

SOUVENIR EDITION

We make history yet again as we take over our library

Puddletown library has become the first in Dorset to be run entirely by the community it serves. On Monday 7th January Kate Adie, the distinguished BBC war correspondent, came to cut the ribbon that symbolised our independence from county council control.

To celebrate this historic development, this special souvenir edition of the newsletter of the Friends of Puddletown Library is devoted to pictures of that momentous and historic moment—a moment that brought two television crews and many photographers to the village.

This is the second time that Puddletown's volunteers have made history. In 2008 that they became the first group in Dorset to work with professional staff to extend opening hours.

On both occasions Puddletown's volunteer librarians stepped in to save the library when it was threatened with closure when Dorset County Council needed to save money. Five years ago, instead of closing our library and 13 others, the council decided to reduce opening hours at all its libraries. As Puddletown would have been open with a paid librarian for only six hours a week, the Friends group's volunteers stepped in to increase the hours and allow the library to open on four days a week for a total of 10 hours.

They had to come to the rescue again last year. Then the council needed to save even more money so decided to remove its staff completely from Puddletown and eight other small libraries — all but one of which, led by us, will now take over the professionals' work completely. We had to do the work ourselves or lose our library for ever. The Friends were determined to save it so they recruited more

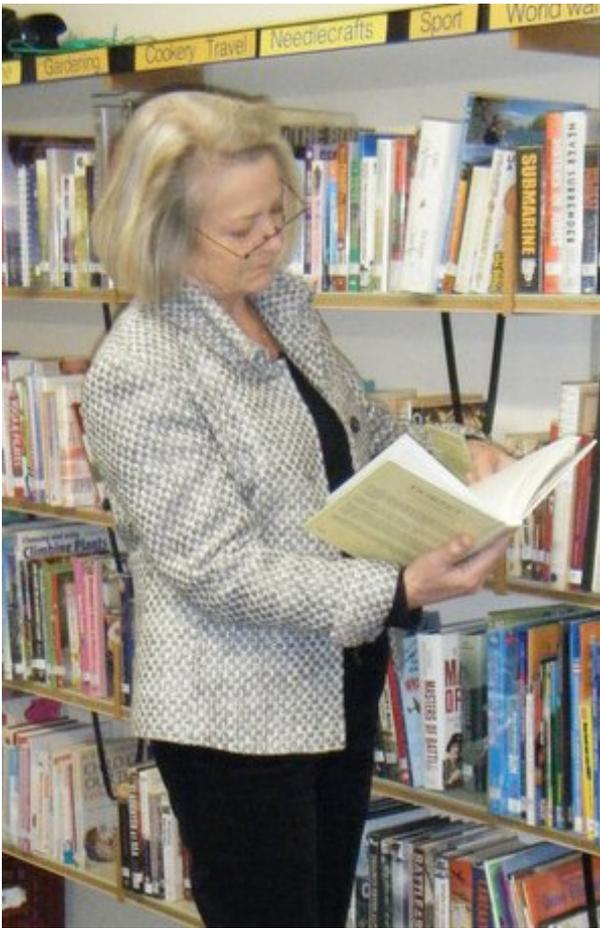


...and the toast is: Long Live Puddletown Library

Leading the toast to our future (left) is our celebrity guest Kate Adie. With her are (l to r) Roy and Diana Bennett, after the handover; Counc.Hilary Cox of Dorset County Council; and Mike Chaney and Kevin Bumby, of the Friends' management committee.

volunteers and now, with technical support and the books coming from Dorchester, they are completely in charge. Their enthusiasm was praised by Kate Adie; by Councillor Hilary Cox who is responsible for the county's libraries; and by West Dorset's MP, Oliver Letwin, who fought with the Friends for the library to stay in council care. In a letter to them he said how disappointed he was not to be able to join in the celebrations. 'Your struggle to save your library has been heroic,' he wrote.

At the hand-over Friends chairman, Mike Chaney, stressed what a struggle it will be to keep the library going. 'We need the whole-hearted support of our community,' he said. 'Not only do we need more volunteers but we also need everyone to back our vital fund-raising activities. It is going to cost the Friends around £3,000 a year to pay the rent and to keep the place warm and dry. So we'll need everyone's backing to help us raise the money.'



Kate Adie samples our stock (left); Lizzie Peckover presents her with a bouquet (above); and we welcome Marilyn Wheller (below left), who was our library manager for nearly 20 years



If only we could attract crowds like this (above) to the library when bubbly and cake aren't on offer...



Long-serving volunteers, Sylvia Hanby & Brian Turner (+ tv cameraman)



Marilyn again, this time she's with volunteer Paul Poser



The library becomes ours: Kate cuts the ribbon and Hilary Cox (left) hands the place over to our care