

DIARY 2024

October 31st – Thursday

It was quite the brightest and best looking morning we have had for the week. Having been told at the end of last week that high pressure would be with us and weather would be good for the half term week, the promise has been seriously under delivered. The cloud was still breaking up in the early part of the day but it would have accounted for there being more light as I took ABH around for the first walk of the day. I am sure wearing a headtorch when there is sufficient light not to need it looks entirely daft. I am glad there was no one around at that time in the morning.

It did not take long for there to be quite a few people around, however. I would normally expect to get through an early breakfast before the fight started but I was inundated with customers before I had a chance to get halfway through. There was a mix of going home present buying and snack buying ahead of a walk or adventure that would take whoever beyond the reach of further supplies.

We often see this ahead of a walk to Land's End, which always perplexes me. Clearly, they have no concept of how near their destination is, which perplexes me even more. If you are intending to walk somewhere, surely you would look at a map initially to first, see where you are going and secondly, to judge the requirements of the journey. I hope none of these people ever wake up in the morning thinking that it is a good day to see what the view from the top of Everest is like before slipping on a pair of plimsols and an overcoat and heading for the number nine bus.

Just like I would not be surfing in the middle of the beach at mid tide at the moment without first looking at the beach at low tide. The waves have continued their effort to rid the beach of sand and have been very successful just down from the dunes in front of the Lifeguard hut. There is a huge field of small boulders and rocks about a quarter the length of the beach just as the beach begins to rise to the dunes. Being dumped on that by a heavy wave would not be very pleasant at all.

Looking at the sea state today, being dumped by a heavy wave on the beach was about as likely as being eaten by a great white shark. There were some decent waves at low tide in the shore break, especially out towards Gwenver, but they were small by comparison to earlier in the week. They were, however, assisted by a light easterly breeze and as a consequence, there were about twenty surfers out there enjoying the serenity of it all.

For the rest of us, the bay just looked flat calm and light blue under a widening cloudless sky. The sun lit up the cliffs opposite and Gwenver's light yellow sands were nearly gleaming. The sun is that low in the southern sky now it barely skims over the top of Mayon Cliff and by the middle of next month, will not get above it at all.

Being as it was such a glorious day, we were comfortingly busy. It came in waves, the biggest being in the later afternoon but our visitors had been at our pasties (sorry, MS) for the early part of the afternoon and our gifts and going home presents in the later wave. We are now looking at some big gaps on our shelves, particularly the sweets, where our visitors have stripped them like a plague of locusts – and we have not replaced them. We still have stock of the basics and trying to ensure that we are not left with an excess of those is exceedingly tricky.

One of our neighbours took advantage of the glassy smooth seas in the bay to take out his punt and carry on a bit of fishing. Quite unexpectedly he dropped a bag of mackerel at my door on his way home, which was most kind. I shall be baking it downstairs to avoid the Missus' accusation of stinking fish in the flat and so it would be expedient to fillet it first. I waited for most of the day for a long enough break to allow me the opportunity to do it without going through a dozen pairs of gloves for multiple interruptions. I went through two pairs in the end, which was not too bad. Having not filleted mackerel, or any fish for that matter, in a long while, I was quite pleased that I managed to do the job quickly and with very little waste.

It was a quieter run in to closing time. It seemed to drag on a bit and I was rather premature in bringing in some of the outside display until I realised it was a bit early. We still had a few customers coming and going but, once again, after darkness fell, our supply of happy visitors dried up a bit.

I then had a bit of a headlong rush to cram some tea so that I could attend the Lifeboat station for a training launch scheduled for seven o'clock. The very pleasing bit of orange glow that the setting sun had left behind that I noticed earlier, had long gone by the time we all arrived at the top of the slipway to launch the boat. The skies were clear but with no moon, it was very dark indeed and we relied on the slipway floodlights to work by, setting up for the boat's return later.

With both boats away, I entreated my compatriots to lend a grumpy shopkeeper a hand in lifting down the old oven that still remained in our living room. Being that it was just about a year since they assisted taking the furniture down ahead of our building work, I told them that it was an anniversary celebration of time honoured tradition that they would be keeping alive. Very kindly they came over to the flat after we had set up for recovery and lent a hand. When I say, 'lent a hand', they lent so many that I did not have to do anything at all except watch, the very good bunch that they are.

October 30th – Wednesday

At last, I managed to drag my sorry knee down to the gymnasium to give it a darned good talking to. It had gone beyond some of my exercises, but I think it is the rowing and the lifting weights with my legs which gets at the quadriceps that are the most

effective. It took about an hour after my blistering sessions to realise the benefits, and the difference is stark, just from one session.

I ventured down to the Harbour beach afterwards with ABH to give her a bit of a run. It was dark the last time we went out but warm and dry. It remained warm and dry for the rest of the day, but we retained thick cloud cover throughout, which was not very pleasant when Radio Pasty had promised at least a little sunshine.

We fared no better today with the order of deliveries in the morning. I am sure that all the drivers are having one last conspiracy week and waiting for each other at the top of the hill. They are very good at it, waiting just long enough between arrivals to give the impression that they did not plan it at all. I know better, though, and even the butcher joined in this morning.

I took it all on the chin but had to open the shop before finishing off the putting away. We seem to have a mini rush at the very outset of the morning then a period of quiet before it all starts to ramp up in earnest. I left for the gymnasium just as it was starting the ramping up stage, but the Missus was still relatively quiet by the time I came back from the gymnasium. We had moments of busyness throughout the main part of the day, but it was poor fare compared to yesterday's mauling that we had and now I have ordered too many pasties (sorry, MS) for tomorrow.

In the absence of customers, I did some closing down preparations. I called the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company to arrange a spare tote box to be sent. These are the boxes that the magazines arrive in and in which we send them back. I will need a spare to send back all our magazines on the last day. There will not be very many because over the course of the season the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company had dropped several titles from our delivery list. I really could not be fagged to go to war with them over it, so I just kept what they wanted to continue to send me. I already have a returns sheet to use that I used last year and with some modification, it is good for this year, too. Our vouchers are just waiting for the last remaining ones for the weekend before I can finish off that form too.

The postie brought more work for me to do. A few weeks ago, I had a conversation with our business insurer, at his behest, and took the opportunity to tell him that we could not afford the premium this year and we would need to rethink the cover. We spent some time working through a revised proposal which he said he would prepare and send to me. I had thought no more about it until a reminder for the original proposal arrived today. We were quiet at the time, so I called the office to explain the situation at which point the first of a renewed customer rush arrived. The person at the insurers who I was speaking with between customers told me he could not get hold of the person I spoke with previously. I left the whole matter in his lap with two days left on the policy, so I hope they pull their finger out.

I also decided to pander to the tentative enquiries made by yet another card payment machine provider. I was in that sort of mood plus the caller was good enough to go

away when I said I was busy and to send me a message with his business details, which he did. He won some points with that, which is largely why I replied to the message; he had passed the attitude test. They all want to see the prices we are currently paying, which I regard as cheating. If they cannot beat our current prices with their best offer, hard luck. They usually go away when I tell them they do not get to cheat, so we shall see what happens with this one.

We went quiet again after that second revival of busyness which coincided with it going dark. We stand out like a beacon with our outside lights on, so people know we are here. I could not be bothered to go shopping in the dark, either, and we only see the last dregs of people making their way home or have forgotten some essential item for the evening – usually beer.

I continue to be in awe of just how mild it is still and with little breeze, too. It was still very mild when I took ABH around after tea with my newly restored knee. It is quite a transformation and since I regularly go to the gymnasium anyway, it is not great inconvenience to keep the exercise going. It has just taken on an elevated importance. I just hope that the hut with a tin roof lasts longer than I do.

October 29th – Tuesday

This morning in the shop was an everything, all at once morning where all my deliveries came within minutes of each other. We had bread, sandwiches, newspapers, pasties (sorry, MS), dairy and, just after we opened, firewood all piled up waiting to be priced, put away or put out. Each carried their own priorities and many of them conflicting, all not helped by the fact that they arrived ten minutes before we opened.

We still had mizzle in the early hours of the morning which was hugely disappointing as I thought that it would have gone overnight. By the time I emerged to take ABH out for the first walk of the day it had gone, and the street was starting to dry. We did not exactly have the sun splitting the hedges as promised by certain agencies, in fact it was grey all day, but it was dry, and I might go as far as saying that it was warm today.

The sea state had changed again. Yesterday, from what I could see of it, there was a fair swell running and at lower states of the tide, the whole foreshore was a mass of breaking waves of some substance. Today, while there was still a some swell running, it was much reduced but still quite big. Given the lack of sunshine, I was surprised just how busy the beach was for the main part of the day.

The Cove's semi-official historian, JP, handed me another couple of pages from the London Illustrated News, this time from 1867. News is slow to arrive here, you understand. This extract from the respected newspaper concerns the inaugural launch of the Mullion Lifeboat in the September that year. The event was held in

Penzance as it coincided with the opening of St John's Hall and there was a great procession with the Lifeboats towed on their carriages through the streets.

At the end of the presentation, the Mullion Lifeboat was taken down to the Esplanade where, after the naming ceremony, it was "*at once launched and received by the other Lifeboats, the crews tossing their oars and lustily cheering the new Lifeboat as she gracefully launched off her carriage into the water*". She joined the other Lifeboats already in the water, from St Ives, Porthleven, Penzance, Hayle and Sennen whereupon they had a race. Sennen won and received a prize of six guinea, which will be worth about £3.50 in today's money after the budget on Wednesday.

It was all very interesting stuff and gave an insight into what passed for entertainment in 1867. The real take-away from this historic report was the Lifeboat race. The crew from Sennen had rowed from The Cove, around the corner and up to Mount's Bay, undertaken a textbook recovery onto a carriage so that they could parade through the street, relaunched and won a race. The row from The Cove, around 15 nautical miles would have taken around three hours in the stated "placid waters", at least in Mount's Bay. They left for home soon after the race, it was reported, and I really cannot say that I blame them. Crikey, they were hard boys back then*.

They would, of course, been fuelled by the good old Cornish pasty when they were not eating sardines. Our visitors decided that today was a good day to emulate them and went at our pasties like there was no tomorrow. After yesterday, this caught me quite by surprise but fortunately, we had half of yesterday's stock plus the reduced order I placed for today available to meet the demand.

Just before the pasty frenzy took hold, I had come to the conclusion that we probably had sufficient pasties to see us through today and tomorrow. It was shortly after that I took two consecutive orders for five pasties each, which put me on guard. I already had some pasties in the oven but not enough in the warmer to satisfy the orders immediately. These were the last two customers who had to wait for their order. After that, I was constantly baking pasties until we ran out at half past two o'clock.

Fortunately, the two big orders came before the pasty ordering deadline. If that were not enough to signal that we needed to order some, we sold twenty pasties inside the next fifteen minutes and after that ones or twos in quick succession. So constant was the demand that I was concerned that I might miss the deadline. As luck would have it, the Missus appeared and was able to throw some more pasties into the oven which gave me just enough time to get the order in. Later in the day I wondered if I had ordered enough.

The midday rush for pasties also signalled an increase in customer shopping generally and for a few hours we were summer time busy. It took me completely by surprise as it had been a grey start to the day and grey throughout. It did not seem to

be the sort of day to foster a major rush, but I suppose on the rebound from yesterday, it might have seemed a delight.

The rush was, however, quite short lived and the majority of purchases many but small. Consequently, the till at the end of the day did not appear to reflect the mad dash we experienced through the afternoon, which was a disappointment but far better than a poke in the eye with a blunt pasty.

While the frenzy cleared a few things from shelves we will have to be very careful for the last few days with just how much we order in to replace it. Milk is awful to get rid of, for example, as we do not like to throw it away and while we drink the whole milk and can freeze it, an excess of semi-skimmed is no great use to us. I have terminated our waste collection contract from the middle of next week, so anything to be thrown away I will have to do on Monday. For anyone who thought that was when my 'holiday' started, think again.

Right at the last knockings of the day, some heavy mizzle started up. It was enough to soak everything through in short order. The rain was on none of the forecasting websites and I noticed that the rain radar was not working, so I could not see the extent of it. Quite fortunately, it was just stopping when I took ABH around after tea. Gosh, it was warm even then. With a bit of sunshine, these days would be glorious. Let us hope for a spectacular finish.

*I have assumed that Sennen rowed around to Penzance as the newspaper did not expressly state that they had. It was certainly intimated that they rowed home. The section of A30 to Land's End was not started until 1925, so in 1867 it would be not better than a good track. My assessment therefore was, getting a carriage up Cove Hill and along the Penzance road would have been far more difficult and time consuming than rowing around.

October 28th – Monday

It was a day of disappointments. Well, three disappointments that all happened in the morning. Given there was not much else going on the rest of the day, it is probably accurate that it was indeed a day of disappointments.

The first was that I needed to get out of bed, which revealed that my dickie leg that had been increasingly dickie since I did not get to the gymnasium on Friday, was still dickie. Not really a disappointment, more becoming a fact of life until I get the darned thing fixed, but the gymnasium sessions seem to help, and I was bounding around like a young gazelle for most of last week. I am also finding that I am having to shape my life around it, which is even more irritating: leaving extra time to do things and get places and choosing easier routes.

The second disappointment of the day was that the weather was pants. I had not paid an enormous amount of attention to the weather forecast, for obvious reasons, and thought that today would be merely cloudy. Opening the door first thing to a face full of mizzle was not the opening gambit for a busy half term holiday that I would

have chosen. It also came with a bit more breeze than was strictly necessary, but it was from the southwest, which dampened its effect, and the ambient temperature was still mild for the time of year. The mist was so thick all day that not only were Cape Cornwall and Brisons mere notional concepts on a map, but Gwenver and North Rocks were pretty much obscured and they are only a mile or so distant.

Against this backdrop, I also had an appointment at the local hospital to have my dickie knee x-rayed. This is the first stagger on the road to having the errant article replaced, which I am led to understand might require a wait of two years, which is an interesting prospect. I left in plenty of time for the appointment at eleven o'clock in the metropolis of Penzance knowing that I would have to park in the public car park which is down the hill from the hospital.

Keen not to part with excess funds for my parking, I had enquired of the much maligned council's website the cost of parking for two hours such that I might ensure I took the exact coinage. Having arrived with plenty of time to spare, I discovered that the parking charges were completely different from those detailed on the Internet but fortunately cheaper. Happily, we keep a few coins in the car for this very eventuality and I was still able to proffer the exact change, although I did have to walk to a second machine in the car park because the first was not accepting coins. This was a further irritation because I had specifically parked close to a machine so that I did not have to hobble further than was necessary.

I was indeed seriously early for my appointment. Even allowing for a slow grind up the hill, I was going to steel myself for a lengthier wait than I had anticipated by arriving on time. Therein was the third disappointment, although on reading back up the page I rather think I might be on disappointment four or five by now. I will however briefly tarry on the walk up the hill.

It is but a short walk up the hill from the car park to the hospital but today, it was much longer. Walking uphill is a little easier than walking down hill but in both directions, I felt incredibly vulnerable. I put this down to the neutering of my basic fight or flight response, the most basic of human options, now no longer available to me. Crossing the road was the worst bit, looking for a suitable spot where I could see sufficiently far up and down the road to afford me enough time to drag my errant peg across to the other side. I send my undying gratitude to Tufty, if he has not yet shuffled off, without whose dedicated efforts I would have been lost.

And so to the last disappointment of the morning – maybe. We have all been told or read of the parlous state of the National Health Service, the long waits in emergency wards, ambulances not arriving for hours or just not arriving, and hospitals brim full. Each of these reports has highlighted the stalwart resolve of the staff, against the odds, well, against everything really, their stiff upper lips and noses to the grindstone while successive governments allegedly starve the service of funds.

Clearly, my expectations of my visit today were founded in such stories, and I had expected a lengthy wait to be seen. In fact, I was quite looking forward to being able to rest my eyes in the comfort of the waiting room while the hustle and bustle of hospital life went on around me. Truly enough, as I passed by the minor injuries unit, there was quite a gathering of the battered, bruised, injured and sick, looking like a scene from a painting of Napoleon's retreat from Moscow and who looked like they might have been waiting a while.

I signed in at the x-ray department window and was ushered into a discrete waiting room where I found myself all alone. Ideal, I thought, and promptly settled in for a long wait as I was at least half an hour early for the stated time of the appointment. I was just on the cusp of drifting off - believe me, this takes moments and certainly no more than five minutes - when through the veil that lies between sleep and reality, I heard someone calling my name. It quite made me jump, which surprised the caller enough to make comment upon it. I suggested that she might want to leave me another ten minutes, but she was quite insistent. I was in the room no more than five minutes and ceremonially sent on my way.

As to my disappointment, well, there is no good the press and various commentators raising an almighty row about the state of the Health Service when I was back in the truck fifteen minutes before my appointment was even due. How am I now supposed to join in with the moaning now. Although I do have possibly two years to get that in.

The journey from and to The Cove had been shrouded in mist as thick as a bag once I got to the top of the hill - well, half of it was. The mist cleared quite a bit once the road dropped away from the high ground after Tregonebris hill. It got wetter instead. The car park that I used is lined with trees and the rain dripping off the branches played a tattoo on the roof of the truck and dripped by my neck when I got out. It was the same in reverse on the way back but the fog in Sennen seemed to have got thicker.

Naturally, we had a very poor day's trade. Our customers deserted us, probably to stay at home rather than go elsewhere because there was no elsewhere to go to. It made for a very difficult pasty order (sorry, MS) for the following day as I had ordered for a full day and had no idea how sales would go today. I compromised, which was the best I could do especially as our sales today ended up being not too bad.

When I headed into town, I left our electrician gainfully employed in fitting our new oven and hob. He arrived on his own again and since I would not be there to assist, I left him to it. When I got back, he had just about finished, which was ideal as far as I was concerned. It does mean we still have a cooker, the old one, in the middle of the living room but after a couple of weeks it has become a feature. I have contracted the much maligned council to take it away along with the hob and the two broken dining chairs. They will not be here until next Monday, so we will wait until closer to the time to put it out. We may well throw ourselves on the kind services of the

youngsters of the Lifeboat Crew to heave it down the steps who are keen to help in such matters.

