

Braishfield Pantry, 2018 - 2021, Challenge, change and cheers!



Braishfield Pantry continues to develop as a community resource for all to use, share and celebrate. Your constructive comments and ideas have guided future business plans. Survey feedback from 2018 asked for longer opening hours. So, mindful of everyone's safety and well-being, we focused on phasing in and covering extended shift rotas fully and consistently.



You can pop in to see us:
Monday to Friday 09.00 - 16.30
and
09.00 - 13.00 on Saturdays



Easter 2021 sees Meri, Gemma and Ian ready to spring into action.

Once again, we thank all our team members for their time and for taking on the challenges of extra responsibilities. We do not we take your efforts for granted.

We appreciate that individual circumstances change.

If you feel that it is time to step back or move on from volunteering with us, remember your support will have made a positive difference to someone.

As well as saying farewell to some special colleagues and dear friends in the community, we have been fortunate to have welcomed many new supporters to The Pantry since 2018. Some of you have chosen specifically to join our venture here in Braishfield rather than volunteering or shopping closer to home. You are 'going the extra mile' for us, literally! We value your interest and involvement and we are sure that you will enjoy being part of our exciting community project and its success story.



A pre-Covid Braishfield Pantry special occasion setting ready for guests.

During 2018, shoppers urged us to share our narrative by entering, for example, the CPRE Countryside and the Plunkett Foundation Rural Community Ownership awards.

The entries noted our growth and progress in forging ever stronger links with diverse interest groups.

We love your positive reviews that are passed on through social networks, local media and, of course, by 'word of mouth'. Thank you for telling us about your happy visits to The Pantry. We have been so pleased to have met groups including: local artists, Health Walkers, Barton Stacey's Youth Football Teams, Winchester Breeze Cyclists (see right) and members of the Southampton group of Cycling UK (see pre-Covid photo below).

(The national cycling charity was known formerly as the CTC.)



"Thanks for looking after us just before lunch today when we descended on you. We certainly enjoyed the cake and tea and coffee. We wish the Community Shop and Cafe every success and I'm sure we will be back again. Thanks again, from Alan and the other members of Southampton CTC."



Staying in touch, even at a distance...



Many of us have been fortunate to have had the chance to be out enjoying the fresh air recently. Relaxing and keeping fit benefit body and mind.

Escalating sales show clearly that Sharon's range of savoury and sweet treats or the specially chosen gateaux from 'Oven Door Bakery' also contribute to a perfect day!



Never could we have imagined the unexpected publicity and profitability that resulted from striving to stay open in lockdown times.

Our saying, "Live life locally" reflects the superb support we have seen from volunteers, the splendid service provided by our suppliers and the soaring sales from loyal customers.

How brilliant then it is to learn that so many of you have shared your praise and kind thoughts in the wider public arena. In early March 2021, Braishfield Pantry was selected as one of the two first recipients of the

Test Valley COVID-19 Unsung Heroes' Award.

This award aims to...'highlight the amazing people that have gone above and beyond to assist their local communities throughout the Coronavirus pandemic'.

We value your comments and compliments. We wanted to be there for you whenever it helped and we remember with regard and respect all those who have been challenged with illness or sadness and great loss during recent months. Equally, your encouragement buoyed us when news might have seemed bleak and the introduction of new rules brought challenges.

Thank you to everyone who put our little business forward for the award in February 2021 and promoted our work, saying, for example:



"I would like to nominate The Pantry, Braishfield's Community Shop. Run by volunteers, The Pantry has been a wonderful support for the whole village over the last year. Friendly, caring, supportive, going that extra mile. It has been the best place for the lonely to come to see a friendly face and to have someone to talk to whilst shopping and to know that life is still going on and that all will be well eventually. The amount of work and thought that has gone into keeping The Pantry going over the last year has been amazing. We are very lucky."



"I believe The Pantry deserves this award for the support and provision it has provided on a continuous basis throughout the pandemic. Within a week of the first lockdown last March (2020), the team (all made up of volunteers) had safely organised a delivery service for vulnerable or shielding residents in the village. The team successfully managed and coordinated a group of volunteers to provide our deliveries to residents on a daily (weekday) basis. Deliverers were also able to check on the well-being of those residents whilst delivering essential supplies. Not only was The Pantry providing a vital service to a rural village and community, but it also managed to keep local suppliers in business by continuing to support them. Furthermore, The Pantry managed to top up the Village Hall's much-needed funds which were depleted due to the hall having to remain closed to bookings etc..."

Growth, achievements and celebrations...

