



1992 – 2022

HAMBLEDON VILLAGE SHOP

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF
COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP
AND
VOLUNTEERING



Hambleton Village Shop c.1910

IN THE BEGINNING ...

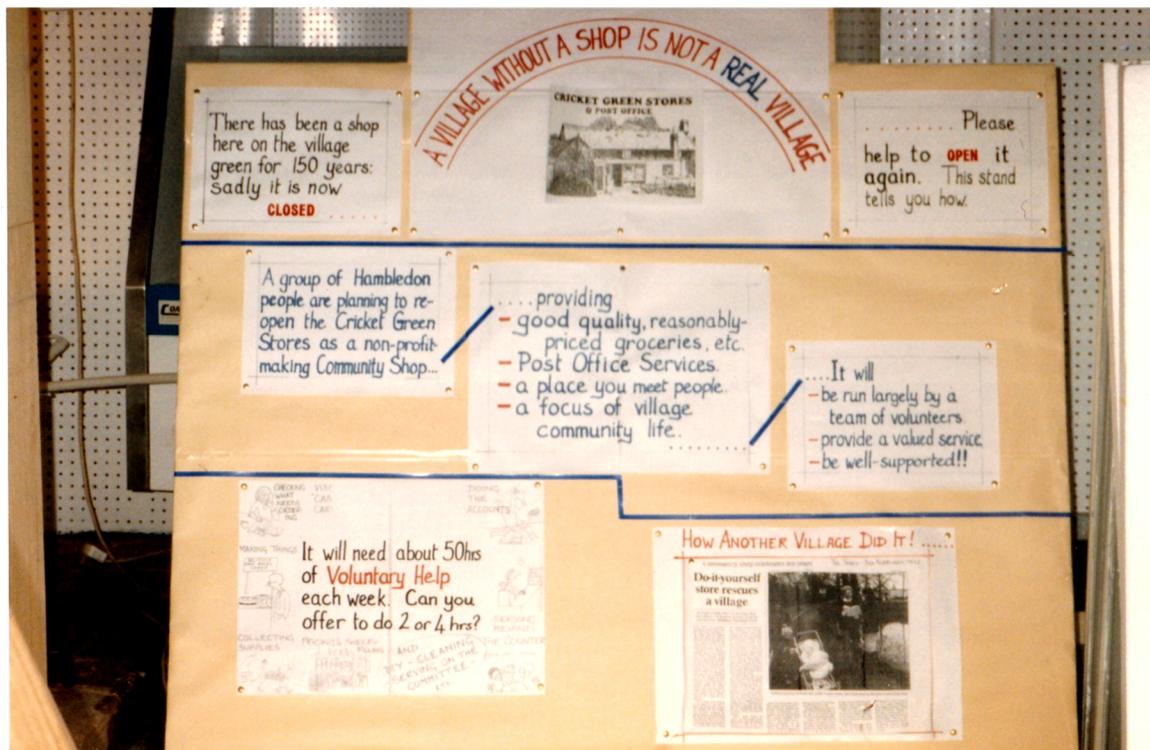
In 1908 Hambledon Post Office moved to what was then known as The Cricket Green Stores, run by Frederick Farmer Smith, baker and confectioner, grocer and provision merchant. That is the first mention we have of what is now the village shop, though there had been a Post Office in the village since at least 1852.

By 1918 the Stores were under the management of Frederick Morley, grocer, who was also listed as Sub-Postmaster. He was succeeded by George Withey and his wife in 1924. They lived in the cottage which forms part of the property and was then known as Duck Cottage. They gave up the shop in 1938 and it was probably at this point that the Edwards family took over, as they were living at Duck Cottage in the early 1940s. In about 1950 they were succeeded by Mrs Loach and her son and daughter and they were followed by Mr and Mrs Nelson. During this time the Stores was still a real Victorian shop, with stock kept in mahogany drawers and served from behind a mahogany counter.

By 1963 The Village Stores, as it was then known, was being kept by the Evans family. The Ainsworths were the next owners: in 1968 they sold the business to Geoff and Margaret Heath who modernised the interior and ran the shop for the next 14 years. During that time it was open from 09.00 – 17.30; it closed for an hour at lunch time and at 13.00 on Wednesdays; and it was also closed on Sundays. The family lived at Duck Cottage and Geoff was the Sub-Postmaster.

In 1982 the Heaths decided it was time to move on. They sold the shop to long-term villager Ray Williams who became Sub-Postmaster and ran the shop with his son Patrick. Cedric and Joan Hardy, who had recently moved into the village, bought the cottage and rechristened it Pendle Cottage to remind them of their Lancashire roots.

Patrick Williams moved on from the shop at the end of May 1989 and the business, including the Post Office, was taken over by Mr and Mrs Chambers. They left soon afterwards and were unable to dispose of their lease, which meant that the shop and the Post Office both had to close on 14 March 1991. However, its loss was so keenly felt that a dedicated group of villagers, led by George Pitt and Denis Jones, suggested that a village co-operative be established to re-open and manage the shop as a community venture. Ray Williams, as landlord, fully supported the idea which was promoted by a notice displayed at the July 1991 village fete.



The reaction was immediate – and positive. A volunteer work force came together to renovate the premises and equipment; and sufficient funds were raised, largely in the form of loan notes from individual villagers (all of which were subsequently repaid) to buy what could not be made good and to purchase stock. In just over a year from the date of the fete it was announced that the shop would formally re-open on 14 November 1992.

GOING TO WORK



The store room—plenty of work needed here



Brenda and Denis Jones get started



The door to the then-barn (now the kitchen)



DEFYING the rain on Saturday afternoon, Hambledon villagers turned out in force to celebrate the re-opening of their village shop and post office.

South West Surrey MP and Health Secretary Virginia Bottomley unveiled the new shop sign and cut a ribbon on the door.

Mrs Bottomley said the scheme to re-open the shop as a community enterprise was "absolutely brilliant." She said she and her family would try to use it as much as possible.

The post office will open on December 10.