Talking of dining chairs, we have met an immovable object in the Chinese company from which we purchased the new ones. These were the ones that the Missus purchased two pairs of and only one pair turned up because there were two of them. We were waiting for the customer services people to contact us but instead, they credited the missing pair in a full and final settlement sort of way. There is no arguing with people who will not talk to you, so we are left with finding replacements, which appear to be very thin on the ground.

The mist lifted right at the very end of the day to allow us to ascertain that Cape Cornwall and Brisons were still there. It then rapidly got dark, and we lost them again. When I came to take ABH out after tea, the mizzle was back or at least the drizzle bit of it was. It was still doing it when we went out the second time, but it was so light that my jacket was nearly dry when we got back again. We are told that today's weather was a one-off and I do hope they are right this time.

October 27th – Sunday

After a shaky start, the cloud cleared away and we broke out in acute sunshine for most of the day. There was some high level cloud that took the edge off a bit and after a windless start to the day, a breeze picked up from the northwest and brought down the temperature a little bit. Once again, we started seeing a groundswell of customer activity from about the middle of the morning.

The clocks going back did not give us or ABH too much trouble in the morning. For the first time in a while we were able to take to the beach for a run, which started out very pleasantly. There was quite a bit of weed about, which I had not expected but there again we are only a few days off the stormy waters we had. We tarried for a bit because I felt that we had a bit of time which turned out to be a mistake. If we had shortened our visit she would never have ventured under the slipways and never had the opportunity to roll in something unspeakable, left behind by a seal.

Suddenly, the bit of time that we had compressed and disappeared as I threw ABH in the sink for a scrub down. Her harness followed her in, and I threw a cupful of washing power after it. So powerful was the aroma that I had to wash the girl down three times before it dissipated. I left the Missus to finish her off with the hair dryer while I cleaned up in the kitchen and headed downstairs.

I have been less than diligent in recent weeks with my morning chores. This morning I had to pull my finger out as we had a milk delivery arriving, Sunday papers needed to be organised and both drinks fridges needing topping up. The dairy order was bigger than it had been recently, and the soft drinks needed some additional changes to ensure that all the older bottles and cans were at the front. When it is really busy, it is easier just to top up at the front, which is expedient for a while.

Coming close to the end of the season, however, we did not want to be unnecessarily throwing drinks away because their best before dates had expired. Fortunately, I managed to do all of that a little bit ahead of opening time and just as I was about to relax, realised that I had not done the beer fridge.

A bit like yesterday, the waves were breaking on the beach again at high water. This made it only possible to be sitting on the rocks all along the southern portion. The only bit of sand was at the entrance to The Valley but there was only a small group gathered there. I assumed that this would send everyone off the beach and along the road for a spot of shopping, but it was our quietest time. When I looked through binoculars, it seems that people were happy to nestle amongst the rocks and stay on the beach. It appeared that our general routine this holiday would be busyness in the late morning and late afternoon with a grey bit in the middle.

It was almost like that, but we were quieter in the later afternoon than I would have liked. I spent some of the time topping up shelves for the want of anything better to do and keeping an eye on bread sales. It was looking quite thin in the middle of the afternoon and by the end of the afternoon we were cleared out. I was trying to work out how much bread I should order for the next day. The problem with that is a person buying a large tin loaf may not come back for a couple of days whereas a family buying it may need one a day. It was impossible to know who had bought what, so I may as well have not agonised over it at all. We also had a number of bread orders which pleased me greatly as it removes some of the uncertainty and at least some customers would be satisfied – provided that I remembered the order. The guess is in now and I will have to wait until the end of tomorrow – or sooner if we run out early – to see if I got it anywhere near right.

One of the customers ordering bread had telephoned to ask if our bread was vegan. I had no idea and told him so. We have some vegan food, but it is mainly vegan incidentally not because we have actively sought it out. First, just five percent of the UK population is vegan according to the vegan society and our shop, being very small, does not lend itself easily to devoting five percent of shelf space to what is essentially a lifestyle choice. Secondly, it seems to me that the definition of vegan is a moveable feast and depends on just how zealous a vegan you are. It remains a mystery to me and one that I am not that zealous about to be brutally honest.

I referred our caller to our website where the detailed ingredients of each of our artisan bread products is listed – and can also be purchased, alongside many other alluring and exciting gifts, dear reader. He could make up his own mind. He did tell me before he went off to look that the rule of thumb is animal products, hence butter, because it comes from cows – who knew – is outlawed. I agree that cows' milk is a new-fangled thing – relatively speaking – and that humans invented cows for their milk. I have heard that honey is also excluded but I rather thought that the bees would have made that anyway and, you know, no animals were hurt in the production of this product. As I said, it is far too complicated and philosophical for a mere grumpy shopkeeper to even contemplate.

Our man ordered croissants in the end, which are loaded with butter. It reminded me of the Groucho Marx quote, roughly paraphrased as, 'I have principles. If you don't like them, I have others'.

I turned on the outside lights at just after five o'clock today. It was getting gloomy out aided and abetted by some heavy cloud cover that had rolled in unnoticed. I suppose I should have done, really, because it had slowly become chillier, and I needed to fetch my jacket from upstairs.

There were flecks of rain in the air when I put the recycling out, like a good citizen. It had gone by the time I hobbled around the block with ABH but had come back again more heavily when I took her out just before bedtime. I do hope that is a temporary affliction.

October 26th – Saturday

It was a cracking looking morning when at last I could see it. It was not all that bad when we could not see it too, when I took ABH around first thing and set up the shop display. It developed into a proper sparkler, and we did not see any of the rain during the morning that Radio Pasty told us about.

We started seeing some life not far into the morning and by ten o'clock, we were selling pasties (sorry, MS) for the first time in a while. We got far busier as the day went on, which was most gratifying and, if it continues this week, a massive relief.

As I noted yesterday, the tides are all wrong for this holiday. At high water, just after the middle of the day, there was hardly anyone down on the big beach. The Harbour beach fared better with a bit more sand available during one of the smaller neap tides in the cycle. The bay did look glorious, filled with a brilliant azure sea. It harboured a deep, rolling ground sea that kept itself almost hidden until it reached the shore, roaring up the last few metres of beach or jumping up in white spray against the brightly lit cliffs around Aire Point and Creagle. Even with the tides as small as they were, it managed to haul waves over the Harbour wall, so there was some power to it.

Earlier in the tide there had been some good surfing to be had and a fair few out there having it. As high tide approached, with no waves breaking until they hit the beach, it was game over for a while. I had also noticed two practitioners of eFoiling, charging about on powered hydrofoils. I had to look up the name of the sport as I had no idea it had a name at all, I just assumed it must have. Probably also known as cheating.

The Cove had filled with happy visitors as the day went through its cycle of arrivals and departures with the former outstripping the latter for a change. One of the arrivals was not quite unwelcome but definitely not in the best place.

A visitor dropped by in the early part of the afternoon to tell me there was a juvenile seal in the Harbour on the eastern side. I said that I would telephone the seal brigade so that they could bully visitors to the beach to stay away but found that I immediately became busy and could telephone for a few minutes. I decided to check the Harbour webcam before I picked up the telephone.

It is as well that I did because not only was there no seal in sight, but a family was also gathered and playing where the seal was reported to be and they had a small dog with them, running about. A juvenile seal would have attracted a fair bit of attention from cooing humans and the dog, I am sure, would have been inquisitive at the very least. I watched for a little while to see if the situation changed but it did not, so I abandoned the idea of calling in the brigade. I did not think that the reporter was wrong, just that the seal must have left.

The Missus told me later when she took ABH down late in the afternoon that there were two juvenile seals down there then. She spoke with one of the brigade who had arrived earlier who told her one of the seals was injured and underweight and would be whisked off to seal hospital. I would wager it did not have to wait six hours for an ambulance, though.

There is a plethora of dogs about this week. They can run riot on the beach, and I have met several that have been brought to the shop by their owners. Many get biscuits if well behaved. The dogs can get treats, too. We still get enquiries about the bleddy hound and then the conversation develops onto ABH and then their own dogs, perhaps. One owner told me that their dog was a trained sniffer dog previously used to ferret out explosives, standing stock still if he detects some. He told me that the dog was very well trained but had ultimately failed because he was too nervous. Well, excuse me, if I had been selected without much choice to run into buildings ahead of anyone else where there was a suspected bomb, I would be a tad anxious, too.

The dog is apparently also delusional and thinks he is Mark Spitz. If he sees water he just has to swim and his owner said he had nearly been dragged in too on occasion. The Missus met him on the beach and she said that had the dog not been tethered to a training lead, he would have been past Brisons by now and still going. That bit of frivolity aside, I would be on constant tenterhooks having a sniffer dog as a pet, watching constantly in case it suddenly stands still and points. Dickie knee or no, I would outrun that dog over a hundred metres.

One of the great mysteries of shopkeeping revealed itself today: shoppers will always do the opposite of expected. The latest big bars of chocolate we purchased, price marked that they are, were twenty pence dearer than the stock we already had. Rather than waiting for the last of the of cheaper ones to run out, I decided to put out the more expensive ones as well. I had observed, on numerous occasions, that our customers generally drew the bars from the back of the stack. Clearly, the thing to do

was to put the older, cheaper bars at the back and the new ones at the front. I have spent the last week watching as customer after customer brings to the counter the more expensive bars that they have drawn from the front of the stack.

We were reminded this morning by Radio Pasty that the clocks will go back during the wee hours. We will awaken to lighter mornings and then must become accustomed to darker evenings. The radio programme had a succession of interest groups coming on to warn of the dangers of early darkness: cyclists should wear light clothing and have lights on their bicycle; motorists should be wary of horse riders; horse riders should be just wary as the animals are notorious pranksters; and cyclists, you have nowhere to hide because motorists are just out to get you. Darkness, it seems, needs to be given a wide berth. It struck me that if changing the clocks is so fraught with danger, why do we persist in doing it.

One thing is for certain is that it will confuse the behind off ABH and we will suffer for a week or more while she steps into line with the rest of us.

October 25th – Friday

It was still raining when ABH and I stepped out into the darkness this morning. That is not to say that it did not stop at some point during the night, it may well have done, but we knew nothing about that.

The rain promptly stopped while we were out in it and allowed me to put out the shop display in the dry, which was good of it. Somewhere above my head I could hear the occasional howl of a robust wind blowing in from the south but that is all we knew of it. Midway through the morning, Gwennap Head, windiest place in the universe, had it at near 60 miles per hour gusts.

By then we could see the bay in the brightness between clouds. There was a clear demarcation between the shelter of the bay and, where it ran out, the whipped up frenzy of the waves exposed to the wind. There was also a deep rolling ground sea courtesy of that low pressure system, no doubt. As the waves rolling into the bay crested and broke, the caps were blown back in capes of spray as they ran into the beach.

The swell was not severe enough for the Lifeguards to red flag the beach. This was something of a relief to me as I had assured a family buying bodyboards yesterday that the weather would be good today. It left sufficient room for manoeuvre as I had not mentioned the sea state or that the best times would be before breakfast or just before it got dark. Oh, come on. It is not like I was fibbing.

Even for an out of season change-over day it was remarkably quiet. Being on the sheltered side of the coast I had hoped for better, but we spent most of the day in the doldrums. It was also not helpful that the tide spent most of the main part of the day occupying the beach and the occasional shower was blowing through. I found it

necessary to step out into the sunlight at one point in the early afternoon and found that it was agreeably warm. What were people thinking that they did not want to turn up and enjoy it all – well, apart from having no beach in a beach resort.

I had nothing better to do but sit back and enjoy the rest of the afternoon. It was a pretty decent day looked at in the round and if you ignored the couple of showers that had come through. As the day wore on, the wind from the south diminished which was evident by the change in the sea state outside the bay. There were a few people about who had encountered it first hand by braving the walk from Land's End and who looked a little dishevelled by the time they came into the shop. Sure, they had a great time.

It happens quite often especially when we are a bit quiet that I fall into some random conversations with our customers. Today, for example, apropos of nothing at all, we spoke about carpal tunnel syndrome and various other similar disorders. The lady I was speaking with highlighted the problems derived from inflicting the relevant body part by repeating the same actions time after time. After more than twenty five years of domestic living, it made me wonder if that was what happened to my ears.

There was a little more liveliness toward the end of the day as some new arrivals pitched up for the week, although some said they were here only for the weekend. It perked up my optimism and I adjusted the weekend orders accordingly; there is no point in preparing to fail. The only thing I had not tweaked was the newspaper volumes, which can stay as they are. After the initial reply to my closure notice that said the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company would get back to me when they had time to organise my closure, I have heard nothing. I do not intend to prompt them again and will have time to unpick the problems if they occur after we close. I must also remember to call the recycling crew during the week and hope they do not forget to stop charging me.

We had an unremarkable trip around the block after tea other than we had just missed a small rain shower when we went. We seem to continue to be mild well into the evening and we are hoping for fair weather for the coming week. It is just a shame about the tide. As many of our ducks as we have are in a row and we must relay on good luck. Surely, we must be due some at last.

October 24th – Thursday

Oh, woe is me. I mentioned yesterday that we would have high pressure for a while that would keep the sea state quite steady for the next few days. I had foolishly based my assessment on the synoptic pressure chart forecast issued by our friends at the Meteorological Office.

Wind forward to this morning and Radio Pasty joyfully announced this morning that a small low pressure system would be forming off the back of a couple of weather fronts. It would bring some rain and wind and, very possibly mash up the sea state a

bit before it beggared off to the south in a day or so. Thinking that I had missed something when I looked at the charts yesterday afternoon, I went back and looked this morning. I had not missed anything, but the chart had radically changed in less than 24 hours – again.

It may look like your Diarist is developing an unhealthy obsession with the weather that is set to dominate The Diary forever, dear reader. This is not the case. Your Diarist is becoming obsessed with is being constantly fed wildly inaccurate weather information by an organisation that is accepting millions of our pounds to provide accurate weather information. If the weather is so unpredictable that it can no longer be predicted, they should say so and stop issuing random guesses.

There, that is much better off my chest. I promise I will never mention it again. Not once, not ever, never, honest guv – well, not until the next time they make a monumental mess up.

Sticking with looking out of the window, we had big thick cloud this morning courtesy of those weather fronts I mentioned. Through it, bits of blue could be seen, which made it all seem better somehow but not really. There was quite a robust breeze blowing in from somewhere in the southeast but the direction must have been slightly off as we felt little of it in The Cove. That which there was helped the temperature down a good bit and did not set the groundwork for a busy day, unfortunately.

One success we have had over the last few weeks has been clearing out our stock of disposable vapes. We are down to just a few. I had introduced a rare – unheard of actually – discount for purchasing two, which cut me to the quick every time someone asked for it. All of this frantic activity was based on the likelihood that the disposable vapes would be banned from the beginning of April next year. I did not want to be left with expensive stock I had to throw away.

It was rather irksome, therefore, to hear the news that the ban date for disposable vapes had now been set to the beginning of June instead. It is not the case of being upset with anyone or suggesting misinformation regarding the earlier date; the April date had been mooted by the previous Government. On the basis of there being no further information, other than there being general agreement a ban would go ahead, the retail industry worked on the best information it had. It is too late now, but knowing how long it takes to wind down the stock, we can stock a few for the first part of the season next year should we think it a good idea.

The weather was a disappointment today and not helpful at all to trade. The morning, while cloudy, had remained bright but in the afternoon some heavy cloud turned up and we spent some hours in the dark. I came to the realisation that I am going to have to wash down our windows because I noticed when I looked through the doorway, it was not quite as dark and misty as I thought it was. We had some

moments of brightness in the afternoon, too, but it did not encourage much trade and we were much worse off than yesterday.

A little way into the afternoon, I went and retrieved my book from upstairs. It had the desired effect because we had a succession of customers arrive shortly after I started it. There was, however, plenty of gaps in between and I managed to finish the book off before halfway through the afternoon. With nothing better to do the dirty windows started to irritate me more and more until ...

I snapped. There was hardly a soul on the street, so I went and pulled out the hose. Naturally, as soon as I had done so and cleared the outside display away from the windows, we started to get some customers coming to the shop. I had arrived at the stage that it was touch and go whether I dropped the hose and opened the first electric sliding door in The Cove or sprayed them with water and sent them packing. Thankfully, I regained my reason just in the nick of time and sprayed them with water. Alright, no I did not. I opened the first electric sliding door in The Cove and took their money and smiled broadly.

Washing the windows took less time than I had hoped, and I was still in my same dilemma when I had finished but at least I could look out of the window to see how dark it was. Actually, it had brightened considerably, and we even had a very fleeting moment of sunshine just before it dipped behind Mayon Cliff.

ABH had to wait for her run around in the evening because I went across the road to attend Lifeboat training. Once again there was no training launch, although with my ears not working, I may have missed the explanation why. Instead, we took a party of latest recruits and let them play with the Tooltrak on the beach. I say 'we' but there were enough trainers there for me to slip away and take ABH around the block while the machine lit up the Harbour beach with its blazing lights. I was back in time to watch some more practises and to help wash down before putting away our toys and going home.

It had rained lightly while I was watching the shenanigans but amounted to not much at all. It waited until ABH and I were out for our last walk of the evening, which just about summed up the day.

October 23rd – Wednesday

There were some decent waves for ordinary surfers as the tide dropped out today. They were the tail end of the big bashy waves driven by the two consecutive low pressure systems crossing the Atlantic. We appear to have high pressure moving around for the next few days, so we can expect calmer waters, although I doubt we are getting our sand back any time soon.

It was a good looking day on and off. In fairness, it was mainly on but every now and again the sun would be blocked out with some thick cloud which appeared to be piling in from the south. I think we were quite grateful that there was no rain in it.

I made my way to the gymnasium again today for another successfully blistering session. It did not take long to get back to my average time for 5,000 metres on the rowing machine, which was pleasing. There are still some things I cannot do, such as standing on one leg, balancing a weight under the opposite arm and holding my ankle with the other hand. I am not overly concerned with that because I could not do it before either but there are some exercises that I will need to work on. Nevertheless, after just two gymnasium sessions, the difference in my knee's dickiness is remarkable.

For the first time in a fair few days, it was a tad chilly on the walk around the block first thing. It might have been to do with the lack of cloud cover witnessed by the collection of brilliant stars and planets available to gawk at. Even with half a moon the other celestial bodies shone brightly. Mars and Jupiter sat either side of the moon and Capella and Sirius were not far off. That was about the extent of my knowledge but there were others, less bright inciting me to trip over things by not looking where I was going.