Research from The Prince's Trust shows that seven in ten villages in England do not have a shop. We are very lucky to have The Pantry in our lovely corner of rural Hampshire and we are proud of all that has been achieved in partnership with you. Our secret gardeners sow and grow for the future enjoyment of all. Similarly, we want to ensure that Braishfield's hall, shop and recreation ground community assets remain welcoming, well-regarded and safe.

We are grateful to all our visitors and users who already 'respect, protect and enjoy' the environment by following the Countryside Code, but can we do more in the future?
Yes, certainly we can and easily!



Let's all do our bit to ensure that rubbish does not mar our village views or present dangers to people, pets and wildlife. Let's love local life by binning waste, cans and packaging responsibly and securely in the clearly marked litter bins.

We have a green garden waste bin for our garden trimmings and there are handy red bins too around the perimeter of the recreation ground for our doggy friends' poo waste bags.

Lots of us doing a little shares the load.

A very big, "Thank you," to all who have donated bulbs and young plants and who have dedicated hours of time to develop the community garden space for us all to enjoy. Thank you also to Richard for the wooden items that have been sold in aid of charity and to Alex and Ian for the recycled tiered vegetable shelving and the fruit trolley that make such a difference to the shop front fresh goods' displays.

Building on success ...



Following on from our success in the 2016 Hampshire Life Food and Drink awards, The Pantry featured in a 2018 Hampshire Life magazine article that discussed the important role of shops at the heart of modern village life and celebrated the determination and loyalty of customers supporting small local businesses.



We, too, want to record our appreciation of your on-going enthusiasm. It nurtures our growth and, along with your wide-ranging input, contributes so much to ensuring that Braishfield Pantry is part of a confident and resilient rural community.

The panel judging the 'Southampton Stars' awards also recognised our 'special something' by announcing in October 2020 that we were Bronze Award winners in the

SO51 postcode 'Community Cafe' category that celebrates, 'taking business to new heights'.
So, after a strange Covid time of thinking on our feet, let's say,



"Three cheers,"

once again for everyone in the hard-working team... such success would not have happened without the efforts of so many.

Sizzling news:

Braishfield Pantry teamed up with Greenfield Pork, a local supplier, to create the 'Braishfield Banger', a honey & mustard pork sausage that you will find only in our shop!

In November 2019, just before everyone entered the curiously quiet Coronavirus world of masks and social distancing, we had good reason to dance, sing and cheer VERY LOUDLY.

The Pantry's scrummy honey and mustard 'Braishfield Bangers' were declared 'Champion of Champions' - that's short for the best sausages in the UK and Ireland.

Wow, what an accolade!

We were thrilled for Tom and all based at the family firm of Greenfield Pork near Andover, who had toiled tirelessly to perfect the recipe that includes ingredients from our shop.

In fact, the busy hard-working bees from Roselea Apiaries are often based in the village.

Braishfield Bangers named Champion of Champions!

The awards, celebrated in London, show-case food suppliers who strive to create inspirational culinary favourites. Rigorous regional rounds of taste testing culminated in our popular product being promoted to the national stage. Don't fret, there's no need for you to travel to London to source your sausage supplies. These 'bangtastic' beauties are only available in Braishfield at The Pantry...a unique selling point!



Tom's team delivers on Thursday afternoons. The stock does not stay in store for long as our canny customers know when they're gone, they're gone for another week.

PS - Braishfield Bangers freeze really well; to bag yours, just open the doors!

Tom and Sharon with the Champion of Champions' Cup.



A Taste of Braishfield!



Braishfield Pantry Stock and Suppliers.

Our search for new quality products continues ceaselessly. Fresh fish from the South Coast featured first in our chillers in 2019. Caught locally, supplies of plaice, cod and gleaming mackerel arrive regularly from Downton's well-regarded 'Premier Fish' company. Best baked or poached simply with zesty lemon and a selection of our fresh vegetables from Hansards at Awbridge, fish dishes offer a great healthy eating option.



There's more good news as we have welcomed 'Newhouse Game' to the Pantry shelves.

Well known from Hampshire Farmers' Markets (HFM), the lean venison packs,

game pie and pheasant supplies rapidly became popular additions to our range.



We congratulate HFM in having been announced as one of the March 2021 winners across eight categories in the prestigious awards organised by the Farm Retail Association (FRA). Well done to all in the county's farmers' markets and hard-working small trader teams. We are so proud to support many of you here at Braishfield Pantry including Jane and Graham at 'New Forest Smokery' (who produce superb trout pates), and 'Lyburn Cheese'. Special congratulations to both businesses for having been featured on BBC Two's 'Remarkable Places to Eat' programme (New Forest episode), on 6th April 2021.

