'first thing' in this journal may vary) into ordering the small bags of sweets. The current display is woeful and was full just over a week ago.

There was a definite increase in the numbers around and the numbers shopping as the day advanced. Somewhere between five and six o'clock, it reached a bit of a zenith, and we were scrambling around for while trying to please everyone. It still did not put enough of a dent in our pasties but there was a fair amount of groceries leaving the shop, which was good enough. I had already had to backfill the beers earlier in the afternoon, which was a smart move else we would have run out. By some quirk of fate, I managed to get the timing just right so that the next rush for beer had cold ones to choose from.

I took the little girl for her walk around just after tea. She had been having fun with Neice and was definitely less energetic when I came up from the shop. She walked very nicely around with me even though we could not get on the Harbour beach again.

I had expected a fair crowd around, it being a pleasant evening and just before sunset. The vast majority of the watchers were all arranged around the Harbour, the jumpers on the wall and the observers on the old Lifeboat slip and all over the Harbour slipway with camera at the ready. It was already looking splendid and still had a good hour of film time to come. By the time we reached the car park, the crowds were very thin, and Coastguard Row was empty. It concluded our walk in a very pleasant and quiet way and the little girl settled when we got home. Ahh.

August 18th – Friday

For a day that cancelled itself towards the end of the morning, I found myself extremely busy and, at the end of it, extremely pressed.

It had started in a challenging way, too. I had ordered in 250 pasties or more and just coincidentally, the milk had reached a nadir as well, so 60 litres were arriving. I guessed in a pessimistic sort of way – quite correctly as it turned out – that the pasties and the milk would arrive together. Because of the volumes, I would guess, both were also late, and it was by mere fluke that we were not terribly busy at the time. It took quite an effort of mind and body to get both stored away in a timely fashion and serve the few customers who turned up during the minor crisis.

The rest of the morning settled into a normal sort of changeover day, with fewer customers anyway and those that there were buying going home presents and pasties for the journey. It has been reported back to me that the smart money take away cold pasties for the journey because those that have the hot ones find that they can no longer resist temptation just a few miles into the journey.

The rain started a few minutes after I returned to the shop after a blistering session at the gymnasium. I have to admit that today's blistering session took a lot more effort than the one on Monday. I must be weakening with just a week of proper busyness left to go. I trust that the effort put in today provides sufficient impetus to see me through the weekend, at least.

It was fearfully quiet even before the rain started up. It was almost certainly fear of weather forecasts, whether they be right or wrong, and I learnt later that many people had packed themselves off to St Ives and complained that it always seems to rain when you go there. Quite coincidentally, I received a message along those very lines later in the day, pointing out the difference between yesterday and today on the beach despite the initial weather today being very similar.

Because it was quiet, I thought that I would place an order for some fishing tackle. I had noticed yesterday while topping up the jewellery stand that the tackle display was looking a tad empty. It should have come as no surprise as we have had young lads mainly, buying lures and spinners like they were going out of style. I went onto our tackle supplier's website only to discover that many of our previous lures and spinners were missing from the shelves or had 'out of stock' labels on them. I ordered what I could and even consulted one of our local anglers for help on what else I might get to fill the gap when he dropped in for a pasty.

A little concerned that the order fell short of a full shelf of replacements, I looked to see if there were any other wholesale suppliers I could turn to. The choice seemed a little thin and even if there was another, I would have to go through the process of applying for a trade account that would be time consuming. In the end, I called the company to see when replacements would be coming in.

The very pleasant man I spoke to was somewhat affronted that I had suggested they were short of stock and went on to list all manner of lures, spoons and spinners that I might purchase. I think the problem was that we had the same type of stock for so long, I had no idea which alternatives to choose. The very pleasant man suggested that I place the order for what I could see that I wanted and that he would add a few others that would be suitable. I must now wait to see how that turns out.

Unfortunately, what I had imagined to be a five minute job had taken more than half an hour, serving customers in between. The Missus had already left to pick up some fish from our favourite supplier as we had the in-laws coming to tea for fish and chips – with fresh fish and home cooked. I had thought ahead and assumed we would be quiet enough that I could order in a bit of a replenishment of our dwindling supplies and have time to vacuum pack and price it. I called in a smaller order than I might ordinarily have done, but it was still a lot of work and arrived back with the Missus in the middle of the afternoon.

I think, on reflection, that I had mis-estimated what a small fish order might be because what turned up took far longer to process than I had anticipated. It took the

remainder of the afternoon and then only to discover that we are frightfully short of freezer space in which to put the finished output. Quiet though it might have been, the majority of our afternoon customers turned up during the pack process and we even had a minor rush when the deadline for the bread order arrived and made me wonder if I might not send it off in time.

On balance, the effort was worthwhile because we were very low on fish in our freezer. Earlier in the week I was taken aback at the cost of the hake we were supplied from our St Ives supplier. I was met with similar prices today but at least the quality of the fish was absolutely top shelf. I called our man, because he is a friendly chap and would not take offence and asked why the hake was at such a premium. He told me that landings of late had been light and of all the products we buy in, fish is immediately price sensitive to supply and demand. I will let you know, dear reader, if it tastes any better for being so expensive as I have fish finger sandwich with lump of it for my tea. Ah, the sweet decadence of grumpy shopkeeping.

We have Niece arriving for a few days amongst all else. She would normally drive but took the train this time for various reasons that her car was not available. Due at eleven o'clock at night, she called late in the day to explain that the train had been terminated at Plymouth by reason of their being a bit of a blow along the south coast. How she might proceed from there had been left unclear.

There was a weather warning in place for wind along the south coast, possibly 60 to 70 miles per hour they reckoned. The train cancellation was based on the alleged fact that a previous train had failed, and the operator was unwilling to send another. They were happy, however, to send trains a bit later on, arriving at Penzance at midnight or beyond, which all seemed rather queer. It seemed even more odd when I checked the windspeed at Gwennap Head, acknowledged to be the windiest place on the planet even when there is no wind at all, and the windspeed there was gusting 42 miles per hour – a mere stiff breeze for these parts.

Niece ended up arriving at Penzance at gone one o'clock in the morning and arriving here nearer two. ABH felt it important to share that with me at the time by leaping on my face. I am not sure, at least in this direction, train travel will ever be the preferred method of transport unless something is done to make life on it much more reasonable.

August 17th – Thursday

It was a day much like the one before it but a bit cooler which was coming off an easterly breeze that had struck up when no one was looking. It will have put the Lifeguards on alert for all those naught inflatables that are prone to be carried out to sea on occasion with their owners still attached.

By the middle of the day, it was looking remarkably spectacular down on the broadly open beach. The tide was out, the sand plentiful and the sea showing off its many

hues of blue and sandy turquoise. There was a carpet of beach dwellers all the way from The Beach complex to The Valley, tucked up against the rocks at the head of the beach and a collection of little groups at play on the sand or making their way to and from the water. The sea was dormant, so without a surfer anywhere to be seen, the only people out there were swimmers, paddlers and paddle boarders.

I had time to gaze down there in the middle of the day as the morning rush, which was substantial, had just subsided and the middle of the day lull had just begun.

The Missus would have found that lull quite useful earlier on. I had called her down because our ice cream delivery arrived just as we were getting busy. I managed to get some away before the fight started but after that I was pinned down behind the counter with the clock ticking on ice cream survival time. The Missus remained downstairs for the next couple of hours to clear away the stock she had brought down from The Farm yesterday and the remains of the Tuesday grocery delivery that neither of us could shift yesterday. More importantly, she let me finish my breakfast that I had started just ahead of the ice cream arriving and had been delayed to the point that I could not have it because we were too busy.

I had been keen to try the smoked salmon as it came from the same smokehouse as the smoked mackerel that I rave about. This was the salmon that was left after extracting the customer's portion that I had to eat myself, poor lad that I am. Having eventually concluded my breakfast and having already partaken the morning before as well, I can report that the smoked salmon is every bit as good as the smoked mackerel. Something good coming out of St Ives; I am very pleased they are bucking the trend.

I was very pleased that our surf jewellery turned up today. I had only ordered yesterday after discovering the parlous state of the display. I actually managed to get quite a bit of it out, enough to make the display look a little more presentable and I was selling items from it within minutes of doing so. I would have done the lot, but the arrival of the wine order scuppered any further work on it, as that had to be put away before we started tripping over it.

The Missus went over to Mother's in the afternoon because sister-in-law is here and it is sister-in-law's birthday. Happy Birthday sister-in-law. They were all due to come across for tea, but their car is broken and had to be sorted out, so that is postponed until tomorrow.

