

History of Kington St Michael Village Shop Ltd, Village Hall, Kington St Michael

Our community owned and run shop has evolved over the years from its origins – starting as a Post Office & shop, then becoming a community-owned shop with the Post Office as a separate business, and then as a community shop with a PostPoint, and finally as a stand-alone community shop. Here's the history of how it got there....

In early 2003 Kington St Michael's remaining shop and post office (situated at what is now 85 Kington St Michael) closed when the former postmaster moved away and new business owners could not be found.

Following on from that loss, villagers started looking at ways to restore the much-needed facility, and, in conjunction with the Parish Council, a Post Office Sub Committee was set up. A search for a new premises and a new post-master was started and by September 2003 both had been found. The back room of the village hall was only used occasionally and was ideal for conversion into a shop, with the post office part to be set up in the adjoining store room (with a new village hall store-room to be built at the rear of the hall).

Howard Greenman was identified as a potential sub-postmaster (already running several other sub-post offices locally) and agreed to take up the position.

It was estimated that £37,000 was needed to carry out the work on the hall, with money coming from grants and much fund-raising. In the end, the final figure raised through grants and fundraising (£10,046.49), was £36,535.57. The total project expenditure was £32,372.69, leaving £4,162.88 in the pot. This was held by the parish council for future use in the village and all without any rise in the parish precept!

Once the funds had been raised, and the conversion of the rear of the village hall carried out, the official unveiling took place on 26th March 2004.

However, in the 2000s Post Office Ltd started a swathe of closures of rural post offices and ours was identified as being at risk. The community once again rallied round and took over the shop business, making it community owned and run, and registered as an Industrial & Provident Society on 10th May 2007 (following the Act of 2014 it then became Community Benefit Society, registration no. 30226R).

Post Office - End of an Era



After decades of almost continuous service, sadly Kington St Michael Post Office was no more. Despite its resurrection in 2004, our post office was an unlucky victim of the round of closures and our post office closed on 2nd April 2008. Our last sub-Postmaster, Howard Greenman, wished the community shop every success for the future.

The community shop committee then looked in to the possibilities of how some of the services could continue and so a self-service PostPoint was installed where the Post Office counter had been, meaning that letters, packets and parcels could still be sent nationally and internationally.

Here's some background on the initial efforts made by the village, back in 2003/4:

BOULE TOURNAMENT
Sunday 14th September, 2003
From 12pm to 6.30pm
at Manor Farm,
Kington St Michael
(by kind permission of
Mr & Mrs R Sealy)

**In aid of Kington St Michael
new post office and shop
building works fund**

Entrance £5 per couple
To book tel. 01249-750275

"Come and enjoy a pleasant event
and a glass of wine"

The Boule Tournament
raised £253.45

PROMISES AUCTION
Tuesday 23rd
September, 2003
Kington St Michael
Village Hall
Doors open 7.30pm
Auction commences
8pm
Licensed Bar
**In aid of KSM Post Office
& Shop Fund**
Catalogues 50p (available from
1st September) from:
14 The Close,
Grove Cottage, 44 KSM
Typegrafix

The Promises Auction
raised £3,212.77

<u>Lot no.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Kindly donated by:</u>		
1.	Bottle of "Echo Falls" white wine	John & Maureen Hall	13.	Cream tea and croquet for 4 people Gay & Roger Sealy
2.	Giant sherry trifle (made to order)	Jo Atack	14.	Coffee & Walnut cake (8" dia) made to order Liz McCarron
3.	Professional dog walking / pet sitting within a 24 hr period	Elaine Jefferies	15.	A gargoye "Whitewinds" of KSTM 01249-750667
4.	A balloon in a box	Balloonability 01249-463518	16.	A silk scarf Maureen Hall @ Catprint Designs
5.	Indian head massage voucher	Niki Willows	17.	1 hour driving lesson (or refresher or motorway lesson) Kington School of Motoring 01249-750017
6.	A teddy bear	Helen Brougham	18.	6 hours babysitting (to finish by 2am) Jo Atack
7.	4 hours babysitting/granny sitting (by arrangement)	Angela Baker	19.	Giant pavlova with seasonal fruits (made to order) Caroline Hooper
8.	A pavlova case to serve 10 (made to order)	Julie Thompsett	20.	Bottle of apricot brandy Joan Jackson
9.	3 x 1hr riding lessons on a pony (weight limit 10 stone)	Jane Edes	21.	A "tip run" to Stanton Recycling Centre (2 journeys if necessary) for general household clearout Steve Thompsett
10.	Bottle of "Blossom Hill" red wine	John Senior-Stern	22.	Kettle barbeque SAFEWAY
11.	A hand painted vase	Louisa Hall	23.	Nursery voucher for 2 free days at a play scheme during a school holiday (valid until 31.08.04) Lodge Farm Nursery 01249-750210
12.	A 15 mile taxi ride (there & back)	Nigel's Taxis 01249-462259	24.	A 2 course meal for two "The Rattlebone Inn", Sherston 01666-840871
25.	Passport tickets for Longleat (to see all attractions) for 1 adult and 1 child over 3 yrs (under 3's go free)	Longleat	37.	An introduction to computers, in your own home (for the absolute computer virgin!) Eric Sambell
26.	Bottle of wine	David Yeadell	38.	Case of 6 bottles of white wine Brian & Alma Gemmel
27.	Thornton's "Continental" chocolates, 400g	Yvonne Powell	39.	Pegasus ornament "Whitewinds" of KSTM 012499-750667
28.	Window cleaning - 1 house	Simon Curtis	40.	Choose and cut your own Christmas tree Will & Sue Wilkinson
29.	Madeira cake (8" dia)	Rose Yeadell	41.	A full skid pan training course voucher (full current driving licence required) Castle Combe Skid Pan 01249-783010
30.	Philips magna "Raclette" electric stone grill	Linda & Rob Durro	42.	A three-course Sunday lunch for two The Angel Hotel 01249-652615
31.	Thought Field Therapy - 1 therapy session to remove phobias or fears	Chris Puddy	43.	Homemade loaf of cheesy seed bread (freshly made to order) Niki Willows
32.	Silver & amethyst drop earrings	Chas Hart Jewellers 01249-653180	44.	Hamper of goodies Marshfield Bakery 01249-891709
33.	£20 "Flower Shop" voucher	John Senior-Stern	45.	Backpack & baseball cap Garth Hulme
34.	4 hrs babysitting/granny sitting (by arrangement)	Angela Baker	46.	Carved coal model of "The Flying Scotsman" David & Rose Yeadell
35.	A chocolate pavlova (made to order)	Jennifer Hayne	47.	Bottle of "Nottage Hill" red wine John Senior-Stern
36.	A cheese board	Hilary & Alwyn Leek	48.	Chocolate sponge cake with chocolate ganache topping (8" dia) made to order. Liz McCarron