We've known about these goodies and have been pleased to stock them for quite a while.

The secret's out nationally now, but you can drop in locally to see us and get your paws on these delights.



We were very pleased that Tom from Greenwood Pork

joined many of our independent small businesses and producers, including 'Corner 53 Gin' and young entrepreneur, Jess from 'Lemon and Jinja' (plastic free/zero waste goods), at our special Christmas open evenings in 2018 and 2019. These get-togethers see The Pantry taking over the Community Room in the hall. We set out selections of biscuits, crackers, cheeses, Wessex hams and Red Fox souffles. It's a good time to find out about the range of Roselea Apiaries' honey and Charlotte Brown preserves too. There are Hill Farm juices to sip and wines chosen by Iain and Ian for that ultimate test - customer scrutiny



and comment. Convivial open evenings have become 'traditional' annual events. They present perfect opportunities to meet the makers, peruse potential presents in a relaxed atmosphere and try and buy. Taking time to preview gifts for family, friends or oneself (secretly of course), is stress-free. Christmas and New Year hampers show-case seasonal specialities and bring great delight to lucky draw winners.

Special Times...

If you are busy preparing a present for a special someone, don't forget that The Pantry offers cards and wrapping paper as well as a range created by local artist, Jennie Maizels. Jennie designed the bees and oak tree shop logo for us in the early days when Braishfield Pantry was just getting going. Now, our volunteer, Margaret crafts handmade cards for us.



Anyone who has received a celebratory Pantry hamper, care of family and friends clubbing together for a special 'O' birthday or anniversary perhaps, is always impressed; so remember, the Pantry is not just for Christmas!



We love getting your feedback and positive praise for doing that little bit more to serve the community at any point in the year. Thoughtfully chosen goods and beautiful basket arrangements arriving mysteriously on doorsteps result from careful coordination and planning.

Stock orders are placed early and often so that the shop's range is interesting and inviting with selections refreshed regularly to reflect the changing seasons. Many summer hours are devoted to scanning winter catalogues for festive fare. Gemma's and Sharon's buying deliberations in 2019 resulted in Christmas takings that bucked the trend among other major retailers with Pantry profits amounting to nearly £4,000...well done that team!

Covid regulations and guidance may have curtailed special gatherings and major social events during the pandemic, but the shop community continued to flourish. Ever more chat was heard in our socially distanced queuing system and everyone excelled at keeping two metres apart...good game! Thank you for your understanding and good-natured giggles as you waited patiently.

A carefully choreographed 'two out and two in' dance featured at the heart of our safer shopping protocols. Our team of volunteers responded with great agility to deliver enhanced cleaning routines. Plentiful hand sanitising points help us to stay safe both outside and inside the premises. Clear updates with important advice from the Food Standards' Agency are shared to ensure that we are all in the loop as we protect ourselves and others.



Yes, there have been occasional shortages of loo roll, tinned tomatoes or flour along the way during the epidemic, but many visitors have commented with pleasure and surprise at just how extensive our range of goods has been. Your help was key too as you bought just enough for your household needs without clearing the store or inconveniencing others. Everyone was ready to share, care and be fair.

Special mention goes to our suppliers, some well known and some new to The Pantry, who ensure that we keep the shop shelves well stocked with lots of special treats for good measure.

Particular thanks also go to everyone who donated to the shop's collection point for Romsey's Foodbank, which continues to make a difference by serving many in Test Valley.

Pulling together - a community at work.

From September 8th 2020, the cafe operated in the Community Room. In November 2020, however, new rules required this sit-down cafe facility to close temporarily and we offered take-away drinks and cakes only. One benefit of social distancing and limited numbers of customers in the shop at one time is that we can offer an even better level of one to one personal service. Sociable banter cheers us all, of course, but our staff are ready also when a quiet listening ear is needed.

Thank you again for your feedback and all the touching comments that make everything worthwhile:

"A huge thank you to all The Pantry heroes who have provided such a vital source in these difficult times. Your kindness has shone like a beacon in the gloom."

"Three cheers for Braishfield Pantry. We're so lucky to have The Pantry and shop in our community ... supplying veg needs, household needs, but more importantly ... social needs."

"... absolutely singing the praises of ... visit to The Pantry ... very impressed with the cleanliness and awareness of you working there."

Wide-ranging village occasions make great memories. The Pantry has shared its facilities and supported events such as the Horticultural Club's July Flower and Produce Show and the Flower Club's talks since its early days by staying open later whenever possible.

