



Chair's Report AGM 2021

The last year has certainly had its challenges! 2020 started optimistically with great sales in what is generally a quieter time of year for retail. Many of you would have been at our 10 Year Anniversary celebration at Ruskin College on March 4th. It was such a lovely evening, well -attended by volunteers and shareholders.

In mid-March life changed dramatically for everyone living in the UK when we moved into lockdown due to the pandemic. As the shop is not an essential business, it closed on March 24th and our manager was furloughed from April 1st. There were discussions about whether to run a delivery service but the committee decided against this. We were very grateful for the government small retail grant, the rates exemption and our landlord exempting us from rent for two months as this support enabled us to continue when the shop reopened again on June 13th. The committee planned carefully the reopening of the shop so that it would be Covid-safe for our staff, volunteers and customers.

We were pleased to have four and a half months of good trading before the next lockdown in November. Meanwhile we appointed a media assistant in mid-October who set up 'Click and Collect' on our website which enabled us to carry on limited trading in November and the first few months of 2021. We also appointed an assistant manager who ably supported our manager when we re-opened.

We had a fantastic month of trading in December once we reopened and we were delighted with this, although our annual sales were £32,000 less than in 2019 due to the many months we were closed.

We continued to improve the premises at the start of 2021. We redecorated the back end of the shop – the office, kitchen and food storage room. Many thanks to the volunteers who carried out this work.

Our shareholders continue to support us – without their commitment the shop would not be able to continue. By increasing their shareholding or helping by giving loans when needed, their support is essential to our growth.

Our volunteers continue to be amazing – we are so grateful for the time they give up to help in the shop, sometimes at short notice, and the time they spend outside of the shop helping to promote it.

Our staff have also been fantastic, in particular our manager Suzie Hodgson, whose presence, knowledge, commitment, flair, artistic skill and efficiency is amazing!

Our committee work tirelessly in so many ways to support the shop. Many thanks to Pru Dickson and Kate MacFarlane for their work on the committee over many years and welcome to Nina Peace, who joined us a year ago.

2021 will be a challenging year again as we were closed for the first three and a half months. The shop recently reopened and there is optimism for the future here in the UK, as numbers of Covid infections reduce following lockdown and vaccinations. Sadly, this is not the case in many other parts of the world and many of our partners overseas are suffering greatly. This means they need our support even more and we are mindful of this.

Sue Baker