49.	Table top wrought iron candlestick	Hazel Moore Artists Blacksmiths 01249-750580	61.	A wall plaque "Green Spirit"	"Whitewinds" of KSTM 01249-750667
50.	Gareth Gates' autograph, framed	Lauren Amos	62.	Car air conditioning system service & top up (no strange make of car, please!)	Mick Atack
51.	Car valet (internal)	Jon Hewlett	63.	Organic fruit & veg (4 weeks supply of a large box seasonal veg & a large box seasonal fruit), delivered within the locality	Tallywacker Farm 01249-750035
52.	A stud fee for either a racehorse or a show jumper (for more details telephone Linda Durno on 01249-750514)	New Priory Stud	64.	4 hrs babysitting (to finish by midnight)	Barbara Fenner
53.	4 hrs babysitting/granny sitting (by arrangement)	Angela Baker	65.	A black forest gateau (10" dia), made to a traditional German recipe	Kay Sambell
54.	250 A6 black and white correspondence cards and envelopes	Typegrafix 01249-750072	66.	A bottle of red wine	Rachel Worsley
55.	Pavlova with seasonal fruits (10" dia), made to order	Kay Sambell	67.	A basket of tracklements	The Tracklement Company 01666-840851
56.	Bottle of "Highgrove" champagne	Barbara Duckett	68.	Dinner party for 4 people, to include pre-dinner sherry, 4 course meal & wine (prepared & served at 1 The Orchard, KSTM)	Janet & Gerry Elms
57.	2 hours "playing" in a JCB (age limit 16-70)	Roger & Gay Sealy	69.	15 handmade wedding/occasion cards or a bride's tiara or 2 bridesmaids' combs (made to order)	Treasures & Trinkets 01249-750078
58.	A boiled fruit cake	Mrs K Kirby	70.	A sponge cake	B Tayler
59.	A photographic portrait session (individual/family/pet)	Terry Hewlett Photography 01249-750777	81.	Glass Worktop Saver	Countrywide Farmers 01249-782391
60.	A bottle of white wine	Rachel Worsley	82.	Corgi Dycast "Eddie Stobart" Lorry	Promotize 01249-782391
71.	Tickets for a family of 4 to the Formula Ford Carnival meeting on 4 th October, 2003	Castle Combe Circuit 01249-783139	83.	Corgi set of "Italian Job" Minis (collector's item)	Promotize 01249-782391
72.	½ pig, jointed freezer pack	The Farm Shop, Lakeside Gardens, Grittleton 01249-783072			
73.	1 hours tuition and 1 hours clay shooting for two people (14 yrs & over). All equipment provided	Roger & Gay Sealy			
74.	4 hours babysitting (to finish by midnight)	Barbara Fenner			
75.	CD-Rom re-writer (installed to a PC)	DTE Software Systems 01249-445052			
76.	A rich fruit cake (7" dia) made to order (1 week's notice required)	Julie Thompsett			
77.	A full skid pan training course voucher (full current driving licence required)	Castle Combe Skid Pan 01249-783010			
78.	1 large bale of organic horse hay 350 kilos: 1 months supply)	Mike Hawker			
79.	Cream tea and croquet for 4 people	Gay & Roger Sealy			
80.	1 hours tuition and 1 hours clay shooting for two people (14 yrs & over). All equipment provided	Roger & Gay Sealy			

**PROMISES AUCTION:
ADDITIONAL
PROMISES**

<u>Lot No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Kindly Donated By:</u>
84.	Bottle of "Vida Nova" red wine from Sir Cliff Richard's vineyard	Wendy Cruwys
85.	Set of 6 wine glasses	Robert Dyas 01249-446376
86.	Signed Everton FC photo (including Wayne Rooney)	Jo Atack
87.	A rod for a day (accompanied) on a stocked trout fly-fishing brook, at Wellow nr. Bath	Edward Drewett
88.	A dog or cat booster	Lucy Hayes @ The Hale Veterinary Group
89.	½ doz large bales of hylage (wrapped & delivered within the locality)	Bill Isaacs
90.	Organic Aberdeen Angus beef freezer pack, to include (approx weights): 4lb silverside, 3lb 6oz topside, 1lb 4oz rump steak, 1lb 8oz sirloin steak, 11oz fillet steak, 2lb mince, 2lb stewing steak (can be kept in donor's freezer until needed)	Andrew & Jo Trump
91.	Test & inspect wiring (max. 3 bedroom house) to include certificate	HCI Electrical 01249-750576
92.	Set of 6 wine glasses	Robert Dyas 01249-446376
93.	Bottle of "Vida Nova" red wine from Sir Cliff Richard's vineyard	Wendy Cruwys
94.	A day's coarse fishing on the Avon at Kellaways	Edward Drewett



Racehorse stud offer going, going, gone

By Michael Lloyd

A stud offer to purchase the racehorse stud at the village of Wellow, near Bath, is being held by a group of people who are offering to sell the stud for a good price. The offer is being made by a group of people who are offering to sell the stud for a good price. The offer is being made by a group of people who are offering to sell the stud for a good price.

Stud in village pledge

A group of people have offered the village of Wellow a good price for the racehorse stud. The offer is being made by a group of people who are offering to sell the stud for a good price. The offer is being made by a group of people who are offering to sell the stud for a good price.



Stallions are best bid at auction

GALLOPING TOWARDS THEIR GOAL: From left, project co-ordinator, Linda Durro, postmaster Howard Greenman, and stud owner, Malcolm O'Hara, with members of the committee, and one of the New Priory Stud horses whose pedigree is helping bring Kingston St Michael closer to having a new post office (10917-17M).