We made it to the beach again after I returned from the gymnasium. It is the dark rather than the tide keeping us off the beach in the early morning and now the high tide is later, it was not far down the beach when we arrived. With little to sniff or roll in, we headed around the block again after a brief explore. The scaffolders are removing the scaffold from the sea wall, so presumably the work is complete, and we have less of a chance of falling down a hole in the car park. There is now more space for the hundreds of cars that will want to park there next week, ahem.

As seems to be usual this week, most of the custom we had was in the afternoon and then, concentrated into a couple of hours in the later part of it. It is an odd trading profile, and I can only presume these are people taking a tour and reaching us last or possibly refugees from Land's End. I suppose I could always ask, although one customer, a regular from a while back, volunteered that he was staying in Hayle, which confirmed the tour theory to some extent.

In response to me saying that Hayle was a pleasant place to stay, he told me he found it rather down at heel. I laughed and said that it had always been that way, certainly as long as I could remember. It was once a thriving industrial centre and would have had some very posh bits back in the day. I suspect the glister went out of the sometime after the 1940s when the river was allowed to silt up and the big ships could no longer get up the estuary. I suppose my view of the place is stilted by fond childhood memories and the remnants of its rich industrial history.

There was an opportunity to make something of Hayle twenty or more years ago but various plans for the Foundry end were scuppered by endless politics and changing

finances of the companies that sought to go it alone there. In my view the combined 'theys' have made a right mess of it with discrete bits of development here and there that never really fit together as a whole. The only bit they got right was to restore the sluice gates on Carnsew Pool, but I am not sure they use those to effect any more.

Back in The Cove where opulence drips from every corner, I had plenty of time to look out over the weed strewn beach in the softening afternoon light. I might have mentioned before, it is my favourite time of the day when the sun is shining, as every facet of The Cove is picked out in detail. The surfers had indeed enjoyed an afternoon of perfect waves that only at the bottom of the tide had started to lose their form. I had watched numerous figures glide effortlessly a hundred yards or so back to the beach carried on smooth running waves.

While I laboured away in the shop looking at things, the Missus was shearing ABH. Unlike the bleddy hound, which was like trying to shear a bag of eels, ABH is very compliant and let the Missus do her worst for however long it took. She even got a manicure. We now have a super-slim, very streamlined girl, half the size of her previous self and less insulated just ahead of winter. She will just have to run faster to keep warm.

There was still no real need for wrapping up when I took ABH out after tea. Even with no or little cloud cover, it was still perfectly mild. Someone had told me earlier that the easterly breeze we had today had made it somewhat chilly, but I could detect none of that as we strolled around the block. There were stars about, but the moon was yet to rise. I was quite astounded to read that when it did it would be 25,000 miles more distant than it was five days ago during its supermoon phase. I will sleep on that, I think.

October 22nd – Tuesday

We started the day as we left it last night, mild, dry and pleasant. Just after I heard the forecaster on Radio Pasty telling me that there were some isolated showers about today, we had one. I am not entirely sure that I would call a lump of heavy rain the size of West Penwith, isolated but I suppose it is just a matter of scale. We have certainly been made to pay for each day of sunshine we have had this year but getting a soaking for just half a day's sunshine was a bit unfair, I felt.

As a sort of compensation, one of our regular visitors drew my attention to the passing by of the QE2. Not the lady, who had already passed by, or indeed the cruise liner that is languishing somewhere as a floating hotel, but the aircraft carrier of His Majesty's Navy. Well, of course it might have been HMS Prince of Wales, which perhaps should have been promoted when the King was, but that would not have been half as much fun. I was urged to look at the AIS ship tracking application on the Internet, but it was absent from there and obviously travelling in stealth mode, so no one could see it. It was almost working, too, because I could barely see it

through the mist on the horizon through my binoculars. I suppose turning off the AIS is the Navy equivalent of closing your eyes and thinking no one can see you.

The day slowly improved during the morning until the sun broke through in the early afternoon. It stayed for a while and then promptly returned to grey and mizzly for a while before going back to sunshine again. This clearly confounded our visitors who stayed away from The Cove in droves and left grumpy shopkeepers twiddling their thumbs. We had better than the weeks leading up to this one but even so, it was disappointing.

The sea state diminished quite a bit and provided some sport for a few desperate surfers, but it was not what you might call ideal. The recent thumping waves had also ripped up a good bit of oar weed and left it distributed across the big beach. In a last gasp of naughtiness, the dreg ends of the raging sea took even more sand from the upper reaches of the beach and revealed more rocks quite a way down from the dunes. Still, in the sunshine toward the end of the afternoon, it looked pretty glorious.

I had spent quite a bit of the day between customers trying to get the solar panel inverter to talk to me. It was working just fine for the first couple of weeks then decided to break communications. Together with one of the technicians at the company we worked through a number of options and tried to get it to talk to my smart mobile telephone. We had some minor successes, but I really needed to devote more time to it. One theory is that with it being tucked away in the store room, it is struggling to see the wireless Internet signal. I think there is probably more to it than that, but we need to discount that first. We agreed that I would have a closer look after we closed because the solar panels are doing what they are supposed to be doing, we just cannot see the data on the computer.

ABH and I had our usual saunter around the block after tea. She has come to favour being inside or rather is too lazy to get up to get out. There is much cajoling, and it gets to be a bit of a fight with growling and teeth. There is no malice to it but I think someone unused to this might take fright. This went from the occasional incident before going out to being a regular occurrence and I think it had turned into something of a game. It takes an age to get her out of the door.

Once I have won and the harness is on, she is just fine, and we go and have a sniff at all the usual places. She seeks out the cat that frequents Coastguard Row and they had a proper meeting the other night. ABH is purely curious and had a good sniff like she might with another dog. The cat was not impressed, so I do not think that there is a bright future for this relationship. ABH, though has not given up and looks for the cat each time we pass.

Tonight, however, she met another new creature. A rather large frog was sitting atop a wall that ABH like to jump up on along Coastguard Row and the little girl examined it with fascination. I have to be a bit careful because she thinks nothing of eating snails. Although the frog did not run off like the cat, I do not think that it was going to be new best friend. ABH, it seems, is not destined to be lucky with playmates of a

different species.; she does not have that much luck with playmates of her own. Still, we, she especially, has no plans to give up yet.

October 21st – Monday

I woke up to the sound to a bay full of angry sea. When the light arrived, I could see that it was very angry indeed and definitely more angry than any of the previous days of anger. I am not sure that it could have got any angrier than it had been in the Harbour for the last couple of days, but it was having a good try. Overhead we had grey cloud and closer to the sea we had a rising mist of spray coming off the tumbling waves. Out to the west, however, the cloud was abruptly cut off in a straight line and the other side of that was blue sky. It was like being in a convertible car with the top coming back.

Unlike a convertible car, the line of cloud took an age to peel back to reveal the goodies. It was worth the wait because we had an afternoon grander than yesterday and without the attendant breeze. Low water took the punch out of the sea state, although the Lifeguards kept the beach red flagged all day. There were big waves still banging in on the northern half of the beach and plenty of potential for rip tides. There was not a surfer in sight and no surprise as the waves were all washed out.

We know that necessity is the mother of invention, but I have the sneaking idea that some people actually enjoy the inventing process and do it more for fun than the possibly altruistic aims behind it. Such people appear to flock together as they did at the recent inaugural meeting of the Sustainability in Drinks (SID) meeting last week. We learnt that a glass company has increased its use of recycled materials to 40 percent and is aiming to make that 60 percent by 2030. Not only are they looking at using more greenhouse gas friendly fuels for the melting process but also using new materials that melt at a lower temperature.

One more thing the glass company is doing is looking at making its bottles, particularly wine bottles, lighter. Another member noted that bottle represented 50 percent of the carbon footprint of the wine, so making the bottle light was a “no-brainer”. Apparently, the technology is there currently to reduce the weight of the bottle by 25 percent but there is a complication. Another member – they all have doctorates in one field of the other, or boffins in other words – highlighted that consumers associate heavy bottles with luxury product. Some producers have tried it and lost sales.

The doctor, who is the chief of some winery or other, went on to draw the analogy with better quality suitcases that used to be heavy. In modern times no one would dream of having a heavy suitcase because the lighter ones had been made to look more classy and attractive. The same needs to happen with light wine bottles. They also mentioned reuse, which has its own problems, but it was interesting to see the luminaries of industry rolling up their sleeves to get to grip with these issues.

Separately, but also thinking more inside the box is a youthful Scottish distillery. It is offering free return scheme for its bottles of whisky and claims that it would save lots of carbon if they all did it. I wonder they have factored in the transportation or indeed how you might start to measure lots of different length journeys. I will leave that to the experts.

There was not much transportation coming into The Cove initially today. We had to wait until well into the afternoon before we started to look busy. I had already decided that regardless of everything, I would be going to the gymnasium today. It must have been two weeks since my last visit and I felt every single minute of each one as I went through a full and very blistering session this morning. My left leg quads have clearly suffered in even that short time and will need some effort to get them back in order. I must concentrate also in putting more weight on it while walking as I cannot think that it was just not going to the gymnasium that weakened them. It felt good to be back in training again, though.

It also felt good to be able to run - well, maybe not run just yet - ABH out when I came back. She and I have been unable to visit the beach together for the best part of a week because it has either been too dark, or the tide has been in. We found that the sand had been scoured clean or rather the sand had been scoured out, which was obvious by the appearance of the rocks in the top corner again. While the swell is less obvious out in the bay we were nearly caught out by in the Harbour as one wave pushed the water about fifteen feet up the beach at us.

More sand has also gone from the big beach now. Ordinarily, I would probably not have noticed but having examined it in detail yesterday, it was obvious that even more sand has gone from under the Lifeguard huts and all the way back to The Beach car park. The other side of The Valley has not suffered quite as much and the sand under Carn Keys, the black huts, is still relatively untouched. The sand in Escalls Beings, Little Gwenver, had gone completely.

Another disappointment is that the other two chairs in the set that the Missus purchased, do not appear to be coming now. She sent them a message this morning in a chat session to ask where the second pair were. It seems that in a remarkable coincidence two people at the company are hard of thinking. One works in the warehouse, deciding that a package of two chairs must be two items, and the other responding to the chat session also told the Missus that her order was complete because two chairs had been despatched.

Having been educated that there were two chairs in each unit and two units had been ordered, she was then told that they were out of stock and that a refund would be raised for the errant parcel. The Missus explained that it was a dining set and that having two chairs missing was like having a saucer without a cup or a fork without a knife in a cutlery set. If there was any refunding to be done it would be for both sets or, for the avoidance of doubt, four chairs. At least then we could go to another company whose employees could read. We have to wait up to four days for

someone in customer services to respond to her complaint, so I will have to rescue the cardboard from the bin in case we have to send them back.

While on the subject of money, one of the ladies from the Lifeboat shop who came in for a newspaper advised me that there are forged five pound notes around. I told her that I was grateful for the information and asked how I might identify the rogue notes. She pointed to the St Stephen's Tower on the note's window and said that on the real notes the tower is gold and on the forged it is orange. Great, all I need to do now is employ someone who can tell the difference between gold and orange, and we will be safe as houses.

We took quite a few five pound notes in the latter part of the afternoon. It seems our visitors this week are very late starters, or they are coming from farther afield. It is a bonus anyway and a necessary one because I had not been expecting much of this week at all. It was not so much of a bonus that we put a dent in our pasty order (sorry, MS) and a let what we had ride until tomorrow. I had been over-optimistic from the upturn on Saturday and the realisation that it was a flash in the pan came too late for today's order.

We had a very pleasant starlit walk around the block after tea. It is perfectly mild, given the season, and the sea state is at last relenting a bit. I was asked earlier if it was safe to go swimming in the Harbour. Even on calmer days, it is difficult to provide such advice not knowing the swimmer's abilities or sense of adventure. Not saying anything could be worse because the enquirer would probably go anyway and then at a more inappropriate time. Today, I suggested that sooner rather than later would be the least risk option, and not to venture beyond the Harbour wall, as nearer high tide it would get messy there. I was right, though I have not seen the lady who asked since.

It looks set fair for tomorrow as well and I do hope we do not use all our good weather this week when it would be of more use next.

October 20th – Sunday

It was a very slow start to the day. We had seen a few customers for milk and newspapers but nothing really until the weather brightened at the end of the morning. It had shown some early promise but despite the forecast trying to be encouraging for a change by showing clear sunshine, it relapsed into mizzle for a bit before recovering again.

ABH and I had set out in the dry but were rained upon, not heavily, before we got back home. We avoided a heavier line of rain that came in just after the shop had opened, so that was something. The sea in the Harbour was still flexing its muscles and the Harbour tractor was perhaps a little belatedly pulling up one of the boats from the western slip. I spoke with him as he left and he reasoned that he was unlikely to get out this side of spring, so pulled the boat up into the car park.

In the trading desolation of the morning, I tackled the wealth of shoes, toys and gifts that the Missus had brought down from The Farm. There was not as much as a summer months delivery but there was enough to keep me occupied for much of the morning. The shoes, as ever, were tedious to process, the unpacking, unstuffing and in some cases linking together with ties. We now need customers to turn up.

Disappointingly, we did not get the customers we hoped for. After yesterday, I had high hopes. The fear and alarm spread about Storm Ashley would have had an effect, I am sure. The sunny after rain period that we had been promised also did not materialise as expected and although bright, the day never really lost its cloud cover until late in the afternoon. The breeze, though not severe, introduced a bit of a chill, which did not help our cause.

I kept an eye on Storm Ashley's progress, first in northern Ireland and then in the west of Scotland. In Donegal, Portree and Stornoway where I could see weather stations, the storm winds barely made 50 miles per hour, a mere breeze by storm standards and the rain, though heavy, seemed unremarkable too. The Meteorological Office once again made a mountain out of a molehill and I wonder how many more times it will cry wolf before someone takes it to task.

I had plenty of time to observe the beach and the aftermath of it being pounded by big waves over the last few days. I had the benefit of a photograph that I had taken only on Thursday, which allowed me to verify the extent of the changes. The sand that had been up against the northerly end of The Beach car park wall and the wall of the ramp down to the beach, was now all gone. Just visible in the photograph is the top of a rock surrounded by sand next to the exposed length of ramp. Now, that is a huge boulder amidst a field of smaller boulders.

That, I think was the extent of the excitement today. Even the sunshine gave up the ghost after a couple of hours, although that might have been to do with it dipping below Mayon Cliff. Out to the northwest the cloud had thickened and lowered a bit putting Cape Cornwall and Brisons in a haze but up above there was still some blue sky through the thin cirrus cloud.

The strong swell returned yet again with the tide. It has been a while since we have had such a sustained ground sea running up Tribbens, burying the Harbour wall and dancing over Cowloe. It was roaring in our ears as I took ABH around in the evening and still attracting observers even in the dark. It was still going a couple of hours later for our last run out and after that, I did not care.

October 19th – Saturday

Well, how about that, it turned out nice again. It was very picturesque during the early part of the morning with the rising sun low in the sky, lighting up the white water

in the bay. There was plenty of white water there to be lit up too, as the swell had returned with a vengeance.

ABH and I took a moment to watch it lumping over the Harbour wall in the darkness, first thing. It was churning around in the Harbour and successive waves coming over the wall were coming a good way up the western slip. The fishing fleet on the main slip had been pulled up days ago but were not that far out of reach of the run of the of sea coming up towards them. I found it quite intimidating even from the safety of the road.

Perhaps I should not have felt so insecure, after all, we were watched over by a large bright moon attended by a just as bright, but much smaller, Jupiter. Atop Mayon Cliff were Sirius, clearly the brightest star we have in these parts and Rigel, trying its best to catch up. There were a host of other stars, which will remain nameless, which was surprising in such a brightly lit sky and if there was any cloud about, I surely did not see it.

It was not the first time that I had been out in the morning. I was awoken by the telephone ringing in the kitchen from a number I did not recognise. The Missus said that she thought that she had heard someone banging on the front door and also that she could hear an alarm ringing and wondered if it was ours. It was enough for me to put on the outside lights and have a look on the camera, which revealed nothing. I did, however, notice that the new fire alarm light on the Lifeboat station was flashing.

I telephoned our caller back after discovering it was our neighbour up the hill. I suspected that she was alerting me to the Lifeboat station alarm, rather than anything amiss at her home, which, to my relief, she was. Due to my delay in calling back, she had also called one of the Deputy Launching Authorities, which was comforting knowing it was not just me woken at four o'clock in the morning by what was almost certainly a false alarm.

Arriving at the station just ahead of the DLA, I silenced and reset the alarm after checking which zone it was. The fatal flaw was resetting the alarm because it would have reset the warning light on the device that triggered the alarm. Without a map of the zones, neither of us knew where the faulty zone was, so we toured the station just to check. I will recommend a map or list of the zones be put up by the control panel at the next operations team meeting.

I think that the system is as yet incomplete. We were told that a sniffer system was to be added that draws air in from outside through a tube running the length of the boat hall. Some clever gizmo then samples the air in the tube and if it contains smoke, sets off the alarm. It sounds like the perfect antidote to nights of uninterrupted sleep and convivial relationships with the Lifeboat Station's neighbours.

The day turned out to be a proper cracker of a day and we enjoyed blue skies and sunshine. The huge tides are still with us but will shrink from today onward. They devastated the beach last night and even without closer inspection, I could see rocks uncovered where the beach met the dunes. Someone also told me that the sand had also gone from the bottom of the OS slipway. It had not long been put there by the previous spring tide, I believe. Out in the bay, the new tide came bounding in like a pack excited Newfoundland puppies, oblivious to all before it. Since the Lifeguards had red flagged the beach at the turn of the tide, there were only a few surfers out there who do not mind being wiped out by several tons of water flying at them.

Our glorious day came packaged with an uplift of customers. There were certainly at least treble the numbers wandering about and on the beach of any of the previous couple of weeks. I had thought that we might see some better business as some of the schools up country have broken up, and so it was. I had ordered slightly more pasties (sorry, MS) than on previous weekends but probably nowhere near enough had the full potential of the crowd been realised. We were saved by yesterday's pasty buying desert, and a late start today. Also, more irritating, having spoken to a couple of visitors, some may have been put off coming by the Meteorological Office's damaging inaccurate forecast. One couple said that they had considered not coming, so it is logical to assume that others did not.

