

CASE STUDY

ST HELEN'S, GRINDLEFORD, DERBYSHIRE, DIOCESE OF DERBY, COFE

www.grindlefordshop.co.uk // www.achurchnearyou.com/grindleford-st-helen

Population: 909 (2011 Census)

St Helen's, Grindleford's parish church, stepped into the breach when the village, in the Hope Valley within the Peak District National Park, lost its last village shop, post office and butchers some years ago.

Since the summer of 2015 after four years of persistent fundraising, there is once again a shop and cafe in the village selling general provisions now based in the former choir vestry in St Helen's. The church's offer of rent-free space made it possible and enables it to continue as it is able to pay all other running costs including utilities.

The Grindleford Community Shop and Café is open from Monday to Saturday from 9am to 6pm and on Sundays from 12 to 4pm and caters for locals, tourists and many walkers. And, the church is committed to the shop staying with the priest-in-charge, the Revd Jude Davis saying: "We feel that we have more credibility in the village and people see us as part of the community, rather than aside from them".

In June 2017, the shop signed another five-year lease agreement with the church having celebrated its third birthday. It serves about 250 customers a week with particular favourites including freshly baked daily bread, tea and cakes (mostly home-made).

Thanks to the shop people, who would not normally enter a church, are familiar with the building and support it. One of the shop's founders and co-manager, Sarah Batterbee, pointed out that without it, the village might have gone the way of some other villages and become a "soulless commuter community". She said Grindleford was

a particularly supportive village and reaching the shop's third birthday in a solvent state was cause for celebration as in most business plans that meant "it stood a good chance of succeeding".

While the shop has a number of volunteers, it also has two paid co-managers following the Plunkett Foundation's advice that "you need somebody who will be prepared to go in whatever the circumstances".

St Helen's now serves as a place of worship; a venue for village meetings, concerts, exhibitions and lectures; a place to mark the transitions in life: baptisms, marriages, funerals, and to remember loved ones; and is open every day for peace, quiet thought and prayer. A wheelchair ramp assists with access to the church, it has a disabled accessible toilet and there is also limited disabled parking within the churchyard.

It also offers a small kitchen/tea point in the porch (offering regular afternoon tea parties for older residents) and its flexible seating allows the nave – able to seat 100 people - to be used for a variety of fundraising and community uses including the Centenary Roof Appeal at St. Helen's (CRASH!). There are also plans to organise a coffee shop drop in for younger people and GraveTalk cafes for older people.

Worship too is united with members of the small Methodist community joining the St Helen's congregation and a Methodist minister or lay preacher taking a service at least each quarter. The Revd Jude Davis says there is also an increased attendance at Christingle and carol services.