The offer of two stallions is helping to raise village funds of a new post office in Kingston St Michael.

The stallions were donated by New Priory Stud for an auction of premises at the village hall.

The stallions were sold for a total of £1,000 and £1,500. The stallions were sold for a total of £1,000 and £1,500.

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COFFEE MORNING

Wednesday 8th October
10am to 12 noon
1 Stanton Lane, Kington St Michael

Raffle and Bring & Buy

In aid of KSM Post Office &
Shop building works fund



This coffee morning
raised £168.25



Children's Toy Sale

Saturday 15th November
12.30pm - 3pm
At Kington St Michael
Village Hall

Clothes, toys, equipment
from birth upwards
Entry 25p Tables £5.00
To book telephone 01249-750514

In aid of Kington St Michael Post Office Fund



The Children's Toy Sale
raised £45.97

PROGRESSIVE SUPPER

Saturday 15th November

7.30pm start

Tickets £10 per person



Further details and bookings from

Maureen Hall 01249-750550

Linda Durno 01249-750514



*"Enjoy a convivial evening with friends and neighbours
throughout Kington St Michael"*

In aid of Kington St Michael Post Office Fund

The Progressive Supper
raised £776.10

CHRISTMAS QUIZ NIGHT

Saturday 13th December

Kington St Michael

Village Hall

Doors open 7.30pm

Quiz starts 8pm

£3 per ticket to include a Ploughman's supper.

Available from:

Kay Sambell, 36 K.S.M, 750205

Linda Durno, 14 The Close, K.S.M, 750514

Typegrafix, 13 K.S.M

24/11

24/11

Bring your own wine!

IN AID OF KINGTON ST MICHAEL POST OFFICE PROJECT

The Christmas Quiz night
raised £189.87



Cheese & Wine Evening

Friday 23rd January, 2004
7.30pm

Kington St Michael Village Hall

Tickets £3 (to include first glass of wine)
available from:

Linda Durno, 14 The Close, KSM 750514
Kay Sambell, 36 KSM 750205

Typegrafix 13 KSM

Raffle

Raffle

In aid of Kington St Michael Post Office fund



The Cheese & Wine evening
raised £214.96

Caplanville N133
5th Day 8/10/04
Wiltshire Times Series

New post office for villagers

THE village of Kington St Michael, near Chippenham, is about to win the national trend and open a new (temporary) post office next month.

Local people have been the driving force behind the £100,000 project. They have pooled together to secure grant funding and have held local events to raise more than £20,000 towards the new one, which has been part of an old church school transformed into the new post office.

The former service, which was attached to a house, closed in February 2003.

Village project co-ordinator Linda Durno said: "An enormous amount of work has gone into it. There's been study, advice from our architect and planning officer. Initial estimates showed that between £20,000 and £30,000 was needed for the conversion work."

"Villagers joined in the fundraising by holding a variety of events. The post office sub-committee were able to secure grants from the parish council, South Wiltshire District Council, the Countywide Agency, Post Office Ltd and Royal Mail."

The new post office and shop will open for business at 10.30 on March 23.

Post office is resurrected

ALTHOUGH rural post offices are closing down across the country, Kington St Michael has bucked the trend to resurrect the post office a year after it closed.

The parish council funded the village hall but an important community focal point when the post office closed 18 months ago, and failed to re-open a new one.

It was felt it needed between £20,000 and £30,000 to convert part of the village hall into a post office, but it took just six months for the village to get the money through grants, and raise £10,000 itself.

Parish council chairman Robin Duddon, said: "The reality is that because of the stage I wasn't sure if we could do it, but once the money started piling in and we got some funding, it all started to come together."

He said the parish council pledged to resurrect the post office and issued a questionnaire to gauge public support for the idea.

The response from villagers was overwhelmingly positive.

The village benefited by organising other drives, coffee mornings, a progressive supper, a bike, a wine and cheese event and an auction of produce.

Post Office Ltd offered a grant for a new sub-post-



SUCCESS: Linda Durno, project co-ordinator and villagers prepare to open the new post office (125000/40).

office which was then accepted by Howard Green, who also runs post offices in Pewsey, Halloway and Galloway.

Ms Durno said: "Once the post office closed it ripped the heart out of the community."

Village project co-ordinator Linda Durno said: "The project has brought the whole village together."

North Wiltshire MP James Gwyn, who has been campaigning for rural post offices, applauded the village's pro-active stance and said he hoped it would inspire other villages who were fighting to

keep their post offices.

He said: "I take the view that the post office is a central part to many villages."

"There are two or three post offices in the area lacking a high weekly at the moment, but I hope that what villagers in Kington St Michael have done may inspire them and other villages that have lost their post office."

Ms Durno will officially open the new post office, which will include a shop and an off licence, tomorrow.

It will open its doors five business on Monday.

RALLIED ROUND: community raised £10,000 towards £35,000 project

Post office is brought back to life by village



DETERMINED: Howard Gosman, postmaster at the new post office in Wickham, Wiltshire

VILLAGERS have rallied round to rescue a vital community facility.
When the post office in Kingston Wick in Wiltshire, near Chippenham, closed more than a year ago, local people were devastated that their town should be a post-free town.
On Monday a new community post office and ground store will open in a former church school.
Local people pulled together to save the post office and staged events to raise more than £10,000 towards the £35,000 project.
The last post office and shop in Wickham closed last year and since then the village, which has 1,000 people, has been without a post office.
"It has been a proper day for us

By Paul Wiltshire
Local people pulled together to save the post office and staged events to raise more than £10,000 towards the £35,000 project.
The last post office and shop in Wickham closed last year and since then the village, which has 1,000 people, has been without a post office.
"It has been a proper day for us

and the community in a certain way. We are proud that so many of us wanted to help to see the post office and shop open once again."
Wiltshire Wiltshire Council provided £10,000 towards the project, which was a Grade II listed building.
"It has been a proper day for us

(The above article erroneously states that the village hall is a Grade II listed building – it's not listed, but it is within the village's conservation area!)