Knowing that we would certainly have an upturn in business the following week for the home half term, I set out of list for the Missus to collect from The Farm. I reasoned that we should maximise our potential by having some stock on our shelves. For those of you concerned by my laissez faire attitude to the Missus' dickie arm, I was quite willing to run up to The Farm myself to do the lifting. Happily, there was nothing on the list onerously heavy and the Missus was more attuned to what was up there, and the Missus wanted to do it anyway, so there.

She was gone for ages. I called in the end to make sure she was alright and discovered that she had been diverted to tidying up as she could not get in and out of the store very easily. When she eventually came back and we had emptied the truck, it was too late to start processing and putting out.

I would most likely have time in the morning before the fight started, as indeed I had this morning. The hooded sweatshirts arrived late yesterday, and I had left them until today. They all have to be labelled up with a prominent size ticket which makes it easy to pick them out of a crowded box. By printing the correct amount of labels, I can also check that there are no hooded sweatshirts missing, which there were not. Since we had cleared space at the back of the store room for the solar panels' inverter to go, there was space for an additional box. We have suffered greatly by not having enough space for all the stock and this now should make it much easier – as long as I can reach the box for all the cases of soft drinks in the way.

What also came with the delivery was a new range of navy coloured, full zip hooded sweatshirts. We are limited by display space, so the charcoal colour will eventually

be replaced as it has dropped in popularity over recent years. I shall also get the children's stock on the online shop, which I had planned to do today but ran out of time before it got busy.

Our busyness peaked at around the time the Missus came back from The Farm with all the stock. Of course it did. It was comforting as I was not entirely sure what to expect of this coming week. It also gave me an adequate idea of the sort of numbers of pasties to buy in for Monday. It was also a relief not having to scratch around for something to do. Once again, we have familiar faces arriving, which is always a pleasure.

What was not so encouraging was the Missus telling me the Lifeboat station fire alarm was going off again. This was late in the evening. No one else was coming for this one, so I went over to sort it out myself. Again, the same zone was showing as the trigger and again, not knowing where that was, toured the station to check everything. I reset the alarm and sent a general message out to see if anyone else was interested. If it was not sorted, I doubted that I would hear it in the night but some of our visitors staying nearby certainly would and it would not particularly engender support of the cause.

Fortunately, the duty coxswain and station mechanic responded. The station mechanic had some more detailed knowledge of the system and was able to disable the faulty zone. I could rest easy tonight, at least as far as the station alarm was concerned.

What was also quite alarming was that when I went across the road with my headtorch on, I was swarmed by thousands of flies. There were so many it felt like pushing my face through a curtain trying to get into the door. When I came back again, there was a cloud of them around each of our outside floodlights. The Missus told me later that when she opened the roof window to let ABH out, the flies poured in and crowded around the porch light.

I can only imagine the flies are from the beach disturbed by the waves crashing in there. Either that or we have livestock pestilence, boils, hail and locusts to come, which sounds a bit like a Meteorological Office forecast, so probably not then – or maybe just Scotland.

October 18th – Friday

Radio Pasty confidently announced that we would have a dry day but rain, some of it heavy would join us later in the day. I pondered this as I watched the rain come down outside at eleven o'clock in the morning.

It had started out so pleasantly, as well. There were some high cirrus clouds reflecting the sunrise and the air about us was reasonably mild. Had I looked at the weather stations, I might have noticed that it was starting to blow up from

somewhere in the south but as yet, it was not bothering us. Even the sea had ceased to be angry with us that the great swell we had yesterday had almost disappeared completely.

The weather stuck the boot into what otherwise might have been a buoyant morning of going home present buying. There was some of that but the busiest we got was when the work team resurfacing Stone Chair Lane came in for dinner. I spent the rest of the day with very little to do having exhausted all the other work type possibilities days ago.

Happily, two of our new dining chairs arrived during the morning. The Missus had found some cheap ones, very probably from China, on the Internet which will have to see us through for now. The original ones, which were a tad more expensive, have dickie legs that in some cases have snapped and broken beyond repair. To repair the others, again, would be costly and I suspected throwing good money after bad. Probably because they were cheapish, I did not conduct the full level of due diligence on them that perhaps I might have done had they been expensive. I reasoned that as long as we could sit on them and they lasted a couple of years, we might be in a better position to buy some decent ones then.

I might have left the box unopened, but our hooded sweatshirts were coming later in the afternoon, or at least they were according to the message sent me by Doing Parcels Dreadfully. We would not have enough space to accommodate all the boxes comfortably, so I decided to open the chairs box so I could ship the contents upstairs. Once I had opened the box, curiosity had the better of me and I decided to construct one of the chairs.

We had sought to avoid chairs with separate legs as that proved the weak point on the expensive ones. It was disappointing then to see that the new ones had a seat to screw on meaning that the seat itself was only supported by four bolts. I would have been happier had the bolts been more robust but there was no choice now that we had bought them. The other thing that was surprising was that there were no instructions, and construction would be a matter of guesswork. Given that there were only four parts and eight screws, the potential for getting it wrong was small, although I did initially try and screw the seat on upside down. In fact, I think that was the only thing that could be got wrong.

It did not take long to finish the chair off. It is possible to screw a batten under the seat that will support it further and I might do that during the winter to give the chairs some extra life and the sitter some confidence that the seat would not collapse under them. It was Mother, though, who asked, 'did it fit under the table', a question that clearly should have been considered before we made the purchase because, when I went to try, they did not fit under the table.

We ran through some options such as cutting the arms off the chairs or the bit of the table that was in the way. It was then then Missus who come up with the obvious

alternative which was to raise the table. To accommodate the chairs on the ends, the table needs to come up about three centimetres. So, the search was on for casters of a very specific specification. Well, I had nothing better to do.

I determined that what we needed was 'risers' and looked up a few and sent the results to the Missus. These were instantly dismissed because risers. 'look ugly' and would make the table look like something 'from an old people's home'.

As a brief aside, I should stress, dear reader, for those of you reading this from, ahem, retirement homes, that The Diary is merely reporting an individual point of view and in no way suggests that there is anything derogatory about them and does not support or condone such views – but, man, the risers look some ugly.

I was informed that what was required was a set of sliders that raised the table the requisite number of centimetres. I discovered very quickly, however, that there was a dichotomy of purpose between the two items. Risers were deigned to move the table vertically and not necessarily encourage lateral movement and sliders were designed for lateral movement while trying ever so hard not to lift the table vertically. In one example, we would need six sliders stuck one on top of the other to achieve the height. I was informed that the Missus would take the matter from here and that my assistance was no longer required. I complied.

Around half past two o'clock in the afternoon, the skies brightened, which was around the time that the forecasters had told us it would start raining, often heavily. It did not make a huge difference to the level of business we were conducting but there were a few more people on the beach than earlier on. That did not last and before long we were enveloped in mist with damp swirling in the air.

Not content with getting the forecast entirely wrong again, the Meteorological Office put out a social media post that warned of an approaching storm, Ashley. The animation showed a low pressure system crossing the Jetstream from the south and rapidly deepening to produce some expected storm force winds that would sweep across the country on Sunday. Had it been a factual presentation of the news, I would not have minded but I object strongly to its use of language like "explosively deepening" regarding the pressure system and highlighted 200 miles per hour winds in the Jetstream, which is its normal state, expressly for sensationalism and inducing fear. Coastal communities will be well used to the combination of spring tides and high winds and while potentially damaging from wind and flood, there is no need to try and scare the pants off people.

Worse still, two hours later, the Meteorological Office issued a second animation showing the storm only affecting Ireland and Scotland. The previous animation had been completely unnecessary. Blow me, two hours later they changed it yet again!

I decided it was best for my health not to look any more. I could not anyway as I was distracted by the arrival of a customer. Clearly, that took some time while I threw

rose petals for them to walk on as they went around, made sure the ambient temperature of the shop was sufficient for their comfort, hand fed them grapes as they traversed the aisles and practised some heavy fawning. When they came to the counter to pay for their purchase, I prostrated myself and thanked them profusely for their patronage. I do hope word gets around. We might see another customer. Who knows.

Despite the frightful lack of customers, I did manage to capture the quote of the week from one of them. When asked where the marker pens were, I replied that they were down the middle aisle. They went to the right aisle, so I repeated with attendant hand signals that they were in the middle aisle, which elicited the response, "I was never any good with right and left."

With Mother home for tea, we sat at the table for our home cooked fish and chips and stared out of the window. A big rolling ground sea had developed with the tide but the waves were not breaking until late on the shore. They were heavy enough to make some noise when we arrived and we would spend the night with roaring sea in our ears – not that I would notice very much being deaf and asleep.

The rain returned for our walk around the block after tea, but it was not very heavy. There was the suggestion of a bit of wind but again we were not greatly affected. Despite the thick cloud cover, the moon's light still penetrated somehow and I did not need my headtorch until we got into the shadows along Coastguard Row. It seems that the work team on Stone Chair Lane may have finished up because they had filled some of the potholes and smoothed the lumpy drain cover on the end of the Row. We shall have to wait until the shop closes before seeing what the Lane looks like. See what excitement we can look forward to.

October 17th – Thursday

It was a day full of wow, golly and gosh. I do not know which of those was for the moon that was hanging big and, erm, yellow/orange/beige above the Roundhouse first thing. It was difficult to keep my eyes off it while we had a wander.

The day improved from there on. High level cloud dissipated and disappeared leaving only a milky haze out to the north. To the northeast, some vague cumulus clouds bubbled somewhere far off over the cliffs. The sun lit up the widening beach and the tides displayed their largest extents under command of the giant supermoon. With large lumbering waves still running in on the beach there was plenty of white water standing out bright against the blue sea and the cliffs too, as the spray burst up on the rocks.

It was the sort of day to bring joy and happiness, so I decided to call the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company, Recycling Division, to see if I could change all that. I had sent a message the day before asking to suspend our recycling collection from the end of October. Quite remarkably, I had an almost immediate response thanking

me for my interest but requesting that I telephone to cancel the service “in the week of 5th November to 7th November” so that they could cease the service charges from the 2nd November. Perplexed, I resolved to call them today to find out how I should cancel a service the week after I wanted to stop it.

My call was answered quite smartly by a very pleasant lady whose first language was not English, I guessed. Had I been in full command of the faculty of my hearing, it might have made it easier. However, we persevered, and I was led to understand that I could not cancel in advance as they might forget. I thought that might have been a product of my hearing, so I asked her to repeat that a professional business might forget a written request to cancel a contract. I suggested that they might like to write it down somewhere, such as a calendar. This was dismissed because they had so many customers, how could they possibly remember everything they all wanted.

I must confess that when I was told this, I laughed out loud. Can you imagine your bank saying that it had not paid a direct debit on time because there were so many other things they had to do that day, they could not possibly remember them all. I still could not fathom why I should call the week after I wanted the service cancelled and this we could not resolve between us. I said that I would call on the day that I wanted it stopped. However, I still had reservations and asked what if the person I spoke with forgot my request the moment I put the telephone down because he or she had another call to answer or a pressing engagement at the lavatory. I think that I would have to trust to luck.

It seems that some of our visitors are just as forgetful as big business. We had a lady come by the shop asking if anyone would mind if she sat in the Harbour to do some painting. I could not see the harm in her setting up an easel on the wharf, so I gave her my blessing despite the fact that it was not mine to give. She was not gone very long when she came back to the shop to see if we had a china plate she could borrow. She told me she had come to The Cove expressly to do some painting but had forgotten her palette. I imagine that is like going angling for the day and forgetting your fishing rod.

The sunshine brought some much needed business to us that had been sorely lacking from the previous days of the week. We even sold a serious amount of pasties (sorry, MS) for a change, which was handy because it cleared us out ahead of the weekend delivery tomorrow. It must also have been take-a-pasty-home day because we took some orders yesterday for collection during the morning. They had been wise to book in advance and just ahead of my last order. Had they left it until today, we would not have had the numbers to cover them.

The milky sky to the north and the cloud to the east joined forces in the middle of the afternoon and blotted out most of the brightness. It coincided with the push of the tide and the bay filled with big angry waves, bigger and more ragged than those enjoyed by the surfers at lower parts of the tide. The foreshore was filled with white water to about 100 metres out and also covered Cowloe. Four kayakers who had

carved their way through the surf from the main beach, appeared to change their minds and headed for the safety of the Harbour. It was about then the breeze freshened from the southwest and an errant shower blew through The Cove sending diners on the benches opposite rushing off and leaving the street near empty again.

We had a small trail of customers coming to the shop by and by through the rest of the afternoon. I filled the time in between by watching the boisterous sea flying over the Harbour wall and dance up the cliffs opposite. The sun returned in the late afternoon and made the sight even more spectacular, and several people returned to sit on the benches opposite and gaze out over the view. It passed some of the time until closing.

We are now approaching the last two weeks of opening and ordering while trying to not be left with things to throw away is getting more tricky. I noticed that some of the schools up country break up for half term next week, so I made our orders for the weekend a little bigger than I might otherwise have done. It is unfortunate that our shelves will be noticeably thinner for our customers these weeks, but it cannot be helped. We do, however, need stock to sell, so we cannot be too frugal either. I shall know more by Monday and can act accordingly.

There was no Lifeboat launch for training in the evening; we would never get the boat back in with all that swell. Instead, we watched a film. I mentioned some weeks ago that a local photographer and film enthusiast had been working with the station, putting together a short film that will run on a loop in the visitor gallery. It will explain how the station works and what going on a shout looks like – hence all the play acting we did a couple of weeks ago. It might even show me limping heroically to the station door. If it does not look heroic enough, I shall ask for a retake.

We duly gathered in the station to watch the first cut. The director explained that it was a work in progress and when the station had more footage of its own rescues, these would be cut in to the film. It was a very professional production and clearly much work had gone into it. I was a little disappointed with the lack of Very Excellent Shore Crew footage. I cannot complain too much as we had our own film on the news a couple of days ago that showed a close up of a good looking Head Launcher in action, holding his lamp very professionally. It also had some other detail about one of our coxswains and his family, but it was clear what it was really about. We are, after all, a very newsworthy, very excellent Shore Crew.

October 16th – Wednesday

It might be said that we got away lucky today with the weather - mainly. Those unfortunate folk living to the east of Camborne copped a wrong 'un most of the day long with a big lump of rain moving up from the south. There was another stream of rain piling up to the west of us, which clipped the Isles of Scilly for a bit.

Although we had a fair amount of mist that came and went during the first part of the day, our weather was reasonably benign. There was even some brightness out to the north, which was encouraging but did not do an awful lot for us. That mist cleared away by the middle of the day and gave me a clear view of the bay. At first glance, it looked dead calm but there was quite a bit of white water over at North Rocks and some more at Gwenver. Just behind that was some very usable surf and just behind that some dozen surfers trying to use it.

There has been a small yacht out on the mooring since yesterday. It had been here before. The swell gently rocked it and I imagine that the movement would have been quite pleasant unless you suffered from seasickness. Given that the southeasterly breeze was so moderate, I cannot see them moving for a day or two yet, although there are some strong winds forecast for after that.

We had a message from the Chinese this morning telling us that the hob that we purchased from them was on its way. It was too late to cancel the arrival of the electrician who was due today to fit the oven. When he did turn up in the afternoon, he was on his own which I thought brave since he has only just recovered from a hernia operation. I mentioned this when he turned up and he asked how big this oven was. It is kind of oven sized, I thought, but showed him instead and he agreed that he would come back with a beefy pal. This will hopefully coincide with the arrival of hob, although we need to put up with the oven in the living room for another few days.

Yesterday, I reported that I was not overly impressed with my service at the opticians for my ears. It was as if he was dismissing as nonsense everything I said about how the false ears appeared to be operating. I tried them in again this morning and noted that there was absolutely no difference between listening to Radio Pasty with or without them. I had two visits early into the shop day and experimented with conversations, one male and the other female. In both cases I could hear better with them out than in. I could however hear the fans of the fridges quite distinctly, which is not very helpful at all. There is something very wrong going on here, but I have no idea whether going back again will yield any better result. I have no idea if I am able to jump ship and try the other provider in town. Maybe I shall enquire.

We had some trade today, but it was short-lived. Once again, we fell into quietness but today I had little else to do. I did have a look around the shop for gaps on the shelves but with few customers buying things, we had few gaps in the shelves. In the end I went and brought my book down again and this time finished it. It was a good read but excessively long. Perhaps I should not complain. The other reader mentioned that The Diary entries are getting very long recently. I have been mindful of this feedback when writing the subsequent entries and note the word count each time. I have tried very to be more succinct and have succeeded in adding 100 words to each subsequent day, 200 on one of the days. As of today, the average is about 1,200 words a day. I do wonder if there is a world record for longest and most sustained writing of drivel. I must try harder.

By half past three o'clock, the rain eventually caught up with us. It was the tail end of the stream that had got to the Isles of Scilly and as it went north, it also came east. It was not as severe as the lump that had gone up to the east of us, but it was still wet and killed off what trade there was. The swell that had been more clandestine before made itself obvious by launching over the Harbour wall at near high water and our friends – who we have not seen yet – on the yacht on the moorings were having a more uncomfortable time of it.

The rain had gone by the time ABH and I headed around the block again and it was very mild with scarcely a breeze. As we headed across the Harbour car park, I noticed that I hardly needed my head torch. Looking back over my shoulder a waxing moon, nearly at full, was peeking through the cloud. It neatly picked out the white caps of waves dancing over Cowloe and racing down Tribbens. I did not really need to see them; I could hear the waves even with my deaf ears.

October 15th – Tuesday

A quieter day in The Cove you could not imagine. Several times during the morning I looked up and down the street and there was not one person in sight. The beach was deserted and I spotted two hopeful surfers in a flat sea. That was it until twelve o'clock when we started to see a few stalwart visitors occupy the seats outside the café.

Although I had no customers to serve, I was not idle. Alright, I was not completely idle. Alright, I was mainly idle, but I also worked through most of the delivery that was still piled up in the store room. As I mentioned yesterday, there was not a great deal of it, so it did not take all that long to go through. After that, I was completely idle.

We receive our invoice from the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company on a Tuesday, which I await with eager anticipation. This week, having given notice a few weeks ago, they increased the charge for delivery. I noted at the start of the year that they had reduced my charge when we started having newspapers again but decided against digging to find out why. The increase we have just had is a more reasonable increase than we had this time last year but given that I believe the charge to be unreasonable in the first place, this is no recommendation.