From 2019, our chosen charity has been

'Jumbulance' (registered charity number 1090731; info@jumbulance.org.uk).

Our weekend shop staff felt privileged to support the local 'Jumbulance' project's visit to the village recreation ground one summer Saturday afternoon. Chris Chisholm's volunteer team inspired visitors by demonstrating the special adaptations that enable people with serious medical conditions to go on holiday in safety and comfort.



In 2020, the local 'Jumbulance' morphed into a mobile centre supporting the work of our extraordinary NHS during the pandemic. Let's take a moment to celebrate the wonderful work of our friends and colleagues at the 'Covid front line' and those who have been part of the army of cheery caring workers undertaking long hours of volunteering duties at vaccination and help centres. We would like to say a big, **"Thank you,"** to our customers for contributing a further £85.60 in loose change for 'Jumbulance' recently and £60.00 for the NHS by purchasing Braishfield Pantry bags.

From May 21st 2021, small retailers are required by law to levy a ten pence charge for most single use carrier bags. We will donate the monies raised to our chosen charity and Braishfield Village Hall.

Examples of looking out for each other and 'just being there in times of need' have been in our minds so much recently and are always heartening. Quick thinking and calm support certainly were in evidence in spring 2021 when Braishfield Pantry staff and Village Hall volunteers offered a safe refuge and refreshments to the pupils and staff of the village primary school.



A small fire resulted in a swift exit from the school site across the recreation ground to our premises. Everyone was safe and well. Thanks are due to the wonderful emergency crews who attended at pace to manage the incident and all credit to the beautifully behaved youngsters who waited calmly for parents and carers to collect them.

No doubt, the Friday afternoon half-day holiday was an unexpected bonus (at least for the pupils)! Once again, it was brilliant to see different groups in the village coming together to help out.

Fresh air and fun are back on the menu...



March 29th 2021 saw some easing in rules with outdoor sport being permitted. Being careful to follow the amended social distancing Covid 19 restrictions, the Rugby Tots' group returned to Braishfield's recreation ground.



It's been delightful to hear the youngsters who are enjoying getting out and about again now that spring has sprung. We have been cheered by hearing the buzz and hum of laughter coming across from the school playground and the play-park.

Let's hear a big clap please for our toddler customers and the village primary school pupils who line up so brilliantly and take turns to pop into Braishfield Pantry two by two.

You help to keep us safe.

Lots of our customers have noticed your helpful good manners saying, "Great work; top team, well done!"



Perhaps next summer, we can look forward to times when we might welcome back Primary Year 5 and Year 6 pupils as 'Junior Assistants' here at the shop one afternoon each week?

Looking out for each other...a feature of local life in Braishfield!

Pantry volunteer Mark heads off with a delivery.

During lockdown, many residents in the village were very grateful for well-managed medication drop-off services organised by our local pharmacies and surgeries. These ensured efficient delivery of supplies to those who were vulnerable or isolating.



Similarly, Iain at Braishfield Pantry set up a rota of nineteen drivers to support our own local shop/home delivery scheme. Our sincere thanks go to all in this new outreach team who stepped up and contributed to the community by working so hard.



Grateful clients shielding at home have said this was a life-line during the difficult times of lockdown:

"... a person to talk to ... a joy. Thank you to all the volunteers that kept going ... going strong for the community."

Three cheers for all our volunteers.

"Thank you so much for the delivery yesterday. It was really appreciated. It is very strange being isolated like this when normally we are very active."



We smile when we look back to great community events in pre-Covid times. We recall, for example, the shop and the hall opening on balmy June Sundays to support the popular Romsey Road Runners' annual Braishfield Beer Race in 2017, 2018 and 2019. Surely, it will not be long before groups, families and friends, fortified with plentiful supplies of Pantry cake and ice-cream, will be able to meet safely again to cheer and participate in fun times?

We are looking forward to saying,
'Bon appetit and cheers,' together soon!



Braishfield Beer Race 2018

We cannot wait, either, for that special moment when we may welcome back our badminton and short tennis players to The Pantry and the Village Hall. We have certainly missed seeing you each week! All that jogging round the lanes and those country walks will have kept you in super fit form. You will soon be back to your tip-top match ready selves; but don't be shy...do pop by for those essential half-time oranges and, maybe, some restorative cake!



Community Christmas Cheer...

Having rested our voices as per lockdown regulations, we are anticipating making the most of another of our busy late night shopping evenings in mid-December, depending on restrictions being eased, of course. With festive music setting the mood for winter holidays, we will have no trouble making up for lost time and getting in the mood for carefully managed community celebrations in 2021.