THE RE-OPENING BY VIRGINIA BOTTOMLEY (WITH DENIS JONES AND GEORGE PITT)

14 NOVEMBER 1992

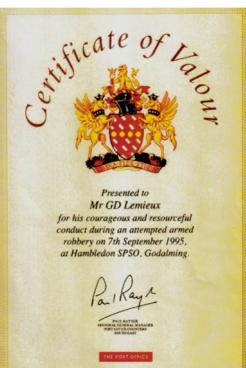


THE EARLY YEARS



The first manager was Diane Whyborn, pictured behind the deli counter (some things haven't changed much!). Her successor was Guy Lemieux; and it was during his time that the first, and happily so far the only, attempted robbery at the shop occurred. The Post Office recognised his bravery with a Certificate of Valour.

The next major happening was the shop's 10th birthday party, held on 23 November 2002. Some of those who had masterminded its re-opening as a community-run venture, including Denis and Brenda Jones, had by now moved on; but others had taken their place and 53 volunteers were working at what had by now become the longest-running enterprise of its kind in the south-east.



HAMBLEDON VILLAGE SHOP 10th BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS - SHOPPERS, VOLUNTEERS AND SPECIAL GUESTS



Arthur Blackman	Cllr David Inman	Philip Underwood	Christine Craig	John Tidmarsh	Mrs Bottomley's secretary						
Sue Dovey (SVSC)	Caroline Pitt	Mrs Inman	Cynthia Miller	Gabrielle Mabley	Judy Leeper	Cllr Maureen Nyazai	Jane Woolley	Cllr Denys Kinsella	The Rt Hon Virginia Bottomley MP	Stephen Dean	Jeni Fuller
George Pitt (with birthday balloons)											

But although celebrations were in order, fixtures and fittings were starting to wear out and the hunt for grants to help with essential shop improvements had already begun. In 1999 £1,500 was secured from The Surrey Village Shop Development Partnership to cover half the costs of a new chiller, new shelving, a new till and an electric ham slicer. In 2002 a further £1,500 from Surrey County Council's Local Committee in Waverley helped with the installation of two air conditioning/heating units in the deli area and the renewal of the shop floor.

SOME SIGNIFICANT NEXT STEPS

That the shop was able to re-open as a community-run venture was in part due to Ray and Patrick Williams who, as landlords, agreed to lease the premises on extremely favourable terms. However, it was obvious that the village could not count on this generosity lasting for ever.

In 2003 The Hambleton Village Trust was established “for the benefit of the residents of Hambleton for purposes serving the community”. Its first task was to purchase the freeholds of the shop and also, with the agreement of its owner, Joan Hardy, Pendle Cottage, thereby helping to secure the shop’s long-term future. (Joan continued to live in the cottage as a non-paying tenant.)

Having secured the property as an asset for the village, the Trust had to address a wide range of maintenance needs and the additional space that by now was badly needed for both the shop and the Post Office. This could be met by restoring what was then a small 18th century barn which formed part of the shop property; but it was in an advanced state of disrepair and was unusable. So, early in 2005 the Trust applied, successfully, to what was then the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) for a grant under its Rural Enterprise Scheme. This covered 80 per cent of the cost of the work, with the balance largely being made up by villagers’ donations.



Trustee Jane Woolley propping up the derelict barn (left)

Peggy Smith (right) helping to clear it out prior to its restoration



The barn having been restored, it was possible completely to reconfigure and up-grade the shop and the Post Office – and make the premises compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act which came into force in 1995. The then-store room (the area now occupied by the chillers and the deli) was integrated into the shop. A Post Office strong room and a toilet were built in the barn (the strong room is still there) and the remaining space (all of which is now the kitchen) became the storage area. The Post Office, which hitherto had been in a cubby-hole at the back of the shop, was moved to its present location. The results included improved facilities for displaying goods; the ability to source a lot of new products, including more locally-produced and seasonal foods; and the introduction of a café area. A large part of the costs (£70,000 in total) were offset by grants from the Post Office, as well as from the County, Borough and Parish Councils and from the Trust; but there remained a shortfall. So the next major happening was the Seventy/70 Challenge.

Before that, however, a bit of publicity. On 6 January 2006 Southern Counties Radio featured the shop in its breakfast show, A dozen volunteers got up at 6am to meet the show’s presenter, Paul Jenner, and to ensure a good supply of coffee and croissants.

Paul’s first interview was with Judy Leeper who described how the shop was run and how it fitted into the community. Jane Woolley then explained how the Trust was fund-raising for the forthcoming up-grade. The last interview was with Cynthia Miller who spoke about the vital role that was played by the numerous shop volunteers.



Judy Leeper and Paul Jenner; and (left) with Jane Woolley

THE SEVENTY/70 CHALLENGE

Jane Woolley marked her 70th birthday weekend by walking 70 kilometers in three days in an ambitious attempt to raise £7,000 to help with the costs of the shop and Post Office. The journey was split into three local circular walks and over the three days Jane was accompanied by Derek Miller and Jenny Caddy (who both walked on all three days), Jane Caie, Jean Talman, John and Jean Adams, Sheila Vacher, Stewart Payne, Richard Appleby, Matt Steward, Clare Windiate, Mary Burrows, Richard Payne and Tom Cane. Many of the walkers, in addition to Jane, were sponsored and between them they more than exceeded the planned target: the final total raised by the Challenge was £9,580.



The walking ...

The Challenge was organised by a top-of-the-range team. Derek planned the routes; Matt Steward (a former next-door neighbour of Jane's) created the sponsorship forms; Kim Cross kept track of the money and, with design input from Peter, prepared the posters; Steve Page (the then-shop manager) took charge of the party; Laurie Parker baked the cake; and Mary Burrows kept them all in order. Alex Woodward printed the maps and Stewart Payne wrote the publicity handout which was an essential pre-requisite to the success of the Challenge.

As Jane commented when it was all over: "Between you all, you gave me the birthday of a lifetime. Thank you so much."