The Mail on Sunday March 28, 2004

ENGLAND'S 50th LARGEST COMMUNITY IS LEFT WITHOUT A MAIN POST OFFICE AFTER A LEASE FIASCO – AND FURIOUS CUS

Bungling bosses wipe a big town off their map

By Jo Thornhill

The Post Office, still reeling from savings over a series of branch closures, is failing to anticipate what it is committed to keeping a nationwide branch network. And a blunder by Post Office bosses that led to the closure of the largest post office in Wickham, Wiltshire, last week, has done nothing to stem the wave of criticism.

The irony for the branch in the 1,000 Wick sleeping centre expired nine days ago, but the Post Office failed to remove it. As a result, the branch was closed and passengers were given only a couple of days' notice. No temporary or replacement service has been set up.

Retired partner Stanley McCarthy from Marshfield, near Bradford, is furious.

"The Post Office have known about the lease renewal for months," he says. "They have abdicated all responsibility

and small businesses have been inconvenienced. A public breach fee has even been put in place in the town's only shop. It took them to appeal for mortgage money from the Post Office."

But Post Office spokesman James Clarke says the closure is temporary and that the town is on for alternative provision. How does he accept the charge of management failure, making four miles of the problem was beyond the Post Office's control.

"If a building doesn't fit to extend a lease, he was the shareholder right to do that," he says.

But 70-year-old Frank says the Post Office is paying the fee. "Why have they left it so long before searching for other premises?" he asks.

"They announced the branch's closure on the Wednesday, then two days later, the doors were shut."

While Wickham's residents are angry about the Post Office's management, the same cannot be said of

residents of the village of Wickham, Wiltshire, near Chippenham, Wiltshire. They are celebrating the opening of a new post office.

The community has had to wait for a year to recover a post office in the village after the only branch closed in February 2003. The doors to the new post office will open temporarily for business tomorrow.

Local people raised £10,000 towards the project through sponsored events and secured a further £10,000 of funding and grants from local government, the Post Office and the Countrywide Agency.

With this money, two rooms in the village hall have been converted into a post office and shop.

It will be run by Howard Gosman of the Federation of Sub-Postmasters who says: "This community should be proud that they pulled together and made a great deal for this much-needed service – and succeeded."

County

Crowds flock to new village post office



PARTY TIME: MP James Gray joined villagers at the official opening of Kingston St Michael Post Office on Friday

HUNDREDS of villagers gathered together on Friday at Kingston St Michael to open a special present, which they spent months saving up for – a new post office.

More than a year ago the former post office closed down, but the parish council voted to reopen it as quickly as possible.

After 15 months of hard campaigning, fundraising and the conversion of part of the village hall, the new post office and store is open for business.

The villagers raised £10,000 towards the £22,000 project through fundraising events such as an auction of produce, which included stork fees, and the rest was made up with various grants.

The final piece of the jigsaw came together when North Wiltshire district councillor Howard Greenham, who runs several other post offices, was invited to the sub-postmaster.

"It has been incredibly well supported since its inception and the whole exercise has been a demonstration of collective effort," he said.

MP for North Wiltshire James Gray was on hand to unveil the new post office sign, which was draped with a Union Jack on the occasion.

The store was the first to allow villagers to have a look round.

In just two hours more than 2000 of goods had been sold.

A specially-baked cake, which was decorated with a post office on top, was cut to mark the occasion.

Originally the parish council had feared the closure of the old post office would rip the heart out of the community.

It went out a questionnaire to residents to gauge public support for the idea of converting the village post office.

The overwhelmingly positive public response prompted it to start fundraising.

Village project co-ordinator Linda Durno said: "I have never seen so many people in the village hall. I think people realise it's a great achievement."

It has been well supported by everyone in the village, which I think shows just how much everyone wanted a post office."

Rural Focus Mar/Apr 2014

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Village shop partnership celebrates first success

A partnership to revive village shops is celebrating its first success in a small Wiltshire village that lost its post office.

Regeneration charities the Plunkett Foundation and the Village Retail Services Association (ViRSA) teamed up under the umbrella of Plunkett's Rural Revival campaign.

The partnership combines ViRSA's skills in supporting community-backed shops with Plunkett's expertise in using co-operative approaches to improve rural livelihoods.

Residents in Kingston St Michael, near Chippenham, are the first to be supported by the campaign. They have just opened a new community post office and general store.

The village's last post office and shop closed in February 2003. But villagers and the Parish Council decided to reopen it by converting part of the old church school into a suitable building.

Initial estimates showed that up to £45,000 was needed for the conversion. More than £10,000 was raised locally, with the remainder of the money coming from grants. The new post office and shop opened on March 26 this year.

ViRSA helped the group to refine its ideas, prepare a business plan and raise funds. Rural Revival provided a seed-corn grant and further advice to take the initiative through to establishment.

The Post Office sub-committee also secured grants from the Parish Council, North Wiltshire District Council, the Countryside Agency, and Post Office Ltd.

Parish Council chairman Robbie Duckett said: "It has been a project that has united the community in a common goal, we are proud that



Village project co-ordinator Linda Durno and residents celebrate the opening of the new post office and shop at Kingston St Michael.

we have all worked so hard to see the post office and shop open once again."

There are about 200 community-owned village shops in the UK. Once established, such initiatives rarely fail. But 70% of rural settlements don't have a single shop, so the potential for community-owned initiatives is huge.

Plunkett chief executive Richard Moreton said: "Community and self-help enterprises are flourishing in rural England, but are still only succeeding in slowing down the rate of social decline."

"By working together under the Rural Revival campaign, both ViRSA and Plunkett can achieve much more to promote and support this proven approach to rural regeneration."

For details, call the Plunkett Foundation on 01993 883636 or ViRSA on 01305 259383

Here are some photographs from the opening ceremony on 26th March 2004:







The Signing of the Lease, 19th March 2004



Left to right – Robbie Duckett (Chairman of Kington St Michael Parish Council),
Howard Greenman (Sub-postmaster),
and Mrs Kathy Kirby (Chairman of the Village Hall Management Committee)

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Opening ceremony speech with James Gray MP



Kington St Michael Parish Council cordially invites

Mrs L. Durno

to the official opening of
Kington St Michael Post Office & Shop
to be held at 6.00pm on
Friday 26th March 2004
at Kington St Michael Village Hall
Kington St Michael

RSVP

Mrs L. Durno, 14 The Close, Kington St Michael
Chippenham, Wiltshire, SN14 6LE. 01249 750314



Community funds shop

KINGTON ST MICHAEL: The new post office and shop at the village hall will be officially opened at 6pm tomorrow. The project was supported by the parish council and community, which has raised over £10,000 since September following the closure of the old shop. 01249 750314

Linda Durno
Post Office
Project Co-ordinator

Gazette & Herald, Thursday, April 1, 2004

We should salute our unsung heroes

Wiltshire to Westminster



By James Goss - MP for North Wilts

"IT'S a tale of adventure and courage, of heroism and loyalty, and such great virtues as these, that of all the world's brave legends, there is none more inspiring."

