

Introduction

When we sat down to review our third year of trading, we found a new theme emerging: the people who make Kett's Books aren't all behind the counter.

This has always been the case, of course, as many of our closest supporters are happier not serving in the shop.

Much of our strength is behind the scenes: we have a members group responsible for the company, a system of consultants who are always near with advice and encouragement, and a number of regular helpers to come along to lend a hand at events.

This year, however, we saw that customers—and even their families—were “joining” the bookshop, to make our aims happen.

Customers came along to help run our book fairs in schools. A parent started leading children's storybook tea parties. Husbands and dads came along to help with DIY, unload cars, and in some cases, to read stories.

And within the shop, we are very glad to be able to say that we have lost none of our volunteers from this time last year—there can be few better signs that we've got a community that works.

We've got to know each other and what we're good at. This year's report gives you an opportunity to get to know a few more faces you might not have come across. We hope you enjoy reading about our community bookshop, as much as we've all enjoyed creating it.

Tracy Trevor and Chloe
Directors, Wymondham Community Bookshop



Top things we learned in 2016

1. Conversation is the job—people can buy a book anywhere, but they come to us for the welcome and to be remembered.
2. Independent shops are a fair trade issue: charging a fair price means authors and shopkeepers earn a fair wage as well as keeping their high streets alive.
3. How customers feel about us and what they tell about us are as important as money through the till and people through the door.
4. Choosing a supplier is more than just about money—it's about how we will treat each other over time.
5. Promoting books we love, rather than those the publishers are incentivising, turns out to be unusual in the book trade.
6. Giving people an opportunity to give, builds their loyalty and even brings along the loyalty of their own friends and family.
7. A tension will always exist between whether to stock books people want to read, vs books they *should* read.

Top sellers in 2016 (roughly in order of popularity)

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. <i>The Watchmaker of Filigree Street</i> | 12. <i>My Brother is a Superhero</i> |
| 2. <i>On the Trail of Kett's Rebellion 1549</i> | 13. <i>Me Before You</i> |
| 3. <i>Girl on the Train</i> | 14. <i>You Choose</i> |
| 4. <i>Shepherd's Life</i> | 15. <i>Crossing Places</i> |
| 5. <i>French Rhapsody</i> | 16. <i>Leviathan</i> |
| 6. <i>Prisoners of Geography</i> | 17. <i>The Improbability of Love</i> |
| 7. <i>All the Light We Cannot See</i> | 18. <i>The Spy Who Loved School Dinners</i> |
| 8. <i>Letter for the King</i> | 19. <i>The Name of this Book is Secret</i> |
| 9. <i>How it Works: the Husband/Wife</i> | 20. <i>Harry Potter & the Cursed Child</i> |
| 10. <i>A History of Norfolk in 100 Objects</i> | 21. <i>My Brother is a Superhero</i> |
| 11. <i>Tap the Magic Tree</i> | 22. <i>The President's Hat</i> |
| | 23. <i>A God in Ruins</i> |
| | 24. <i>Red Notebook</i> |
| | 25. <i>Life After Life</i> |
| | 26. <i>Rooftoppers</i> |

Finance

If you'd like to know more about our financial picture please call in to visit us, where we'll be happy to discuss running a social enterprise community bookshop with you.



Trevor is familiar as a regular behind-the till volunteer in the shop, but behind the scenes he also manages our finances. It's a huge task and extremely vital to the successful management of

the shop. He's taken on more than just Director's duties: from negotiating better utility bills to reporting to Companies House, Trevor is another who gives his own time to building the community bookshop for the people who love it.

Marketing and outreach

Because we are a social enterprise, we will always be looking for ways that our work can benefit the community. And these activities are what we become known for delivering. Marketing and outreach merge into a single proposition.

For us ‘the public’ is not a woolly aspiration. It is our inspiration, our operating model, and our business plan.



