

August 2022 – Chiddingly Shop and Café's 10th Anniversary!

In the month of our 10th anniversary, Caroline has kindly written about her memories of managing Chiddingly Shop & Café; it's reassuring to know that the ethos, challenges and highlights remain very similar today as they were at the start!

Early days at Chiddingly Village Shop

Is it really ten years since Chiddingly shop opened its doors for the first time? I can still remember how I heard about the shop manager vacancy when the shop was only a year old. I was in the back of a shared taxi on the way back from a lively party when a fellow partygoer and shop committee member insisted I should apply for it! Martin and I had lived on the outskirts of the village for a year, but becoming the new shop manager was a wonderful way to get to know a large proportion of the village. And I could walk to work.

Several village residents were already shop volunteers and I have fond memories of all the different personalities that made up the team (and almost certainly still do). That team extended way beyond the friendly faces behind the counter; there were the cake and quiche bakers, the window box tenders, the computer whizzes, the handymen, the committee members and countless others that keep the wheels oiled... and the fridges working. Not to mention the group meetings such as weekly French lessons, and the monthly Oral History Group when we'd scramble around for extra chairs!

We were new to running a village shop then and feeling our way. It wasn't all plain sailing. Volunteers were sometimes hard to come by and keep. We had to experiment with what sold and what didn't, balance a tight budget and increase footfall.

Our regular customers weren't all local. Some came daily, some weekly, and some on annual visits from further afield. Ages ranged from the very, very young to the wonderfully mature; the former sometimes ordering sweets one by one which could be an onerous task for a luckless volunteer with a queue! I also loved the quirkier visitors such as horse riders tying up to the fence, or traction engines puffing in for a quick stop.

Suppliers were special too: I enjoyed going to pick up the goats' cheese from the local farm as I could stroke the young goat kids climbing the fence to see who'd come to visit. And I still remain in touch with the 'Dog Biscuit Lady' who delivered her very popular produce in a wicker basket.



Fundraising was an integral part of our community-owned aspect and annual quiz nights were enormous fun and real brainteasers. I also recall the shop's recipe booklet which made it to a second edition – I found my copy the other day and was transported back, as we had included an introductory paragraph about every contributor.

Celebrating the second and fifth birthdays were joyous milestones, marked with wonderful Mummers plays. So the tenth birthday of Chiddingly Village Shop is truly a momentous occasion! In Sue's capable hands, I'm sure the shop will continue to be a real asset to this lovely village.

Caroline Surgey (previously Caroline Rasmussen)

(Caroline was manager of the shop for four years until 2017 when she and Martin finally married and moved to Cornwall. Caroline now works as a garden nursery assistant at the Duchy of Cornwall Nursery, while Martin has retired from graphic design and manages their small woodland when not boating on the River Fowey)