As the afternoon pressed on, the gloriousness of the day started to leak out. The sunny blue sky started to be blotted out by the arrival of a haze that thickened into something more of a mist. It was an odd one because if you look directly up, the blue sky was still there but in every other direction, it was misty.

We were mobbed again in the later part of the day for wine, beer and groceries. I am very pleased that the decision to almost completely replace big commercial brands

of beer with local ones seems to have found favour. Admittedly, the customer does not have much choice in the matter, but the local beers are flying out and no one has grizzled for the lack of a particular alternative. The local ones are also easier to get hold of and can be replaced almost daily, which is a keen advantage when we do not have much space for huge amounts of stock.

I abandoned topping up until the morning, but I was still not early enough out of the shop to witness both Lifeboats being launched. I did see the substantial crowds gathering to watch the spectacle. There were still quite a few around later to watch the recovery, which is unusual, but it was a very pleasant evening. I know because I watched it too with ABH in tow as we did the evening circuit. Both boats were coming in together and from where I was standing I had a clear view demonstrating an obviously textbook recovery up the short slipway. The Inshore was coming in, with rather less people to clear out of the way than the other evening launching. We are, after all, a very observant, very excellent Shore Crew.

August 16th – Wednesday

The planets were all aligned for another rip gribbler of a day in The Cove and I duly girded my loins for another trouncing behind the shop counter. It was a corking morning to be out for a stroll with a bit of breeze blowing and brightness out to the east. The day blossomed to be just as corking as the morning, but I have no idea how that compared to yesterday. It looked much the same.

Clearly, our visitors this week are a lily-livered lot and have no stomach to maintain their all day assault on local shopkeepers – unless they chose a different shopkeeper today. We had a typical beach day, fat at either end – assisted by a timely high tide – and very thin in the middle. Unlike yesterday, too, the early morning lot turned the screw on our pasty supply with a concentrated effort to eat us out of all our pasties before the middle of the day. This only became apparent after the deadline for ordering tomorrow had passed and I had reduced our order based on the remaining pasties and yesterday's performance. Tomorrow will be run on a knife edge, I can see.

I was noticeably pressed in the early part of the morning as deliveries and deadlines coincided to make life extremely difficult. The milk had arrived after shop opening again and the pasties arrived just as I was finishing that off. We also had more customers than we have generally had at that time of the morning, just to make things interesting. The frozen order was the deadline. We have ordered on a Wednesday before and it has not arrived until the following Monday. Since the order was to top up the ice cream freezer, I felt it quite important that we did not miss the opportunity to have a full freezer to gaze at when the rain came back in again.

With the ice cream now coming tomorrow, I could relax a little but only so far as the next deadline was an hour away. I had very cleverly line up the pasties to be available a little earlier today anticipating the crowd would be keen to get going and I

was right. Having heated up the pasties I discovered that I had omitted to turn the pasty warmer on, so I had to do it all again ten minutes or so later.

It can be a lonely existence being a grumpy shopkeeper. This may not be immediately obvious, since, especially at this time of the year I am talking many people each day. The relationships, however, are fleeting and pretty much single topic – how much, thank you and goodbye. Sure, there are people we know a little better and in quieter times we can have a bit more of a conversation, but it will be limited by the company of other customers and the next person wishing to be served.

So, grumpy shopkeepers must develop a coping strategy to overcome such isolation and this particular grumpy shopkeeper occasionally indulges in a bit of fun with the customer, whether they be party to it or no is immaterial, or pays attention to combinations of purchases and trends.

Today's observation was all to do with pricing and the 'cost of living crisis'. Consider if you will, dear reader, two identical products on the same shelf, one price 30 pence more than the other because one was delivered last week and the other this week, the price having increase (a lot) in the intervening period. Our hummus is a popular product and ordinarily I would place the new supply behind the older one. On this occasion, and because I was pressed for time, I reasoned that the price would be sufficient to drive proper succession of old and new.

Au contraire, mon brave. Being so popular, I have sold at least half a dozen packs and all of them were of the new price. It was only the Highly Professional Craftsperson who noticed and noted the price difference when he purchased one late in the afternoon. There are a number of options here: the average customer is not that price driven, even in troubled times; there must be something wrong with the lower priced item; observation of seaside shop customers is not a strong suit; the Highly Professional Craftsperson is a tight begger.

Occasionally, at the end of a shop day when the grumpy shopkeeper is particularly fatigued, having a five minutes to closing rush that seems to show no sign of abating, is the least welcome of all shop eventualities. It was therefore obtusely gratifying when my Lifeboat pager went off at one minute and 18 seconds to closing time and I was able to tell the shop full of customers to leave immediately. I will, of course, self-flagellate with birch twigs for an hour later to purge myself of such ungrateful and wicked notions.

The call, which turned out later to be a false alarm with good intent, was for paddle boarders around at Porthcurno – the favourite place for paddle board incidents, it seems. We got the boat away in record time, launching from inside the boathouse.

The Inshore went too, which is a bit more tortuous since the tide was high making launching tricky and the beach was crowded with revellers who did not seem to appreciate the urgency of moving out of the way to permit the boat to launch safely.

For such occasions we deploy as many bankspople as possible to keep, especially, children who are otherwise distracted from the path of the oncoming carriage.

The boats were stood down almost before they got there but checked with the boarders to make sure all was well.

We set up on the short slipway for the boat's return after a few issues getting the cradle to operate. This caused only a short delay before we were able to execute a textbook recovery up the short slip, observed by some wall jumpers and a beach full of happy revellers. We are, after all, a very publicity-conscious, very excellent Shore Crew.

Having left the shop in the throes of closure, I had to return after tea to close up properly and to place the orders for the next day. I was proper ready for my bed after all that and brooked no delay in getting there.

August 15th – Tuesday

There was a big question hanging over The Cove as we walked around first thing, where do all the birds go in the morning?

Over the last few days there have been quite a few seemingly lost juvenile gulls about the place. One, ambling around the Harbour car park squawked loudly at the little girl. It was probably a warning not to chase it as ABH was looking keen to do. They have very sharp beaks, and the likelihood is that she would come off worse. There was another up on Coastguard Row another night, soon after a someone reported another in the same area the day before. This one was looking a little worse for wear, but I imagine I would probably be a little out of sorts having been ejected from a comfy home and three square provided to go and fend for myself a bit. There was no evidence of protective parents around, and there were far too many to be accidentally lost, so I imagine it is the natural way of things.

Yesterday evening, I noted a large flock of terns down on the water's edge under the OS. Most were in the water but there were one or two on top of the weed down there. I may have been mistaken about the weed, of course, being so far away and it might have been a tern over a new leaf.

I do apologise, dear reader. A momentary slip and it will not happen again. Anyway, the question still remains regarding the absence of birds in the morning. Not a one.

There was also a great absence of newspapers. There were two problems at hand, one was some were on a re-run, a frequent occurrence when they are not available when the vans leave the depot. The second problem was that the driver was hard of reading. Over the weekend he had delivered a pack that belonged to a shop in Helston and today he left behind a pile that looked very short of what I was expecting on the re-run.

I caught him as he was about to leave, and he insisted they were the correct ones until I brought his attention to the label on the front that said St Erth, which I had to read to him. The presentation of the evidence did not bother him a jot and simply said that he must have delivered mine elsewhere. He seemed most surprised that I handed him the errant pile and told him to take them away. Did I not want just some of them? No, there was only two of each of the missing papers and it was easier to claim the lot rather than fuss around with odds. I shall check my credits tomorrow because that is bound to stir up a hornets' nest.

The day's fortunes changed very quickly at around the middle of the day when it became increasingly clear that it was turning into a bit of a rip gribbler. In fact, several people commented later that it was probably the best day of the season and since I have not been out in any of them, who am I to argue. The pace in the shop went from very quiet to very busy almost in the blink of an eye but this was no time for blinking when the customers were coming thick and fast. I think the first sign of it being a glorious instead of ordinary sunny day was the lady who came in wishing to buy a parasol, the first since June, I believe.

There followed a succession of beach shelter purchases, the occasional windbreak, shorts, – “because I left mine at home” – buckets and spades in abundance, crab lines and fishing nets, wet shoes and all manner of sweets and drinks to take to the beach. The only item left behind in this mad dash to the beach was our pasties, which scarcely moved at all during the morning and only in the middle of the afternoon started to sell in any numbers. It was probably something of a relief since I had short ordered for tomorrow because I had not sold as many as I imagined the day before.

