

# Wilstone Community Shop

*Run by the community, for the community*

We aim to serve the Community by:

Tel: 01442-891167

- Keeping prices fair
- Offering a wide range of goods and services
- Stocking home-made and local produce
- Being a place where people like to shop and volunteers like to work



## The new Wilstone Village Store



# Re-modelling the Wilstone Shop

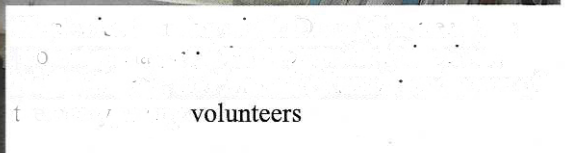
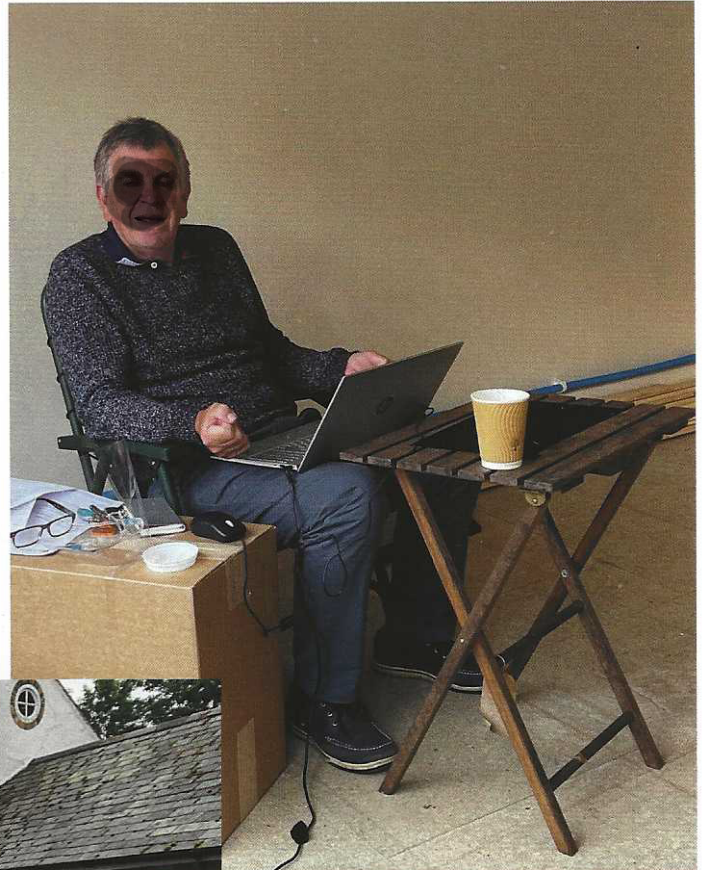
by Abby Fermont

AFTER three years of planning, a lot of fundraising, meetings and hard work, we finally have our new Community Shop. And it really has been a community project, we couldn't have achieved this without the help of everyone inside and outside of the parish – we can all be truly proud of the finished product.

So many people have been amazed at the transformation – in effect the shop was only closed for 17 days – and the change from what it was to what it is now could not be starker. There are so many people who put in so much time and effort to make it happen and we are so very grateful to you all.

### Fundraising

£107,000 was the figure we had to find to secure the future of our shop and to expand and refurbish the interior, and within three years we have managed to reach our target, which is a magnificent achievement. —Continued on page 14



## Re-modelling Wilstone Community Stop continued from page 2

We have received some extremely generous donations from local charities and individuals and have also raised a lot of money via SOCS. The SOCS committee have worked tirelessly to come up with innovative ideas to relieve us of our

worked 21 days straight, putting in long hours to ensure we achieved our timescales. We used all his tools from chop saws to screw bits. He was ably assisted by Steve Illey who also worked incredibly long hours and although he insists that

his main skills relate to gardening, we can attest to the fact that he is very handy as a builder's mate.

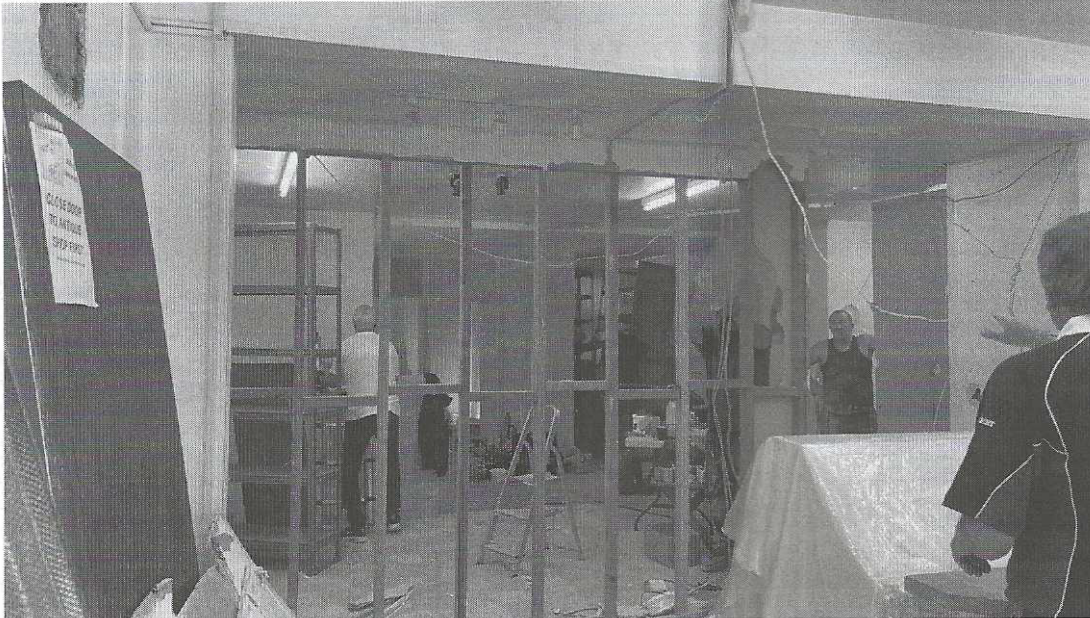
**Jewson's** were also very good to us. We opened a credit account with them as recommended and they gave us access to trade deals and prices. On top of that they tried to help with their final pricing to reflect our standing as a community shop. Due to the nationwide shortage of building materials, we ordered early and they sourced and then reserved the materials in their store until we needed them.

