

More Than WORDS

Volume 5

Dec 2017-March 2019



Kett's
Books

Wyomndham Community Bookshop



Kett's Books

leaves
fall

&
BOOKS

call

Why bookshops?

At Kett's Books, we know that the right book can change your life.

It's a rare and wonderful thing - not every book will be able to do this. But you've got a much better chance of discovering exactly the right book you need right now, if you look in the right places.

Independent bookshops are a good place to start. They only sell the books they choose, and they match them to their community and what they like to read.

At Kett's Books we've taken that practice of independence, and grown it. Our space is little, but our impact is big: twenty-five volunteers work regular shifts, and another twenty or so work behind the scenes, to understand which books our readers deeply need, and what will make them happy.

Because we're readers ourselves, we know that sometimes you're not just looking for any old book - there are times you need a book that will show the way, restore your faith in humanity, or support you to step up to being the person you know you are meant to be. Our community saved the shop from closing, so we can be there to help find that book for you.

Life throws things at you - so you need an independent bookshop to help you find the right book. And you know, a life-changing gift isn't just going to fall into your trolley in the supermarket. Nor is it likely to get spewed out as the product of a robot algorithm online.

If your book matters, it should be put in your hand by someone who's looked you in the eye and noticed you're there.

It's not just bookshops where this applies, of course. Supporting independent and local shops supports the human connection, builds local economies, and preserves dying trades. It's a neighbourly thing to do.

We've stepped up to run the bookshop the way we think people should shop. By being independent, and by asking fair trade prices, Kett's Books is able to support writers and publishers. This is good for readers and everyone who loves language and believes in its power to change. The best books keep being written, and we're able to bring them to you.

Books are written for people, by people. Support independent bookshops, and your independent community bookshop, and let a real live independent thinking caring person put your next book in your hand. You, your town, and all the books will be better for it.

"I enjoyed that book so much I shall now just always ask you what I should read next."



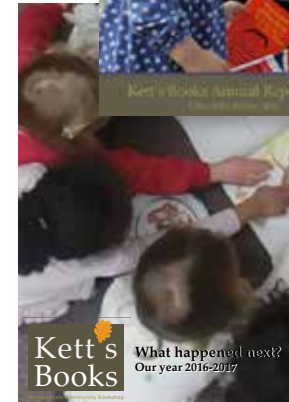
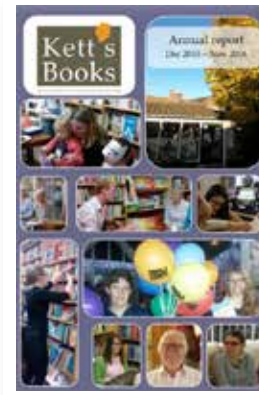
History of 'the bookshop in Wymondham'

Our oldest customers tell us that Wymondham has 'always' had a bookshop. We can't trace it back as far as that, but we know that our own story started very late in 2013, when the town was about to lose its bookshop to retirement. But Ray Rumsby, a loyal customer of the bookshop as it was then, was determined that Wymondham is the kind of town that needs an independent bookshop – and the rest is our history.

Ray took action. He called a public meeting in the Cross Keys pub, and in September 2013 a bunch of strangers agreed that we could face this challenge and save the shop. We asked each other, 'How difficult can it be?'

We've now spent five years answering that question, and despite challenges, we've pulled through. Even back then in the pub, having just met, we knew we were onto something: we shared a vision of a place where people of all ages can come together to talk about books and spread the love of reading with our town.

We moved quickly: only sixteen weeks later, on 1 February, we had funding, had done all the legal bits, got our teams organised, and opened Kett's Books. It's a story we tell again and again – in every window our volunteers Nicki and Mary put



MORE THAN WORDS: Our annual reports - Nov 2013-Nov 2014 (top left); Dec 2014-Nov 2015 (top right); Dec 2015-Nov 2016 (bottom left); Dec 2016-Nov 2017 (bottom right)

together, in every floral display Cathy puts together, in every ISBN Harriet types, we're showing that a group of volunteers can run a bookshop, because we are a community, and this is our gift to our town. We hope you enjoy being part of the story to come.