... and the partying

THE SHOP PROMOTIONAL LEAFLET, AUTUMN 2006

HAMBLEDON VILLAGE SHOP

SHOP
OPENING HOURS
Mon – Fri 9am – 5pm
Sat 9am – 1pm
Sun 9am – 12pm
Tel 01428 682176



POST OFFICE
OPENING HOURS
Mon 9 – 12.30 & 1.30-4.30
Tues 9-12.30
Wed 9-12.30
Thur 9 – 12.30 & 1.30-4.30
Fri 9 – 12.30 & 1.30-4.30
Sat 9-12.30
Sun Closed

At the Cricket Green

Get your currency here – commission free
Pay Bills
Plus all the usual postal services including
Insurance, giro, phone cards etc.

Enjoy the convenience of **EASY PARKING**
and friendly service plus wholesale:
Local fresh veg and fruit
Local meat
Local cakes
Local pâté
At your village emporium



For delivery please telephone 01428 682176



Try out our new chilled wine
selection, also sample quality reds

Wine list available

Discounts available on purchases
of 6 or more bottles

Locally produced food bursting with freshness and flavour, is thriving in
the countryside around you. Find you don't have to pick your own
to enjoy it, because we've picked it for you

English fresh meat and sausages



Organic Bread , biscuits, drinks, confectionery

Following our recent shop refit we are offering

New lines in
Organic produce
Confectionery
Wines and Beers
Greeting Cards
Gift Wrap

Baked on the premises:



Baguettes
Danish pastries
Croissants
Vegetarian pasties
Sausage rolls
And a variety of pies



The best cakes in the area produced by our local cooks
&
Paté to die for!

Smoked salmon
Smoked trout
Chicken liver with brandy
Coarse pork

Check out the deli!



Quality

Cheeses
Cooked Meats
Olives
Etc, etc.

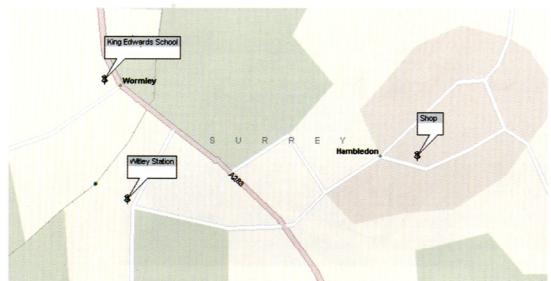
Meet Martin your local fishman every Wednesday between 12.30 and
1.00pm on the shop car park for your supply of fresh fish

Local free range eggs
General Groceries
Newspapers
Dry-cleaning
Delivery

**Stop by to collect your Sunday morning papers
& hot croissants for breakfast**



Hambledon



....part of local history

Tucked away from the woodlands of the Surrey Hills, this community is proud of the wide range of sports and social facilities for local people of all ages. At the heart of the community is the village shop, a symbol of the Hambledonian's determination to sustain village life.

The shop closed as a commercial venture in 1990, but the villagers took it upon themselves to re-open as a community-run venture just two years later and it now flourishes and is the longest established community run shop in the south east, offering a wide range of facilities to its customers, including a post office, locally renowned delicatessen, home-made cakes are a speciality. The shop is also a stopping point for the mobile library.



AND THEN – THE CELEBRATIONS



In recognition of your support for the up-grade of
Hambledon Village Shop and Post Office,

Hambledon Village Trust invites you to toast the
formal opening of the up-graded premises by

Jeremy Hunt MP

at Hambledon Village Shop, Cricket Green, Hambledon,
Godalming, Surrey GU8 4HF

on Friday 18 May 2007 at 12 noon.

2005: RESTORATION OF THE BARN. Thanks to
Neil Caike, who drew up the plans.
DEFRA's Rural Enterprise Scheme whose grant funded 80% of the project costs.
41 individual villagers and Hambledon Parish Council for their grants: these, plus a share of the
proceeds from the 2005 Hambledon village fête, funded the balance.
Leon West, project manager, and Richard Appleby for the building work.

2006-7: UP-GRADE OF THE SHOP AND POST OFFICE. Thanks to
Waverley Borough Council's Community Partnership Fund, Surrey County Council's Local
Committee in Waverley, Hambledon Parish Council, the Post Office Accessibility Fund, the Post
Office Rural Investment Scheme and Surrey Community Foundation (the Hazelhurst
Foundation) who supported the project with grants.

The organising committee of the Seventy/70 Challenge, the 171 sponsors, the individual
walkers and their sponsors and Alex Woodward who made the maps: between they contributed
£9,590 to the funds.

The organisers of and contributors to the 2006 fund-raising Christmas concert by Impact
Percussion and Surrey Brass.

Leon West, architect and project manager, and Richard Appleby for the building work.
The shop up-grade steering committee.

AND, throughout the entire period,
The volunteers, without whose support there would be no Hambledon Village Shop.

SAVE OUR POST OFFICE!

Just when everyone thought the future was secure, along came the next bomb shell – a Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) proposal in 2007 to axe up to 3,000 post offices, mainly in rural areas, because the network was losing almost £4 million a week and was “unsustainable”. Apparently small rural Post Offices were serving just 16 people a week on average – obviously no one from Post Office Ltd or the DTI had come to Hambledon to witness the steady daily trade!

An immediate appeal was issued by Waverley to fight to save Post Offices within the Borough and a protest petition was launched by Witley and Hambledon Borough Councillors Adam Taylor-Smith and Elizabeth Cable at Hambledon Post Office on 16 February. The campaign was backed by local MP Jeremy Hunt and the petition was presented to the House of Commons.



Adam Taylor-Smith, Liz Cable and Jeremy Hunt putting their names to the petition

And it worked. Of the four local Post Offices, only Wormley failed to survive the cut: Hambledon, Milford and Chiddingfold all survived.

WAVERLEY DESIGN AWARDS, 2007

A Special Community Award was given to Hambledon Village Shop at the 2007 Waverley Design Awards ceremony, held at the Borough Hall, Godalming on 23 October 2007. The nomination was made by the Chairman of Hambledon Parish Council, John Anderson, pictured with Philip Underwood, Jane Woolley, Jeannie Postil and Leon West.



