



MUSTARD SEED 29th AGM
17 November 2023
 6.30pm: Blessed Hugh Church Hall

Present:	Apologies:	Apologies:	Apologies (contd):
Sjoerd Vogt (Chairman) Katie Foot (Manager) Karen Vogt (Manager) Rosalind Burns Fr Claro Liz Kilpatrick Sue & Keith Thrower Dave Headey Maureen Courtney John Seedell Malcolm & Val Swift Ann White Helen Jackson (15 attended)	Gaynor & Nigel Archer Brenda & David Barber Angela & Mike Barrett Lois & Andrew Chell Tim & Sharon Gerry Margaret & Eric Gutsell Jill Headey Ann & Derek Jerome Geoff/Muriel Loosemore Bruce & Carol Garfield	Denise Monk Jim & Helen Mynors Ruth Seedell Libby/Michael Smedley David/Lyn Williamson Peter Foot Jonathan & Barbara Mapley Maria Jukes Jenny King Emily Smith	

The meeting was opened with bible reading and prayer .

Minutes of the 28th AGM were signed as a correct record of the meeting held 11th Nov 2022 in the Barber Rooms. No items outstanding that are not discussed below.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

CHALLENGES

Even though we're now a year out of lockdown, we continue to face a raft of challenges. Instead of having a single reliable supplier for our fairtrade goods (Traidcraft) we now have to work with half a dozen less reliable suppliers – meaning significant frustration, extra work, and empty shelves. On the Christian books side and our 100% reliance on the Lighthouse Bookshop, we will also need to make important decisions about our future direction. Lower footfall still means mornings only for most of the year; and inflation/increased prices translate to increased customer cost-sensitivity. Not only have we seen the demise of our major trade supplier and the imminent closure of the Lighthouse Bookshop, but we're also seeing other Christian Bookshops in the area that have had to close their doors (for example, the Rainbow Bookshop in Swindon) as well as fairtrade shops (notably Fairtrade at St Michael's) .

We all need to continue to rally together to ensure that the Mustard Seed will still be around for another 37 years!

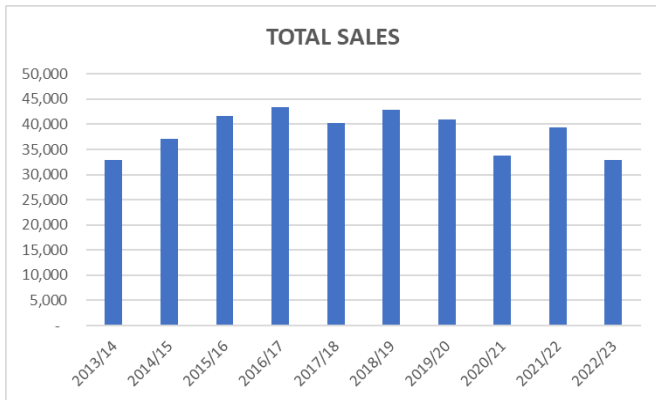
FOOTFALL



Faringdon is much better off than many Market Towns of similar size – with new retail businesses continuing to take the plunge. It's a town centre that continues to evolve and we can help in steering the direction, but we certainly can't take anything for granted. We thank our amazing team for their resilience and their flexibility.

SALES

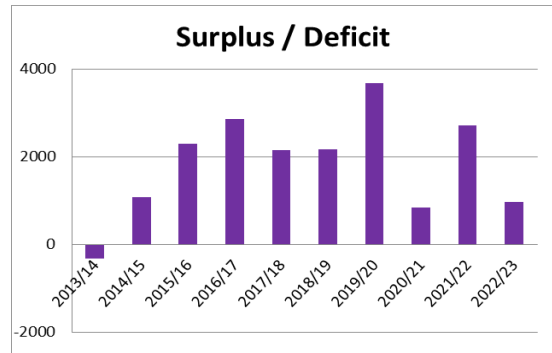
A perfect storm of negative factors conspire to drive down our sales. In spite of that – we still pay our bills and our cash flow remains healthy.