So goes the old song, The British Grenadiers. I've been reflecting on historical heroism, and I was thinking the real definition of a hero is someone who leads you, the great person who provides inspiration to others. And so on.

Has your David Houghton Adams ever read? I managed to show himself his American beliefs, have read the House of Commons, has work for me on his way to the House of Commons, but the latest is a long series of letters which started by talking about the Duke of Devonshire's Award Scheme.

After that he was off to Canada to read not even with awards - the time for climbing to 40,000 ft in an hour for air balloons. Climbing the highest mountain on each continent, working towards to North and South poles. Dying with a ball-bone across the Arctic and over the Arctic - all explains a lot of the way the English tradition of courage, skill, determination and loyalty. He is a hero indeed, and a wonderful role model.

But on 1st Chippenham was, had Lawrence with you. I had a meeting in Froley. He took an aim in the Ball, and in his opinion, not a week for the world as the other people in his opinion. I was deeply impressed by his speech, determination and optimism, despite a disability which today will have done us in late a terrible disease. What a fine example to all of us, and a wonderful role model.

But then if we're talking about role models, perhaps we should look at our traditional heroes. Later on Friday I was delighted to come to see you, though they are not often in Kington St Michael. It took real determination on the part of the spiritual community to overcome a number of hurdles to make their dream a reality. Other villages in danger of losing their post office or shop should take inspiration from you.

What about Becky Ross from West Wilts? She has a group of youth from the village to Parliament for a year and went to the public gallery. She tells me we may have a few potential politicians in our ranks as a result. What about the people who are supporting to keep the maternity unit - and indeed the rest of the hospital - open in Marlborough. What about the traditional heroism of people right across the town who spend so much time and energy supporting the Marlborough team, running voluntary organisations, helping others, caring for the elderly and disabled. That's heroism all right.

We should be proud of the community spirit in North Wilts - it's all in the name, determination to put the interests of others ahead of your own. That is a very real kind of heroism - very often it's the common kind - and we should all be proud.

Kington St Michael Post Office – The Future
A Word From Howard Greenman

At last we're here! 26th March hailed the official reopening of Kington St Michael Post Office and shop at the rear of the Village Hall. Against a back drop of Post Office closures in rural and urban communities alike this 'bucks the trend' in no small way, and is a tremendous testament to the enthusiasm of you all.

Particular tribute needs to be paid to the Parish Council, Village Hall management committee and, borne out of those of course, the Sub Post Office action group. Within my role as Vice President of the Swindon branch of the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters as well as the communities served by my other Post Offices elsewhere, I have never had the pleasure of dealing with such a proactive community and 'switched-on' committees. I had initial misgivings however! I have seen so many projects fail despite a lot of 'hot air' and best intentions and didn't want to be part of yet another casualty. My belief in your collective ability to bring this to fruition has however been entirely justified and the whole exercise has been enormously rewarding and enjoyable, making new friends and renewing old friendships also.

There is however no room for complacency; there is no secret that should this enterprise fail, not only will Post Office Ltd not grant a further 'crack of the whip', but many of the funding agencies responsible for the grants, will require repayment of monies given. The maxim therefore remains ever true. This is your Post Office, **USE IT OR LOSE IT**.

For my part, I have never run a village shop before. If that doesn't fill you with dread, it does me! I have other shops of course, but this is my first village shop where I shall attempt to sell as wide a range of products as space will allow. It will however be very much a development role and as such please bear with me. All suggestions gratefully received and will be considered. I am now licensed to sell alcohol and will be, together with tobacco, groceries, fruit and vegetables, confectionery, cards, bread, cakes and biscuits, hardware, pet foods and a small line in gifts. Beyond that I intend fully developing the Post Office facility where my strengths historically really lie. In addition to the core Post Office products, I will also be offering foreign currency with a three day waiting period, travel insurance which is among the most competitive on offer, Post Office Phonecards, Mobile Phone E-top ups, all Royal Mail Priority services and car tax availability from Hullavington Post Office. With a short delay, I am willing to collect car tax applications at the Post Office, process them at Hullavington and return them for your collection. Additionally Post Office Ltd is soon to be introducing Personal Loans, which will also be among the best unsecured loans in the market place including: 7.9% interest, decision in ten minutes and cheque the next day, two repayment holidays a year and no early repayment penalty.

The opening hours of the Post Office are very much dependent on the use of the Post Office and shop. In other words it's down to you! Initially however the opening hours will be:

09:00 – 1:00	2:00 – 5:30	Mon, Tues & Weds
(Note: the Post Office counter will close at 1.00 on Wednesdays for balancing purposes)		
09:00 – 1:00	2:00 – 8:00	Thurs & Fri
09:00 – 12:30		Sat

This heralds the beginning of a new era for the Post Office in Kington St Michael and for the village itself. Its success depends largely on you and of course myself and my staff. I look forward to seeing you, serving you and building on the strong relationship I've already forged with the village. This has already attracted a lot of attention in surrounding communities and the local press. Lets continue to make this an enterprise we can all be proud of.

Thanking you for your time

Howard



FarmLife

Counting the bread. Linda Downes with her children (left) and son, James, (right) in the shop. Howard Greenaway is outside the entrance.

Locals talk shop to save rural service

Concerned at having lost their post office and shop, residents in one Wiltshire village decided to act. **Tim Relf reports**

AT FIRST glance, the post office and shop in Kingston St Michael is like any other. Its shelves are stocked with bread, milk, chocolate bars, cereals and the like, its counters that allow local users to buy stock up on provisions.

There's one big difference, though. This one, which opened in a town at the back of the village hall in March, has been partly paid for by locals.