A dad joined in the story tea party to make the cave man noises in the book ‘Dave’s Rock,’ to everyone’s great delight

When we give to our community, people remember us, and they remember the conversation. We are seeing that this level of local, personal investment is helping us meet our financial, marketing and outreach objectives.



We worked with Wymondham Music Festival to create the first ‘debut concert,’ with the bookshop as a safe setting for emerging musicians to have their first public performance.



When Emma Harris isn’t busy running her business Stay Active Physiotherapy in Back Lane, she’s often in the bookshop with her two young daughters. A conversation with Tracy about what

In January we had a new bookmark developed to reflect our slightly more mature message



Ten more ways our outreach was effective marketing this year

1. Each month we held two adults' book groups, and for eight months we held book groups for either 8-10 year olds or young children. "I'm reading books I'd never have read before," members often tell us.
2. Our increased activity in World Book Day put more free books in more young hands, and brought more families to visit the shop.
3. We invited local history authors to speak during Wymondham Words, using the Wymondham Heritage Museum as a venue, in an event to cross-promote and benefit all three organisations.
4. On 13 separate occasions we transported 300 books to school book fairs.
5. Parents who bought books at our book fairs left with a money-off card to encourage them to visit us.
6. We regularly bring authors to the shop for an evening with readers.
7. All our volunteers know that the conversation, a cup of tea, and the invitation to sit on the sofa can be as important as the books themselves.
8. We continued to work with Wymondham Words, and both groups enjoyed a very successful season.
9. Acting as box office drew to the shop the audiences for Wymondham Words, Creative Arts East, and our own Ray Rumsby's play *Forgotten*.



Children drawn into the story 'Tap the Magic Tree' during one of our monthly Storybook Tea Parties

could be, with more time, prompted Emma to take the lead in starting Storybook Tea Parties, which began Autumn 2016. Parents have found it a safe place to bring children with additional needs, and we've got as much out of it as the children do!

Our work with schools



Because book fairs are usually held after school, they are a great way for us to engage younger people as volunteers, bringing generations together. And the school's parents and children like taking recommendations from another youngster!

In our short time running the bookshop we have realised that it's no good standing in Whartons Court waiting for children to just arrive at the shop—the families who most need our advice and encouragement are those least likely to wander into a bookshop.

Our book fairs have proven to be critical in our reaching our outreach objectives, as well as our marketing and financial targets, too. We regularly take 300 books to any school that asks, give a Kett's Books-printed balloon to every child, whether they buy a book or not, and talk to parents about the child's reading interests—and disinterests. We have had overwhelming positive comments from families we meet, and frequently bump into the same customers back at the bookshop, in the Co-op, and even the leisure centre—Tracy has been cornered at the swimming pool by children previously hostile to reading, who'd fallen in love with a book they got at one of our school book fairs.



If you're in the shop on a Friday afternoon you can thank Lynne for our beautiful selection of greetings cards, but you'll also frequently find her at our book fairs. Lynne also offers her professional

And we make sure the value goes on: after every book fair we issue a credit voucher back to the school, based on the value of books that parents buy. We encourage the schools to bring disengaged youngsters back to the bookshop to allow them to learn browsing skills, to select books themselves for the school's library, and to then feel a sense of ownership over these books as they come across them over the years. **It is good marketing, good outreach, and it forms a true virtuous circle.**

How we work with schools

1. **We offer recommendations.**

Because we meet with children's book publishers every month, we are able to offer up-to-date advice on new titles.

2. **We are able to negotiate good rates.** We, too, want schools' resources to stretch as far as possible.

3. **We offer a third place.** We have heard youngsters say that the bookshop is neither school nor teachers, so takes pressure off them about reading.