A ROYAL VISIT

Hambledon enjoyed its first royal visit on 9 July 2009, as a result of its having won the *Surrey Village of the Year* competition in 2008. It secured this award in recognition of its strong community spirit and innovative ideas, including the re-opening and subsequent success of the village shop to which the most recent addition had been the introduction of wi-fi.

HRH Princess Alexandra made the shop her first stop and chatted to then-manager Philip Underwood and his band of volunteers. “It’s fatal to bring a woman into a shop and not expect her to buy something”, she said – and she was presented, amongst other things, with a gift of freshly-picked raspberries from Tuesley Farm to ensure that she didn’t go away empty handed.



With Hambledon and Witley's Waverley Borough Councillors Adam Taylor-Smith (left) and Liz Cable (in the red jacket). Ron Vickery is on Adam's left, with Muriel Campbell and Monica Fisher in the background

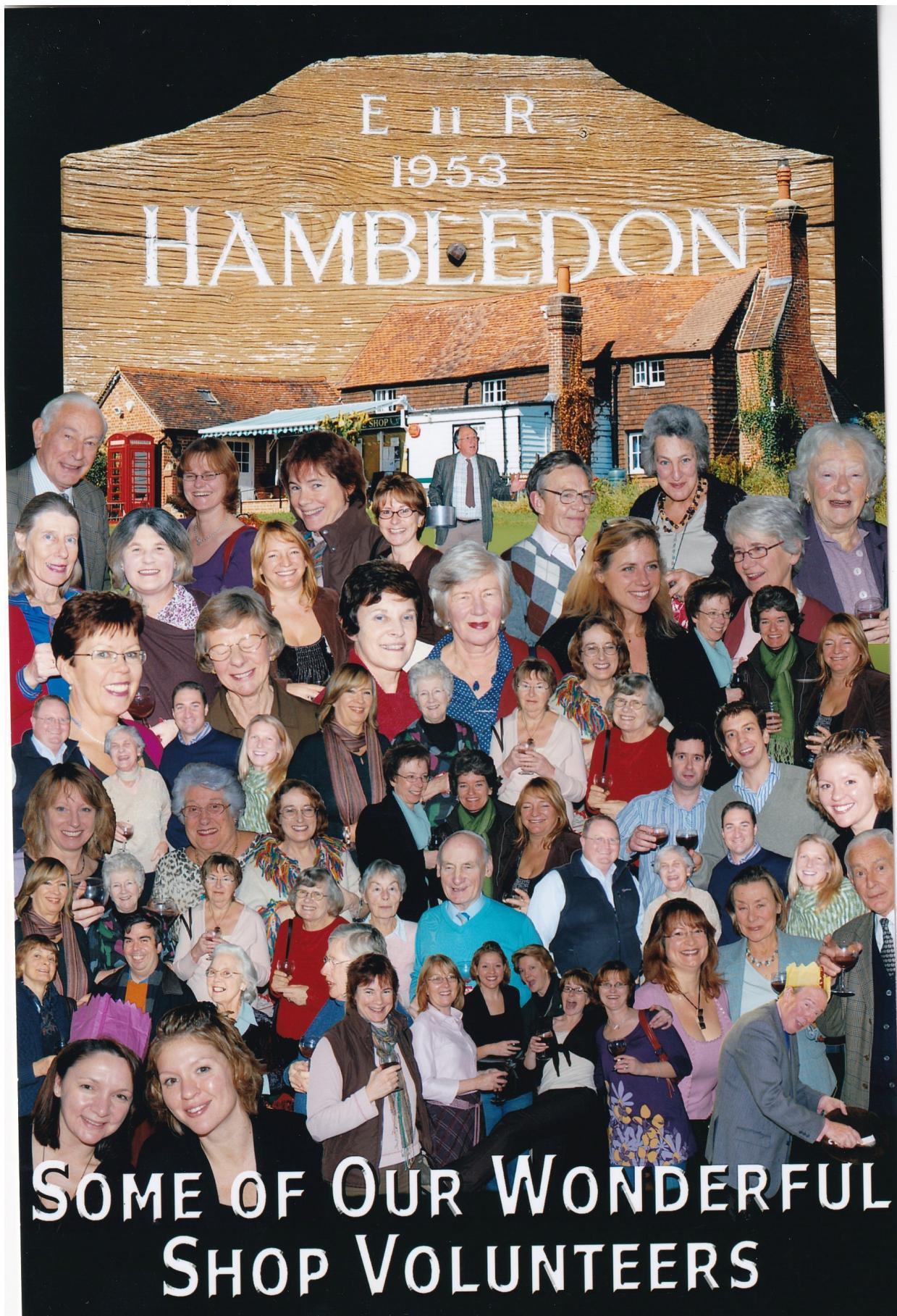


Princess Alexandra arriving at the shop with the Lord Lieutenant of Surrey, Sarah Goad



Chatting to shop volunteers Judy Leeper, Cynthia Miller and Mary Parker

2010 – THE PICTURE SAYS IT ALL



SOME OF OUR WONDERFUL
SHOP VOLUNTEERS

TWENTY YEARS ON AND STILL GOING STRONG

On 14 November 2012 Hambleton Village Shop celebrated 20 years of trading as a community shop. Following its closure as a private venture many people had chipped in to support its re-opening under the guidance of a team whose leaders were George Pitt and Denis Jones. They had both supported Hambleton's then-MP, Mrs Virginia Bottomley, when she cut the tape to get the shop going again as a community enterprise.

Everyone was delighted that Denis Jones and his wife Brenda, together with Virginia (now Lady Bottomley) and her husband Peter, were able to accept invitations to join the other invited guests to raise a toast at the party to the shop venture.

Since its re-opening John Tidmarsh, Judy Leeper and George Pitt had all been chairs of the Board that ran the shop. Each of them had had issues to face from time to time; but the ethos behind the shop and its community spirit had always risen above "any local difficulties". As a result, the shop was in good shape to move forward, now under the chairmanship of Tim Parker.