Really, the purpose for mentioning the Laurel and Hardy Newspaper Company at all was to report that last week we went into a loss. This does not include any newspaper vouchers we have taken, so it may be possible that we broke even or slightly better. We only have two weeks before half term, when I would hope business is such that newspapers return to profit for the last week. It confirmed that my strategy of not doing newspapers for the first half of the year was probably right and we will be doing it again next year.

Another strategy that I am trying to nail down is what to do when the ban on disposable vapes comes in next April. We were late to the party with these, but they have good margin and during the summer we sold many. The young guns from the chip shop and OS were good customers when the visitors went home but even they now have given up. I remonstrated with one young lad who had suggested one of the flavours we stocked and had been a regular customer. I pointed out our excellent, and hitherto unheard of, reduced price for two and he told me he was trying to give up as they were bad for his health. I told him not finishing off the vapes that he had recommended before he gave up might be worse for his health. I have not seen him since. I think he may be hiding from me.

The problem I have is what I stock when the disposable vapes can no longer be sold and I have been looking at the alternatives. I found a couple of reasonable resources online and then, today, an industry magazine was dropped off in the post. I had hoped it would give the definitive answer to my conundrum or at least provide a couple of choices. Instead, it made matters worse. Much worse.

The paper, which is a respected source, told me that total sales of vapes in this year showed 175 million. It then went on to say that there were five formats and after disposables were stopped in April that would leave three. I think we will dispense with the open systems which would mean stocking a selection of the myriad e-liquids available on the market from a myriad of different manufacturers. That left closed systems of which I could choose 'pod mods' or 'refill caps'. I know that whichever one of those I chose to stock, everyone would want the other. I also suspect that within each category there will be hundreds of different types and brands. I read on a little bit in the article and wished that I had not. Apparently, there are also nicotine pouches and patches and then there are heated tobacco products too. I found myself envious of shopkeepers of old who only had to worry about whether to stock Woodbines in 5s or 10s.

The reading had passed the time until my appointment with the false ear man drew close. Once again, I mounted our trusty, erm, truck and headed east. I had left it a bit late and naturally found myself behind a learner driver learning the art of driving by following the road to Penzance at 25 miles per hour. I hasten to add that I am not criticising learner drivers for driving at 25 miles per hour – we all had to learn at some point – it is just that they would not have been there had I not be a little pressed for time.

I need not have worried because I reached the optician who looks after ears on time. He told me many things that I did not understand about my false ears. He said that they were actually working but my brain had tuned out the programming; that they were running at 70 percent and could run at 100 percent and that I was wearing them wrong. It is a good job I could not hear because I think that I would have either been bored or disbelieving.

He tested my hearing again and played about with his computer. He invited me to try the false ears again and I told him that there was no perceptible difference and I told him that several times more after he fiddled about. I also told him that I had changed to size one tube because the size two were painful, so he changed them back to size two with a different head on them, so they still hurt but with a different size head.

After more fiddling, the left ear sprung to life but although the right ear is clearly operating at some level, it is doing nothing to enhance my hearing. We agreed that I would try them in my usual environment, in the shop to see how things went. I did and the left ear happily amplified the rain pouring down outside but through the right still sounded like I had cotton wool in it. Worse still, I am not entirely sure that I can hear customers any better and my right ear 'ole is hurting.

As if things could not get any better, it had started to rain while I was in Penzance. I had already said that someone on Friday had taunted me with the battle cry of summer that it was going to be a cracking week of weather this week. Someone else had, only in the morning, told me that the forecast was for sunshine in the afternoon. Something deep in my subconscious clearly wanted desperately to believe them, so I omitted to take a rain jacket with me. Thankfully, the rain did not come in hard until I was comfortably back in the truck. It then proceeded to rain for the rest of the afternoon and any potential for having a customer or two to break the monotony of the last few hours of shopkeeping were well and truly scotched. The only positive I could possibly take away from it was that I could hear, with crystal clarity and in both ears, the drops of rain hitting the road outside.

It was only when I was on my way into town that I remembered that the truck needed fuel. I then remembered that I had left my credit card at home, which I generally do as I mainly use cash. It struck me that I did have my mobile telephone and that I could make payments with it, although I had never tried it in anger. The thought of having filled the truck with fuel and then discovered that I could not make my telephone payment facility work, terrified me.

Since I needed some rechargeable batteries for our telephone at home I thought I would have a dry run in the independent electrical shop in town instead of using cash. I am painfully aware from the grumpy shopkeepers perspective of the irritation of people paying by telephone only to discover at the crucial moment that their telephone has not been set up properly ahead of their visit to the counter. Therefore, I made sure I had prepared the telephone properly before I approached the shopkeeper. I asked if he minded me using my telephone to pay, especially as it was experimental, and he said that he did not. I was mildly surprised that it worked without issue.

Brimming with confidence after such a glorious success in the electrical shop, I advanced to the supermarket petrol station. Here I filled up and as I approached the mini supermarket that is also the payment station, I once again prepared my telephone for action. My downfall was that there was a queue and by the time I

reached the counter, my carefully prepared telephone had timed out. Apparently, there are 'things' you must do to reprepare it once it has lapsed into unprepared mode, 'things' that I am blissfully unaware of. I cleared all my apps and opened the payment one again and, thankfully, it worked but it had taken vital seconds which was adequate time for me to imagine the eyes of the attendant lifting to the ceiling and the tuttings in the queue behind me. I shall not be forgetting my credit card again for a while.

The rain set in properly as the rest of the afternoon progressed. ABH and I were fair soaked when we returned from our walk around the block after tea and soaked again when we came back from our last walk of the evening. According to the weather man on Radio Pasty this morning we can look forward to many more soakings during the autumn. There, something to look forward to.

October 14th – Monday

Ah, the dawn of a new week, unless you count yesterday as that. The very mild day we were promised for yesterday seemed to have come through today and even by mid-morning, I was regretting wearing a mid layer instead of a shirt. I should have stuck with my little boy trousers and shirts until the end of the season.

It may not have been too bad had I been idly standing around as is usual at this time of year but today I had things to do. The Missus had booked a collection time at the cash and carry for two o'clock. We very quickly realised that she should not be the one to do it with her dickie shoulder and that I should do it with my dickie leg. Not one to waste a journey, I decided that I should return the polystyrene boxes our fish is delivered in as I would be passing our supplier's door, and I would also drop into the tip, sorry, Household Waste Recycling Centre, to tip a few items that needed to go out.

Once, I could have left at my leisure when I was ready, but now, not only did I have to be at the cash and carry between two and three o'clock but I also needed to be at the Household Waste Recycling Centre at a given time. The much maligned council has decided that it was not quite irksome enough to turn up at the HWRC and abide by a set of impenetrable rules but now a visitor must book a time slot to arrive at.

It is a trial system and as yet not clearly signposted on its website. It was by chance that I happened across a link and filled out a form that required my name, address and telephone number, my weight, inside leg measurement and the name of my first girlfriend's aunt. Fortunately, there did not appear to be any sort of restriction about which time I could book – all the times were available. The form itself, however, was not very sophisticated and I suspect that the whole of Cornwall could book the same time on the same day, and it would let them. I just hoped that was not today.

First, though, I needed to drop by at The Farm to drop off the excess quantity of shampoo that I had inadvertently ordered a few weeks ago. It had sat in the back of

the truck buried under a weight of RNLI fundraising paraphernalia that the Missus only yesterday dropped off at the RNLI Inshore boathouse for storage. There were also a couple more polystyrene fish boxes to pick up before I could head out on my way. I am sure that there were other things that I had set aside to take but given that I could not quite remember what they were, they would have to wait until a next time.

Other than the searing heat of the day, the weather had been a tad mizzly from the outset. I had supposed that once the rain had cleared through, we might have a dry day, but I was to be disappointed. The mist element unfortunately thickened throughout the day and by the time I came to leave The Cove, it was thick as a bag up the top and getting thicker down the bottom, too.

It was hardly the sort of weather to encourage a lot of visiting and a lot of shopping and it did not. We were quiet all the time I was behind the counter. I did not ask the Missus how she fared while I was gone because she would have told me she was very busy even if she were not. In any case, it was deathly quiet after I came back as well.

Despite Radio Pasty telling us that the mizzle would clear up in the afternoon, it did not. I was mizzled and rained upon at all points of my journey and the errands thereon. I had picked up a few more items at The Farm that I recognised as being marked for tipping, sorry, recycling and packed them all into the back of the truck. I stopped off at our fish supplier and arrived at the Household Waste Recycling Centre bang on time.

I am not sure that I got extra points for that but he swopped his clipboard for a computer tablet when I affirmed that I had booked an appointment. This indicated to me that they were still letting people in without, but probably with a stern and patronising talking to. No doubt we will progress eventually to the 'more than my jobs worth' stage in the fullness of time. I am not sure how people are supposed to know about the new system. I only found out when someone told me they had seen a moan on the community face page thing.

I did not tarry at the HWRC and sped off, within the speed limit, to the cash and carry. I had not been there for some years, and I am never sure which exit to take for Camborne and Redruth as there are at least three. I decided to try out the satellite navigation system on my new mobile telephone. It was a mistake because it took me off at the first junction instead of the second and led me a merry dance through Camborne itself. Frankly, I should have known better but the architecture around there is interesting to look at, hinting at the wealth and opulence that once abounded in the area.

Having loaded up our booty, I set myself a course for home, this time not activating my daft satellite navigation system. Radio Pasty informed me that there had been an accident at Loggan's Moor roundabout, which is just to the east of Hayle. It gave no further detail, so I thought it a good idea to detour through Connor Downs instead of

using the A30 on the way back. I have not been that way for a while, but I allowed my mind to wander back to when we travelled as a family to visit my grandfather there.

The road would be largely unchanged, and I could imagine a very young me in the back of a mini traveller – the one without the wood, I think – full of anticipation at the end of what must have seemed an endless journey. The shop is still there – it had long since stopped being a shop – the shop windows still remain, though I doubt they are the ones my grandmother would have looked through, as it was she who ran the shop.

The much maligned council has also shifted the 30 miles per hour sign at the village boundary. It used to provide a handy nightlight into the living room where I slept on a camp bed in later years. I therefore missed a glance at the retirement home grandfather had built in the first of the three fields he had there. It was all gone in a flash, much as it did at the time, I suppose.

When I reached Loggan's Moor roundabout there was no queue on the westbound A30. There were police cars on the opposite side of the roundabout and as I drove up the Hayle bypass there was a lengthy, static queue heading the other way.

There was not much to our order. The hardest bit was hauling into the shop the heavy cases of water and beer. The rest was just a collection of this and that, enough to see us through to the end of half term, we hope. I shall process it all tomorrow as I could not be fagged to do it in the time that remained of the shop day.

It is not as if I did not have plenty of time to do it as we had no customers. The day had remained, how shall I put this, bleddy miserable – grey and mizzly throughout, but warm enough for me to dispense with my mid layer and spend the rest of the day in a t-shirt.

The mizzle had almost cleared when I took ABH out after tea. It is a perfunctory journey now in the dark, but she enjoys a good sniff around in the wet greenery. I note that our friends in the end house of Coastguard Row have extended their gardening to the triangle bounded by the Row, the Coast Path and the cut-through. Someone in the past cultivated a small part of it unless the hydrangeas there are wild ones. There is stonework there that does not look natural as well and they have excavated around it to reveal a channel between two rows of granite. It is hard to say how that looked originally or if it was anything at all. I am not aware of any old pictures of it, and it would be good to see it in daylight.

There was still moisture in the air and while ABH ferreted around in the undergrowth I gazed at the small droplets swirling around me. They were light enough to be gently blown away and where they landed on my jacket, they evaporated almost immediately.

They upped their game on our last run out and we were proper wet when we came back. They are clearly not to be messed with.

October 13th – Sunday

I did not feel it too much as I took ABH around the block first thing but as I completed a few outside chores outside the shop a little later, it seemed far chillier than it had on previous days. Yesterday, Radio Pasty assured me that we would be the mildest place in the country today. Crikey, the rest of the country must be going around dressed like Eskimos and wearing tennis racquets on their feet – apart from the Geordies who will still be in shorts and t-shirts.

It was clearly a slow-burn sort of morning and it took ages before even a few small groups were gathered and milling about at our end of The Cove. Mind, we looked like we were doing better than the big beach at that time. We had a few early customers in for newspapers including one who arrived half an hour before we opened and one couple in for grandchildren presents by the look of it.

Caught at a loose end and determined to do something constructive, I took a tour down the gift aisle. We still have bits of gift aisle stock in the store room and I thought to get some of those out on the shelf ahead of half term. First, there was the carnage to clear up from weeks of small hands playing with and abusing the toys and gifts lining the shelves on the left and the bigger hands ripping hats off hooks and leaving divorced bikini tops and bottoms on the floor and on diverse hangers on the right. It took a long time clearing up the mess and even then, I am left with one bikini bottom minus its matching top.

Having then gone through and put all things in their proper boxes and removed broken and toys with missing bits, I cleared the empty display boxes and cleaned down the shelves. I married up the various bits of clothing and put hats back on hooks and hooks back on hats so that I could hang them on a hook. Only then could I go through the store room and fetch the things that we were short of on the shop shelves of which there was very little.

There was less to do down the middle aisle, although I noted that we will need to order playing cards. We sell an abundance of playing cards, which surprises me each year and order a huge amount at the start of the season. We do not usually run out so either I ordered fewer than normal or playing cards are more in vogue this year than last.

Some, probably many, years ago we were encouraged to buy a job lot of coloured pencil tubs. There was a large minimum order as we wanted Sennen Cove printed on the side. We still have the remnants of this order. We discovered early on that small hands would readily pull the tops off and spill the pencils everywhere. It required a considerable effort to tape down all 500 (or whatever large number it was) to prevent the little darlings from such destruction.

Understandably, we missed a few tubs and every now and again we stand on spilt pencils or find them in amongst the soft toys or perhaps tucked inside the brim of a hat. Today, I found a bunch of pencils in amongst some card games and gathered them up with the thought to rehome them. I found two tubs short of a few pencils and took those with me to the counter. There are originally twelve pencils in each tub, so I took a full one as a template to try and fill the empty two. This was never really going to happen. I can probably distinguish the difference between maybe five colours. Since some look identical in the full tub, sorting the difference between two similar colours from the loose set, some of which were actually identical, was nigh on impossible. Add to this that there were only 22 pencils, I was definitely on a hiding to nothing. I left it for the Missus.

From late morning we started to see a few more customers coming in, so I had to abandon the whole being industrious thing for another time. There was still much sitting about doing nothing, but it was in between customers, so I could not easily start other jobs between. The busyness continued, helped along by some brighter moments during the early afternoon I would say. The cloud cover remained but it was thinner in places to let a bit more sunlight through. It did warm up a little during the afternoon but the breeze, such as it was, came to the southeast toward the end of the afternoon and started blowing through the shop doorway.

Between four and five o'clock we had a small revival of busyness but before then we had a couple of hours quiet. While I tried it before, I went and got my book. It is a mighty tome, and I have been approaching the end. In truth, I have been getting a bit tired of it and would finish it sooner rather than later, despite it being a good and enthralling book. It was a little while after I started to read it that we became busy again, so I left it on the counter. A couple of our customers noticed the book and started a conversation about it. I was really hoping that no one would give the end away inadvertently, which they did not, at least not directly. One customer told me that it was the author's last in the series and another told me that the author had died recently. I am now wondering that if the author knew it would be his last in the series, whether he killed off all his characters, which the way the story is going, is very likely. I am even more keen to finish the bleddy thing off now but between the customers during the day and ABH in the evening, it is slow going.

My customers were full of good news today, it seems. Another informed me later in the afternoon that it looked like it would rain fairly soon. Another agreed and said her weather app had told her six o'clock. I had a peek at the rain radar while they were there and there was a guts of rain almost on our doorstep out to the west. With the wind in the southeast, it seemed that the main bulk of the rain would skirt to the north of us, and we might have to wait until a little later for the tail of it, which was heading our way, arrived.

I will have to find out which weather app the lady I spoke of was using because at six o'clock it started to rain. There was a fortunate break in the rain when the time came to

take ABH around and we made it back largely unscathed. We were not quite so lucky later for our last run out, but it was not as severe as it was after we came back. I shall look forward with some excitement to see if we have a flood in the shop tomorrow or not.

October 12th – Saturday

The morning was perfectly still in The Cove when I took ABH down to the Harbour beach first thing. There was some light to see by but the head torch picked out the little girl when I lost her in the gloom. The air was chilly but not uncomfortably so and there was little going on to disturb the peace. We had watched the fishing fleet head out into the bay just as the light was creeping over the cliffs opposite, which is why I headed to the beach, knowing that we would not be bothered there.

Just after we opened the shop, the sun was just breaking over the cliff. We had a dark bonnet of cloud sitting over the bay making the water look dark as ink. Anything white out there stood out in the light and the rising sun, shining down The Valley like a search light, picked each one out. A scattered flock of gulls, floating idly off Aire Point, looked like a bunch of floating lightbulbs cast upon the waters.

That reminded me that we had a gentleman staying last week, a regular visitor, with whom I enjoy a chat now and again. He told me that he had been labouring long with many others from the Salcombe community in planting LED lights in a couple of fields opposite the town. It is part of an art installation by Bruce Munro who is famed for such things but not, apparently, for getting his website working. When I looked none of the images worked. This one celebrates the RNLi 200th anniversary and is a wonder to behold. If you look for Salcombe field of lights on the Internet you can see it too. People are asked for donations in Salcombe to gaze upon it while everyone else must keep their eyes closed.

It was with some disappointment that I noticed a second Squid Ink gin miniature has gone missing from our shelves. I had thought that since our customers at this time of year are predominantly reasonably well-heeled pensioners, we would not have too much trouble with them. I must suppose that losing their winter fuel allowance must have affected some of them terribly, but I cannot see that burning gin would be an adequate alternative. I have tied the sample to the shelf with electrical wire, which is unsightly, but I cannot immediately think what else I might do to stop the thieving toerags from nabbing another.

Again, with more time on my hands than is good for me, I note from the trade press that 74 percent of the public questioned believe that glass bottles should be included in the deposit return scheme (DRS) that aims to use shops as recycling depots for single use bottles and cans. That is all very well but 74 percent of the general public do not have to find somewhere to put them, most of which will be dirty, half filled with fluid and possibly sharp. I am sure if grumpy shopkeepers were asked if customers

should have their hands tied behind their backs when they came into shops so they could not nick things, you might have a similar response.