Our book fair at Ashleigh Primary—we saw children whose families are known for being reluctant about reading showing true excitement about buying a book for themselves



Wymondham High Art students created our Christmas window 2015—drawing families to the shop, and generating publicity in the local newspaper



Every child gets a Kett's Books balloon on a stick, whether they buy a book or not

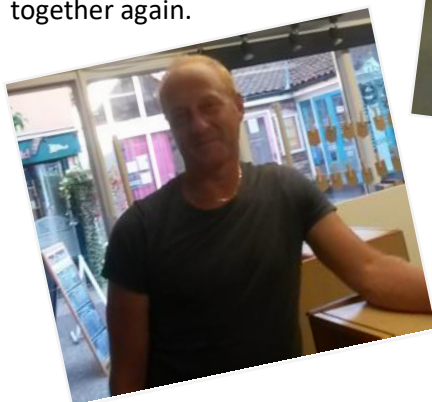
experience in HR to help us make sure we look after our people correctly, from basic health and safety to making sure they feel valued and appreciated. With any time left over she also represents Kett's Books with the Mulbarton Words Festival.

Shop improvements



By August 2016 we'd realised that although loved all the books, the huge shelf down the middle of the shop was preventing us seeing each other.

One Wednesday evening we stripped the shelves so a clever book-loving builder could take them apart and put them back together again.



During this year Steve has moved our shelves, created better storage, stripped out old wiring, extended our power points across the window, deepened the window display space, and fixed our sticky door—all minor but significant shop improvements.



Ian's in on Tuesday afternoons, and often comes in to his shift to find a DIY task waiting—lights are becoming a specialty, but he'd rather be tending the beautiful flowers around our window.



The change to the layout has gone down extremely well with customers and volunteers. Children enjoy having a space their own size, and weary adults enjoy sitting in the cosy space with a coffee to gaze at our poetry, art, non-fiction and history selection. Here we use the space to welcome the author of *Watchmaker of Filigree Street*, Natasha Pulley (below).



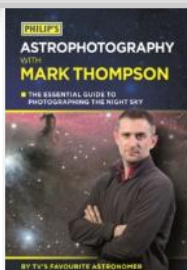
Karen was with us so early she led the street-based market research to measure the town's desire to have a bookshop. An expert in stock takes and returns, Karen's often found in on Saturday mornings.

Author visits



Astronomer Mark Thompson grew our minds by holding a stargazing event for us

12 Jan 2016

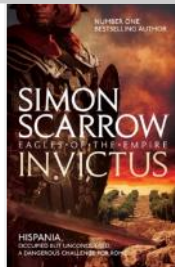


Author visits are one area of our community activity where we this year began to truly see the importance of working together with the community.



Simon Scarrow talked about historical adventure novels

17 Feb 2016

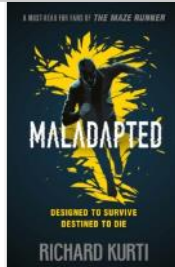


We revised our strategy for selecting authors into one of partnership, looking from the beginning for opportunities to share our events with other groups in town.



Children's author Richard Kurti visited the shop and later tweeted 'This is the future of bookselling'

20 April 2016

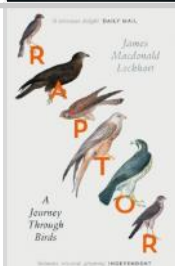


This was best demonstrated in the event with John Davies and Tim Pestell (pictured far right),



James Macdonald Lockhart read from *Raptor*

12 Aug 2016



Chris Brown is one of our closest out-of-shop volunteers, who has had great success persuading an impressive range of authors to visit our shop. His relaxed interview style makes authors and visitors

authors of *A History of Norfolk in 100 Objects*. The book was popular with local historians as well as readers, so we organised a sell-out ticketed event as part of the Wymondham Words Festival, held in the Wymondham Heritage Museum.

Working in collaboration meant three community resources reached additional supporters of other like-minded groups, and ensured a highly successful event for us all.