In announcing Tim's appointment at the celebratory party, George said: "I am sure that Tim's enthusiasm and younger-generation contacts will produce success. I am also pleased to say that Louise Rhodes has agreed to join the Board to provide a younger, female view."

In conclusion George thanked everyone who had supported the shop in the past, as a volunteer, a shareholder, a helper in any other way or a shopper. Then it was just a marvellous party!



The picture, from *The Haslemere Herald*, shows some of the key players with two specially decorated "Then and Now" cakes baked in honour of the occasion.

HAMBLEDON VILLAGE SHOP

1992 - 2012 LOOKING BACK AT THE FIRST 20 YEARS



A village shop reborn for brie and baguettes



By Tim Leonard
The new co-op Caroline Pitt, Freda Blizard-Jones, Fiona Greenhalgh, Jean Hardy, Brenda Jones and Denis Jones have now moved into their former village shop, which they have turned into a delicatessen. The shop, which was once a garage, has been converted into a delicatessen by the new owners. The shop is now open from Monday to Saturday, and offers a wide range of fresh food and drink. The new owners are looking forward to the future of the shop, and hope to continue to provide a service to the local community.

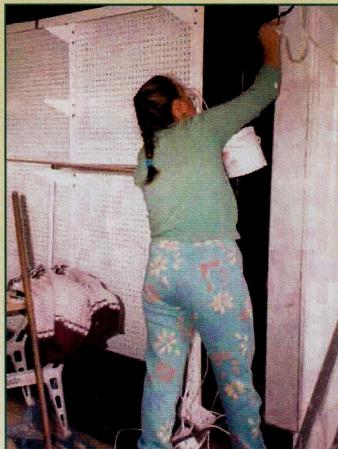


Brenda & Denis Jones with a willing carpenter between them



Autumn 1992 Brenda Jones and renovated shop

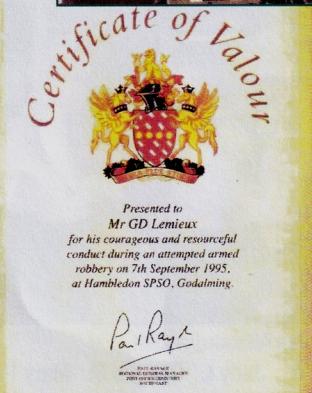
Surrey Ad article telling the re-opening story



Fiona Greenhalgh painting 1992



14 November 1992
Virginia Bottomley MP watched by Denis Jones cutting the tape to re-open the shop



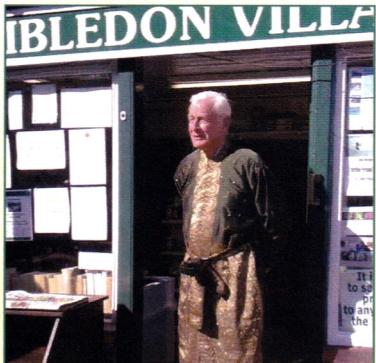
Guy Lemieux and citation



2004 The barn - Jane Woolley looking at a ruin or an opportunity?



Bake-off! 1992



John T Shopkeeper extraordinaire



Jeremy Hunt MP "Toasting the Shop" after the barn renovations. 17 May 2007



3 A team ready for Royalty 9 July 2009



Princess Alexandra visit
Jane W Judy L Cynthia M Mary P



Shop interior 2012



Summer 2012

1992 - 2012 LOOKING BACK AT THE FIRST 20 YEARS

UP-GRADING THE CAFÉ

In October 2014 the shop celebrated the receipt of a £30,000 grant to enable it to improve its café area. The grant came from Surrey County Council, as part of its Community Improvements Fund scheme. Although the shop had been serving coffee and a variety of accompanying snacks for several years, the then-manager, Jo Jazeel, was looking to create a proper café area, both for villagers and for the increasing numbers of walkers and cyclists who were passing through Hambledon and were starting to realise that the shop was an excellent stopping point for hungry and thirsty people.

The project saw the introduction of the outdoor picnic benches, made by the Hydestile Joinery which was then located just beyond the Hydestile crossroads, as well as dedicating space both inside the shop and on the outside terrace for tables and chairs. The success was immediate.

The photo shows Jo on the right, with shop volunteers Jane Horne and Joan Hardy.



HAMBLEDON VILLAGE SHOP – A COMMUNITY BENEFIT SOCIETY

Community benefit societies were established by the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 “to carry on a business, industry or trade ... conducted for the benefit of the community”. Members hold shares; but any profits which the society might make have to be used for the benefit of the community – they cannot be distributed to the members. Members also have voting rights. Becoming such a society was therefore a natural progression for the Village Shop, thereby ensuring that everyone who had its interests at heart could feel part of the business. As shareholders they would be helping to fund the running of the shop as well as the part-time paid staff who had become key to its operations. It would also enable the shop to expand and grow as any surpluses from trading would be invested back into the shop - again for the benefit of the village and those that used the shop and its facilities.

All Hambledon's shareholders are invited to the AGM, usually held in June or July, to elect a Management Committee to administer the business of the shop, to approve the audited accounts and to receive reports on the past year's trading. By the time of the first AGM, in 2015, the Hambledon Society had 125 shareholders; and that number has remained pretty well constant ever since.

THE QUEEN'S AWARD FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICE

The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service was bestowed on the village shop volunteers at a ceremony on 19 September 2015. The Award, which has an equivalent status for groups as the

MBE has for individuals, was in recognition of the wonderful service given by the volunteers since the re-opening of the shop as a community-run venture. It came from Her Majesty The Queen and the citation was read out by Karen Seymer, immediate past High Sheriff of Surrey (and whose husband Jamie was a former shop treasurer). The chair of Surrey's Queen's Award





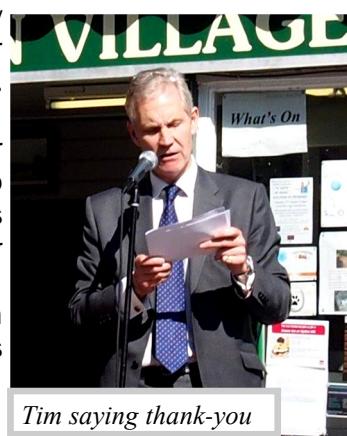
panel and the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Surrey, Gordon Lee-Steere, made the presentation and the other guests



included the chair of Surrey County Council, the Mayor of Waverley, the present High Sheriff of Surrey and the chair of the Parish Council. They were welcomed by Tim Parker, chair of the Shop Management Committee.