There had been a shop and post office at another site nearby, but that closed in February 2013 leaving residents in air. "It felt a bit like, 'Oh, it's a bit of a big hole,'" says Linda Downes, who's been co-ordinating the venture for the Parish Council. "We lost our food pole."

Possible venues were sought, with the village hall (currently the school) proving to have all the essential prerequisites: it was convenient, large enough, secure and had parking. Just one problem, though. The estimated construction cost was between £25,000 and £45,000.

Advice was sought from the Village Food Services Association (VFSA), and villagers got into fundraising mode. Within a month, they'd raised over £10,000, recalls Linda. "It was just amazing. That was a real boost."

"We tried to do fundraising events to get everyone, some as

you want a stress free life," she laughs, "don't go into private negotiations."

Linda, however, was convinced the facility was worth fighting for. "People tend to be a whole range of things," she says. "The elderly people, it was essential. Public transport here could be better."

There was also the knock-on effect of the disappearance of the last shop here. "People don't see each other for months. It was sad."

Meanwhile, the Parish Council had been seeking a tenant, having ruled out running it themselves with volunteer help. The person they came up with was Howard Greenaway, who already ran a branch of Post Offices.

Howard is a strong advocate of rural services. "It sits the heart out of rural communities when a post office or shop closes. A village can be decimated."

"It acts - like a pub does - as a focal point of the village. It also increases property values and the desirability of living in a village."

And government policy - forcing people to have health and pension paid into the bank, rather than over the counter - is guaranteeing the demise of many, he claims.

Howard offers all the core products at Kingston St Michael, plus others such as foreign currency and travel insurance. In the shop, he stocks a range of goods - everything from alcohol and groceries up to law tools and old-fashioned jugs of honey. He's even now offering a photocopying service.

COMPETITIVE PRICES
His shops that village shops are necessarily more expensive than supermarkets. "They make their money by perpetuating that false perception," he says.

He also claims that this experiment shows such establishments can have a future.

"Against the backdrop of post office closures in rural and urban communities alike, this battle the retail and is a tremendous statement to the confidence of everyone who helps it."

The message to residents of the village - and indeed of any other where there is a shop - is a simple one: "Use it or lose it."

And as for Linda, she says: "But don't realize how much you are going to miss something like this until it is gone. You don't realize what a hole it will leave."

"It's not easy, but you can do anything if you're committed. None wasn't built in a day - and neither was Kingston St Michael Post Office and Shop."

THE LIST

- 200 community-owned shops UK-wide
- 70% of Britain's rural settlements don't have a shop
- VFSA and the Plantureux Foundation are working together to help save village shops

the morning, some in the evening. There are only so many coffee mornings you can have, after all."

They launched a 'buy a brick' scheme and held a protest action. "That took a huge amount of effort, but was great fun."

Many of the 250-plus households in this community near Clapperton took part, making the total £19,000. In tandem with this, grant aid was sought. "It's not a case of writing to anybody and everybody when you think might be able to get you a grant," says Linda.

Now they had secured more than £300,000 from Wiltshire District Council, £5000 from the Countryside Agency and £2000 from the Plantureux Foundation, a rural regeneration charity.

It was a steep learning curve for Linda. "You learn through things I never thought I'd do. If

COVER STORY

Mark Wingett reports on the community store that's had a little bit of heavenly help to get it off the ground

Divine intervention

Let's be honest, most of us have at one time or another asked for a little help from some greater force, whether it be to get us through the day, make sure our favourite football team scores that all-important goal, or for sales to be better than yesterday.

However, when the villagers of Kingston St Michael in Wiltshire faced the dilemma of finding a new site for their only store and post office or losing it altogether, their prayers were answered – in the form of a room in the church hall.

Local resident Linda Durno was instrumental in keeping the store alive and re-siting it to the hall. She says: "The closure of the post office and store in February 2003 left a hole as there was nowhere else to go to shop locally, and we all lost a part of our social life because there was nowhere to meet."

The nearest grocery store is also two-and-a-half miles away, a tricky journey for some of the residents who have to rely on public transport.

The post office hadn't closed because the business was falling, but because the people who ran it had decided to move on.

"They tried selling it as a going

concern but it was attached to a very expensive property, so no buyers came forward. Therefore the parish council decided the post office and store should be housed elsewhere," says Durno. "There was a threat that the post office would have to move out of the village. The longer we left it, the less chance we would have had of getting it back. The campaign to get the post office and store re-opened also gave the community a common aim and focus."

The village parish council formed a post office sub-committee and started looking around for suitable properties. The back room of the

church hall was soon identified as the only option.

Durno says: "The room is very secure and has enough space to house both the post office counter and store. The whole building is owned by the community and run by the village hall management committee. It was used about half-a-dozen times a year, so the committee benefits more by renting it out as a store than as a room."

She adds: "Our next step was to raise the money to refit the room and clear it of chairs and tables."

ON A MISSION

So the whole village started fundraising in August last year, with events including a busload tournament, a 'buy a metaphorical brick campaign' which raised more than £2,000, and an auction of premises.

Within the first month they had raised £3,000, which showed how keen people in the village were to keep the facilities.

Durno continues: "We needed to raise £12,000 to get the store up and running. We got grants from North Wiltshire district council, the Plunkett Foundation, Rural Revival Campaign and from the **800-44**

Linda Durno feared that if the post office stayed closed for any length of time, it would disappear for good





Countryside Agency, plus £30,000 from our fundraising."

However, the battle wasn't over as they had to empty someone they trusted to oversee the refit and run the store. They found experienced local subpostmaster Howard Greenham fitted the role.

Durno says: "Howard lives in the village next to ours called Lavington, and he runs several sub-post offices, but this is his first one. It helped having an experienced subpostmaster on board. Howard is someone whom the Post Office knows well and he was a member of the Post Office Association."

The Village Retail Services Association provided advice on refitting the hall and bringing in local produce, and Howard, with help from his family and contacts from his other businesses, put up shelving and installed new lighting, refrigeration and chillers.

Durno says: "In November 2005 we were told by the Post Office Ltd that we had three months to open the store. This then changed to six months, and then it had to be opened by the end of the company's financial

year in April. There was a bit of a panic, but the store opened for business on March 29."