Happily, the Government has indicated that it intends not to change the policy of the last lot that glass is excluded in England and Northern Ireland. This will put us at odds with Scotland, Wales and generally the rest of Europe but does not necessarily make us wrong. I am hopeful that small stores in the Far West of Cornwall will be excluded from the scheme. I think that it would be poorly managed for the rural community with insufficient collections, and I believe costly for we small operators. I would write to my local MP, but I can think of far better ways of wasting my time.

A little past the middle of the day, the cloud went away and we had skies without a cloud to be seen anywhere. It had rained a little in the morning. I had not noticed until I saw that the street was wet, but the afternoon made up for it by excelling in sunshine and dryness. It also brought out the crowds, well, as much as a crowd as we get at this time of the year, but our sales were mainly of snacks, pasties (sorry, MS) and fridge magnets. It was not going to feather any nests and that was for certain.

The sea was being obtuse. We had started the day under the dark cloud with a sea as flat as a dish. It was no surprise that the fishing fleet had gone out early. They were followed out by a small group of kayakers, intent on a bit of fishing themselves. I met one of them later who told me that it had turned a bit uncomfortable out there when the northwesterly increased and the sea state became a little rough. He was glad to be back in, he told me.

The pleasantness of the day drove a few pasty sales, rather more than I was anticipating. Well, I had not done too much anticipating having narrowly avoided missing the deadline for pasty ordering on Thursday. As a consequence of me taking my eye off the ball for a moment, I had left myself with insufficient pasties for tomorrow. Fortunately, I judged that there were not that many more that we needed and even more fortunately, we had a few left in the freezer to bolster our dwindling stock. Surely, they would be enough.

As usual, The Cove became a ghost town after about four o'clock leaving me to enjoy the vista of a sunlit bay. As lovely as it is, that does pale a bit after an hour of staring, and I sought succour in the Internet to see if anyone else had a polytunnel at the top of a field that had reasonably frequent 80 miles per hour winds blowing across it. Apparently not. Everyone else's polytunnel was clearly built like a brick outhouse and brushed off hurricane force winds for breakfast.

I have the seeds of a plan germinating in my addled mind but whatever we come up with, it will have to wait until we have cleared the field and the surrounds of the buildings. This task alone is monumental and I suspect will be like clearing the Eurasian Steppe, although I have never been, I hear that it looks a bit like The Farm

does at the moment, but slightly larger. I am now researching the Internet for the Eurasian Grass Mowers Association to see if they can help.

I was saved from terminal boredom at the end of the day by a visiting foreign national. Of advanced years, she was most friendly and told me that she had searched her homeland for sunglasses such as the ones she brought to the counter to purchase. I told her that she should clearly have come here first and to remember us next time. She pointed out that the shade of colour that the sunglasses possessed matched the quilted cover of her mobile telephone. I told her that of course it did as we spent much time anticipating our customer's needs. If you have ever heard a lady of advanced years giggle, it is the most delightful sound. We parted on the most agreeable terms. It quite made my day.

October 11th – Friday

It was a morning of disappointments, frustrations and of answering darned fool questions. I weathered it bravely largely because you could do little else on a morning when the sun was shining, the skies blue and the sea in reflective mood after getting a bit bashy last night.

I had fully intended to visit the gymnasium this morning which would have been the first time in possibly a couple of weeks – I do not keep a record of my attendances, well, not all of them. I discovered last night that the Missus had arranged to see a man about the Christmas lights at our end of The Cove slap in the middle of my rowing time. She offered to change the appointment, but time is pressing and Carols in The Cove, for which the lights are very important, is not far off, so I gave way.

This gave rise to the first disappointment of the day when our ex-Head Launcher telephoned to say that the lights man was not turning up today. I could have gone to the gymnasium after all.

Our new cooker was delivered yesterday when the Missus went off to pick up Mother. It had to come out of its wrapping to get through our flat door and now resides on the living room floor awaiting installation. I had cleverly, I thought, arranged for the cooker to arrive at the same time as the hob, or thereabouts, so that they could both be installed at the same time. I had written to the supplier of the hob yesterday, too, as I had heard nothing from them since acknowledgement of the order. Delivery was due sometime between yesterday and Monday, so I was a little concerned.

I was already a little concerned because I could find out very little about the company when I was researching them. It looked like they might have been American but only after getting an acknowledgement did I discover it is a Chinese company. This concerned me even more, especially as they had no bricks and mortar address listed. I had reasoned that if it was a bad purchase at least it was not a huge expense, which was another concern – buy cheap, buy twice. I had a response from

them this morning, indicating that they were in a different time zone to us, and in broken English, stating that they were out of stock in the UK and could we wait some more days. The message stated 10/15 which I was not sure whether it was 10 to 15 days or 15th October.

Either way, we have a cooker sitting in the living room in the way and a hob nowhere in sight. I pondered the problem for a while and thought it best to get the electrician in once to install the oven and a second time for the hob. With any luck, the hob would arrive between now and the appointment, but judging from the rest of the morning, it is highly unlikely we will be that fortunate.

By and by the number of messages arriving in my inbox all seem to want a little piece of my time. Combined, it amounts to a lot of my time, so I try and do them roughly as they arrive so that I am not faced with a lot of time to commit all at once. One of them this morning was asking me to register the new oven, which I thought would not taken very much time and therefore it would be a quick win top get it out of the way first.

Opening the link in the message turned out to be the only easy and straightforward part of the process. The form proceeded to ask me all the usual questions, such as name and address and the date on which I had made the purchase. It struck me that the company already knew this information from when I filled out the form to make the purchase. Furthermore, having had to traipse upstairs to find the model and serial number of the box, surely the company had those too since it was they that sent the thing. All I really should have been asked was whether I wished to register and did I want the extended warranty – that they asked three times during the registration.

I did not get as far as the end of the registration for our Smart Export Guarantee. This is the agreement to get a shekel or two for electricity going back to the grid from our solar panels. I found our MPAN number, after I had looked up what MPAN was on the Internet, and then looked the MPAN number up again on a previous bill I had to dig up. Did we receive a FIT, I was asked, or did we know if a FIT was registered at the property, which I also had to look up – Feed-In-Tarriff of course. What was the size of our system? Could we please upload our MCS and having done so, upload the DNO response. Having had my fill of TLAs (Three Letter Acronyms) I decided that would all best be done after a couple of stiff drinks, so I gave up.

We then entered the darn fool questions category of time wasting. Since I had plenty of time to waste and that I would probably be harangued forever if I did not do it, I sought to complete the feedback form for my visit to the doctor. How would I describe my overall experience? Sadly, there was not the option to upload the few paragraphs I had penned for The Diary, which would have saved some time and answered all the questions they might want to ask and more. I responded with a 'Very Good' from a drop down list of options. Why would any sane respondent answer anything else, I wondered. Answering, 'bleddy dreadful', would have

exposed myself to some awful revenge on my next visit – and even bigger needle, perhaps. Next was, how had I arrived at that score? Well, apart from weighing the risk of retribution, I did not have to wait very long, and also, very near the top of considerations, I came out alive. Would I recommend this service to my friends or family? No. Apart from not having any of either, how could I possibly recommend a service where they stick large needles into you or drain you of blood.

Thankfully, we started seeing a few more customers which distracted me from such trivial pursuits. I did not quite manage to repeat my Arkwright upselling skills of the day before, but it seemed to be better trade that we had managed through the inclement weather. It was however a change-over day, so while the morning was busier, the middle of the afternoon drifted into obscurity and let the side down a bit.

The weather held firm for us, and I am told that we will have good weather next week, too. I think that I was told that every week throughout the summer and the good weather never materialised, so I am sceptical. Some high level cloud drifted in towards the end of the day which turned the direct sunshine a bit milky. The breeze, such as it was, from the northeast, introduced the chill that the forecasters or someone I was talking about earlier in the week told me was coming.

It was because of this that my little boys' trousers were dispensed with yesterday and although I take the girl around in shorts in the morning, I think the transition to big boys' trousers is a permanent feature for this end of the season. These were my new trousers that I had agonised over purchasing from the Internet some weeks ago. They must be made in the same place as they make kitchen hobs and sent by slow boat because they took an age to arrive. They do, however, fit perfectly but I am yet to discover if that have better protection against a cold draught than my existing trousers, which was the whole purpose of buying them. They are also a brighter shade of blue than I recall seeing on the Internet screen which drew some attention from my colleagues at Lifeboat training yesterday evening. While the comments were not overtly unkind, the fact that they were noticed at all concerns me – “you know the fella I mean, the one with the bright blue trousers”. Yes, that sort of concern.

Luckily, they cannot be seen in the dark, but I took no chances and changed into shorts when I took the little girl around the block after tea. It was an unremarkable journey save for the echo of a sunset glow out to the northwest. The sun clearly takes a right turn after dipping below the horizon. There was enough light to see our way by, but it was darkening quickly and I used my head torch to see what ABH was sticking her head into next. I also use it to see if the cat is there that hangs about on the corner of Coastguard Row. She is fixated by the cat and they have come face to face on occasion. The cat looks worried: “you're a dog, you're supposed to chase me”. ABH: “what the 'eck are you?”

October 10th – Thursday

It was a day when time simply evaporated and nothing of note got done. It was a day when time moved so quickly, I only just managed to get our weekend pasty order (sorry, MS) in with seconds to spare.

It had started out quite ordinary with me waiting for a clump of heavy rain to pass by before taking ABH out for her early morning walk. In fact, it was not that early as she had declined my earlier invitation to sally forth – when it was not raining – and only decided to stir herself later, when it was raining. The heavy stuff had passed when we stepped out, but it was still raining some and the slopes were running water.

There was not a whole heap of stuff to do before opening the shop, so it did not matter greatly that I was a bit tardy coming down to prepare. Had I known that we would only see one customer in the first hour and a half of opening, I may not have bothered at all. So, when ex-Head Launcher turned up for a chat, it rather helped the time pass while we talked about this and that. A while later we were joined by the Missus, and we chatted some more about that and this and before I knew it eleven o'clock had arrived and I had not even turned on the pasty warmer.

The Missus had stopped on her way to pick up Mother and since she would be passing the door in the truck I suggested that it would be an ideal time to fit the new dashcam. She duly stopped outside while I ducked into the truck to discover that the cable end of the existing power wire was different from the one needed to plug into the camera. I had already purchased one adapter to allow me to charge it but had forgotten to check the wire and plug in the truck. Not only that but the existing wire is a bit short for the new setup and would require the camera to be placed a little further to the nearside that we would have liked. I set out in search of another adapter and one with a bit of length to it.

There are now several types of USB connector and finding the right adapter in the right mix of male and female took some time. I then discovered, like so many such things on the Internet, some of these were coming from China and would take several weeks to arrive. It took a while more to find one that would be delivered in a more appropriate timescale.

I then fell chatting with one of our regular customers and, when he left, had a little resurgence of busyness. It was when one customer turned up and asked for pasties that I suddenly realised that I had not placed the pasty order. Of all the pasty orders in the week, Thursday's is crucial because it is the pasty order that encompasses the weekend's supply. To miss that, and it was one minute to cutoff time when I made my call, would have resulted in no pasties at all for the whole of the weekend. I must say that gave me a bit of a start.

Very occasionally, your struggling Diarist has a hot potato – metaphysically speaking - dropped into his lap, dear reader, that fills a few column inches without the need of too much thought. Today was one of those instances. One of our neighbours, a

Cover born and raised – actually, I think he was a Sand Flea but let us not split hairs – brought an old Lifeboat related document for us to have a look at.

Guessing from the last date written on the page, it was probably typed in the early 1960s. It contained key dates from the station's history and answered a few questions but also raised a few.

I was pleased to see that it mentioned the construction of a new Lifeboat house in 1874, that would be the Old Boathouse Stores as it stands today. It cost £250.

In 1890, £5 was splashed out towards the cost of a lantern to guide fishermen approaching The Cove from the south and west to warn them off a “dangerous ledge of rocks”. I was wondering where such a lantern would be placed, particularly to warn shipping approaching from the south, meaning it would have to have hung around the corner from Pedn-men-du.

By 1896 a new Lifeboat house was being constructed on the site of the original, where it still stands today. It included the building of a ‘carriage house’ and slipway and cost £1,560. I wondered where the carriage house might have been and if it still exists today. A further £325 was spent on a road to Whitesand Bay. My guess is that for a while the Lifeboat was still taken by carriage down to the big beach to be launched. Perhaps the slipway could not be used at certain states of the tide.

In any case, by 1904 the “carriage was of no further use [and] it was removed from the station and the carriage house became a store”.

The document summarises two heroic launches where silver and bronze medals were awarded including one in 1868 where a rocket apparatus designed for use from shore was adapted and fired from the boat. That would have been a rowing boat, the station's first motor Lifeboat arriving in 1923 at the cost of £11,000.

I am very grateful to JP for handing me that sheet which filled out some column inches on a day of particular desolation in The Cove. There were a few moments of busyness, and it was certainly better than that day of alternating rain and brightness, which was barely worth getting out of bed for. One highlight from today was the lady who brought to the counter one chocolate bar and a small tub of flavoured Cornish sea salt. Her mistake was to mention in passing our Squid Ink gin in its alluring copper flask. She was not willing to risk such an expensive purchase in case she did not like the taste. Fortunately, I have a tin set aside from which I can extract a sample should the necessity arise, which I felt that it had in this case. Not only did the lady leave with the gin but also purchased one of our logo bags – available on our webshop for a very reasonable £6.99 – to put her purchases in making her purchase ten times the value of what she originally brought to the counter. Aye thang yew.

That was probably the only highlight of the shop day and the kindest that can be said of the day in general. Approaching four o'clock or it might have been closer to half past three o'clock, I took a moment to gaze along the street. In both directions there was not a soul to be seen nor at the extremity of my vision in the Beach car park or outside the OS. I think that there may well have been half a dozen people on the beach, and I was not entirely sure that they were not Lifeguards.

We were called to arms for a Lifeboat launch in the evening. We brought our legs too, and dispersed to our various roles. Initially, it was planned to have the Lifeboat back at eight o'clock to make the tide on the long slip. At the last minute the decision was rescinded due to the swell on the long slip that would have made recovery tricky. Instead, the Lifeboat would stay out half an hour longer and make the tide on the short slip, although that might be marginal even then.

I elected to run the Tooltrak and launch the Inshore boat as I had not done that for a while. That was not without some excitement too, as the waves were fairly robust coming in on the Harbour beach and the Tooltrak was being buffeted about a good bit on both launch and recovery.

In the interim, I took ABH around the block in the dark while the Missus took Mother home. We did not rush but we did not tarry too long either and I was back in good time to make preparations for the Inshore coming back.

We were not overly blessed with numbers shore side in the evening, especially as we doubled up on the winch to give a trainee winchman some practise. The Inshore boat returned first and I had a similar experience to the launch with waves thumping into the windscreen of the Tooltrak, which is an interesting experience, especially if it is the first time you have done it. I managed to have that washed down and put away and be back in time to assist with the big boat.

There was just about enough water on the short slip for the recovery to go ahead but with the waves coming and going, there were moments when there was not enough water and moment when there was plenty. The cable had been kept deliberately short so there was no delay in the take up and I could clearly see from where I was standing that the team executed a textbook recovery up the short slip in less than favourable conditions. After that, we had the boat washed down and tucked away in no time at all. We are, after all, a very precise, very excellent Shore Crew.

October 9th – Wednesday

The day started quite bleak and wintry and while the edge had been taken off the temperature by a persistent northwesterly, it was not enough to persuade me into long trousers. By the middle of the day there were some cracks in the cloud cover and showed some blue sky. Occasionally during the afternoon, the sun shone through, just to remind us that there still was one.

We had to wait until well into the afternoon for customers in any numbers. Those pottering about prior to that were thin on the ground and thick with winter attire. It seemed to be a day of postcard buying, without stamps, although I was reminded by a foreign couple that I had not yet ordered in the new price international stamps. We will have to be a bit careful with that as the stamps will no doubt increase in price again in April when we reopen. There is also a minimum order value, so we need to be sure we can sell all the stamps we have in the few weeks we have left open.

Not that it is particularly pressing, but the cash and carry delivery or as it is now, collection, was still on the to do list. I had a chat with the manager at the cash and carry and we are able to do a 'click and collect' so at least the Missus does not need to pull the items off the shelf, just load them into the truck. What our man did not tell me is that the 'click and collect' is a separate stream on the website and the order that I painstakingly keyed in for delivery cannot easily be transferred to the other stream. In fact, the whole list needed to be rekeyed.

Thankfully, it is not the largest of orders and it did not take long to finish the transition especially as I had few customers to interrupt me. To make sure that I had not missed anything or added anything, I looked at the list total value having taken off the price of tobacco that I could not add to the click and collect. They were marginally different. I tried to compare the lists visually but could not see a difference. To make matters worse, the monetary value was so small that it could only have been the difference between multiple items as it was too small to be one item alone. I gave up after a while and asked the Missus to check my work. Unfortunately, she came to the same conclusion.

It took a little while to discover that the drinking chocolate was 40 pence different and I had ordered two different rolls of catering foil. I might have called that a waste of time if it had not provided me with some entertainment for half an hour.

That interlude was enough to distract me from the increasing wind speed as it edged ever closer to the north. I had started to the day gung ho about my attire but as the afternoon wore on, it became clear that a change of policy might possibly be required. The cool air was starting to circulate in the shop and even wearing a mid layer and a fleece, by the closing hours in the shop, it was starting to feel a tad chilly.

Once again, there was nothing much doing in the final hour of shop opening. I had thought about pulling the truck around so that I could install the new dashcam device but that had been scotched by the cash and carry malarky. For once, there was a dairy order which occupied me for seconds so I will have to find something constructive to do in the increasing quiet moments that does not cost anything. This barren wasteland of time is unlikely to improve in the few weeks ahead until half term but at least it is just a few weeks.

I had thought that all the rain for the day had long gone when I decided to take ABH around after tea. The wind had gone all muscly on us from the north so I was taken

quite by surprise when I opened the front door and was slapped in the face by a wall of squally rain blown in at gale force. I checked the rain radar to see when it might be gone and discovered, with the aid of my spectacles, that it was the smallest dot of rain the pixels on my computer screen would allow. It was gone in moments and I had chosen that precise time to open the door to what appeared to be my own personal rain shower.