Cynthia Miller, one of the original volunteers, received the Award on behalf of her colleagues and Tim made a brief speech in which he thanked them all and also noted the particular service given by some of the key contributors to the shop's success – Cynthia in particular but also George Pitt, John Tidmarsh, Jamie Seymour and former shop manager Philip Underwood.

Over the years around 100 volunteers had been involved with the shop. Although it now had a paid manager and a few part-time staff, volunteers remained at its heart: many had served for more than 15 years, and some, like Cynthia, had been involved from the very beginning. Several were even continuing their shifts even though they had moved away from the village.



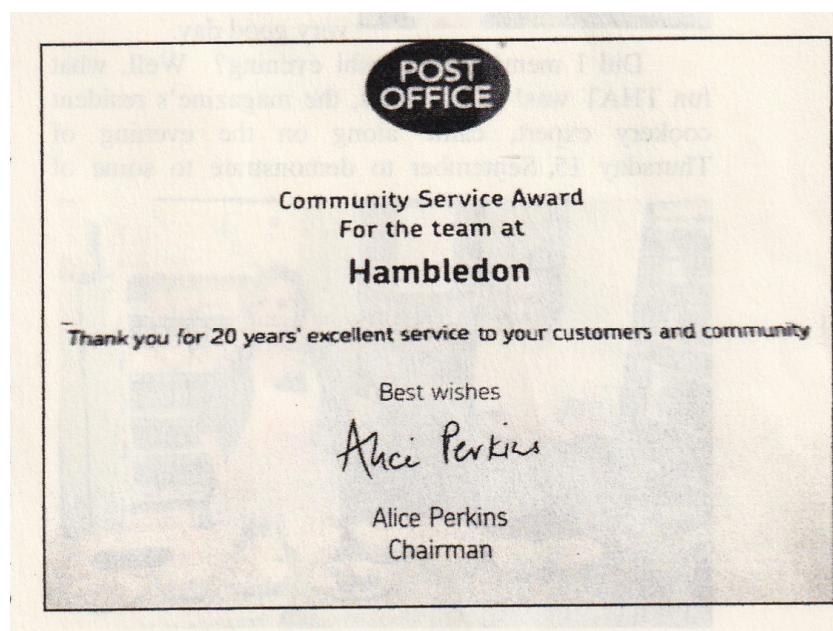
YET MORE AWARDS – YES, AWARDS!

In 2016 Hambledon Village Shop won a Godalming Trust Civic Design Award in recognition of the refurbishments that had taken place in 2014 to improve the interior and external café facilities.

These Awards were initiated in 1996. They are limited to schemes completed in Godalming and its surrounding villages. The various categories recognise not only the construction of new buildings but also refurbishments, extensions, shopfronts and environmental enhancements.

And then another comes along! The team at the Post Office was recognised with a Community Service Award from the Post Office Chairman. The accompanying citation from the Chief Executive personally thanked all staff for their years of hard work and the dedication which they had given to Post Office customers in Hambledon. It continued “The Post Office holds a proud and unique place in communities across the UK as a trusted company with a social purpose. We have an enviable reputation that we could not hope to attain without the work of outstanding branches like yours and I can assure you that your efforts are appreciated by the whole business. Thank you.”

(No wonder they didn't dare axe us in 2007!)



Woolley, the nominated sub-post-mistress who had only recently retired as another Post Office volunteer.



There was no presentation but the Award took the form of a handsome plaque which provided a perfect opportunity to offer congratulations to all the members of the team, past and present. These were Guy Lemieux and successive shop managers who had provided Post Office services as well as running the shop; Alison Wilson who was (and to this day remains) in day-to-day charge; Michelle Abbott who at the time was doing a lot of the counter work; Alan Brien who provided vital back-up support (and still does); John Tidmarsh, at that time the only Post Office volunteer; and Jane

TWENTY FIVE YEARS OLD

On 17 June 2017 Hambledon Village Shop celebrated 25 years as a village owned and run venture. The actual anniversary would not fall until November but, fearing that the weather at that time of year would be slightly less conducive to a birthday barbecue, it was decided to bring the party forward – and the organisers were rewarded with a beautiful balmy evening. Well over 100

people came along – young and young at heart; past and present staff and volunteers; shoppers; and people who had supported the shop in so many other ways over a quarter of a century. As the then-shop manager Gill Derbyshire reported in her post-party write-up in the Parish Magazine, these included shareholders, the Parish Council, the Hambledon Village Trust, the Hambledon Community Fund, St Peter's Church, the Hambledon Festival Committee, Waverley Borough Council, Surrey County Council and, on more than one occasion, central government.

Also forming part of the celebrations was the formal opening of the new outside toilet by George Pitt, the first chair of the shop. This was the latest in the string of improvements undertaken over the years to keep the shop fit for purpose. Brian Pearce and Daniel

used amazing ingenuity to create a building that is not only compliant with disability regulations and includes baby-change facilities but which also sits comfortably in its surroundings – even the colour of the door was selected to match the trees in the area.