The residents were intrigued to see how the store was developing as the alterations were going on, and Durno believes they were impressed with the results. She says: "It was brighter and fresher, and they were surprised by the amount of stock we were able to fit in."

C-STORE FIRST

Howard sees running the new store as a challenge. He oversees eight sub-post offices across the country and a hardware store, but the Kingston St Michael outlet was his first dip into the c-store sector.

He says: "I was humbled that the villagers came to me to run the store but the retail side has taken a bit of getting used to. I never realised to be VAT-registered before because all the products I have ever sold were zero-rated or exempt, as are all post office services. I also have sell-by dates to deal with."

"The vast turnover in stock in a c-store is much more than I imagined, so while I'm adjusting to this

A £32,000 refit transformed a room in the church hall into a community c-store and post office

we end up with much more wastage than I would like. But this is something we are getting better at."

Where possible the store's stock comes from local suppliers and farmers, particularly fruit and vegetables, bread and cakes. Howard picks up the rest from the local Butleys cash & carry, which he visits twice a week.

Howard comments: "I struggle looking after each post office so I can visit the store at least once a week. Thankfully, most of the post office can be left in the hands of my staff."

"At the Kingston St Michael store I rely heavily on Jo, who used to work for me in another of my post offices. Although she doesn't live in the village, she is very much part of the community. Between us we keep the store ticking over."

So how Howard got the c-store bug? He says: "Running this c-store is enough at the moment and it's a case of seeing how we go with it in the short term and working out what services we can add to it to benefit the community in the long term."

For the villagers of Kingston St Michael, it looks like a little faith is set to go a long way. **CBF**

Key facts

OPENING HOURS: Mon-Wed 9am-5.30pm, Thurs 9am-7pm, Fri 9am-8pm, Sat 9am-1pm
STAFF: one full time
SIZE: 500sq ft
TURNOVER: £1,100 per week
STRENGTHS: Car park, local produce, post office center



"The vast turnover in stock in a c-store is much more than I imagined, so while I'm adjusting to this we end up with more wastage than I would like. But this is something we are getting better at"

Howard Greenham, manager

FUNDRAISING

DETAILS	RECEIPTS	EXPENSES	TOTAL
3/9/03 COFFEE MORNING PROFIT	135-60		135-60
2/9/03 RECEIPT BOOK		2-49	133-11
" ALL DIVIDENDS		1-29	131-82
14/9/03 BONE TOWNMENT PROFIT	253-45		385-27
23/9/03 PROGRESSIVE AUCTION PROFIT	3,212-77		3,598-04
24/10/03 WHIST MONEY	50-00		3,648-04
" DONATION	2-00		3,650-04
4/10/03 WHIST MONEY	18-00		3,668-04
8/10/03 COFFEE MORNING PROFIT	168-25		3,836-29
02/01 Sale Of Remaining Bought Buy Items	5-30		3,841-59
25/10/03 STAMPS		2-40	3,839-19
26/10/03 WHIST MONEY	23-00		3,862-19
3/11/03 COLOUR INKJET CARTRIDGE		4-70	3,857-49
15/11/03 TOY SALE PROFIT NET	45-97		3,903-46
" PROGRESSIVE SUPPER PROFIT	776-10		4,679-56
25/11/03 BLACK INKJET CARTRIDGE		9-40	4,670-16
26/11/03 WHIST MONEY	16-00		4,686-16
24/11/03 DONATIONS (WV)	3-00		4,689-16
9/12/03 WHIST MONEY (TOTAL: 2122-00)	15-00		4,704-16
15/12/03 CHRISTMAS QUIZ PROFIT	189-87		4,894-03
4/1/04 SALE OF XMAS CAKES (20)	2-00		4,896-03
18/12/03 " " " " (25 CAKES)	4-00		4,900-03
19/12/03 DONATION	50-00		4,950-03
29/1/04 SALE OF SURPLUS STOCK	14-00		4,964-03
21/1/04 CHEESE & WINE EVENING PROFIT	214-96		5,178-99
11/2/04 DONATION	3,500-00		8,678-99
BRICK MONEY TOTAL	1,387-50		10,066-49

TOTAL:

£ 10,066-49

PROJECT EXPENDITURE

(Cash Payments
from Equity
Only Cash)

PAYEE	ITEM	AMOUNT	TOTAL	CHG NO
NWDC	PLANNING PERMISSION FEE	110-00	110-00	459
COXIN COXES	DRAWING UP PLANS	450-60	560-60	462
NWDC	BUILDING FEES	59-64	619-64	474
COXIN COXES	ADDITIONAL PLANS	11-70	631-34	477
Jordan Hare	PLANNING COSTS	13-22	644-56	478
VALUATION OFFICE	RENT ASSESSMENT	311-38	955-94	484
COXIN COXES	ADDITIONAL PLANS	5-60	961-54	485
SRS ELECTRIC	NEW ELECTRICITY SUPPLY & METER	188-00	1149-54	486
AMAZON CONSTRUCTION	ADDITIONAL PREMIUM - BUILDING INSURANCE	52-50	1202-04	489
WOODKENS	SPRINKLER - AS'S	190-35	1392-39	491
HOMERISE	5 LIGHTS & 1 BUSH	29-94	1422-33	CASH
DAVE YERGEN	MISC EXPENSES (PHONE CALLS)	40-00	1462-33	488
SARALAY	MISC EXPENSES	28-71	1491-04	CASH
VARIOUS	PHONE & INTERNET (PHONE CALLS)	20-28	1511-32	CASH
TRAVIS PERKINS & SONS CO	2 REPRODUCERS & 2 SPARE KEYS	63-88	1575-20	CASH
POST OFFICE	STAMPS	2-40	1577-60	CASH
R J SELMAN	EXTERIOR WORKS (MAY 2020)	1905-30	3483-00	492
R J SELMAN	CONSTRUCTION WORK (MAY 2020)	8,048-75	11,531-85	493
MARSH WILSON LTD	6 SECURITY PIN FORMS	1,061-25	12,593-31	494
WILKINSONS	WASTE BIN	2-59	12,596-09	CASH
KSM VILLAGE HALL	CLEANING	15-00	12,611-09	CASH
NWDC	SRS FEE TOWERS	587-30	13,198-39	500
PANICERA LTD	FIRE ALARM SYSTEM	1,487-35	14,686-74	495
R J SELMAN	HEATING & PLUMBING	820-20	15,506-94	496
NWDC	BUILDING REG FEES	216-79	15,723-73	537
A DUKETT	REPAIRMENT WINDOW FAN	25-00	15,748-73	499
POST OFFICE	12 + 2ND CLASS STAMPS	2-40	15,751-13	CASH
WATERLOO BUSINESS SERVICES	INKJET CARTRIDGE	4-70	15,755-83	"
STAGECOAST (via 3000)	INITIALS ON CHROMOCALC BOILER	29-38	15,785-21	"
WIND AWARD & FUEL	LENSE	541-25	16,326-46	528
R J SELMAN	DECORATING	1,910-05	18,236-51	529
KSM VITREC	SERIES FLOW VALVE	19-07	18,255-58	CASH
-	G/L	-	£18,255-58	-