Volunteers

We firmly believe that Kett's Books will only remain successful while everyone feels they are part of it. Same as we are eager to help and will offer to make you a cup of tea, we will gladly accept if you then offer to go across the road to buy us more milk! We know we can only do this when are in it together, and we are better for it.

Yes it's true that it can get complicated, but actually by sharing the joy of bookselling with other people who believe in it, we create a really distinctive marketing proposition. We get the benefit of everyone's wide reading, their professional skills, and their life experience, and they bring all their friends and family, too.

The story of a bunch of strangers saving the shop and running it together, is our unique story. It resonates with the public, and it makes us successful. And now we've done it, we can't imagine running a bookshop any other way.



"Nothing seems to faze them; perseverance is their middle name!"

1644

The number of books our volunteers read every year

7020

The number of hours volunteered in our shop every year

1560

The number of customer orders placed every year

25

The average number of volunteers who work a regular shift in the shop

14

The age of our youngest volunteer

75+

The age of our oldest volunteers

20

The number of volunteers who've been with us three years or more

Looking back at this year



JULY 2018

LOSS OF OUR FRIEND GEOFF KIRK

Geoff had been with us from the beginning and we were devastated to lose him to a stroke in July 2018. He is very much missed but his work in growing the community goes on as the *One Community, One Book* project, thanks to the kind gifts from his family and friends.



MARCH 2018

SNOW STOPS EVERYTHING!

In March the snows came down, World Book Day was delayed, and yet our neighbours in the motor shop dug a path to our door, so we opened every day. It was an icy, wintry wonderland, and our customers who stomped and dragged their way in were delighted to see us there with the kettle on!



JUNE 2018

HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

Em K and Tracy went to a Booksellers Association reception at the Houses of Parliament to advocate for the importance of independent bookshops in UK culture.



MARCH 2019

LONDON BOOK FAIR

The Booksellers Association invited Tracy to join them at the London Book Fair to speak about community bookshops, to great success.

BABIES

Our volunteers have been producing the next generation of readers! In October 2018, Chloe and Garry welcomed Rory to their home. Then in January 2019 Em and Jon brought young Casper into the world! We are all very excited to have fresh reasons to read baby books!



SUMMER 2018

PICNIC AT BISHOP'S HOUSE GARDEN

In 2018 we ventured beyond the bookshop: many of us met for a Sunday afternoon picnic at the Bishop's House Gardens. On a separate sunny afternoon, Lynne and David organised the Friends for a day out to visit the Brundall gardens featured in the book *Rescue of a Garden*.



FEBRUARY 2019

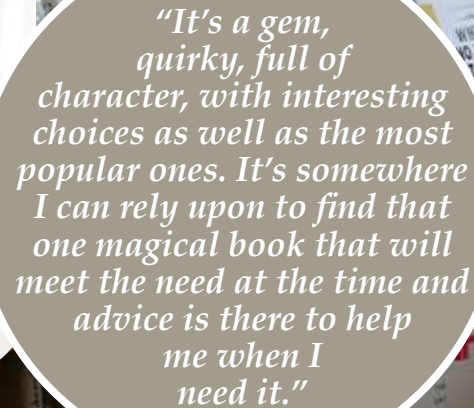
OUR FIFTH BIRTHDAY

Five years previous we met as a bunch of strangers in a pub, wondering if we could make a bookshop happen. Some doubted we'd even get started; some thought we'd fail before our first year. But here we are, and many of those Friends, customers and volunteers who made it happen joined us for our all-day birthday party. We couldn't have done it without you!

Stuff we've learned

One of the principles we work by is that it's okay to make mistakes, as long as we all learn from them. Here are some of the things we've learned this year.