Last, I must just note the arrival of a thank you letter from L&L that arrived yesterday. These are our friends in the far north, so far north of Camborne that you would need to stand on a chair to see it, to whom we sent consolation parcels of goodies because they could not be here. Oddly, they sent photographs of two complete strangers, small almost grown-ups that could not possibly have been the wee (they say that instead of saying small) girls we met so long ago. My, my, what ladies you have become.

October 8th – Tuesday

I have mentioned my dickie knee on occasion but only when necessary. I do not like to dwell on it; it is hard enough standing on it. So, I may as well get the story the battle of wounded knee out of the way first.

The arthritis in my left knee was the result of an old injury and over the years has clearly harboured a grudge against me for mistreating it so. It was once and a long time ago, but it must be a Cornish knee to hold a grudge that long. Anyway. For some reason best known to itself, it went into overdrive last week and my limping was noticed by our neighbour, Lifeboat compatriot and handily, GP. By the weekend a few days and a Lifeboat recovery later, it had swollen to twice its normal enlarged size and the same GP, visiting the shop once again noticed. He recommended that I come and see him at work where he could drain the offending part and inject a steroid. He painted the procedure as quick, simple and did not mention pain once.

Lured by the alleged painless simplicity of it, I called up to book. It was disappointing to discover that I had a week to wait, especially as the knee had ramped up its assault and was impeding any sort of rapid movement and once any sort of movement at all. What was I to do, for example, if I had to run away smartly from something – like a creditor or a disgruntled customer. Obviously, I have spent the week in trepidation.

Come the appointed day, today, and I had to travel to Newlyn to see our man. Why he could not have dropped around to the shop, I have no idea. There was no one in the queue ahead of me and I was immediately concerned that my two hour parking fee in the car park down the road had been a little over-cautious. I was seen almost immediately and almost immediately the doctor recognised that my knee had dramatically lost weight since he last saw it. He advised that the draining element of my visit was now no longer necessary, even if the swelling had now gone to my ankles and foot. Apparently draining feet is not a thing.

He told me that it was probably for the best as draining the knee would have been dreadfully painful as he would have to move the tube around the joint to get at the best bits. I was mortified. If he had told me that on Sunday when I had seen him, he would not have seen me for dust, well, as much dust as someone moving very slowly in the opposite direction can raise.

Wondering then, if I had arrived under false pretences, he assured me the steroid was worth having and did not come with the same level of pain as the draining bit. He then proceeded to tell me the small print that came with the bottle, that one in 10,000 get an infection and one in 5,000 have an allergic reaction to the steroid. As if to reassure me, he said that was less of a likelihood than being run over by a bus. I thanked him for his concern but pointed out that I had yet to get back to where I parked the car down a road that is also a bus route.

I am now carrying around a steroid in my knee delivered by a needle at least twice the size of the one used to extract blood from me a couple of weeks ago. I thought that I was very brave and looked the other way until he explained it came with a local anaesthetic. Given that my knee was on the way to improvement by itself, I may never know if it has any effect and may need to wait until the next episode that, should it actually do its job, I may never know occurred. I will be happy just to be able to keep up with ABH as we go around the block, to be honest.

By the time I got back to the shop with Mother on board, both my expected grocery deliveries had come and gone. There was work to do to get them out on the shelves or put away in the store room, which of course I ignored for a while. After all, I had just come out of surgery and would need time to recuperate. Also, having had an early and inadequate breakfast, I was a tad peckish. I understand that can be exacerbated coming out of anaesthesia.

Anyway, enough about me. Let us move onto a more interesting topic. Ah yes, the weather. Yesterday, the morning was dry and the afternoon wet. The day before, the morning was wet and the afternoon dry. Today was also half and half but the rain and the dry took it in turns roughly every hour. Some of the showers were particularly heavy and some of the dry spells were not particularly dry, so I think the poor weather probably had the upper hand today.

As if to prove the point, the wind came around the corner in the later afternoon, demonstrated by our bin falling over; I had not strapped it down since it was emptied yesterday. The wind had been in the south earlier, blowing just as hard. I noticed when Mother and I stopped in at The Farm for some more of our voluminous hessian logo bags – available on our webshop for a mere bagatelle – but it was largely unnoticed down in The Cove earlier.

The change in the wind direction encouraged a group of wing surfers to come out to play. The sea state had calmed rapidly today with wind flattening out most of the

swell, so it proved handy for these players. I watched as they headed for the Harbour beach to launch and surmised that the mono boards that they had with them must weigh a fair bit as they seemed to be struggling under the load. They must be some clever design to float as well, which will probably explain why the board and hydrofoil will set you back more than £2,000. They were making good use of them, out the other side of Cowloe where presumably they were more in the wind.

The rain came and went deep into the afternoon before clearing up and leaving us with a wintry feel to the day and damp in the air. The wind did a good job of drying up the streets and other than the puddles here and there you might hardly have known it rained at all. The biggest evidence we had was that the till was still empty at the end of the day. The previous two days we had enjoyed some liveliness during the dry half of the day at least. Today, our customers gave up completely.

It was still relatively mild when I took ABH around the block last thing. We are told this is about to change and I have my big boys' trousers at the ready. Could tomorrow be the day. I can hardly contain myself.

October 7th – Monday

The sea had been crashing all night, I assume, because it was still crashing when I woke up in the morning. It was a much closer crashing when I woke up in the morning than it would have been earlier as the tide was almost in and the sea at its most playful. ABH and I were able to watch it being playful from our vantage point on Coastguard Row with the white caps of the waves almost luminous in the dim glow of pre-dawn light. Golly, it was putting some effort into it. Not only were the waves charging down Tribbens to throw themselves at the Harbour wall, they were stopping halfway through to jump into the air. Atop Cowloe, they were having just as much fun, dancing and leaping and making the sea boil in a great white mass of foam.

Later, before the tide dropped out completely, the waves were making just as much effect as they ran onto the beach, crashing and tumbling all the way. At North Rocks and over on Gwenver, the waves were churning and jumping all over the foreshore to about fifty yards out. In the grey, it would have looked quite ordinary, but the sun was shining for the most part of the morning and the whole scene was a marvel to wonder at.

I would have been quite happy to gaze out at this spectacle all the day long but someone burst my bubble early on by telling me that rain was on the way. Sure enough, by the middle of the day the cloud had ruined the blue skies and by one o'clock, the first rain drops were falling. Looking at the rain radar I surmised that it might go on for a bit. I was a little dubious of the forecaster's online claim that it would all be over by three o'clock and thereafter, the sun would shine and order would be restored, although they did change that to five o'clock after the rain started but it turned out they were wrong about that too.

When the Missus arrived home last night after taking Mother back, she dropped our dead dashcam machine on my lap. I had noticed last week that it was not working properly but had not had the time to look at it more closely. I am of a mind that it is a more necessary accessory than it was a few years ago and so decided that perhaps we should replace it.

I spent some of the quiet time that the rain brought on to investigate the make and model of a suitable replacement. I was not keen to select a direct replacement as I was not that happy with the one we bought a few years ago. The disadvantage of not doing so meant removing the adhesively attached magnet that secured the current one to the windscreen and getting an adapter for the power cable.

Things, it appears, have moved on quite a bit since we bought our existing one. The top of the range units will mix you a cocktail, tell you jokes, know all the best short cuts to places you did not want to go to and mop your fevered brow when you get lost in a field on the way there. I was not sure we needed something quite so all embracing and favoured a cheaper unit that just took moving pictures of the journey you were taking. There was only really one contender, so that did not take very long at all, and it will be here tomorrow as will the adapter. It may take a little while longer to remove the little magnetic disc the existing one insisted we stick to the windscreen but I suspect the Missus will be quite good at that.

It took half an hour after the rain started for the street to completely empty. After that I was on my own but for the occasional waif or stray after a postcard or a packet of crisps. One of the waifs, who arrived mid way through the afternoon, was a young lady in distress. She and her mother found that their car battery was flat after they returned to it having decided that The Cove in the rain probably did not have an awful lot left to offer. Someone down the far end had sent her down with the vague instruction to find a mechanic not bothering to mention that he was at the RNLI station. It would not have helped as he is on holiday. Such was her luck that the only living creature she found with ears, and even then ones that did not work very well, was the grumpy shopkeeper.

Given that I was on my own and the only remedy to that was to ask the Missus, I spent a moment rifling through the honeycomb of my mind to think who else might be able to assist. Having exhausted all the non-existent options, I called the Missus to see if she would stand in while I drove the young lady back to the Beach car park with our battery pack. The job was done in a few moments, but I waited at the entrance just to make sure they left without a problem. I find it hard to believe that in the whole of The Cove we are the only option for a bit of help.

My good deed for the day was almost immediately repaid by the arrival of the Highly Professional Craftsperson. His interest was piqued by my explanation of flooding in the shop and given that he had been rained off his proper job, came to look at ours – in the rain. The same as everyone else who has ever looked at it, he could find no obvious cause but happily stuck his arm down the main drain that had filled with

water to unplug it. He removed a few small stones and a cap that we were not sure about but there was nothing that might have caused a blockage unless it was further down and shifted with a bit of poking. We left it at that and hoped for the best and he went home with our thanks to get dry.

I twiddled my thumbs, flicked through the pages of a trade newspaper, twiddled my thumbs some more and idly looked out of the window. The heavy rain was very effective at keeping people at home or in the bar. I did not see a customer until a few minutes to closing when the rain had started to ease off in a prelude to stopping altogether. Fair weather shoppers, that is all a grumpy shopkeeper needs at the end of a tedious afternoon – well, yes, that is exactly what a grumpy shopkeeper needs at the end of a non-productive afternoon and grateful for that.

When we went out after tea it had stopped raining but the ground was still very wet. A veritable river has been running down from Mayon Cliff and the springs there, running across the end of Coastguard Row and down to where the Harbour toilets are, where it promptly disappears somewhere. ABH revels in all the new and fresh smells and it takes us an age to go around. Given that is all there is for her, I indulge her and it is still not cold out and my dickie knee hampers the speed I can walk at. Hopefully, that is being fixed tomorrow and that, I am sure will be fun.

October 6th – Sunday

For the first time in quite a while part of the shop floor was flooded I discovered when I came down to get the outside display prepared first thing. We were never sure where it gets in, but we believe that the drains behind the store room become inundated. The problem has always been quite random. Some days of heavy rain we have got away with but others, with seemingly lighter rain but a different wind direction maybe, have resulted in flooding.

The boys made some minor changes to the downpipes in that area, which I cannot imagine changed things much, but I will have a word to see if they have any ideas. At the very least the launders are new and clear and waste water would have flowed more quickly.

It may have rained heavily during the night that gave rise to the problem. It rained again after the shop opened and some of that was heavy, too, but the flooding did not reoccur. Maybe a blockage cleared itself or maybe it needs a particular sort of rain. Whatever the case, there are part of the shop floor that are cleaner now than they have been since the start of the season. We shall see how it goes and if it is a frequent problem will have a chat to see what we can do.

The rain continued through the morning and just into the afternoon before it ceased. As you might imagine, dear reader, it did nothing to encourage customers to come out, although we had one or two walkers come by. Instead, it did everything to encourage my apathy, and I did begger all for most of the morning. Eventually, I

convinced myself that it would be a good idea to finish the cash and carry list and to do an order for the farm shop cash and carry, that I thought we might need.

One of the directors of the farm shop cash and carry had dropped by last week to introduce himself. We have been using them for more than a few years, so I do not think it was a deliberate trip and more that he had been close by talking to a proper customer. He left some free samples one of which was a packet of chilli flavoured peanuts, which were very toothsome. The packets are part of a range of Asian flavoured snacks, which look quite alluring, so I have ordered some to see how they sell with hardly any customers around.

As I expected, we will not make a minimum order for our normal cash and carry and therefore cannot have it delivered. I have keyed the order into the system – to see that it was not enough – and will be able to add it to a click and collect order so that the Missus does not have to go and pull it all off shelves. Although, I have no doubt that the Missus will want to traverse every aisle just in case I have missed something.

An hour after the rain stopped, the cloud cleared away and the sun shone in a perfect blue sky. Other than the street being wet it was hard to countenance that no more than two hours previously it had been wet, dark and miserable. I remained miserable as it seemed a waste being miserable for just half a day.

It did not take long for the weather to cheer everyone else up. The beach was soon busy with people strolling about and people walking their dogs now that they can do so with impunity, although most just had their dogs. There were very few surfers, probably much to do with the lack of surf, although what there was near low water was very clean, and even fewer bathers. I do not think it mattered very much as everyone was just grateful for a bit of decent weather.

I warned yesterday that there was a second deep low pressure system out to the west. It would be ex-hurricane Kirk by the time it came in view of us. Looking at the synoptic charts again today, it appears Kirk will be heading off across the Bay of Biscay – south of Camborne – and will not be much trouble to us in the Far West. I heard later that the Meteorological Office had issued a hurricane warning for wind in the greater south of the country, leaving us out.

I was mightily surprised today to see that the bay was still as flat as a dish and even more surprised when it remained largely so into the afternoon. I no longer know which is the best website to look at regarding swell forecasts, so I looked at the first that came up. It was suggesting that there would be no significant swell through to the end of the week. That I found most surprising of all.

It was late in the afternoon, looking for something to do between customers, that I remembered that the Royal Mail was putting up the price of stamps tomorrow. Our signage for stamp prices has survived several increases and was now covered with

successive stickers and looked a little shoddy. If we were to sell stamps at a premium price, which they will be from tomorrow, I felt our sign should look the part.

A long time ago I nicked two Royal Mail stickers for the signage and when they started to look tatty, I scanned them and made the sign reprintable, which is what I spent half an hour on in my quieter moments. From tomorrow we shall see how our postcard sales fair. My guess is that the populace is so inured to hefty price increases now that they will not bat an eyelid.

Also inured to their condition, I imagine, were the hundred or so runners that came belting past the shop. Such is the frequency of one race or other going on, I paid them little attention. It was only when one of them stopped by the shop that I thought to ask. I should really have remembered that it is the time of year for the three marathons in a row starting out at Padstow or thereabouts. The last leg, other than the one many of the runners were on, starts in St Ives and takes in the rotten bit of Coast Path to Zennor. Surprisingly, or perhaps not, many of the runners were still powering past the shop with just a mile left to go.

What stuck in my mind most was that the first runner to stop at the shop asked if we sold vapes. I had assumed all the runners belonged to a group fastidious about their health and well-being, knocking back probiotic shots washed down with wheatgrass following gymnasium sessions starting at three o'clock in the morning shortly after they get up. Either I am grossly misinformed, or our man will be sitting out on the clifftop puffing away on his tod, a complete pariah, while his pals all celebrate, sitting in ice baths, popping the corks out of alcohol-free prosecco.

I cannot now remember the name of the website I looked at that predicted no swell for the coming week. It is a shame, as I would know which one to avoid in future. We sat watching a local lad enjoy some perfect six foot waves rolling in off the edge of Cowloe and crashing on the rocks below the road. They came to prominence an hour before high water and when I took ABH around after tea, waves were thumping over the Harbour wall ten feet high or more while the Harbour itself boiled and the roar of the turmoil was intimidating. It took a while getting here but it knows how to make an entrance.

October 5th – Saturday

My lady friend from up the hill behind us refreshed our counter flowers this morning. Last time we had some Michaelmas daisies, which seem to have such a long season and, even cut down, a long life in the vase. Today we had some more but with some pink flowers as well. She told me what they were, which I immediately forgot or did not hear or both but remembered they were from South Africa, and I did not even know she had left The Cove.

It was only a short while later that another neighbour stopped by and admired them. She asked what the pink flowers were, so I looked up 'pink' and 'South African' on

the Internet to see if it would guess what I was talking about as it so often knows my mind. While I was doing that the neighbour suggested they might be kaffir lilies, which I then looked up and discovered that there were indeed. Also known as Hesperantha, which I thought was a poem by Longfellow, but what do I know.

With a bit of time on my hands now, I was able to have a little investigate as to why I could not listen to Radio Pasty on my computer. It has stopped working at the start of the season and I had ignored it because I did not have the time to chase it up. I discovered yesterday, or possibly the day before, that I could get it to work using the same app on my mobile telephone. In the meanwhile, I had written to Radio Pasty and had a very pleasant response from one of the presenters that she had passed my complaint onto one of the technicians. I have heard nothing since.

No matter, I have been able to listen to some of the morning show and I am now wondering if I should stop listening again for the sake of my sanity. The first item up on the first day of listening in a while was the much maligned council's attempt to save money. My apologies, that should have read the much maligned council's valiant attempt to save carbon, obviously. So keen are they to save, ahem, carbon that they want to turn off streetlights in one of the towns a bit further up. They already do it here. I do not remember exactly which town, but east of Camborne somewhere, and there is hellup. It seems to me that the much maligned council missed a trick by not thinking far enough ahead. Had they spent a bit of time thinking about it, they could have saved even more, ahem, carbon by not installing the streetlights in the first place.

The Diary is always keen to support the much maligned council in any way that it can. We have had a quick whip around of ideas and when that did not work, made something up. We suggest that the much maligned council could save even more, ahem, carbon by turning off the lights at their offices and, in particular, the offices of the streetlighting department and see how they like it.

The other thing of note that Radio Pasty brought to the party this morning was news that poor weather was on the way. Having had a geek at the pressure charts yesterday, this much was clear, but Radio Pasty insisted that we would at least have the morning, and they were right. The weather had been very reasonable from first thing and, indeed, ABH and I were looking up at a star spangled sky as we took our short walk around the block. The day slowly clouded over which was complete by the middle of the afternoon. By three o'clock, the heavy band of rain approaching from the west was a few miles off the Isles of Scilly and beginning to show its brooding shadow to our west. The wind, that had remained in a quarter where it did not bother us, edged a little more to the southeast where I could feel it start to blow across the counter at me.

Up until then we had enjoyed quite an upbeat sort of day. We had seen a bit of an influx of new faces and others that I assumed to be trippers. Sales were not going to

set the world alight, but we sold a tin of Squid Ink gin, which always brings me a smile and a few other worthy items.