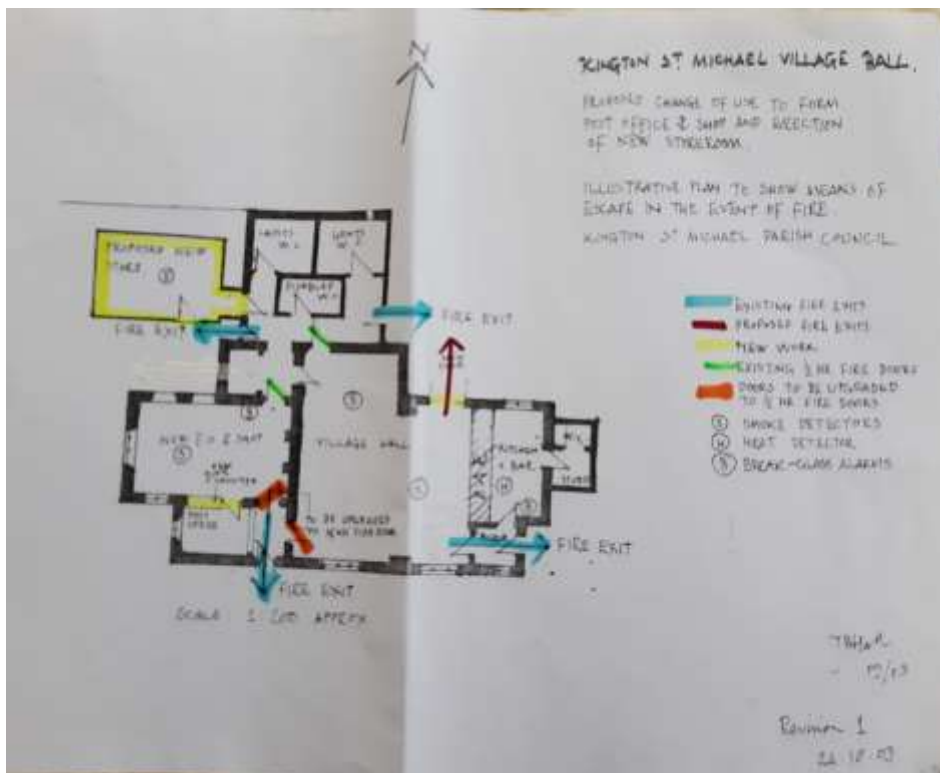
Food £ 18,255-58.

PAID NAME	ITEM	AMOUNT	TOTAL	CHEQUE
W.H. SMITH	Raffle Tickets	1-99	18,257-57	CASH
VARIOUS (various)	Items for Dining Room	3-52	18,261-09	CASH
H. GREENMAN	Prices: Salt Vinegar	25-00	18,286-09	CASH
ADT SECURITY	Security Systems	348-96	18,635-05	530
TYRGAFF	Fluorinating & Laminating (various)	77-00	18,712-05	531
L. DUCKETT	TARMAC	16-26	18,728-31	533
LOUISA HALL	FRAMES BORDS CERT.	25-00	18,753-31	532
ADVANTAGE BORDS	3x Vertical BORDS	236-18	18,989-49	536
H. GREENMAN	AC:4 BONDING CARPET & CARPET STICK	490-00	19,479-49	534
D. PISLEY	CELEBRATION CAKE	20-00	19,499-49	CASH
KAY SIMPSON	FOOD: DINNER GROOMING	54-36	19,553-85	CASH
GAY SEALY	DINNER: " "	189-10	19,742-95	0539
CELEST ELECTRICAL	LITTORE BIN	85-23	19,828-18	0538
PURVIS & BROWN	PRINTING SECURITY BORDS	372-45	20,200-63	0540
R.J. SELMAN	COMBINATION OF BORDS	7,359-38	27,560-01	0541
NICHOLSONS	3 TIME UNIT	3-99	27,563-98	CASH
JO ATALK	BORE O'FULTON (GIFT TO PISLEY)	14-99	27,578-97	"
Homebase 24/7	Decor Mat	17-28	27,616-25	"
ADT FIRE & SECURITY INC.	CC-TV	4,756-44	32,372-69	0577

MONEY BONDED (Budget) (Final List)

Date	Amount	Running	
		Total	
-	initial	£25,179-18	
11/3/04	22-01	£25,181-19	
23/3/04	656-25	£25,837-44	
24/3/04	5610-42 (via bank)	£31,437-86	
28/3/04	3094-67	£34,532-23	
5/5/04	3-04	£34,535-27	
5/5/04	2,000-00	£36,535-27	
TOTAL MONEY BONDED (SPRINKLES & FIRE ALARMS)		£36,535-27	
TOTAL PROJECT EXPENDITURE		£32,372-69	
POST OFFICE & SHOP MONEY REMAINING		£4,162-58	

N.B. NONE OF THE £1,400 FURTHER MONEY WAS USED IN THIS PROJECT NOR WAS A PROPOSED INCREASE IN THE PARISH PRECEPT USED



Plans for the shop within part of the village hall (drawn by villager and planner, John Hall)

In late 2020 the shop committee made the decision to close the PostPoint counter, due to most of Royal Mail's facilities requiring barcodes, the reduction of business due to Covid, and the costs involved for collections.



Shop logo, designed by John Hall when the shop became community owned and run