This carried on until the last of them had gone to the beach. It was followed by them all coming back again for drinks and snacks – then hats and sun cream when they realised just how hot and sunny it was. On the couple of occasions I caught a glimpse of the beach, it was stacked with little camps and hundreds of people going to and from the sea and then even more in the sea. I have no idea about sea state or surf, so please do not ask.

The middle of the day traffic soon turned into post-beach traffic and the shopping frenzy started all over again but for evening meals, beer and wine. Someone had left a shopping list on the counter from the previous day, beer, snacks, oats and red wine. About sums it up.

Into the melee came our large grocery order, probably the biggest of the year and also probably the last of the big ones. It was so large the van did not wait for the pickers to finish and left with half the order to arrive mid-morning. They came back in the middle of the day, right at the end of a busy half an hour, which was lucky and this was followed by the secondary grocery order a while later.

The store room was stacked. I had managed to shift some of the large water bottles to the drinks fridge after the first delivery, which under the circumstances was just as well because we started the day nearly out. I picked at the rest here and there between customers but I only made the smallest of dents in it but did manage to clear the bulky crisp boxes which had to be dumped in the shop for lack of room in the store.

The Missus had run Mother up to Truro and was consequently away for most of the day. She had eaten while out, so skipped tea to start on the deliveries just as I was closing the shop for the day. She finished just as I was heading to bed, but at least the most of it is now down and we can start all over again for tomorrow. I noted at the end of the day that the ice cream freezer was looking a little bare, so another delivery is on the cards and then there is the surf jewellery stand, looking like it never had a bangle on it ever.

I shall run around tomorrow to keep a few more plates spinning to the background clatter of a few others falling off their poles.

August 14th – Monday

The weather was not giving much away about its future in The Cove as we walked around the small block this morning. Wearing a waterproof was required – for me at least – although the rain was not at all heavy and probably stopped altogether by the time we got back to the shop had I been paying attention. Looking over to the west there was a line of bright wonderfulness heading in this direction. The Cove held its breath.

The pasties had not arrived by the time I left for the gymnasium, which is very late for our pasty arrival, so it was lucky that there were precious few people in The Cove by that time. I get the impression that The Cove is indeed holding its breath each day to see what the weather has to offer because no one can rely on the weather forecast for guidance. We had very few customers before I left for the gymnasium, but one very kindly asked what time the pasties would be here. I just love saying, ‘five minutes after the van arrives’. He never batted an eyelid, thanked me, and went on his way promising to be back at that time.

The day blossomed, and the crowds duly flocked but it did not seem that busy in the shop. Doing the till at the end of the day, it had been relatively good. I must be getting inured to it. When I looked at the beach when there was still some beach to look at, it seemed quite crowded. Despite that, there seemed to be a steady flow in the shop that kept me at the counter through most of it and I did not finish breakfast – started late after the gymnasium – until two o’clock in the afternoon.

The lack of hiatus at the counter made packing and pricing the fish order that turned up while I was out, very awkward. It was a bitty order that took far more time because of that.

The company we use is the last man standing after discounting the other St Ives supplier whose quality was decidedly suspect. It was disappointing therefore to see that the haddock could have been better looking and when I complained, it was all excuses where an apology would not have gone amiss. I know that ordering for a Monday can be hit and miss, some fish will have been landed on Friday, but there is no need for standards to slip. I also noted that the hake was overpriced. I think we may be faced with just using our friend in Penzance, despite the restrictions that means because his fish has always been top quality and cut exactly how we want it and at a decent price.

There is still one area in which the St Ives supplier excels: its smokehouse. A customer yesterday had asked for smoked salmon and since I was placing an order anyway, I added a leg of salmon to it. The customer only wanted half a kilogramme and I suspected that it would be larger than that, so I offered to share it. It is the sort of person that I am, you understand, dear reader. I am sure that there would not be many grumpy shopkeeper willing to make such a sacrifice for the sake of his customers. I will, of course, struggle through my – it worked out to be two thirds – part of the smoked salmon smoothed by the knowledge of the delight I had brought my customer.

There was a proper five minutes to closing rush today, leaving me to work overtime to clear the store room ahead of our big delivery tomorrow. I have set up the drinks to make it easier and quicker to put them out, so there is bound to be something that will throw a pipe up the sycamore tree in my cunningly prepared plans.

Something of that nature had already happened with one of the in-laws bringing Mother home from her holiday. They broke down almost before they started, and the other in-law had to step in and bring he instead. He stayed overnight with us and bore witness to quite a delicious evening in The Cove. It was extremely pleasant walking the big block with the little girl in the evening, although we could not use the beach for all the people on it. The Missus took her down there at last knockings for a dash about while our guest and I watched the flame juggler on the big beach. What a randomly odd place this is at times.

August 13th – Sunday

Radio Pasty had reported that Sunday would be the better weather day of the weekend but on initial viewing, it did not look much like it was up to the job.

It was all a little damp outside, which suggested that there had been some more rain during the night and judging from the breeze blowing through the bedroom during the night, windy too. There was a predominance of grey to the sky but at least the sea looked to be a little calmer now it had been angry for a while, although that could just have been because it was low water when I looked.

The business day started with a bit of a whimper, although it seems that is the way of things this year. I had already had the opportunity to top up the soft drinks and for once I had the full complement of stock to do so. I have been trying to keep the stock in the store room at a minimum which sometimes means waiting a day for more stock to tun up before fully finishing the task. The other job I just about managed to do unscathed was to top up the sunglasses stand which had looked emptier and emptier each day of the last week or so. Each time I had set out to do it another priority overtook me.

I need not have worried too much about trying to squeeze toppings up into my day because shortly before the middle of the day, it started to rain. It came and went for the rest of the day, quite at odds to what the lady on Radio Pasty told me on Friday morning. It was not particularly heavy rain and only dampened the street a little, but it certainly dampened my day a lot. It left me with ample time to stock the sunglasses stand, the small packets of sweets display and complete the cash and carry order, all without interruptions – well, maybe just a few.

The sea was still a little wild and we had a Lifeboat shout near miss with some inexperienced surfers caught in a rip. They extricated themselves shortly before our sharp-eyed Deputy Launch Authority pressed his launch button. It was nowhere near as feisty as yesterday, but the heavy swell was still present that gave some better surfing conditions later in the tide.

There were people about throughout the day, making the best of it I assume. We sailed through the remains of our pasties and the frozen ones, which turned out to be the correct call. We ran out of sausage rolls early on, followed by cheese pasties much later but only disappointed a few, I think. We sold the last Cornish pasty at six o'clock, making that 175, 50 cheese where we probably could have done with 60 and 45 sausage rolls when again 60 would have been better. Had the weather held today, I would have been well out of kilter with it.

The rain came in with a bit more weight during the latter part of our shop day. We had one or two notable grocery purchases, one over £100. It is most satisfying when visitors seem to find all they need from our meagre stock, so, thank you very much for shopping with us. The grocery buying extended into the evening and made me wonder if I should not have added a case or two of this and that to our cash and carry order I did earlier. Only the coming couple of weeks will tell.

The rain showers set in more seriously towards closing time. There was no five minutes to closing rush, just me dodging the showers trying to bring the display in from outside. There were sizeable orders to complete and for the first time this year a customer fish order. We have stopped doing these because of the £50 minimum order, but this customer likes her fish and it just needed a bit of topping up to make it viable.

There was a quite fortunate break in the heavier rain at about the normal time for taking the little girl for a spin. Naturally, in such conditions, the Harbour beach was nearly empty and we had a good dash about on that before taking a quieter stroll around. We were both a little damp when we returned, she more than me. I have been looking forward to the opportunity to trim her fur a bit as her front legs look like mops. That was not to be tonight, and it might have to wait until the shop hours reduce as they is precious little time between closing and bedtime as it is. I will do something about it if she starts tripping over them – or use her to mop the shop floor.

August 12th – Saturday

Welcome to weird weather day and perhaps not such a glorious 12th. One that looked a bit grey to start with and a bit of a cool breeze starting up from the west but still quite comfortably temperate. Shortly after opening the shop and quite unannounced, a shower silently started up. I only noticed when wet people started coming into the shop. It dovetailed quite nicely with the arrival of my breakfast from next door – having omitted to take a cob out of the freezer the night before, I was a little short on options – and when the delayed milkman arrived, there was a clear dome of blue sky awaiting us. It turned out, however, that it was but a fleeting thing and lost forever after that.

