

## CASE STUDY

### ST. LEONARDS, YARPOLE, DIOCESE OF HEREFORD, COFE

The church website is at: [www.yarpole.com](http://www.yarpole.com)

The shop website is at: [www.yarpole.com/index.php/yarpole-community-shop](http://www.yarpole.com/index.php/yarpole-community-shop)

Population: 700 (2011 Census)

St Leonard's, Grade II\*, is at the centre of a small rural village which is very much off the beaten track.

The 2005 parish plan identified two issues, first that the shop which had closed in 2004, was central to the community and secondly that the church was underused. The community, determined to hold on to their community run shop and post office, worked with the church to secure a permanent home at the west end of the church.

An exhibition of the proposals was put up in church as a way of getting people used to the idea of using it for secular use. A very carefully structured questionnaire, overseen by the County Council, asking people what they would like to use the church for, was sent to every household. A third responded of which 85% were broadly in favour of extended community use.

An extensive programme of re-ordering was undertaken and now St Leonard's provides premises for the shop, post office, café, flexible community space and numerous community activities. The Victorian side aisle houses the toilets and vestry.

Raising the £240k required and obtaining the necessary permissions proved the two most challenging aspects.

The Yarpole Community Shop Association Ltd was set up in 2005, as an Industrial and Provident Society (IPS). The shop is a stand-alone business and independent of the PCC.

A Community Shares Scheme was set up to help fund the shop. Shares were bought by 236 members for £10 each. These shares are still valid and the number of shareholders has grown to 322.

This is a project where there has been a lot of thought around the sharing of sacred and community space. Initial thoughts that a division should be created between the secular space and the sacred place have evolved into thinking about how the 'sacred space' can be integrated into a cohesive whole with the nave.

St Leonards Building Management Group (BMG) (the inclusive management committee which represents all the users – the shop, the café etc.) has taken full responsibility for all aspects of running the building. The BMG is a sub-committee of the PCC. They also currently manage the café through a part-time manager who reports to the BMG, but that too ultimately could become a separate entity along with whatever else is developed on behalf of the community.

The project took nearly 5 years and on 1st October 2009, Yarpole Village Shop became the first full time community shop to operate within a church. It is open 7 days a week and much of the day-to-day work is carried out by 45 unpaid volunteers.