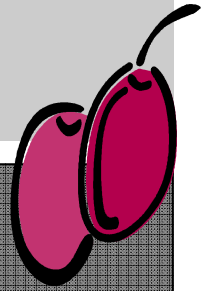


# Lost by one vote — but our library CAN survive...



THERE can't be many readers in Puddletown and the surrounding villages who don't already know that last month Dorset County Councillors voted 21-20 to stop funding our library from next year. That decision leaves us with a simple choice. We either say

by  
**Mike  
Chaney**

goodbye to a library we have enjoyed for the past 34 years or we work to keep it going ourselves. As chairman (for now) of the Friends group I believe we need to hold a meeting to find out just how many people are willing to give up some of their spare time to keep the show on the road. Sometime in September, when most of our holidays are out of the way, we must see whether a self-help library is a practical proposition. We have 12 volunteers now. We

will need three times as many to keep the place open for the same number of hours that it's open now. I am sure we must not cut back on

opening hours if the place is to survive as a credible library.

Of course, there are more difficulties to overcome than just finding enough people to work in and on the library. There will also be the constant uphill fight to raise the money that running our own library will cost this community. The county council pays the

village hall £1,500 a year in rent, which will have to be found if the cost of hiring the hall is not to be pushed up.

On top of that will be the cost of heating and lighting the building and insuring the people who work there. At the moment the library is liable for council tax which would fall on us, unless we can win charitable status.

I have tried to show what a hill we will have to climb if we are to run our own library.

But difficulties we face are not the whole story. There will be benefits, too, from turning the place into a facility we can make more use of than we do now.

**See over for a more cheerful look at our future**

## PLUM

The Newsletter of the Friends of Puddletown Library

August 2011

**WHEN** this newsletter first took shape, it was given the title **PLUM** because, in those early days of the Friends group, we thought we were going to have to run our library entirely by ourselves. The title is an acronym: **P**uddletown **L**ibrary, **U**pkeep and **M**aintenance. In the end our library was spared, though we had to supplement our library manager's hours which were cut to save the county council money.

So, apart from some painting and a little 'gardening', we haven't needed to do much upkeep. From next year though, things will be different. From then on, if the building needs painting or patching, we'll have to do it. The council won't help us. Our title has come true.

Can **YOU** lend a hand if we need you?

## ...if enough of us will work to save it

*If you are on-line, send details to [chaneatley@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:chaneatley@tiscali.co.uk). An electronic newsletter is so much easier to deliver*

# Here's how we can turn a roomful of books into a community asset

ALTHOUGH it will be a tough job, the executive committee of the Friends of Puddletown Library believes that we can run the library for ourselves.

'I am far from happy about the way the county council has gone about making the savings it needs,' says Friends' treasurer (and parish council chairman) Steve Buck, 'but it has responded to relentless pressure and has agreed to help us if we take the place off its hands. After it stops paying for the library it will go on providing a constantly changing supply of books. It will also retain the computer links to library HQ in Dorchester which means we will be able to go on using the self-service console — without that we would have to go back to identification cards in all the books.'

Steve thinks it equally

important that the council will continue to maintain the computers so that library users will be able to access the internet.

Veteran volunteer Roy Bennett, who, with his wife Diana is regularly on duty in the library, believes the chance to take it over gives us the

**'This is our chance to show what we can do'**

opportunity to get much better use out of it.

'Once we are running it,' says Roy, 'we won't be restricted by what Dorchester thinks are the best times to open up. We can make the place available whenever there's a need and there's someone to run things. It could become a really companionable community asset. It'll be up to us to think of ways

to get the best use of out it.'

Roy points out that the Friends already give computing lessons in the library and as they own the gear they can keep them going for as long as there is a demand.

Committee activist Rosie Wyndham, who organises the monthly book club that meets in the library, thinks we can make a better job of it than the county's library service.

'Despite the dedicated work done by our library manager, Marilyn Wheller, use of the library is falling badly.

'We can put some zip into the way we do things that Marilyn wasn't allowed to do. We all hope for the best for both her and Jill when the dust settles.'

All we need is bright ideas — and people to make them happen.

## Age catches up...so a new chairman is needed

PUDDLETOWN Friends group has been led by Mike Chaney for the past three years — ever since our volunteers have been helping to extend opening hours. But he's 80 now and his mobility is severely restricted by arthritis so he is hoping that there's someone willing to take over from him — preferably before next year's AGM.

'I'm happy to keep editing your newsletter if you want me to do so,' says Mike, 'but I am no longer fit to work in the library and would welcome a rest.

'But please don't take it to mean I'm against our having a shot at running our own library. It's just that someone fitter will have to do the running.'

## Carnival bonanza

The Friends' bookstall at the Carnival was another triumph. It made a profit of around £150. Thanks for all who provided books, labour or custom — or even all three..

## How the fight was fought — and the battle lost

IT'S been a long a gruelling fight. We were told in December that 20 libraries would lose their money. Ad Lib was formed and argued so strongly for the mainly rural communities in the firing line that by the spring we were told that 10 of the 20 were reprieved, sadly we were not included. Then we argued for better conditions for any community going it alone — see above. In June one more was saved. As this was going on our county councillor David Crowhurst was leading an

all-party group of councillors which, after exhaustive work, found that all 34 libraries could be saved yet all the economies the council needed to make could be achieved too. It seemed obvious: why, we argued, would the council want to lose libraries when it would cost it nothing extra to keep them open? But such logic failed: the vote was lost 21-20. David Crowhurst and six of his colleagues voted for us — but to no avail. Our funding was lost by a single vote.

Please send your 2011 subscription to our treasurer at 3 High St., Puddletown DT2 8RT