Our milkman, somewhat later than usual this month, presumably due to the increased volumes, was further delayed by a breakdown in Zennor. As I told him, there were worse places to break down but possibly none quite so remote on his rounds, at least. It was fortunate that business had yet to start in earnest as all the current milk needs to come out, the new bottles wiped down and put in the place before the others go back again. That all takes time and uses up most of the floor in front of the fridge, which is problematic with customers going to and fro.

The weather was not the only impediment to the smooth running of the day. The approaching low pressure system had introduced a deep and rolling ground sea into the bay that earlier in the day had caused the Lifeguards to red-flag just part of the beach. As the tide push in closer to high water, they red-flagged all the beach and with the heavy waves crashing right up to the rocks under the dunes, there was no beach left for anyone anyway. There was a small gathering, smaller than yesterday that is, up in the entrance to The Valley and unless they went over the dunes, there was no way back for them.

With no beach to cavort on, the street was much busier than it would otherwise have been. The line between the leaving and arriving must have blurred a bit today because there was no discernible lull in between. We started seeing new people arrive in the early afternoon, some familiar faces and others just seemed to melt away to hopefully be seen again next year or perhaps later this year. They must have all been starving before they got here given the pasties that were going out.

I had quite forgotten that I had to freeze some pasties last week and instead of reducing the order for the weekend, I increased it. Obviously, this induced a deep anxiety for the rest of the day and a sleepless night tossing and turning. It was all for nothing, it would appear as I was barely able to keep pace with the demand selling them one after the other like hot, erm, cakes. I now have a deep anxiety that we will probably have insufficient numbers for tomorrow and will, no doubt face a sleepless night. I have extracted the ones I froze last week from the freezer and will now almost certainly have too many.

The latter part of the afternoon eased off a little in the shop and there was no big five minutes to closing rush. We did sell an larger than normal selection of beers and wines and it was not until later on than one of the customers told me he was buying his because the OS was closed for a function. I knew there was a function because we had been invited to it and provided the saffron cake for it but I had no idea that they had closed the OS bar for it.

I had a long an involved conversation with a disaffected refugee from the OS in the shop later. He had a family meal that he had booked in advance curtailed because on that night they were closing early and no one had thought to say. He was further enraged when he discovered it was for a staff party – in the middle of August – to sooth the poor dears fevered brows for working so hard. Even now, meals are only being served to residents and some bookings because they are short staffed and yet another manager is taking over.

It was the first time in three years that I had crossed the threshold of the OS later in the evening. The family had a wedding blessing earlier in the day and being the kind and friendly neighbours that they are we were invited along. We arrived necessarily late after finishing with shop things for the evening and did not stay until too late. ABH had her first disco experience, I think perhaps she prefers late 60's prog rock but she did not make it too obvious but would have found getting down difficult anyway held in the Missus' arms.

We were up in the terrace that I had not visited since its make over and they have done a decent job of it. The rain we had in the morning made an unwelcome return while we were there, but there is a large awning over the terrace which despite the breeze was effective.

I was very ready for my bed by the time we headed for home after the rain had cleared. The Missus had not ventured up to The Farm during the day and ABH was clearly not satisfied with a lengthy walk in the middle of the day. She practically dragged me down to the Harbour beach when it became clear that is where we were going and tore around down there for twenty minutes letting off steam. It seemed to work, because she settled quickly when we eventually hit the sack. We do it all again tomorrow – apart from the soiree.

August 11th – Friday

Well, as days go, this was definitely one of them and a bit of a rip gribbler, too, in very comparative terms. You would probably have not thought very much of the day the way it looked from first thing as ABH and I took to the streets. She had woken up early, along with me but as soon as I turned my back, she was trying unsuccessfully to wake the Missus. I explained to her that she might wish to reconsider this course of action given the likely impact it might have on her longevity, which I think she understood and allowed me to take her out.

It was only a little way into the morning when the sun started to do what it should have been doing for the last few weeks, shining, and enticing our visitors to The Cove with a few shillings in their pockets and a willingness to part with them. Our visitors were duly enticed even if they had precious little in the way of beach to set their little encampments on and precious few waves to do their surfing on. Actually, the clever things had moved wholesale into the entrance to The Valley and although the bay looked flat as a dish, there was some underlying swell judging from the waves breaking on the beach and along Gurland Cliff. As the tide receded, the waves became a little more obvious. Let surfing begin.

The Missus took the brunt of the early morning rush. I went to the gymnasium before it started but it was pretty busy by the time I came back. The Missus had fallen into the pasty trap and was playing catch up, so I took ABH for a walk as standing around might have been construed as gloating. I returned a little later after cleaning up and getting changed, and it was still a bit busy then, so she was quite happy to go and I, after a blistering session early, was just ready to step in. The paced slowed soon after, but we had an altogether reasonable and somewhat unexpected day of it.

I had my own pasty near miss later as demand fluctuated only narrowly avoiding a cheese pasty outage – it is always the cheese - in the middle of the day. A furious rearguard action saw me clear just in the nick of time. Do not tell me that this shopkeeping lark is all smiles and wrapping paper; we grumpy shopkeepers have our fair share of muck and bullets, too.

There was no opportunity to top up shelves during the day and much will have to be done tomorrow. It may not have been our busiest day but the flow of customer traffic was fairly constant with a big push at the end that might be construed as the five minute to closing rush that lasted probably around two hours.

Much of the rush was groceries and earlier it had been going home postcard boxes and biscuits. I spent a good deal of time after we closed placing orders for the following day to replace them all. We are fortunate that we can do just in time delivery these days as we would not have sufficient space in the store room to keep all the stock at the rate we go through it, not to mention the administrative burden of having to order it.

By the end of the day, the cloud and haze that had been hovering about here and there all day, thickened. It gave over to a misty sunset that I am sure would have been spectacular had I stopped around to watch it. The Harbour car park was much emptier than during the week, so I suppose many people had left and not yet been replaced. I decided against a run on the beach as there was an angler down there casting out and I did not wish to risk flying hooks and the little girl. He also had dogs that he would not be concentrating on, so on balance, it looked like carnage waiting to happen.

It was a shame for ABH, but we will have all winter to run about down there and she is quite happy causing mayhem in the flat. I do not know if we are lucky or we are just excellent in our vigilance, but despite the place being an utter mess, she has not yet caused any material damage, not even to the shoes she steals on a regular basis. Long may this last.

August 10th – Thursday

After yesterday's manic chasing of the illusive sun, today was oddly demure. There was the suggestion of a good number of visitors about, perhaps waiting on the mist that had taken hold after an early remission, to clear away like it did yesterday. Today, that was not to be, but the crowd hung around anyway and during the day it was once again quite busy just not on the same scale.

Regardless of the mist, I have to thank our visitors for being tenacious and hanging on through the day. Although the mist was with us throughout, it did recede a little during the middle part of the day and it was warm and it was dry. When the mist had cleared sufficiently, I could see that there was a gathering of sorts on the beach but nowhere near the numbers of yesterday. The sea was also less crowded, no walking point to point across boards today, and without any waves during the high water period or indeed at any other time, all the boarders were just cruising around.

During the morning before opening, I had plough through as much of the accumulated deliveries as I could, topping up the drinks fridges and some of the grocery shelves. Aware of my plight, the Missus dropped down in the middle of the morning to blitz the store room and top up the grocery shelves. It took her a couple of hours or more, mostly answering enquiries about ABH who insisted on riding shotgun on the trolley she was using to move the stock around.

By the time the Missus left we were starting to wind down a bit. It unfortunately had the effect of making the afternoon drag and having completed all of my chores that I could reasonably manage from behind the counter, I was left looking for something to occupy my idle hands.

I did not have to look very far having noticed that someone had dumped their litter by our big commercial bin because it is locked and because they cannot be bothered to walk 20 metres to the public bin. There is already a polite notice on the bin pointing

out that the bins are private and where the public bin is but clearly this is insufficient. I have been meaning to write a more, erm, direct notice for the hard of thinking but had thus far not got around to it. Today was one paper cup too many and I penned something suitable, including pointing out that the area was covered by CCTV, and stuck it in an obvious place. It will be ignored, of course, but it made me feel better for a short while.

Once again the Lifeboat launched without me. I watched it launch with plenty of crew on board from the shop window as I started to close up. The Inshore boat launched just ahead of it and was waiting in the thickening mist just offshore. It was gone eight o'clock when I passed the top of the Harbour slipway to see the Inshore in the throes of being recovered. It scared the wits out of ABH as we walked back through the RNLI car park where the Tooltrak was preparing to reverse up the slope.

