

10 YEARS IN MARCHAM

On 18 May 1995 Julia and David opened the doors of Marcham Village Stores for their first day. But they nearly didn't... with understandable first-day nerves, they couldn't remember which of the huge bunch of keys opened the front door!

All Post Offices are handed over on a Wednesday (early closing day) so that the normal routine is not disturbed too much. So on that first Thursday morning, David was behind the PO counter ready for his 2-week, intensive on-the-job training and Julia was serving at the till; when the trainer arrived their first question was "Which is the busiest day of the week?" and of course the answer was 'Thursday'! Sure enough, soon there was a queue of people waiting for pensions, benefits, stamps etc. As David learned the ins and outs of the Post Office, Julia too had to learn quickly when the first customer of the day had her stumped "How much is a pint of milk?"!

But it could have been so different. When Julia decided to give up her job as a dental nurse and David stopped being a quantity surveyor, they had planned to take over a guest house on the south coast. After several visits and discussions with existing owners they felt B&B might not be for them and started to look around for other opportunities. One day they saw an advert for a PO and stores 'near Frilford Golf Course'. They

had resigned themselves to moving away from Abingdon

Did you know...
that **Adam Ball** of fox fm's Big Drive Home is David's son?

but this looked too good to miss.

In the ten years they have been here, they have tried out many new ideas in the shop and now have a good balance of the necessities (stamps, bread, milk, eggs), the items that make up a well-stocked local store (ice cream, beer and wine, toiletries) plus the extras that make it special (ham on the bone, fresh-baked bread, DVD rentals).

The limited floor area of the shop means that everything has to earn its keep to keep its place. As the popularity of some items faded, they had to make way for sure-fire hits such as fruit and vegetables, orders for meat and the Lottery. Newspapers were added to the range after the shop in Haines Court closed last year.

Computerisation has also meant a big change with all prices detected by the bar-code scanner, there is now no need to know how much a pint of milk costs! They have little time for leisure – Sunday afternoon is the nearest they get to a weekend off – but up



until a couple of years ago, David played bass in several R&B and soul bands while Julia was the sound engineer.

Every summer they take their holiday in Mallorca where they can recharge their batteries in the sunshine ready for another year in Marcham.

Barney the dog on the steps waiting for his morning biscuit from his favourite customer. From the first day, Barney has never wanted to enter the shop and prefers to keep an eye on what is going on from his vantage point!



David and Julia's success is based on their adaptability and attention to personal service. They know many customers by their first names and have become "personal shoppers" for some people with sight or mobility problems.

This approach to shop-keeping should allow them to survive the pressures of low-price loss-leaders from the big supermarkets or all-night shopping. But they can only survive with our support and you can apply the old formula from the Tower of London, "If the Ravens leave the Tower, the Tower will surely fall" but in this case if the store should close the Post Office will go with it.

**MARCHAM
POST OFFICE & STORES**

16 North Street, Marcham
Tel: (01865) 391261

OPENING HOURS

MON – FRI 8.00am – 8.00pm
SAT 8.30am – 8.00pm
SUN 9.00am – 12.00pm

If you would like to contribute or can suggest a suitable subject to be "In Profile", give me a call on 01865 391725. Ed