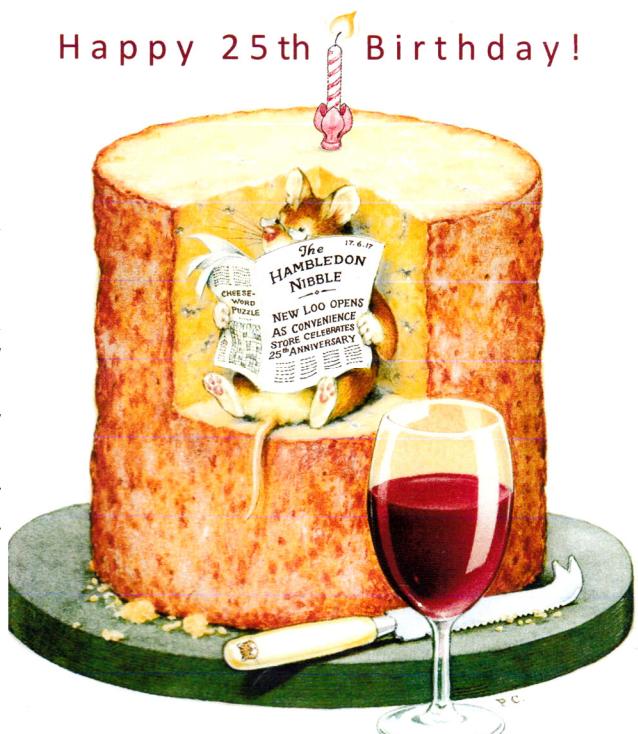
The continuing generosity of the village helped to raise the necessary funds. £3k came from those who had sponsored a half-marathon walk by Hambledon Village Trustee Jane Woolley in 2016 and £5k came from the Hambledon Community Fund. In addition the shop contributed £2.5k and a grant of £2k was gratefully received from the Billmeir Foundation which assists with capital projects and upgrades of benefit to people in south-west Surrey villages.

Then the BBQ really got under way. To quote from Gill's write-up: "At one point in the evening I took a moment to stand back. It struck me that there might be an alternative universe in which, 25 years ago, George Pitt and Denis Jones didn't start the ball rolling to re-open the shop. I pondered that the building might then have been sold privately and turned back into a home and that, on 17 June 2017, in that alternative universe, we'd all be at home in our own gardens around our own BBQs, not having the opportunity to meet so many people in this stretched-out little village. So I take my hat off to the villagers who got it all started and whose foresight, hard work and generosity got the shop going again; and also to those who have kept it going ever since. ... So, instead of 'a family that plays together, stays together', I'd like to propose a new saying 'A village that works together, works'."



HAMBLEDON VILLAGE SHOP

Happy 25th Birthday!



Peter Cross's birthday card

AND THEN CAME COVID

By 2019 there were 10 part-time staff working at the shop, supported by a team of around 60 volunteers of all ages and backgrounds and including Duke of Edinburgh students. Between them they were contributing to all aspects of the work ranging from baristas to cleaners, dishwasher supervisors, shelf stockers and till operators.

"Lockdown" was a word that hadn't even entered our vocabulary. Yet on 17 March the first news item on the village website's home page was that the shop might be forced to shut down, in which case a lifeline would be required by many residents. The shop management group had already started to pour through the government's covid publications and to set up links to the government website so that it could keep pace with new guidance on how to operate under lock-down conditions.



Waiting to fill up

By 20 March a delivery/collection service was in place, at its height operating on five days a week and delivering all orders received before 12 noon on the same day. The option to email or telephone an order for same-day delivery was available for those living within a two-mile radius of the shop but who were unable to visit it. The collection service was primarily for those who were able to visit, but preferred not to enter, the shop ("social isolation" was another term that we were having to learn). Numerous volunteers had already stepped in to help provide these services and a dedicated website and email address were being set up to manage it. Not a moment too soon: on 24 March it

was announced that the Post Office had closed until further notice and that the shop would be providing a delivery service only, including pre-ordered newspapers.

The move from business-as-normal to a delivery-only service was an incredible achievement. It didn't just involve the volunteers who put the orders together and delivered them. Suppliers that were still in business had to be sourced and deliveries could reach 15 per day, with the goods having to be unpacked, priced and put onto the EPOS system. Methods of remote payment (including payments



Full! – and ready for the off

by shoppers) had to be devised. A detailed on-line Shop Produce List was placed on the website and regularly up-dated.

To start with it seemed that government advice was changing on a daily basis. Members of the management group and other essential workers were meeting (virtually) every night, sometimes for up to five hours, to access the situation, adjust the trading mode and go through numerous what-if scenarios to try and prepare for the unexpected. Thereafter, someone would have to work until the early hours of the morning drafting the new procedures and the announcements which had to be

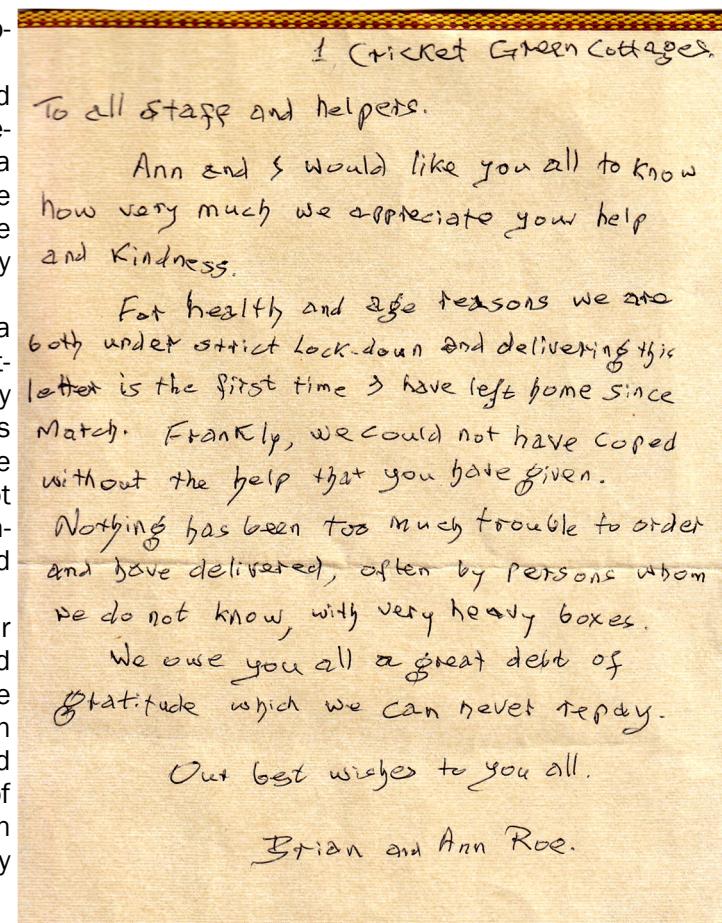


distributed, including via the village website, without delay.