Just as we got in, ABH streaks ahead of me as she ran to get away from the Tooltrak, the big boat was waiting on the moorings ready to come in. I cast a watchful eye, confident that my colleagues would execute a textbook recovery up the long slipway before locking the boat away for the night. They did, of course, being the highly trained professionals that they are, even in my absence. Sadly, it seems that these skills are not readily transferable. One of our senior crew has switched allegiance to the Boat Crew and was throwing the heaving line tonight – very badly. It missed our man standing at the end of the long slipway in expectation by several yards. We are, after all, a very shore-based, very excellent Shore Crew.

August 9th – Wednesday

I am beginning to think we might be living in Brigadoon, only appearing to the outside world every now and again. I was going to say I could not see a hand in front of my face due to the mist, but I think it was more to do with waking up befuddled.

As if lack of visitors, poor weather, high seas, lack of sand and a disappearing Cove were not enough, the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers decided to throw more marbles under my feet by breaking Microsoft Office. As I tidied up The Diary this morning - oh yes, dear reader, hard to believe, I know, but some actual thought and effort goes into the production of this tatty excuse of a journal – the word processing package decided to throw a wobbler. After numerous but limited attempts to fix it, I used an alternative to finish the job.

Given that I would almost certainly face an emergency during the day that required immediate use of a word processor on my computer upstairs, I sacrificed some setting up time to uninstall and reinstall the package. Thankfully that operation went smoothly, and all is well in word processing land again.

Arriving late at the office, I was gratified to discover that all our deliveries except the pasties had all been delivered on time. It was also a relief to know that the orders

were light, having used precious little by way of groceries in the intervening period since the last delivery.

I had anticipated another dour day and in terms of the weather, I was not wrong – to start with. Normally, this would go hand in hand with visitors staying away in droves and my pasties withering on the vine, erm, or whatever pasties grow on. Instead, it seemed that we had stumbled upon International Buy a Pasty Day.

I had previously determined that I would not order in many pasties for tomorrow as we had been accumulating over the last couple of days and could do with clearing them out. Fortunately, before the reorder deadline came it became obvious that things were hotting up in the pasty department, so I increased the order. It is entirely possible that I did not increase it by enough as we were bowled over by the weight of pasty requests. I checked at the end of the day, and we should just about have enough for a better than average day tomorrow – that is, of course, if I have not missed International Wind Up a Grumpy Shopkeeper by Ordering Huge Amounts of Pasties Day.

It was hardly noticeable as it had happened so subtly, but the day transformed into something that might pass for a bit of a rip gribbler in these troubled times. By the end of the afternoon, the beach was as packed as it had been any of the bright days this year and the sea was dotted with the multiple colours of swim and wetsuits and various types of board. If the surf was poor yesterday, it was nigh on non-existent today. At one point, there were so many boards floating in the still water you could have walked a line from The Beach to the Lifeguards huts without getting your feet wet.

I had sent the Missus on a mercy errand to our cash and carry at Hayle for tins of beans and tomatoes, knowing of course that when she arrived back with them we would not sell another tin for a fortnight. We were very busy when she got back, and I hardly noticed her unloading the truck. She had also bought groceries for ourselves in two big sacks that I later had to heft upstairs. Almost immediately, she left for The Farm where she loaded up the provisions for the gift aisle that had been previously ignored in our topping up. She returned much later with those and again we were so busy she unloaded by herself.

Throughout the day, deliveries had accumulated in the store room and by the end of the day it was stacked with drinks and cases of tinned provisions. I managed to clear the toys to their appropriate shelves, but the rest will have to wait until the morning – an early one by the look of it.

It had taken a while after closing to do the orders for the next day, so tea was late and so was taking ABH around the block again. Our ugly duckling of a morning had turned out eventually to be a beautiful duck-billed platypus – well, why not, they are highly underrated. It was also seriously busy. As we walked past the Round House, there were cars queuing to get into the Harbour car park and once in there, we were

faced with the Cape Cornwall gig being man-handled around the parked cars and blocking all the traffic.

We had avoided the beach on the way out because the second gig was still down there, and it was likely to be busy. However, on the way back there was only one family down there who looked like they were packing up and an otherwise empty beach. We had a wander down and discovered that I knew the family as regular visitors, who fussed the little girl for a bit. She did have a bit of a run around, so the detour was still worthwhile.

At some point during the day, the winds turned easterly, which suggested a bit of high pressure had allowed us a bit of a day before the next low comes charging in. From the heavy mist in the morning, the air was still full of moisture and in the evening the air was still quite heavy. It was one of the prettiest evenings, though, and I am sure the sunset was magnificent, which is why it was so busy with arriving vehicles. I do hope they enjoyed it.

August 8th – Tuesday

As if it was not bad enough that the weather was against us this year, I woke up and The Cove had disappeared.

It was the sort of mist that would plague us all day and stop all the flights out to the Islands without a second thought. Whether it was the mist or some other dastardly action affecting us, all the deliveries except the bread were late today. It was a happy coincidence that all our customers were late as well because I would never have got the milk into the fridge else.

I had spent all of the morning before opening topping up the soft drinks and beer fridges. The soft drinks had been cleared out, mainly from Sunday and the spares I had were insufficient to bring them up to full. The delivery arrived yesterday but it is impossible to fill it up during opening hours when I am on my own. When I had finished with that, I started on the grocery shelves but ran out of time and also discovered we were running out of tins of beans and tomatoes, both items only available on our two weekly cash and carry order. The Missus will have to go off to Hayle again later in the week.

There was lots of wandering about and very little being on the beach, the mist having cleared sufficiently that people could find it. Any surfers out there were living off a bit of a shore break and a lot of hope as the bay was mainly devoid of swell. There were a few idle wanders on the beach, but the majority were there for getting into the water for one reason or another. There were maybe half a dozen little camps down there by the latter stages of the afternoon.

The sun waited until four o'clock to show any muscle, which was far too late to be of any use to grumpy shopkeepers. Its absence throughout the day had resulted in a

very sedate day of shopkeeping. It caused me a little difficulty in guessing the bread order for the following day because most of the morning's delivery was still there, unsold. In all likelihood, it would go during the latter stages of the evening when people came in to do their shopping for tea, but equally, that may not happen. I sent off a reduced order and hoped that people would have been eating all day long to console themselves and not want too much bread for tea.

Earlier in the day I had called out one of our book suppliers. I had placed the order two weeks previously and was wondering where it was. The same had happened on the order before that to the excuse that they were waiting for one of the titles, which held up the rest. I did not think it very inventive that they used the same excuse again this time but in the middle of the afternoon part of the consignment turned up. It rather begged the question that if they were willing to send part of the order, why they had not done so before. On the basis that it was not life threatening, I will leave it at that but I shall watch carefully next time and perhaps be a bit more sharp about sending in the order.

A bit more of an irritation was the statement I had received from our drinks supplier. You may recall, dear reader, the contretemps I had with the lady in accounts who effectively accused me of not paying for one of our deliveries and went on to accuse the driver. The statement's total showed that I owed £60 plus, which was impossible having paid cash for years then switched to paying by credit card since the accusations were made. It demonstrated to me that the accounts team were not exactly on top of their game.

I was unwilling to enter into a conversation with the lady from accounts again, so I called our sales representative and landed the matter in his lap. My main concern was that the company would cancel my access again, which he told me would not happen for such a minor amount. I told him that the amount last time was less and they had no hesitation in doing it then. He told me it may take a few days to resolve but assured me that I would not be locked out. He called back an hour or so later and told me that accounts were aware of the issue and were working on it. It begged the question why the accounts sent the statement in the first place if they knew it was wrong, but I was not going to chase trouble.

The late afternoon and evening descended into quiet contemplation. Who was contemplating what, I have no idea and there certainly were precious few people around to ask. There was enough to clear out the bread that I had not ordered to replace the following day, of course. Had I ordered some more, it would still be there.

I was late taking ABH out in the evening as the Missus asked me to set up her electronic mail on her Bramley computer tablet. These devices are as much of a mystery now as they have ever been. They are famed for being utterly obtuse and not inclined to talk to any other computer. I worked for an accountancy company long ago and as the result of a merger, the audit department all had Bramley computers

and the tax department all had proper computers. Even after ten years it was a complete and costly pig's ear trying to support, supply and service the estate.

Proving things had not advanced very much, it took me an age to get the Missus's computer configured, but at least it does now work.

