

# Buckland Brewer



When the shop closed in the village of Buckland Brewer the local church became pioneers and created the first community shop hosted by a Methodist church. The new venture is very successful and the church are now looking at ways to complement the shop with other community initiatives.

It was in December 2011 that I first visited the Methodist Church in the village of Buckland Brewer in North Devon. The village shop had closed in 2009 and a group from the community had formed a committee to see if a community shop was feasible. As the Methodist Church is situated in the centre of the village it was quickly identified as one of the possible venues.



The Church members have always been keen to find ways to respond to the needs of this rural area, so they were enthusiastic about this opportunity. However we soon discovered that there were no other community shops hosted in Methodist premises in England, and the Church were very much pioneers in their efforts.

Quite early on we decided that we needed to establish boundaries as to who would be responsible for what part of the project. It was agreed that a 10 year lease would be drawn up so that the community shop committee could operate independently of the Church within agreed parameters. This was ratified by the local Methodist Circuit and also at District and Connexional level.

It was also agreed that the Church would be responsible for funding the building work for the project whilst the Shop Committee would concentrate on raising funds necessary to open, equip and operate the shop and provide a new disabled access and decking area. Both groups benefited by receiving excellent help and advice from all sorts of sources, including the Arthur Rank Centre.

Buckland Brewer Methodist Church raised the necessary £25,000 needed for the building work through grants from various sources and the shop committee raised a similar amount through grants and a local share issue. As we were working through the project there were times when it seemed never ending and frustrating and so it took a great deal of dogged determination to bring the shop to fruition.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2013 was a real red letter day for the village and Methodist Church, a large enthusiastic crowd gathered to see the shop officially opened by Geoffrey Cox MP. The new shop has proved to be very successful and is staffed by an excellent part time shop manager and band of volunteers. The Church is now looking for others ways in which it can complement the shop by possibly providing a community cafe and drop in centre for older folk.

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