CHARITABLE DONATIONS – see Managers' Report

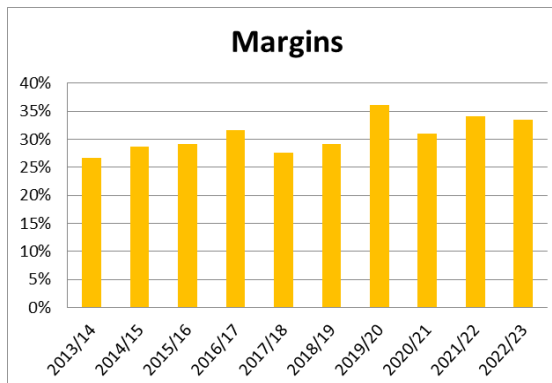
THANKS

We have Katie & Peter Foot's generosity to thank for the **warehousing arrangements** (their garage!) - which have been in place for almost four years now, and continue to be working remarkably well. This year, we had to be particularly creative in distributing the Bali crafts, and we thank not only Katie & Peter, but also Blessed Hugh for use of the Organ loft!



Special thanks go to our joint managers Katie and Karen; and our unflappable treasurer Lois.

We also thank Malcolm and Val from the Lighthouse Bookshop in Highworth for their unstinting support, helped by Keith at this end.



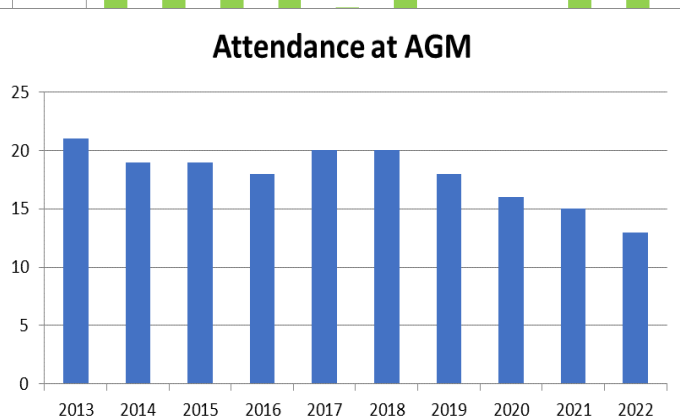
We thank the Committee, representing all the Churches Together.

And we also get support from the wider community, for which we are very grateful.

We have our annual accounts fully audited by Anthony Akers (from Alder Demain & Akers) free of charge. Thank you.



On behalf of the committee, our warmest thanks go out to all those volunteers and members of the community who support us in so many ways.



And last but not least, we also warmly thank our loyal shoppers.

As always, the team of volunteers need your constant support and prayers.

*Sjoerd Vogt
Chairman, The Mustard Seed
November 2023*

MANAGERS' REPORT

The shop was open all year, from 9am to 1pm Mondays to Saturdays, and in December we were also able to remain open until 4pm Tuesdays to Saturdays. Additionally, Ben Jukes has been able to help us out some summer afternoons during his holidays from university. We miss Margaret Gutsell and Emily Smith, who have recently retired after many years of serving in the shop. Happily, Maureen Courtney has taken on "Emily's Tuesdays" and Ann White has joined the team, to cover a number of afternoons in December and other shifts ad hoc.

Our shop staff are wonderful and so reliable – as is Kath Thacker, who keeps us in clean towels each week. Our condolences to her, following David's death earlier this year. We were very sad, too, to hear that Barbara Caldecourt, widow of Rev Dr Len Caldecourt, one of the founders of The Mustard Seed, died in May, and Bob Plumptre, widower of Joan Plumptre, another founder, died in September. They were both great supporters and regular customers.

It was a huge blow when Traidcraft, our main food supplier (in fact, our main supplier of all Fairtrade goods for over 35 years) went into administration at the end of January 2023. Fortunately Karen had already started getting craft items from different suppliers, and also opened various food accounts with PremCrest and other suppliers to try to minimise stock gaps in our favourite items. This has not been at all easy and she's done a great job! Once again, turnover has been slower than usual though we are still in profit. Even Christmas 2022 sales were not as buoyant as in previous years, including Christmas postage stamps. Karen's Christmas Hamper orders, however, helped to boost the figures, although because of the unreliability of the different food suppliers, we very much regret that we will not be able to offer hampers this year.