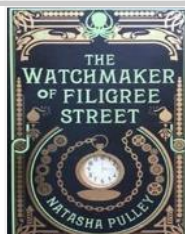
Muriel Murch shared the human side of nursing care in an event to benefit the Big C charity

Sept 2016



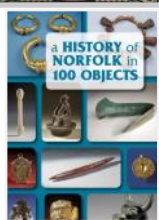
Natasha Pulley delighted our visitors discussing her hugely popular first novel

4 Oct 2016



Authors John Davies and Tim Pestell explored the history of Norfolk at a shared event

18 Oct 2016



Popular local historians Adrian and Ann Hoare launched *On the Trail of Kett's Rebellion 1549* to a packed bookshop

29 Oct 2016



The feature we brokered with the EDP Weekend magazine, to announce the launch of *'On the Trail of Kett's Rebellion 1549'* by Adrian and Anne Hoare

alike feel comfortable. The events he leads are often called 'personal' and 'cosy' - just right for Kett's Books.

Friends

When we first set up Kett's Books, one of first conversations was about how we could give people a way to 'join' the shop. We came up with the Friends scheme as a way for those who believe in what we're doing, but who know that volunteering on a regular basis isn't for them.

In our third year of trading, 103 customers either joined or renewed membership in the scheme. As membership starts at £20, their contributions provide a vital financial 'cushion' for us to continue to trade during the ups and downs a business inevitably faces (see page 5 for an illustration).

We also feel encouraged seeing card-carrying supporters return to the shop—and it helps our volunteers who've not met you yet, to recognise that you're 'one of us.'



Friends enjoy a 10% discount on books including most special orders for a year and a bit. But we feel like it's not about the discount—it's more about giving you a way of showing you believe in what we do.

The Friends scheme is open to new members and renewals. We're now trying to encourage Friends to set up a standing order to make sure your membership stays up to date, to avoid the hassle of renewing, and to allow us to plan.

You can either do this yourself through your online banking, or we can provide you a standing order form for us to send to your bank. Either way, please let us know so we can recognise your contribution and send you a new card when you renew.



David is usually in the shop on a Thursday morning, but further helps us by turning up at stock takes, school book fairs, and business meetings. David analyses our data so we can better understand how

Kind words

“We didn’t even know there was a bookshop in Wymondham. We’d given up trying to get our three boys to read, with all their problems. Now they have all read the book you recommended when you visited our school, and we come into the bookshop to get more advice about what would keep them reading.”

– Village school parent of dyslexic and autistic sons



“I used to go into Norwich to look around the big bookshops. I went upstairs and downstairs, and back home on the bus empty-handed. Now I just stay in Wymondham, wander into the warm bookshop where I feel welcome, and always go home with a book I love.”

- Customer commented on his way out the door
(with a book under his arm)

“As a volunteer at Kett's Books for over a year, I have seen a huge growth in my confidence. Working in a community-run bookshop has really bridged the generational divide that I perceived to exist within Wymondham: when I enter Kett's Books, I recognise myself as an equal within a passionate community of readers and writers, and I have found that to be an incredibly empowering experience.”

- Rose, Wymondham high Sixth Former and volunteer

“You lot have really done it. It’s not just open, it’s beautiful. That’s the only word for what you’re doing. Thank you for being here. It’s wonderful.”

- Many-years customer of ‘the bookshop’ in Wymondham

we’re doing, administers the Friends scheme, and runs our box office service. His observant eye can always be relied on to spot ways that we can improve and make sure all things are better for all of us in the shop.

More than words



Kett's Books is an independent community bookshop run by volunteers. In February 2014 we saved the town's high street bookshop from closure and developed it into a community-run, full-service independent bookshop.

The previous September our sixteen earliest supporters had met in the Cross Keys pub to discuss whether we could save the town's bookshop from closing and run it as volunteers.

We were literally a group of strangers drawn together by an article in the paper, but we agreed to "have a go," and in less than three months we had secured loans, formed a business, negotiated contracts, and got

the keys to start learning to run a bookshop.

We've now transformed our initial assets of enthusiasm, good will, cooperation, and money from some generous lenders, into a **successful high street shop, actively participating** in the local community, that has the loyalty and encouragement of our market town and for miles around.



The same conviction of "community" that formed us, is actually the value that defines us and keeps us successful.

Wymondham Community Bookshop

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