In just a single week orders, valued from £10 to well over £200 per household, totalled 259—with 60 delivered in a single day (which was 30 per cent more than the number delivered on the same day throughout Godalming and beyond by one of the local supermarkets).

The management group applied for a local government covid grant, an effortless and efficient process conducted by Waverley Borough Council. This was received very quickly. However, with the change to deliveries-only, it was not possible to retain all the paid professional staff and a handful unfortunately had to be furloughed.

Perhaps best of all was the customer satisfaction. The letter from Brian and Ann Roe was typical of many that were received, including from one individual on the official Shielded List, living alone and unable to leave home for a minimum of 12 weeks. All were totally dependent on the wonderful service that was offered by Hambleton Village Shop.



The band in waiting: from left to right Alpa, Portia, Lena, Jon and Jo

something for the village and to have a bit of fun, some banter in the group, and to get out and about. Little did she realise that it would come to define her week; to remind her what day it was as all the days began to merge into one; and to give her a chance to chat with at least four other people and also the households on her paper round. Jon fixed their bikes, the group occasionally practised yoga, they found common ground and they made friends. Jo began to feel she had a purpose other than home schooling and watching Netflix.

Then they were furloughed with 80% of nothing. “I think our manager stitched us up there”, said Jo. “Much as I hope that our services won’t be required in the future, I can’t pretend that on a Sunday morning I’m not still drawn to the shop for a chat with my band mates. So I’ll add ‘The Paper Girls’ to the positives of lockdown list because it turns out that, even though I was doing something to help the village, really the village helped me.”

The Paper Girls. On an early lockdown day a text went out to the Covid-19 village group asking for volunteers to deliver the newspapers a couple of times a week. There were four responses: Alpa Cox, Portia van Braam, Lena Kirby and Jo Kirkland. From that moment on they became ‘The Paper Girls’, a soon-to-be hit “girl” band - with Jon Petersen as their hard-talking, star-making manager - delivering papers until fame beckoned

As Jo recounted, it seemed like a way to do

THE QUEEN'S AWARD FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICE – YES, ANOTHER ONE!



On 10 June 2021 the group of volunteers who had kept Hambleton Village Shop running throughout the covid pandemic were finally given their Queen's Award for Voluntary Service pins in recognition of their contribution to the delivery service which the shop had run during the first lockdown of 2020. 'Finally', because the ceremony had been due to take place several months earlier but had had to be postponed because of the second lockdown.

The shop had already received a QAVS in 2015. As it is an award for life and can only be given once, it had been decided that this time round, instead of an actual Award, those involved in the delivery service would be presented with QAVS pins. The group included not only those directly involved at the shop but also the volunteer delivery drivers and The Paper Girls.



So, in a socially distanced ceremony outside the shop, a place which throughout the whole pandemic had been viewed as a symbol of the Hambleton community, the Lord-Lieutenant of Surrey, Michael More-Molyneux, accompanied by the High Sheriff of Surrey, Hambleton resident Julie Llewelyn, distributed the pins. His kind words echoed those of the many villagers and the recipients of the shop's deliveries over the past 12 months - how grateful and appreciative everyone had been of the essential services that the volunteers had provided during the first lockdown and beyond. The regular deliveries had meant so much to so many on various levels during a time of high uncertainty and fear – not just taking delivery of groceries but also the very fact of seeing a friendly face and a wave as the shopping was dropped off and, quite simply, knowing that their community cared about them.

The ceremony was followed by tea and cake at the picnic tables, providing a rare chance for volunteers to chat together. The shop had been run by two separate cohorts since lockdown began and it was exceedingly rare for everyone to be in one place at the same time. So there was plenty of reminiscing about the special time that lockdown had been and wondering about how on earth the teams had, between them, managed to do upwards of 60 deliveries a day.

The ceremony was filmed by BBC South Today. The crew arrived in the morning to do some filming at the shop and to interview some of the award recipients – and one very grateful customer. They then came back to cover the ceremony later that afternoon.



All those who received their pins felt privileged to have been involved in the delivery service: it was an experience that would stay with them forever. As for being recognised for what they had done, this had never even been considered – they were just doing what Hambleton does best – which is serving its community.

A SOUTH WEST SURREY COVID HERO



In January 2021 the Village Shop was contacted by Jeremy Hunt MP with the news that it had been awarded a South West Surrey Heroes Award as part of a campaign he had launched with Tindle Newspapers at the end of 2020. This meant that someone had recognised the shop's extraordinary work during the initial stages of the covid pandemic in 2020 and had nominated it for an award. Beyond this, having reviewed all nominations, the awards panel decided that the shop was a worthy recipient.

The intention was that the awards would be presented at a reception in 2021. However, continuing covid restrictions meant that it was delayed until March 2022. As a result, on the evening of Friday 11 March, on behalf of the shop Management Committee Alison Scott-Bishop, its current chair, attended the awards reception in Tindle Newspaper's offices in The Old Court House in Farnham.

There were around 30 award recipients there, including individuals who had established food banks and representatives of churches, village shops and other organisations which had gone above and beyond to support their local communities during the pandemic.

Jeremy Hunt gave a short speech in which he praised the community spirit shown by so many during the pandemic and the difference that it had made to the lives of many people, particularly the most vulnerable. He singled out some recipients for particular mention, Hambledon Village Shop being one of them; and he noted that it was his local village shop. He also commented that, now that the effects of the pandemic were reducing, a lot of individuals, organisations and communities were starting to focus on what they could do to support Ukraine. Again, Hambledon was mentioned in this regard. Clearly Jeremy Hunt is aware of, and keen to promote, Hambledon's efforts!

Over the years, the sterling work of Hambledon Village Shop and its professionals and volunteers has been recognised in many ways. This award is just the latest example, and everyone involved with the shop, particularly those who kept it running during the darkest days of the pandemic, should feel justifiably proud of being rewarded for their efforts.