Nevertheless, grants were given from the charity account to Faringdon Day Centre, Probus and Faringdon Food Bank. There is also a grant pending to All Saints' for 50% of the cost required for planting one or two new trees in the churchyard, but a decision is still awaited from the District Council/Town Council about this work.

Market stalls were run during Fair Trade Fortnight in March and on Faringdon's Big Green Days in October 2022 and June 2023. The Big Bali Bonanza earlier this month raised nearly £1,000, which should more than cover the profits we usually make from the hampers. Karen Vogt gave a talk to the Women's Fellowship at the United Church last autumn, and she and Katie Foot both spoke at the Women's Breakfast in Stanford in the Vale in February this year. At both events, a small stall showed the range of products we sell and ultimately brought some new customers into the shop, as well as explaining the benefits of buying Fairtrade goods.

We remain deeply grateful to Malcolm and Val Swift for the very important contribution that Seekers' Light offers to making The Mustard Seed the successful Christian witness it is in Faringdon. Val comes over regularly to check the cards and Malcolm is always at the end of the phone for queries and orders of books. We are, however, aware that it is likely that The Lighthouse may have to close early in 2024 and we are therefore looking for a volunteer with a particular interest in Christian books who might take on responsibility for sourcing these, and another volunteer who would take responsibility for greetings cards. Please speak to

Karen or Katie for more information.

We are also very appreciative of our window dressers for their attractive displays, and of Lois Chell for her hard work keeping the books in order and arranging for the accounts to be audited by Alder Demain Akers free of charge. Thank you all!
We remain very grateful for the support of all our volunteers and customers – long may that continue!

Katie Foot and Karen Vogt

Treasurer's Report for 2022/23: See separate Year-end P&L

- Sales of everything down by approx same percentage: Books, crafts, food, paper. Clearly due to stock refilling issues, footfall, and retail sales down generally across all sectors – because of high interest rate, high inflation – shoppers being careful with their spending.
- Expenses under control – and cashflow fine.
- And still able to show a surplus.

*Lois Chell
Treasurer*

Election of Trustees, Directors & Committee Members

Trustees (Mustard Seed Oxon.): Sjoerd Vogt, Richard Bolter, John Seedell

Directors (Mustard Seed (Faringdon) Ltd.) : Dave Headey, Katie Foot .

Chairman: Sjoerd Vogt ; **Managers:** Katie Foot/Karen Vogt ; **Treasurer:** Lois Chell

Committee members: The above four - plus Dave Headey, Richard Bolter, Malcolm and Val Swift, John Seedell. Total= nine . Keith also copied in on Meeting notes.

All existing officers and committee have agreed to continue in their current roles.

Proposed: Sue Thrower. Seconded: Helen Jackson . No dissent.

Appointment of Auditor/bookkeeper:

Antony Akers from Alder, Demain & Akers have kindly agreed to provide their services as our accountants. Will be presented with their usual Christmas Hamper.

AOB and Open Discussion (will be taken forward to next committee meeting)

SV: After discussion with auditor, it's clear that our lockdown grants should not have been transferred to the charity account – and can either be transferred back – or simply wait until we have bottom-line transfer to do – but hold off.

Bali Bonanza raised almost £1000 – all of which goes directly to bottom line.

KF: Need to rewrite till buttons (fading) .

KF: Repeat training needed on card machine.

MS: Trustees will decide 30th November re Lighthouse – but almost inevitable that it will close in Jan. MS/VS offering to help the Mustard Seed to transition - whatever is decided.

KV: Good that SiV regular sales are again taking place.

SV: Damp has returned to toilet – but clearly *rising* damp. KF speculating that it's the Westbrook & groundwater that's particularly high @ the moment.

- Front Door is sticking – not just in Winter. Needs shaving down.

The meeting closed with the grace and was followed by shared supper.