Even before four o'clock when the rain came and stopped everything, I had found the tedium too much for me. I pulled out the overstock of preserves and took them down to restock the gift food section. I noted that I had been fooled by an over-zealous buying of marmalade during the early part of the summer that was very short-lived and now had far too much. Conversely, chutney had sold strongly, and I was now in short supply of that. I think I may just have enough strawberry preserve but it will be nail biting right to the bitter end to see if we run out.

Such is my excitement at this time of year, dear reader.

I saw no reason why I should not start the last cash and carry order of the season, either. Nothing much will change in the next four weeks before we are deluged, we hope, in the final week for half term. It is one very difficult order and one that would benefit from the use of a crystal ball. My suspicion was that we would not make a minimum order and I reasoned it would be better to know sooner rather than later. First, we could give better notice to the cash and carry not to put a driver to any trouble next weekend and secondly, we could pick up the order at our leisure over the next few weeks and even split it over two journeys if one was too large for the truck.

Having thought of everything, I then thought how dark it had become outside and put on our new bright lights. They did not even attract any moths let alone customers and I cannot say I blame them. I think we had two new arrivals keen on some essential supplies. It might possibly have been the insistent rain that deterred them that had become quite heavy as we approached closing time.

It was still raining but not quite so hard when I took ABH around the block later on. We also benefitted from the lack of serious breeze that would have made the walk uncomfortable instead of just brief. It has stopped completely when we made the same trip just before bedtime and given that the wind was not that strong, I was surprised to see that our steps had dried completely in the short time since it has stopped. It must have been special quick drying rain, which is no good for the reservoirs. There will be a hose pipe ban before long.

October 4th – Friday

We had half a day of clear skies, which was very pleasant, especially as there was no breeze to speak of. By the middle of the morning I was compelled to go upstairs and change my mid layer and shoes for short sleeved shirt and flip flops. Naturally, by the middle of the afternoon after the sky clouded over I was freezing my toes off and had to put a fleece on.

Even in the morning there was some high level cirrus cloud which should have demonstrated that more was on the way. We still had high pressure hanging on by a fingernail, if high pressure systems had any, that would see us through until the end of the day. It was responsible for dead flat water out in the bay. Out to the west, however, is a fairly serious low pressure system that we will see some of over the weekend. Further out again, waiting in the wings for its turn is storm Kirk. No doubt with an enterprise of its own, it is likely to cling on to its current course and it would be highly illogical to think otherwise, erm, Jim.

Despite the cloud, the day was still bright, and it did not seem to unduly affect our attraction to visitors. It was very much quieter than yesterday which is to be expected on a change over day at this stage in the season. All, or maybe most, of the going home present buying was done yesterday but we still saw some general trade that was possibly better than expected – especially as I expect very little. That is exactly what we got after about three o'clock in the afternoon: very little. The street emptied but for a few wandering dog walkers and aimless souls heading for who knows where.

It rather made me wish that I had left the stock take of the hoodies until later. Acknowledging that I should have done it yesterday while it was still fresh in my mind, I made a special effort this morning to get it done. I do not know why I put it off because, once started, it is not an onerous task. It took about half an hour and this time included the children's hoodies too. The heather grey children's tops had been selling exceedingly well, which was disappointing because I had ramped up the volume of the sapphire coloured tops which had previously been favourites.

While it seems a little obtuse to be buying stock of such things so late in the season, we do advertise them for purchase in our online shop. That is the online shop that you neatly bypass, dear reader on the way to read The Diary, just in case you were interested. We do not sell very many hooded sweatshirts from our online shop, but it would be embarrassing to have an order placed only to find out that we did not have the stock.

After I had completed the count, I noticed that I still had the previous figures that I had taken for ordering earlier in the year. This enabled me to determine that we had sold close to 100 hooded sweatshirts since the middle of July, which is roughly ten a week. I find that quite remarkable for a small shop in the toe end of Cornwall.

I have already said that it was quiet in the later afternoon today, but I mean, it was really quiet. I know that I am deaf, that might have had a bearing upon things but, there was not even the sound of the sea, no aeroplanes, not a single tweet from the birds in the air or on the ground for that matter, no sounds from the people mooching about, not a whisper and even the sound of the occasional car passing by appeared to be muted. I even stepped outside to see if the sun had been eclipsed or four horsemen were riding across the beach but there was nothing.

Also respecting the silence was an expensively sleek car that passed by while I was admiring the silence. It had a personalised number plate and Aston Martin written across the back end. I would have been impressed, but it looked exactly like the Porsche Cayenne which looks exactly like the BMW X series. I wondered, if I owned a prestige car company and my designer came up with a designed that looked exactly like every other prestige 4x4 car on the market, I would sack him on the spot. Perhaps Aston Martin's owners are not as fussy as the used to be.

Talking of lack of imagination, I note from the front page – yes, the front page, mind – of one national newspaper that one television company is bringing back the darts themed game show, Bullseye. Good grief.

Congratulating myself on cancelling our satellite television service, I took ABH around in the gloom again. While I have tried to make the trip a little earlier, we are being overrun by the shortening of the days. There was still a glow in the western sky from the sun long sunk below the horizon. It had earlier lit up the arches of the Lifeboat long slip in its peacockesque show of glory in its final moments. Ah, we live in a pretty place.

October 3rd – Thursday

It was a pretty looking day, I will give it that. There were folk sitting at the benches across the street for most of the middle part of the day and a fair few promenading about. Most of them were wrapped up in coats and jumpers due to the presence of a northeasterly which, while not robust, was certainly a little cool.

The day had started out that way, too. It was quite late on and not gloomy at all when ABH eventually dragged herself out of bed this morning. Bless her, she had exhausted herself through the night playing merry hell with the pair of us – mainly the Missus. Clearly, walking back from Land's End and playing on the Harbour beach was just not good enough for a young active girl.

We endured the usual slow start in the shop but as the day progressed it showed some promise as the visitor numbers increased. Pasty sales (sorry, MS) were back on the agenda after a brief pause yesterday and we piled through the allocation that I had ordered for today. There were, of course, the obligatory going home presents to be purchased and there are some very fortunate temporary gardeners and pet watchers out there. Some of the presents being taken home were very high class. If anyone actually read The Diary, other than you, dear reader, there would be insurrection among the gardener and pet watching classes.

Starting in the quiet of the morning, I set out to buy the electric hob that we had decided upon. The company I would have preferred to buy from and probably had the better quality unit also had the five ring hob with the middle ring not at the top. That left me to buy from the American company which made things a bit more complicated by insisting that I pay in dollars. There will be a charge from the credit

card company for that but since the hob company had offered a 25 percent discount, and buying from a reseller at a much higher price did not make any sense, I ploughed ahead. It looks like the delivery will coincide with the oven, which is what I had intended or at least hoped.

Next on the agenda was bookings for the annual sojourn to visit the Aged Parent who resides in Dorset, east of Camborne. For the last couple of years I have elected to take the train so that the Missus is not stranded without transport. While the Missus said that she would move Mother in during my brief absence so that I could use the truck, I considered that I would prefer to go by train. I would not use the truck while I was there, and all the convenience would be in the journey there and back and I did not want to drive through a place called Brympton d'Evercy, which clinched it.

Last time I stayed at a very comfortable and reasonably priced holiday let in the centre of town. I looked to stay there again but discovered that Cornwall is not the only place that decided to charge a lot of money for holiday lets this year. Not only did the rental organisation want to charge for the accommodation, there were further charges for cleaning, walking on the carpet and polishing the door key. I considered calling the people direct, since I had their number from last year but thought better of it and booked a hotel instead. It was not my preference as there is less freedom for sitting about while I awaited the Aged Parent's mandatory afternoon Icelandic sauna, ice bath and topless massage. Witnessing the Aged Parent topless would be just too much to bear.

All is now arranged, and I will head off shortly after the shop shuts at the end of October.

The Missus headed off herself in the afternoon. She had an appointment nearby in Camborne to have an ultrasound examination of her dickie shoulder that still continues to plague her. The physiotherapist gave up on her after several weeks as his work did not seem to be as beneficial as he, or indeed the Missus, had hoped. It was he who recommended being referred for ultrasound to see if the precise nature of the problem could be determined. The ultrasound technician does not give an opinion at the time, but I am not sure that sucking air through the teeth like a garage mechanic examining your car was very encouraging.

Also not very encouraging was snaring a shoplifter. The Missus had thought his behaviour on a previous visit worthy of closer attention next time he visited, so I wound back the CCTV cameras after he went. It clearly shows him slipping chocolate bars into his pocket and I will have to deal with him next time he comes in, which I am not looking forward to. He is a strange fish and quite well known by locals here for harassing people walking up to Land's End. He has asked me a few times if I am local and does not seem to recognise me when I am not behind the shop counter. He is clearly not quite all there, so I will step carefully when I broach the

matter with him, shortly before banishing him from the kingdom, which is better than cutting his hands off – for him, at least.

Moving on to fresher pastures, our rather pretty day that remained pretty throughout, remained just as pretty into the evening. The sun is now setting behind Pedn-men-du and requires a person to climb up to the lookout to watch it or to walk along to probably the black huts of Carn Keys. It had been warmer at times during the day but I had only discarded my fleece when the Missus asked me to help unload the shopping from the truck. I put it on again as the sun dipped away and the temperature followed suit quickly afterwards.

It was also a good day for our solar panels and our electricity bill. Near 30 percent of our usage was covered, which is a significant amount fiscally, which gives me high hopes for next summer.

We avoided the beach on our run around in the evening. The tide was mostly in and much of the weed had gone out, which is helpful. On our way back through the RNLI car park we were caught behind a team of very excellent Shore Crew taking the Tooltrak and Inshore Lifeboat for a spin around the empty Harbour car park. We do this occasionally in the winter when the tide is in to give trainees a chance to practise orchestrating manoeuvres in the dark. We call in OMD for short. We are, after all, a very musically vintage, very excellent Shore Crew.

October 2nd – Wednesday

It was about the same level of gloom in the morning that it was the previous evening when I took ABH out first thing. Most of the sky was clear of cloud with just a few cumulus out in the west picking up a hint of morning sun. There was a bit more cloud to the east and by the middle of the morning, the cloud was the dominant feature. According to Land's End weather station, the temperature increased a few degrees during the morning, and it felt like it. This would almost certainly be because I had elected to do away with short sleeved shirts after yesterday and migrate to wearing a long sleeved mid layer. Little boy trousers are still in vogue. Fortunately, the wind had turned very politically correct of late and is being inclusive to all points of the compass. Today's wind was from the northeast.

The sea state was once again not playing ball for our beleaguered surfers, although it was slightly better at low water. Higher in the tide it was flat as a dish. I was hoping that the bigger tide today would carry out the weed to make the Harbour beach a little more accessible. I would have to wait until later to find out.

Yesterday, had seemed busier but then again, I had found a distraction. Today's distraction did not take as long and topping up shelves has never been something to enthuse me. It was useful, however, to bring to my attention things that we were running out of and which could be noted for the next cash and carry delivery. According to our two weekly schedule, that should have been this weekend coming

but I had written to the boss man and he told us that we could put it off for a week and make next weekend the last one this season. I am still not sure that we will be able to make a minimum order but will try our best otherwise the Missus will have to go and collect it along with her dickie shoulder.

As mentioned in passing, I had made provision to use our frozen pasty stock (sorry, MS) today because the pasties I had set aside had all been used up yesterday. To do this I must guess the number we might use during the day. I used yesterday as the guide and removed a similar number from the freezer. Wednesday is clearly not a pasty day because I sold no more than half a dozen all day. I would have done better not to bother the freezer at all and told people we did not have any. I think I could have predicted that. Of course, had I predicted that and acted upon it and only taken half a dozen pasties out of the freezer, we would have had a queue of people up the street asking for pasties.

What was slightly more disappointing was discovering that out of six cases of Tarquin's rather top class gin and tonic cans three had been leaking since they arrived a week or so ago. I had one can leak in the previous order, so should have been more alert. Usually, the offending unit can be identified by it being softer than its undamaged companions. In this case, the leak was so slow that it was more difficult to determine the good from the bad, so I reported that three cases had leaking cans of an indeterminate number.

I suspected that it was a known issue because the supplier representative came back almost immediately with a credit for three cases. It caught me off guard because I at least expected to be asked how many cans had been affected. I should have left it there, but my interest was piqued and I discovered that by weighing the cans I could see which had leaked. It turned out that only six cans out of 36 were leaking. Being too honest for my own good, I messaged our representative and let him know. I received the three case credit but no reply from our man. I think he might have been too busy weeping. I, of course, will be wracked by guilt every time we sell one.

Another distraction of the day was the hob for the kitchen. I had entreated the Missus to make her decision now that the oven was ordered. We did not want to be sitting on the oven waiting for the hob to be delivered if we could help it as we do not have the space for that sort of thing. Even then, it was not until the end of the day that I managed to sit down and order it.

The delay, in part, had been the Missus' desire to wear out ABH. For two nights running she had been a proper little madam during the night, getting up and playing us for fools. Quite what it is that makes her want to play at three o'clock in the morning when she should be sleeping, we are yet to establish. It may be different during our shop closed period when I can run her our more often and for longer. The Missus tried to emulate that today with a trip up to Land's End by bus and a walk back.

She had selected the last bus before bus driver siesta time and asked if I could see where it was on the bus tracker. The bus in question arrives in The Cove after its previous stop at St Buryan, according to the timetable, so it was something of a surprise to see it bowling along the A30 from Drift, which would be put nowhere near St Buryan at its appointed time. It did arrive in The Cove but had completely missed its stop in our neighbouring village.

I double checked with the online bus timetable to make sure that I had not got it wrong, but I had not. It also stops at Crows-an-wra so that people that want to go to St Just can walk from there. I noted too, that some of the buses on the timetable go to Penzance that way meaning I was wrong about buses no longer turning left at the top of the hill. That is when they choose not to miss St Buryan off altogether. It is a bus service, but not as we know it – perhaps more of a gamble that it might actually stop at a place you were expecting it to.

The Missus was gone for some time and took in the Harbour beach on the way back for good measure. The little girl did not look in the least worn out when she returned, although the Missus was panting a bit. I had, in the meantime, entertained our hooded sweatshirt salesman. Actually, he is the company director and a very pleasant chap he is too. We have known him for twenty years, so the dynamic is much less formal than a business relationship. He was able to casually tell me that the prices are going up again in January, which is disappointing because they had been static for years until last year. His visit was strangely prescient because I had only that morning thought that we would need to stock check what we had and get an order in before we closed to cover us for the winter and the first part of the new season. I will get on that tomorrow and get in before the price goes up.

I had little else to consider for the rest of the afternoon as nothing much happened and few visitors visited. There is no avoiding the falling darkness now for our walk after tea, so I am resigned to it. I noticed that the tide had not taken the weed away from the beach, but it was too dark to go and explore down there, so we walked around the block instead, which must be very boring for an inquisitive pup. Maybe we will walk down the other way occasionally. How adventurous.

October 1st – Tuesday

It is only the second day of the new bus timetable and it is already causing confusion. That in part is due to the timetable at the bus stop not having been changed, of course. I have had a few enquiries already and a gentleman today asked about being dropped off at the top of Sunny Corner Lane. I told him that the buses do not go that way anymore and only turn right at the top of the hill – although I am not entirely sure about those where the next stop is St Buryan. Indignantly, he told me he was dropped off there only on Saturday. I could only sympathise.

Anyway, it started out as a very reasonable day for not getting where you wanted to on the bus. Our 'red sky at night' seemed to be holding true, at least for a while. When I met the pasty man (sorry, MS) in the morning, he told me that there was a 'red sky in the morning', so by the middle of the day, the skies darkened in the east and slowly clouded over the sky for us. So, *that* is what happens when you get both.

There was a bit of a breeze from the northwest all day long. It was not in the order of yesterday's more robust draught, but it was enough to keep the temperature down. If our surfers thought that yesterday's swell held any promise for them for today, they were gravely mistaken and it was whisked away from under them as the sea returned to more benign conditions.

Today's distraction away from not having any customers was to seek a replacement hob for the kitchen. The Missus had already chosen a replacement oven and that is now ordered. We could have done without replacing kitchen appliances after all the building work, but the door on the existing oven is broken beyond repair and does not close properly and the hob has a crack across it.

Naturally, it could not possibly be as straight forward as replacing like with like. The old hob is more than ten years old and a generic make with no identifying marks or labels. It is also, I discovered, now a non-standard width and has five rings that will just about accommodate a big frying pan in the middle and four average pans around the outside. The key feature that allows that is the central ring is situated near the top between the two smaller rings of the remaining four.

Much like a governments' pre-election promises, the Missus' stipulated red lines were breach one by one. One of those had been the width because while pan space is important, worktop space in a small kitchen is even more so. We started at 68 centimetres, agreed on 75 centimetres and ended up with 77 centimetres. I am hoping the extra width allows enough additional space for the frying pan in the middle as I could not find a hob with the central ring at the top. I have left it with the Missus for a final review.

We appeared to be a bit busier today. It all seemed to be concentrated into a couple of hours in the early afternoon, which I do not recall happening yesterday. We certainly had a better day on pasties because I sold then entire supply that I had planned to use over two days. I will resort to our frozen stock for tomorrow because the rush came after the deadline for ordering tomorrow.

After the rush died away, we went back to being awfully quiet again with sporadic customer visits. It has been a long time since I tried to read a book in the shop. I think the reason for that is that I become so absorbed in the story that I start to resent interruptions, which is not particularly healthy trait for a desperate shopkeeper. But, times change, and I thought that I may be better able to contain myself now that I am older and wiser, erm, according to convention, so I brought my book down in the afternoon.

We had some late busyness with a handful of customers arriving during the last hour for last minute snacks and drinks to see them through the evening. I will not be bringing my book down tomorrow.

I took ABH around in the gloom of the evening. The cloud was broken enough in the west to allow the light of the day to linger a little longer than it might if we had full cloud cover. There was enough light to see that we had full weed cover of the beach that did not have any sea on it. It was piled a few feet high with a few breaks to allow access to the sea if I was so inclined, which I was not. ABH ranged across the western end, and I let her go where she wanted but even she avoided the bigger piles. Where the weed had not covered the beach, jellyfish filled the gap. It was difficult to see what type they were, but I think they were mostly compass jellyfish, the less harmful of the breeds. We did not tarry.

There were two cars in the car park and spaces in the private area beyond the car park toilets, which spoke volumes as to the population density in The Cove at present. Must be October already.