ABH was not much enamoured that she had to wait for so long. When we eventually did go out, I would not let her down to the beach that was beset with small children, albeit in the water, but a complication to her playtime nonetheless and even the back nine along Coastguard Row was busy with other dogs and family groups. We will try again tomorrow, but a little earlier.

August 7th – Monday

Well, we started out with sunshine and blue skies but cloud racing in from the west did for that in pretty short order. After all, there is such a thing as having too much of a good thing and we had sunshine and blue skies all day yesterday. It was dry and perfectly warm, and we even had the occasional bright spell. What more could you ask for – in the middle of summer.

We were busy from the outset again but nothing like the full on mass invasion that we had yesterday. Well, it might have been but by the time it likely happened I had scarpered off to the gymnasium and left the Missus in charge. I will not ask her because she will say that it was even if it was not. Nevertheless, I kept my blistering session to a minimum just in case it was overly busy and in fairness there was a bit of a queue when I came back.

It is quite often that we are asked questions on local features, directions and historical facts. I find it quite pleasurable answering such enquiries, but never before have I been asked to explain the origin behind the flag of St Piran to a Polish person in the presence of his interpreter son. It was clear almost from the outset that some of the words or concepts did not translate well, like Cornish saints coming from Ireland, so I skipped the bit about arriving on a millstone. The blackened stone from the fire was alright but to believe that the fire was hot enough to melt tin was probably a bit of a stretch. He gave me a smile of thanks when he left, although it was probably pity. He did not even buy a sticker after all that.

As the day progressed, the cloud thickened some more until towards the end of the afternoon we had a little rain from it. The street dried almost immediately afterwards, so it was hard to believe that it had rained at all. The most lasting feature was all our customers beggared off and not coming back again.

It had been quite buoyant through the day with less people on the beach and more people wandering about. We made a good dent in our pasty supply, which was heartening to see and I had the numbers fairly close including the cheese ones this time. I knew that we would be a bit short on the soft drinks if we had another blazing

sunny day, so that worked out too and the delivery I called in yesterday will restock the fridge when I get around to it tomorrow morning. Given the forecasts I probably will not have to top it up again until the end of the week.

I had been meaning to do a frozen order for the last couple of days but when the opportunity presented itself, I clearly had found other things to do. It was mainly when I passed by the empty freezers that I remembered and when I was back behind the till, it went out of my mind again. Our neighbour and friend pointed out the lack of chips during her evening visit. She provides a regular service of pointing out my deficiencies – obviously in the most pleasant sort of way – and I have discovered all manner of out of date goods and vacant slots on our shelves thanks to her observations. It is like having a mystery shopper with rather less mystery.

We had a good little run for our five minutes to closing and they were all gone when the closing time arrived. To demonstrate that we actually had quite a few customers during the day, it took me a little while to write the order lists for greengrocery and dairy.

Most impressive are the sales of our local baker's bread. When we first looked at it, we dismissed the idea because we thought it too expensive. We have constant problems trying to get 'normal' bread – the milkman needs too much notice, and the grocery man delivers too late – so our local man was ideal in that respect. Since we have had it, I have increased the volume as it sells better than the 'normal' bread beside it and it arrives every day before we open.

ABH and I risked the beach in the evening. The sand was churned up by a hundreds of small feet and as the size of the tides decrease, the top end was all soft sand. There was a small boy fishing off the beach when we arrived, so I did not risk taking her off the lead but when he left she went loopy, running around in circles. All I have to do is stand there and watch her. A while later our neighbour arrived then another younger dog more our girl's size, which provided a willing playmate. It went a bit downhill from there as more children and a few adults arrived and it felt a bit crowded, so we tucked up and left for a less frantic walk around the big block.

There was a little more rain in the air before we got back. More coming, I suspect.

Finally, apologies to those who have been disenfranchised by the sudden change in Diary home. I had to provide some instruction to a local lady who was missing it – some people are just gluttons for punishment – and she will pass it on to her friends similarly affected. Had the change over been planned I would have been able to avoid such problems. I promise to think twice about pushing buttons I am not supposed to in future – after all Cinderella never did.

August 6th – Sunday

Sunshine and blue skies. Crikey.

For the first time this year we were proper summer busy as people headed to the beach during the mid-morning. It had also been busy earlier with small groups from shortly after we opened. The flow went very suddenly from very few to very many and seemed to involve an increasing number of pasties along with everything else.

It is very easy to get caught out with pasty sales. You start with a minimal number when it is quiet so that not too many are sitting in the warmer for an extended period. You sell one or two then someone will ask for four, which clears you out. If you have not been smart enough to line up another half dozen pasties by this time, your next customers are in for a fifteen minute wait. That is, of course if you are able to get another set of pasties into the oven and are not pinned down behind the counter by an increasing long queue.

Today, by some quirk of fate, I had read the runes correctly and had lined up an abundance of pasties ahead of the first wiping out. Even then, the orders came so quickly I had to ask the next customer to wait while I lined up even more pasties to back fill the ones being sold. It worked marvellously, apart from the schoolboy error of forgetting that we also have cheese pasties. The sales of these fluctuates wildly, and it is very difficult to gauge when and how many to load up. This caught me out today, despite having a reasonable number of cheese pasties immediately to hand. Two orders in quick succession cleared the warmer out and I did not have others in the oven to follow behind. We disappointed a few customers until I had my act together.

In my defence, we were exceptionally busy. It was the sort of busy that we should have been three or four days a week for the last two weeks, so it was long overdue. It took me by surprise, but I am ever ready, as it were and the fact that I had the pasties organised to some degree made life a whole lot easier. My fingers were flying over the till keypad in a constant blur, and I am sure that many of the numbers were right as well. Everyone seemed happy, at least, and few had to wait any more than a minute or two.

It certainly was a beach day, even if even more sand had been dragged off the rocks and a huge swathe of the beach was covered in oar weed. It split the beach into two camps, one under The Beach complex and the other from the Lifeguard hut to The Valley. There were just as many people in the water which presented as a strange arrangement of sand bars stretching out into the bay and deep pools either side. I did not have much time to observe, so could not say if there was any good surfing out there or no, but it was probably better than a red flagged beach all day.

We remained busy in the shop all day, although not manically so like the morning. There was little in the way of quiet time, so I sneaked off with browsing customers in the shop for a cup of tea, but it was a long time coming. It was not until around six o'clock that the general ebb and flow slowed, and customer visits were a bit more sporadic. It gave me time to walk around the shop and survey the damage, which

was legion. I had anticipated some of it and sent the Missus a list of goodies to retrieve from The Farm. She had left the shop shortly after the main thrust of customer action had dissipated and spent the rest of the day up there.

With the growing abandoned for this year - the damaged eye issue had been terminal for much of the seedling crops - the Missus has been concentrating on weed control and tidying up the worse offending areas up there. She has been taking out the worst of the weeds in the important places we do not want them and putting down matting so that they do not come back. We may not have crops, but we will be the prettiest farm around.

The pleasantness of the day extended into the evening and it was most pleasurable taking a stroll around the big block with the little girl. We took our time but once again saw no one to talk to or play with. She had been quite subdued before we went out, worn out from her Farm antics which included discovering the delights of a bucket full of farm manure. It is a good job we have plenty of water up there from the recent rain and were able to wash her down else she would have been walking home.

August 5th – Saturday

I was a tad pressed to include all the intricate details of last night's shout in yesterday's report and besides, it did not conclude until today.

The balloon went up at ten minutes to eleven o'clock. Balloons going up at any time get my attention but waking me up just after I have dozed off, is a bit much but I dragged myself over to the boathouse. Here I discovered a lot of people sitting around demonstrating a startling lack of urgency, so, after making the station ready for launch by opening the doors and checking the slipway for obstructions, we joined them.

It appeared that the boat had been tasked to escort a small harbour craft towing a lost container back to wherever lost containers go. I heard later that the request had come from the Secretary of State via the Coastguard, though how true that was, I do not know. It was an odd one because the container towing operation was being shadowed by the big tug, Galatea, that used to sit in Mounts Bay waiting for big ships to break down.

With worsening weather on the way, we were keen that the boat did not have to go off service because we could not recover it after the operation. It was decided that we would run the escort until half past twelve o'clock, then return to station for low water at one o'clock in the morning.

So, there they were, two lonely daft beggars at the end of the long slipway, in the dark trying to find the end of the span to hook up to the recovery cable. I know this because I was one of the daft beggars. Having almost stepped off the end of the steps at the bottom of the slipway in the dark, I decided it would be a better idea to

take a torch down with me when we went down again to receive the boat. There was no more than a gentle rise and fall on the slipway when the boat came in and there ensued what sounded like a textbook recovery in dark conditions up the long slipway.