- 1 Yes we can build a dinosaur out of newspaper, a fireplace out of book boxes, and make a train fly.
- 2 The recipe for a great school book fair: combine it with free cakes and fancy dress.
- 3 GDPR was a great opportunity for us to review all our customer service.
- 4 You never know what big difference a small kindness may make.
- 5 Sometimes we have to accept something's not working and change.
- 6 There is no such thing as a typical book buyer.
- 7 It turns out that the community works: we are there for each other.
- 8 African drummers make a lot of noise.
- 9 Customers recognise themselves in anecdotes.
- 10 We are still a great story – lots of people have been writing about us!



"It's a gem, quirky, full of character, with interesting choices as well as the most popular ones. It's somewhere I can rely upon to find that one magical book that will meet the need at the time and advice is there to help me when I need it."

Author events

Being a bookshop means our community of volunteers and customers always have something to talk about – What are you reading? is our favourite question!

So when we get the opportunity to invite one of our most popular authors to come visit us, we are all eager to hear more, first-hand.

And though it's a great thrill meeting our favourite writer face-to-face, we believe that being in a room with an author and hearing them discuss their work is more important than that. Hearing about the motivation for a piece of writing, and having the opportunity to ask questions, makes the reading experience more personal.

Readers who meet authors think more about the thinking behind the book, and become better thinkers themselves. Our community becomes more empathetic, creative and curious. And we all discover new favourite books to discuss, together. It's what community bookshops are about.

Ann Thwaite
*Goodbye
Christopher Robin*
December 2017

Rory Clements
Nucleus
February 2018

Elly Griffiths
The Dark Angel
July 2018

Emma Healey
Whistle in the Dark
September 2018

Louis de Bernières
*So Much Life
Left Over*
October 2018

George Szirtes
*The Photographer
at Sixteen*
February 2019



Elly Griffiths



Louis de Bernières



Ann Thwaite

Outreach

Being a not-for-profit means that we are motivated by more than money – so we try to make everything we do matter, even if it's just offering a customer a drink.

But we don't just wait for them to come to us. Because we have so many willing volunteers, we can leave our comfortable courtyard and go to where the people are - so they know about Kett's Books, and so they can benefit from our work, too.

Here are a few examples of what we've done this year to take the bookshop beyond its walls:

- Every year we visit dozens of schools to hold assemblies, book fairs, and read with children.
- We have worked with Wymondham High Academy to create a list of competencies so our youngest volunteers can build a portfolio of transferrable skills.



In October 2018 we asked Norfolk-based children's author Isabelle King to hold a children's writing workshop for us in the library. The children were fascinated by her stories of local history, and threw themselves into the task of creating their own fantastical characters within our historical county.



In World Book Week 2018 we visited twelve schools in 10 days, shifting up to 400 books per visit, and giving away balloons and hundreds of World Book Day books which we purchased for the occasion. We do this to reach the children who would not be brought to the bookshop, to build excitement around reading.

- At our school book fairs we allow pupils to help run the book event, and we also lead assemblies to help deliver the message about building excitement around choosing the right book.
- We went into Wymondham High to launch a project teaching pupils marketing skills for a real business setting.
- We happily and freely give prizes to schools and charities for use in their fundraising.
- Each month we run two book groups for adults, a book group for ages 9-11, and a story tea party. We are always interested in developing further groups, so do speak with us if you're interested in setting one up.

"Although this is a tiny bookshop it is power-packed! It is excellently run and has established a good core of customers and runs popular and well-supported outreach events."

Our TOP 10 bestsellers this year

Hand-selling is one of the things we do best: recommendations get passed between volunteers, to customers, so we've often got a trend of what 'everybody' is reading.

Here are our TOP 10 bestsellers for the period December 2017-April 2019:



Books with a local focus continue to do well: of the TOP 10 bestsellers, six are written by Norfolk-based authors or are set in Norfolk.

But it's not just down to the local connection: these are books we wholly stand behind as being great writing, a good story, and an all-round great read.



