

**MUSTARD SEED AGM 2023**  
**Friday 17<sup>th</sup> November Blessed Hugh Church Hall**  
**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.

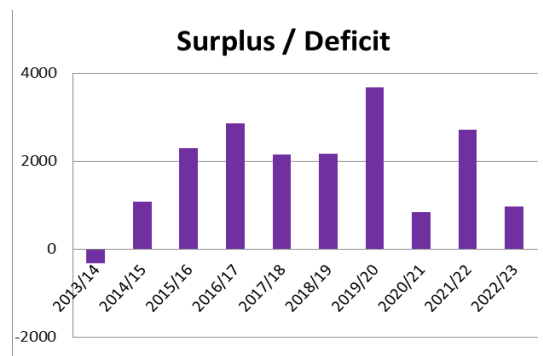
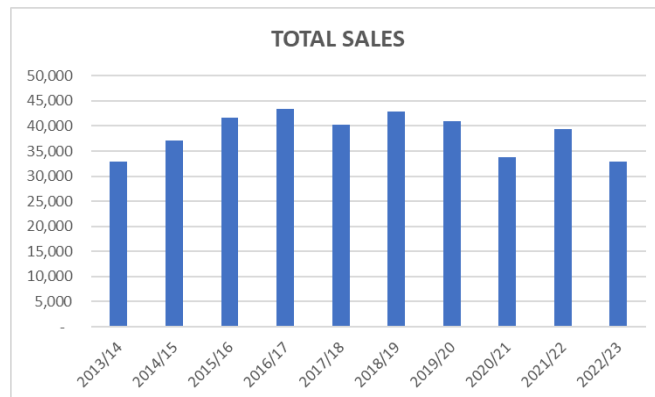
**SALES**

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

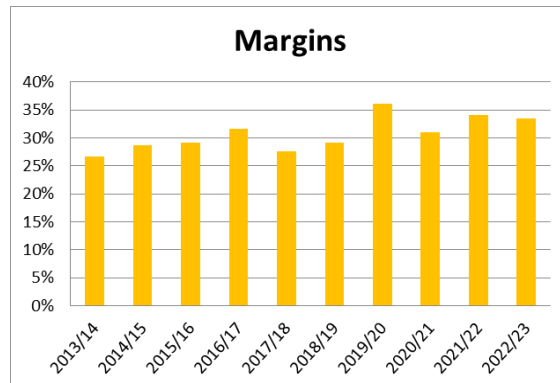


Katie & Peter, but also Blessed Hugh for use of the Organ loft!

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.



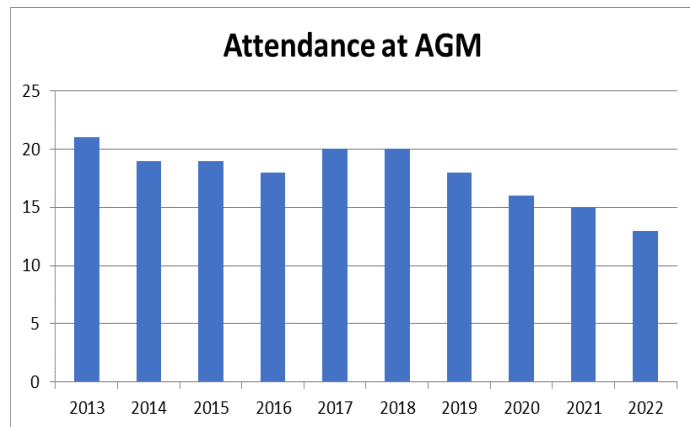
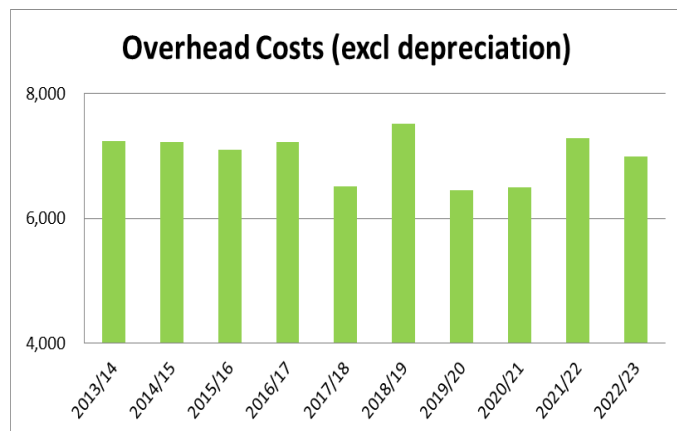
And we also get support from the wider community, for which we are very grateful.

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*