There were better numbers of us for the nighttime operation than there was for the early morning one, which made life a bit easier. We had the boat tucked away in no time and ourselves tucked away shortly after. We are, after all, a very nocturnal, very excellent Shore Crew.

Having been up in the middle of the night, ABH was even less inclined to be dragged out of bed at the usual time. I told her if I had to do it then so did she, which made absolutely no difference whatever. It was a tad blustery on our circuit of the little block but the heavy rain that we had been warned of either had not materialised or had done so earlier when we were all asleep. I decided that it was probably not such a good idea to put the flags out the front today and later, not the pasty sign either.

There was then a bit of a rush to try and get my emails working again after finding out all the changes of server names and settings required to do so. At the last knockings last night, I had fired off a message to the support people in the new supplier to ask for help with the settings insisting that the messaged back rather than telephoned because I would be too busy to field the call. It took until this morning to work out how daft that was because without the mail system working, I would never get their answer. I worked it out for myself and fixed the two main mail addresses – I think.

It took a long while for business to gain any traction at all today. We had some leaving and arriving going on which made customer visits sporadic and of last minute trinkets and provisions for the journey.

It meant that I could look out at the bay and the big waves as they thundered in. With 40 to 50 miles per hours wind behind them I had expected low water to be somewhat inhibited but I think that the spring tide won out quite successfully leaving a huge acreage of beach on display. The Lifeguards had red flagged the beach quite early on and were not minded to relax it at low water, as demonstrated by the lack of anyone in or near the water.

In fact, there was a general lack of anyone at all on the beach. We have seen more in the middle of winter. Not even the sun breaking through in the early afternoon and making everything look a sight better than the grey storminess of earlier. My guess was that the smart money, such had arrived or not left, had gone around the other side to find some shelter in Porthcurno. It was a shame, really, as it did look some pretty in the late afternoon sunshine.

We showed a little of the signs of burgeoning business later in the day, but really, if I had not opened at all I do not think many people would have been inconvenienced.

We are going to have to go some to put a dent in the remaining pasties for the weekend and I foresee a great freezing at some point during tomorrow.

I was quite relieved to close up and go and have some tea. It is almost immediately after this that I take the little girl around the big block to give her a breath of fresh air. We would, of course, have run on the beach if we could but we stopped to watch the spectacle of a churning cauldron of boiling water swirl about as waves crashed over the Harbour wall. I had thought to take a little film footage of it for posterity but with ABH on a lead in one hand and cars passing close behind us in the narrow chicane by Tinker Taylor cottage, that was not going to happen.

It was still a very pleasant evening, with the sun setting in our eyes and a fair few sea watchers hanging about in the Harbour car park. The wind had diminished quite a bit but was still a little punchy in our faces on the way out. In a sign that we are entering the third week of holidays, we hardly saw anyone we know as we walked about. We hope for better things tomorrow.

August 4th – Friday

Another day with no outlet for The Diary. Thank heavens that the other reader has not noticed yet.

It was an altogether much better morning otherwise, still a tad breezy but worthy of a walk around the little block with ABH. I was late getting up, which is not so much a problem on gymnasium days, but all the same put me off my stride. The wheel on the windbreak stand is holding up well and, in fact, it seems much easier to wheel about than it did before. It may have been that the offending wheel was damaged from the outset.

As the morning progressed, some brightness crept into the day and by the middle of the morning, it actually looked a little summery. It certainly brought in an increased number of visitors to wonder at the warmth and brightness of it all and there was quite a gathering on the beach ranged along the new top of the sand. This appeared to be a semi-circle in front of the dunes of rocks uncovered by the raging seas of the last couple of days. High water in the evening meant that the beach completely disappeared by half past five o'clock and we had a minor rush as families were pushed off the beach, so some good came of it.

That glorious – everything is relative – summer day dissolved into a hazy mire towards the middle of the afternoon. As one customer noted, it was nice to have a couple of hours of sunshine during the holiday. So, let us have a recap: there are fewer people here than ever before, the weather has been appalling for weeks, big seas pushed the surfers off and the sand has gone but do not worry, we had two hours of sunshine.

We have had busier days and we have had quieter ones, too. It was sad to see some of our friends leave but good to see a few more turn up to face whatever we have coming our way. We took in nearly 200 pasties this morning, so I do hope that they are all hungry. Those that were still here made a decent fist of putting a dent into those numbers, so something went right.

The lingering drowsiness that I had felt after I had overslept disappeared after a blistering session at the gymnasium. For once it was a couple of degrees warmer in the hut with a tin roof than outside. When I returned, the little girl was still traumatised by her encounter with the waste collection truck that turns up every Friday. I took her for a walk around the back of the shop but she recovered only after a little snooze in the quiet upstairs.

I took her out again in the evening after all to do with the shop had been put away. The rain had started to come in but it was that sparse sort of rain that does not make you too wet and indeed was quite pleasant in an obtuse sort of way. I then spent an enjoyable rest of the evening trying to get the website working including two half hour waits in a queue for a support person. I was cut off the first time and had to call back.

Hopefully, you can see that The Diary is now back – I know, how disappointing. I just have to spend a day between customers trying to get my email working again.

Then, just after I had dropped off to sleep, our Lifeboat pagers went off.

August 3rd – Thursday

I had inadvertently triggered the move to our new website yesterday evening, which caused our current website to disappear from view. I discovered it had gone this morning when I was preparing to post The Diary. This was clearly not the most opportune moment then for our Lifeboat pagers to go off.

Although the sea state had calmed considerably from last night, it was still a boiling mess of big waves and white water at near enough high water. It was clearly not the most opportune moment to be launching Lifeboats either, but needs must when someone reports a drifting liferaft out at the north end of the TSS (Traffic Separation System) keeping the big boats flowing safely up and down the channel between us and the Isles of Scilly. It was almost certain that it had washed off a large vessel and almost certain that it was empty but needed to be checked to see which ship it came from and was indeed supposed to be empty.

It proved to be one of those ship launched liferafts and was indeed empty. It was a bit battered about and listing, having taken on water. The Lifeboat was unable to attach a tow in the conditions and with the Coastguard agreed it should be left to drift where it would probably be even more battered about. The container ship it came from confirmed it was washed off in the storm along with a couple of containers.

A skeleton crew – we do not eat very much – launched the boat at around half past six o'clock into that boiling mess of a sea. The north end of the TSS is a good distance out, so we did not expect the boat back too quickly and shut the station doors. I needed to return home anyway to see if ABH still needed to go out – the Missus had got there before me – and to prepare the shop for opening.

The sea state had been such that we were not sure if we could recover the boat. There was some question whether it would drop out enough for short slip recovery or have to wait until low water at eleven o'clock to see if it was possible then. As I came down to the shop to start on the newspapers, the duty launching authority told me the boat was on the way back and to expect it in an hour. It was only a short while after that the Missus sent me a message that the boat was much closer than an hour and when I had a look, it was two minutes out, passing Brisons.

By the time I was over at the station to assess the situation, the boat was in the bay having a geek for itself. The sea state was still pretty gruesome in the Harbour, so the boat went out into calmer waters to wait for a bit. Another sharp-eyed member of the crew arrived without being bid and together we decided to set up for the short slip recovery anyway. There was a very limited window of opportunity to carry out the recovery because the spring tides were ebbing away quickly and before long, the short slip would not be viable.

Things moved pretty quickly after that. I had gone back to the shop to make sure the Missus was alright to open the shop and by the time I came back again, my friend had finished off all the one-man operations. We set to making all the two-man jobs work and while we were doing that more crew arrived to help at the same time as the boat drew into the bay.

We were right on the cusp on short slipway usefulness and, due to the swell, we had to adapt our textbook procedures a little to make sure we ended up with a textbook recovery, which we did a few minutes later. We are, after all, a very flexible, very excellent Shore Crew.

And so the cycle starts again. It is a day for buying going home presents for people in the office, people who have looked after flowers and cats and for the person next door who cared for the tortoise. I have often suggested a scale of gifts matching the enormity of the task that had been undertaken because, frankly, some people just do not have a clue. Either the present will be way in excess of what is deserved or will make the recipient think twice about doing it next year.