Volunteers Emma and Trevor attended the launch of CJ Sansom's Tombland at Norwich Cathedral

Friends

The door at Kett's Books is always open to the whole community, not just our volunteers. Many of our regular customers have joined our Friends scheme, which our volunteer David Kinnaird has been leading since 2014. With the help of dedicated shop colleagues, the Friends group has grown to a large group of 210 committed, card-carrying supporters of the shop.

David and all of us at Kett's Books are really grateful to all our Friends for their ongoing support. The annual subscription means that the bookshop has been able to meet the sometimes unexpected costs that a business can face, and allows us the cash flow to take opportunities we might otherwise miss out on.

We hope we are friendly with all our customers! However the Friends scheme is for those supporters who want to do that bit more, without the commitment of volunteering. For **£20 a year** Friends get **10% off purchases**, previews and extra discounts on not-yet-published pre-orders, and free tickets to many events.

Our customers love to show their Friends card – it's like a secret pass to show that they are in on what's special about Kett's Books, and that they are one of those who make it happen.



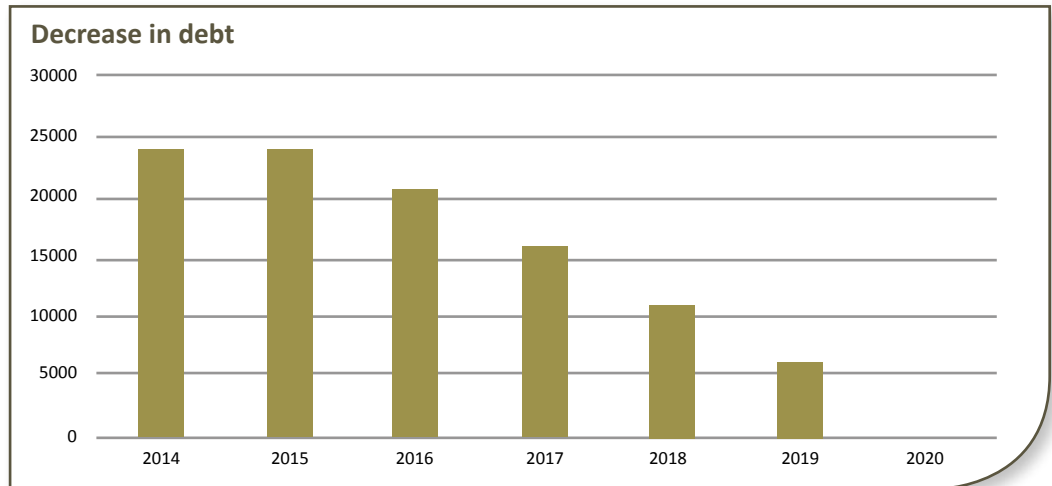
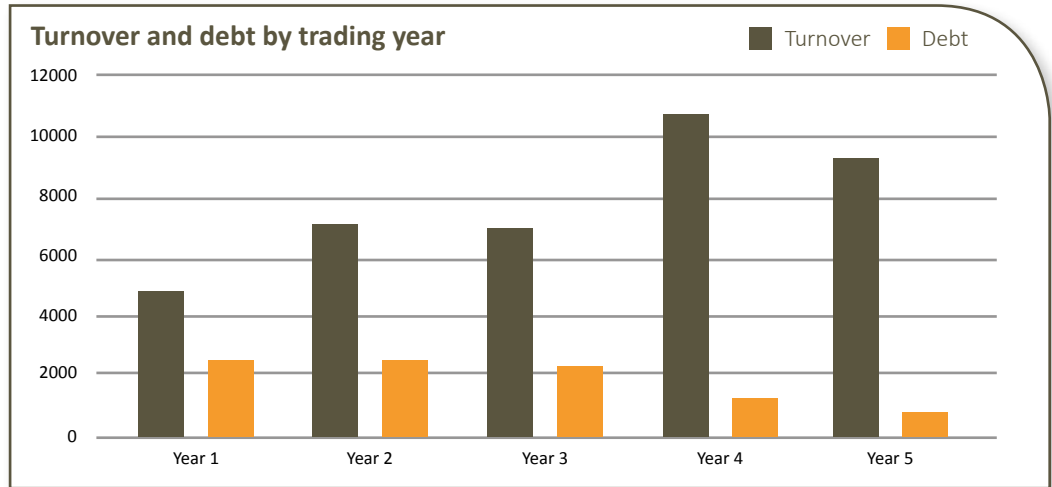
"A great example of a bookshop for a community in the 21st century."

