

## Village Business

### Ascott-under-Wychwood Village Shop

Having recently celebrated our third anniversary and with a record of steadily increasing turnover and profit, things are going pretty well for the Ascott-under-Wychwood Village Shop. Our third year has been eventful, with a lot of interest from people outside the village.

#### Volunteers Make it Possible

Ascott, with a population of well under a thousand, is unusual and fortunate in having its own shop. This message was reinforced by the two nationally broadcast TV programmes in which we figured prominently. We have also had many approaches from other villages, who have heard about what we are doing and want to find out how we do it. Supermarkets and chain stores of course have their place in the scheme of things, but we all know that they have been open to criticism for some of their monopolistic tendencies. Perhaps the local volunteer-run village shop can provide part of the answer longer term, but of course they have to survive in the meantime.

And that is the important point. We are very much a volunteer organisation. Naturally we do have some salaried support from our few, very charming and able assistants, but the bulk of the work; the management, the finances, the ordering, the unpacking, the cleaning, maintaining the premises and serving the customers - has to be done by volunteers. If it were possible to earn a full-time living owning and running a shop for profit in a village this size, someone would be doing it, wouldn't they? And, as always, volunteers are in short supply.

Those who work in the shop think they are helping to meet a definite local need. We know that there are many in our village and in other similar villages who value or would like to have such a facility. Let's hope that people will talk to us and to each other about how it can continue, because, without plenty of volunteer help, it won't do so.

#### So What Do We Offer?

Firstly, there is a broad range of basic supplies from dairy products and groceries to household supplies and frozen foods, together with fresh bread daily, newspapers and fruit and vegetables. Some of our specialities are really worth trying; for instance our gourmet cooked ready-made meals and our smoked fish from Loch Fyne. There are plenty of sweets for the children and a variety of ice creams.

Our wines are specially selected with the help of the Oxford Wine Company, including special choices for the connoisseur as well as something pluggable at a more modest price.

We aim to use local suppliers wherever possible. So we took part in the Wychwood Forest Fair and helped the Plunkett Foundation in launching their programme of sourcing local food suppliers. We found several additional new local suppliers and also secured a free helping of strawberries and cream for all our customers!

We hope that you will be able to support us in one way or another, as a customer or if you can make the commitment, as a regular or occasional volunteer or helper.

**Mark Dawbarn**