A case in point was the tortoise. Surely, looking after a tortoise does not warrant three, yes three, saffron cakes even if you are probably going to share one with the carer. I felt duty bound to point this out to the lady buying them as it left her a bit of a hostage to fortune. What if, I suggested, she asked her friend to look after, say, a pet wallaby next time, a job far more intricate I assume than looking after a tortoise. How

could she possibly top three, yes three, saffron cake. I fear my advice fell on deaf ears, but we do try our best for our customers.

For all that, it being a going home present buying day, it was fearfully quiet. There was a little rain around in the morning that had us damp while pulling the Lifeboat out of the water but that eventually passed and led to a largely dry day. I did fancy it was a little brighter today, and the wind had dropped considerably but it did not translate to an influx of visitors. The beach was sparsely populated even though the swimming and surfing flags were bag flying again, which led to a healthy number of surfers and splashers about in the shallows.

As expected, the sea was in a much calmer state when high water returned later in the day. The waves were still quite large in towards the shore and still rather blown out. It was still too poor to risk a Lifeboat launch for training in the evening, so training was onshore, although I did not attend as I was still working at the time.

It was good enough for a stank around the big block where we met a new friend to play with. ABH thinks that all dogs she meets are friends and want to play with he and is sore disappointed when they do not. She is therefore delighted when she finds one that is. Unfortunately, it was on Coastguard Row and I could not risk letting slip her lead that made play a bit tricky but it was better than nothing, perhaps.

We will keep checking the website but there is no way else to communicate with you, dear reader. Keep the faith, or breathe a futile breath of relief because we will be back.

August 2nd – Wednesday

There was much howling going on when we headed to bed and there was much howling going on when we got out of it this morning and it was not ABH. Even at six months old she knows better than to howl at a waning gibbous moon. It must therefore have been the wind that had picked up yesterday afternoon and decided to have a real ball of it today. Radio Pasty in the morning stated that it had already been bounding in at 50 to 60 miles per hour down our end.

It certainly felt a bit that way when ABH and I headed for our usual run around the small block. We diverted to the RNLI car park and the shelter of Tinker Taylor cottage when the 50 to 60 miles per hour wind came in laced with sharp little raindrops. She was not impressed, and I cannot say that I could blame her very much.

The showers, the few that we had through the day, were mercifully short and not very heavy. The wind was indeed the major feature and completely wiped out the waves heading into the beach. There was not very much of low water as the sea was pushing in continuously and by high water later in the afternoon, it was a white and grey churning mess, dancing up the cliffs at Aire Point and Nanjulian Cliff. Later, it

was lamping over the wall and attracted more people to watch it than the shop had all day. The Lifeguards red flagged the beach too, but no one was minded to be there anyway.

The Missus dropped down mid-morning with ABH to carve her way through what I had left behind of our grocery order in the store room. It took a few hours while ABH entertained and did the meeting and greeting at front of house. It is a blight on youngsters these days that she soon tired of her job and wanted to go and do something else instead. We pandered to her whim, and I took her for a stroll up the back of us for a break and the Missus had her in the trolley for a short while.

It was while all this pandering was going on that I noticed that the black cat was back outside the Lifeboat station viewing gallery. I also took note of the colour of the collar, which was pointless being colour blind but it seemed like the right thing to do. I called the lady I saw last night and left a message, but the Missus went one better and used ABH's carry case to take the cat up to Apple Tree Café where it could be properly looked after and not risk further escape - we did not tell ABH her bag had been used for a cat. Can you imagine the furore. I called the lady again and said that her cat had been delivered to the café or at least someone's cat had been delivered to the café. I had a message later that it was indeed the correct cat.

The afternoon in the shop took off. I have no idea what drives business on a day like this, but many people would have come down to watch the waves which were every bit as powerful and watchable as those that appear during winter storms. What a very odd year this is.

On top of the delivery yesterday that needed to be cleared from the store room, two more large boxed deliveries came in. One was the hooded sweatshirts I had ordered and the other was a huge top up of the little 50 pence sweet bags that are so popular. I managed to clear the sweatshirts between serving customers somehow but the sweets were a bit too much beyond that. The Missus went for an early tea and headed down after the shop was shut. It still took her two hours to clear it all but she is very thorough.

The rain had cleared out in the latter part of the afternoon and evening, although the wind remained. It was perfectly reasonable to take the little girl around the block, avoiding the Harbour which was still full of angry waves. She was of a different opinion about the reasonableness of the weather for walking out, but she came along after a bit of dragging. She belted back across the RNLI car park on the way back as she thought the Missus would be home again as she often is when she is missing on the way out. She was not, and she had to suffer me for the rest of the evening.

I still found time to muck up my website Internet settings, which is why you are reading this two days late, dear reader.

August 1st – Tuesday

I gave myself a boot up the rear end this morning so that I would have some time to change the wheel on the windbreak stand. There was no milk delivery this morning, so that helped a bit but I hurried up anyway and found that I managed to get it done along with all the other deliveries in a very efficient manner and without attendant disasters.

The wheel change went smoother than I imagined. The most challenging aspect was finding something to jack the stand up with but right behind it on the shelf were those tins of boiled sweets you take on car journeys only to find they have all melded together in the heat. Three of those stacked up was perfect. I would normally expect a simple job of this nature to be fraught with woes like stripped threads and immovable nuts. No, the small gods of grumpy shopkeepers were smiling on me – or were still asleep – which means I am in for it later on.

The cloud split open for a tantalisingly short glimpse at a bit of sunshine this morning just as I opened the shop. Less than an hour later it was raining again. ABH and I had missed the rain that came a little earlier in the morning. That was a close run thing, too, as I had seen it coming but she took ages to drag out of bed again and I thought we might get caught out.

I had hoped that the cash and carry boys would get here before opening again. In fact, it was one of the things that would have interrupted my wheel change, but there was no sign of them and they eventually came in the middle of the afternoon when we were busying up quite nicely. Fortunately, they came double handed and shifted most of it in by themselves mostly avoiding queues at the till to get around.

The minor grocery delivery arrived quite a bit earlier but I had not supervised the dumping in the store room. When I went to check that it was stacked at the back of the room I was deeply disappointed. Thinking that the next, bigger delivery could be at any moment I had to knuckle down and clear as much room as I could in the shortest time I could and serve an increasing number of customers at the same time. We do love a bit of a challenge. Life would be so tedious, else.

Busy. Did I mention that we were busy? It started early today. I suspect that the Internet savvy visitors had looked at the online weather forecasts and noted that the rain would start at three o'clock exactly. Unaware of just how appalling our forecasts are, they would have firmly believed this to be written in stone – in a magnetic inky sort of way – and would have adjusted their lives accordingly. I was quite amazed that the beach was quite crowded by late morning. We ended up busier than yesterday by some margin.

The rain did come through eventually, starting at around four o'clock in a light, on my way kind of way and did not really get going until much later. We had the 'almost left behind' crew come through buying evening goods but it surprised me greatly through

the day to see a preponderance of going home presents going across the counter. I did not realise that there were so many mid week change-overs but I assume it spreads the load on the finite number of cleaner hours available during the week.

The Missus returned when the poor weather looked like it was settling in, bringing a weary ABH with her. The little girl does not get any sleep up at The Farm – at least not when Mother is not there - and consequently is ready for a rest when she gets back. This is probably why she was not overly happy about the Missus starting on the grocery order even if she was at close quarters in the shopping trolley. The Missus gave in shortly after starting with the idea of coming back after tea. As we were late finishing tea, this never happened.

In the meanwhile, mainly because I had nothing better to do like serve customers, I made a start on the boxes that were closest to hand and that I could put out without going too far from the till, just in case. The just in case proved apposite as there were small strings of customers coming and going despite the increasing heaviness of the rain.

Just at last knockings I had a lady arrive seeking a lost cat. Someone had posted pictures on social media of a black cat that resembled her own in the Lifeboat station shop. She had come to see if it was still there. I told her that we also had seen a black cat come into the shop. It must have been there for the plain crisps. It had left shortly afterwards, and we had thought nothing more about it.

The lady told me quite a long and involved story of how the cat started with them when they ran a pub in St Just. They had then moved to Sennen and current ran the Apple Tree Café but now lived, along with the cat, in Mousehole. Her supposition was that the cat had stowed away in one of their cars heading in this direction.

I opened the viewing gallery for the lady on the off chance that the cat was still there, which obviously it was not. I wished her well with her search and made a mental note never to have a cat as they were clearly much more trouble than small dogs.

One small dog was going to be disappointed if she thought she was running out on a mucky night like the one then ensued here in The Cove. We have had better winter mucky nights to be honest.