Finance

At Kett's Books we may focus on the people, but we still have a pretty big spreadsheet we drive behind the scenes. However comfortable and carefree we want everyone to feel in our shop, the Directors and Financial Support Group are always conscious that we're running a business, and we want it to be strong and stable for the future.

We live in the real world. We know that money can be tight, and we know that there are a thousand places where you could get your books. But our customers are actually a pretty moral bunch of people. They know that a personal recommendation still matters. They share our hopes of saving the high street. And they get that our business is about more than about the pounds and pence – because we are a community, our customers are literally buying into something that matters.

So we've got some simple numbers we can share, and we're pretty excited that they show we're doing something well. We have you, our faithful customers and supporters, to thank for that.



Outreach: One Community, One Book



In March 2019, at the end of this financial year, we launched our biggest outreach project yet. Reflecting on the contribution our colleague Geoff had made to our community, we wanted to create a project in the spirit of the conversation and friendship we enjoyed with him.

We decided to create a book group for the whole town, where we all read the same book, for a year. Finding a book which we could endorse and give to anyone would be a challenge, but we decided to take the leap, and soon discovered *We Must Be Brave* and its wonderful author Frances Liardet. We used the initial seed money that Geoff's family gave us to invite Frances to visit Wymondham four times during the year, for a variety of community events.

The book is perfect for pulling people together of all ages, as it's about a 20th century life, a small town pulling together in the face of terrible hardship, and the lifelong pain of separation.

Wymondham has enthusiastically joined with us to support the project, and we are thrilled to see groups across town joining the discussion. It's a new effort and we don't know what will happen next – what we do know is that it is already exceeding our hope that it would create conversations and introduce friendships where they didn't exist before.



Frances Liardet, author of We Must Be Brave, will visit Wymondham four times during 2019

One Community ONE BOOK 2019

What you said...

“Kett’s Books is a community enterprise, run by volunteers for the local community. Their service is completely professional. They organise author visits, book groups and work with local schools. We are fortunate to have them working for us in Wymondham.”

“I have Dyspraxia and Asperger’s and anxiety and depression and the other staff and volunteers are so helpful and understanding.”

“The bookshop has a real community feel to it with close ties to local schools.”

“Fabulous shop, staffed by knowledgeable volunteers passionate about books, reading and writing. Lovely positive, nurturing atmosphere - with real team and community working. Outreach to schools helps support those children who can’t come to the bookshop. Book groups are inclusive and fun open to all who want to join.”

“Kett’s Books is a wonderful place to visit as you can be sure to discover a new and exciting author. The staff are all great and ever willing to help without being intrusive. There is never any pressure to buy and it is always a joy to visit!”

“The staff are very helpful, cheerful and friendly. There is a lovely atmosphere in the shop and browsing there is a peaceful, unhurried experience.”

You may think you know Kett's Books: many know the story of how in 2014 a group of community-minded volunteers got together to save the town's independent bookshop from closing.

We're now an active group of 50 or so, and we're proud of how our community of booklovers is making the bookshop such a part of life in the town.

This little book reminds those who already know us of our story, fills in the gaps for those just discovering us, and for the first time, tackles the big question of why we need bookshops at all.

Have a look, then come and see us in action. Meeting new people and talking about books is what we do best!

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(*He's one of our volunteers!*)




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