

Wrens Shop: How it Happened



When, in 2004, the villagers of East Knoyle heard that their post office and shop, situated on the corner of Wise Lane, was going to close they were devastated at losing such an important part of village life. The parish council soon realised that there was such a strong desire for keeping a post office and shop in the village that an action group was set up. They began the long and complicated process of finding support and funding to establish a new one. The first step was to create a local not-for-profit providence society – effectively a trading charity – in which all villagers could become shareholders.

By the time the original post office closed in February 2004, the action group had become a Board of Directors and had started applying for grants. Since the site of the old post office had become the retiring post master's home a different site had to be found for the new one. The decision was taken to put up a new post office/shop on the site of the village bus shelter which had become almost redundant as there were only two buses a week to East Knoyle.

By February 2005 building and planning could start with grants of over £140,000 from funding bodies such as Defra, Cranborne Chase, AONB and the Post Office Restart Fund, a remarkable £30,000 through local fundraising and numerous donations from villagers.

The group chose to bank with the Co-op Bank because of its ethical approach and because of its great support and encouragement in the planning stages. The Co-op Bank continues to be a great ally to Wren's Shop.

Wren's Shop, named after Sir Christopher Wren who was born in the village of East Knoyle where his father was rector, was officially opened on 23rd. June 2006 by Terry Pratchett, the renowned author who lives in the area.

The compact shop consists of a post office counter, a store room at the back, kitchen, toilet (for volunteer shop assistants) and a sorting room for the village postman. It is open seven days a week with opening hours shown on the shop page of the East Knoyle website – www.east-knoyle.co.uk

Wren's Shop stocks everyday essentials such as milk, fresh baked bread, tea, eggs and fresh meat as well as tinned food of all kinds, wine and beer and some deli speciality lines like champagne – chilled, of course – Gentleman's Relish and trout terrine. A special effort is made to source fresh produce from local suppliers.