

Somersham and District Community Shop May 2023 – May 2024

We are pleased to report that in 2023-24, overall the shop has continued to be financially successful, on occasion even recording a small profit. This has enabled us to start topping up our reserves again, which have been called upon heavily over the previous years.

We are proud of our superb volunteer team, which now numbers around 30 regular volunteers. This sounds a lot but is almost exactly the right number to cover our current opening hours, so we would ideally still like to recruit at least another three to five people in order that we can confidently cover all shifts each week, especially in peak holiday times. As it stands currently, regular volunteers are often called upon to give extra time on top of the hours they already kindly contribute.

We continue to add new products to our range, listening to customer requests and feedback. For example, over the last year we have added to our local offerings with an extended range of Stokes products, a new range of cocktails from Niche Cocktails based in Framlingham, Christmas wreaths from local florist Pollen & Petals and, from this week, a small selection of Alder Tree ice creams from Needham Market. We do however ensure that in addition to the 'deli' and 'farm shop' style products we offer, we continue to maintain a full range of essentials and treats at affordable prices, to ensure the shop caters appropriately for all the community we serve.

The shop continues to be a well frequented community hub, and we are pleased to support local events and activities, such as selling the PTA's village trail maps and quiz sheets for the church, as well as publicising local events through our events diary and our noticeboards. We were pleased to bring some Christmas cheer to the shop again through the pictures created by the children of Somersham School, enabling families to see their children's artwork on display.

Our Meet up Monday and Petrol Heads sessions continue to be popular and well supported and the Rural Coffee Caravan (RCC) have recently introduced a bi-monthly visit to our Meet up Monday session, enabling them to reach more people in the village with information, advice, and guidance. The Suffolk Libraries van also continues to visit monthly.

Each year, we are a collection point for Christian Aid Week and the Poppy Appeal, we join in with the annual Macmillan coffee morning, and we are pleased to support our own volunteers' fundraising efforts offering jams, chutneys, seeds and seedlings to raise money for a variety of charities, and in particular Pancreatic Cancer Research. In 2023 we reintroduced the Scouts Christmas Post Box, supporting their fundraising efforts and giving customers access to this helpful service, we continued to offer a Food Bank Collection Point for Ipswich based charity, FIND, and we are a Battery Recycling point.

In the spring of 2023, we were pleased to have the shop redecorated creating a much brighter and more pleasant environment for us all. This year, thanks to funding from Mid Suffolk District Council and the Parish Council, and alongside the Community Association, we have also been able to arrange for the repair and resurfacing of the village car park. Thanks to funding from District Councillor Adrienne Marriott, we are soon to replace all our old and tired external signage and are also replacing our internal lights with more efficient LED lighting. Next on the list is the installation of solar panels to further improve our environmental credentials and reduce our out goings. We are also investigating the possibility of a new till, to improve stock control and streamline processes.

We hope that the members of the Parish Council appreciate the efforts that are made to keep our shop going and to develop it further, and will continue to support the shop, with occasional financial support, but also with their custom and time, encouraging their friends, family and neighbours to do the same.