We will remember Christmas 2020 as having been very different from 'normal'. The Pantry's annual Christmas card is just one way that helps us keep in touch with friends, volunteers and our suppliers who have all been so supportive through the year.

All those lockdown 'zoom' karaoke sessions will have been the perfect preparation as we take the lead from the BUMS (Braishfield Ukulele Musical Society), and join together to sing, with plenty of Christmas spirit in evidence, no doubt.

This traditional celebration usually sees Santa breezing through to bolster Braishfield Village Association's popular family sing-a-long outside the shop. As The Pantry profits are invested in helping to fund the village hall's extensive on-going renovation programme, Santa will be impressed that a major aspect of the work so far has included repairs to the hall roof. It looks just right now for sleigh parking, although the reindeer may be more at home on the rec!



Change and cheers...

We continue to have wonderful support at The Pantry from members of the Village Hall Committee.

We want to thank especially those who chased grants and liaised at length with the friendly 'SafeSpec' building team to perfect The Pantry's own dedicated kitchen space that was installed during 2020. The sleek, shiny units and new equipment facilitate even more baking by Sharon.

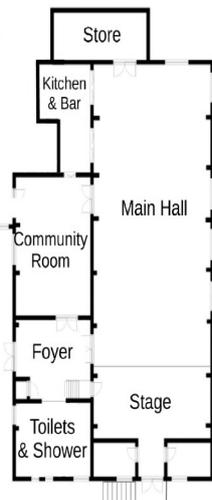


Moving on...

Braishfield Village Hall's refurbished Community Room.

An unexpected 'bonus' of the national lockdown phase was that major work to improve the hall and The Pantry's facilities could be completed without inconveniencing clients as our builders worked flexibly to be on site at times when there were few, if any, people around. After the refit programme, the whole hall is looking fresh and fit to serve its purpose of welcoming many and varied user groups in the future.

Updated toilet facilities, more efficient lighting and heating, a newly decorated and much lighter Community Room; a lighter, lofty spacious main hall and a separate spacious hall kitchen kitted out to please private parties, community groups and commercial clients have all enhanced the visitor experience. Improved storage will complete the new look soon.



Project 'Braishfield Village Hall Modernisation'

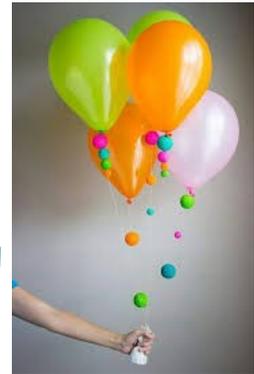
This project, funded by the Loddon and Test LEADER Programme, supported the modernisation and upgrading of the foyer and community room. This was achieved by raising the ceilings, adding sky lights, installing new lighting, boarding and plastering of the bare brick walls and moving the front doors to create extra space. This enabled the hall to be fit for purpose, bringing new benefits to a range of community groups and businesses in the region.

It is part funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

Let's look ahead...



Braishfield Village Hall's main room is ideal for indoor sports, drama, dance, celebrations and musical activities.



Whatever excitement, challenge or change may be seen in the years ahead, we remain committed to promoting and developing The Pantry's place within our community. We feel confident that our hub will continue to be the destination of choice for many with new faces quickly becoming familiar friends.

There's no time for the shop and hall teams to take it easy. Summer 2021 seems to offer the promise of better times.

Plans are in place to create covered seating on The Pantry's patio.

We have been pleased also to see other businesses back including 'The Happy Fryer' team that visits the village recreation ground to serve fish and chips on the last Wednesday of most months. Perhaps we'll see the return of 'The Pizza Man'; picnics, parties and sports too before long?



Such simple pleasures and 'normal' routines will see us busy, happy and together once again.

We will build on the experiences of the past months when we have all benefited from such great community team efforts.

Thank you so much to everyone who has put their faith in our village enterprise so far.

It's been quite a journey and it seems hard to believe, but

Braishfield Pantry

celebrated a fabulous fifth year in the shop extension in February 2021.



Now, we are looking forward positively and with pride to seeing you soon. We will collaborate with you even more over the next half decade...and we will enjoy hearing lots more cheers at

SO51 OPN
in our little corner of Braishfield.

Braishfield, Hampshire, 2021.



Best wishes from Braishfield where life's blooming...
bloomin' marvellous.

We look forward to meeting you soon when you visit us at Braishfield Pantry!