**Linslade Plumbing and Heating supplies.** They gave us a monthly credit account and followed that up by pricing the material as keenly as they were able. They were also a good source of knowledge and help on all plumbing, sanitaryware and heating queries.

**MJ Electrical** gave us very good advice prior to starting work, the result of which is that we have a robust electrical system which meets our needs as a community shop. Their electrician Danny was excellent, he achieved a complete sign-off of all the installations within 13days.

**KoolTouch** won the air conditioning contract with a competitive bid. Their engineer Richard was able to attend site earlier than scheduled and finished his work with four days. There were a few extra items added on to the job which he did not charge us for, stating that as he was on site anyway, he would complete them within budget.

**Chapel Flooring** – had two separate time slots to fit our beautiful Karndean floor. They arrived on schedule and finished both installations a day early which was extremely



money. Especially impressive when you consider that most of their fundraising took place during a pandemic. We had the 'fill a sock' campaign, Rounders and BBQ, Scarecrow competition, Woollies creations and workshops, and most recently the profits from the Open Village were generously donated by the Village Hall committee to help us on the final push. Of course with a larger shop, come larger bills, so SOCS will not disband but rebrand to become Support (rather than Save) Our Community Shop. We will use the ongoing financial help to maintain our keen pricing, cover our bills, the cost of ongoing maintenance and to purchase any new or replacement equipment required.

### **The local companies**

Several local companies went out of their way to help us and deserve a mention in this article.

**Rainsford Joinery** offered to make all the joinery for us, but because our dates moved forward, they could not meet our deadline, so they offered to pay for it all instead. Very generously they paid for all the kitchen and backroom units, doors and frames, ironmongery, and both front of house counters. Shaun from **SBH**



useful as it gave everyone else access to the shop allowing the project to run to time.

### **Residents and Volunteers**

So many of you helped and because you gave us your time, we made big savings on labour costs. Volunteers undertook a myriad of tasks including unloading our building materials from the Jewson lorry, moving the Dexion shelving, taking down and removing the shelving units, packing up everything in the shop, transporting over 100 boxes to the hall for storage and bringing them back again, taping joints, painting walls,

Nigel, Blake, Diana and Dee who let us use their drive as a place to park the skip meaning that we did not have to apply for or pay the road permit charge.

Doug for project managing the whole thing and basically giving over his life for the full two weeks of transformation and Ali Driver for her creative vision and the whole Driver family who put in a late night stint building the new shelving.

### **Next Steps**

We still have some tweaks to do internally, including



skirting, architrave, doors, keeping a photographic record each day, putting protective wrapping on the units stored in the work area, washing cups, making coffee, storing joinery, oven, worktop, boxes, re-stocking the shelves and so much more. Not only that, but when Thames Water dropped the bombshell that they were unable to keep to their pre-arranged installation date, the support we received was incredible. So many people wrote to Thames Water, our local Councillors and MP to complain that Thames Water agreed to put in our new water system on time and even gave us a donation! Without the support we received from you, the new water supply could have been delayed by up to 14 weeks.

Thanks too to Sophie and Tom. They gave us access to the rear part of the shop through their premises from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> July. That meant we were able to do most of the back of house construction before the shop closed and kept the closure period to an absolute minimum. They gave a helping hand with the packing up and came round every evening whilst we were on site to see how we were progressing and offering any help they could give us. They kept their cars off the frontage, allowing us free access for vans and deliveries.

labelling the shelves and building a cleaning cupboard to name but a few outstanding actions. We also have enough remaining money to re-design the front of the shop, putting in a railing, new ramps and some seating, re-do the concrete and basically make the entrance more welcoming and a better reflection of what's inside.

### **How can you help?**

Now you've got us, please use us! We have a beautiful shop which we'd love you all to use as much as possible. Come and have a coffee and cake or browse the cards and gifts. If you would like a regular newspaper or magazine, please order it from us. We'd also love to hear from you if have a few hours in the week you could spare to become one of our volunteers. We have regular gaps which we need to fill.

Finally, a plea that if you do shop with us, please respect our Covid policy and continue to wear a face covering when inside the shop. If you do not have a face covering, or do not want to wear one, we will happily serve you at the door. All we ask is that you treat our volunteers with the respect and politeness that they deserve.