

copy

Ringmore Shop & Post Office

Rosemary & John Tate

Cross Park, Ringmore, Kingsbridge, Devon TQ7 4HW

Tel: 0548 810238 Fax: 0548 810891

1st March 1993

Mr Guy Eddy
Chairman - Ringmore Parish Council
Highcroft
Ringmore
Kingsbridge TQ7 4HR

Dear Guy

On 24th July 1990, in connection with the village post office, Ringmore Parish Council sent a letter to Gayle Kirrage, Community Development Fieldworker, County Hall, Exeter.

Along with some notes about setting up a village shop, you gave me copy of this letter on 11th February 1993, the day before the visit of Hannah Reynolds, Rural Officer, to Ringmore. This was the first knowledge I had of the letter.

Unfortunately, the letter contains several inaccuracies - firstly about myself in respect of the uniform business rate and the setting up of the community post office, secondly with reference to my Post Office interview (at which only myself and two officials from Post Office Counters were present) and training, and also in various statements connected with the 'Post Office' in general.

I realise that the letter was very well intentioned, but I would request that should there be any future correspondence from the Parish Council about Ringmore Shop and Post Office, that I am consulted beforehand.

Yours sincerely



Rosemary Tate

RINGMORE PARISH COUNCIL

G. Eddy
Highcroft
Ringmore
Devon

6th April 1993

Miss Hannah Reynolds
Rural Officer. Community Council of Devon
County Hall
Exeter. EX2 4QD

Dear Hannah,

Thank you for your letter dated 19th February 1993. I am sorry that it has taken so long to reply, but it has taken a lot of nudging to get the villagers to put pen to paper. From the point of view of the Parish Council we can really only speak of our experience in Ringmore regarding the setting up of our community post office, which has now been extended into a shop some two years later.

Ringmore has had a shop for as long as anyone can remember and this, allied to the post office counter that it contained was an important meeting place in the village in addition to its normal business activity. When we were informed at the beginning of May 1990 that the post office side of the business would cease in 6 weeks the parish council decided that it had to act quickly. In fact the shop closed down completely in September 1990.

This set up a chain of action by Ringmore Parish Council that might be of use to any other parish council placed in a similar predicament.

1. Establish a need. This may seem self-evident, but a prospective shop keeper should live in the area and assess the potential. Are there a lot of villagers with no available transport during the working week, elderly people and mothers with young children being prime likely customers. Find out their needs and consider whether you could fulfill that need.
2. A small post office and shop is unlikely to provide a living on its own. Ideally there should be another source of income to support it. For example a husband with a job, leaving the wife to run the shop, or a person taking an early retirement pension with time and energy on their hands. Whatever the case the person should be village orientated.
3. If the post office and shop is to be in a private house then approval will be required from -
 - the area headquarters of the post office. The applicant will be interviewed, the property checked and security requirements assessed. Contrary to general belief the post office are very keen that rural post office/community post offices should survive or be provided in remote villages.
 - planning approval for change of use from private dwelling to shop will be required from the relevant district council
 - the planned enterprise should be discussed with the local tax and valuation officer to ensure that the most favourable terms can be negotiated.

In fairness it must be said that a village shop is never likely to be a gold mine, but it does provide other services as well as being a shop. It is a meeting place and social centre for village chat especially for the elderly and those living alone. This in itself is often a service beyond price, so the shopkeeper needs to be a good listener and sympathetic to others problems, in addition to the requirements involved in running a successful shop.

The role of a parish council after the establishment of a shop is largely one of support, to encourage villagers to use their shop as much as possible and to take every opportunity to promote its wellbeing. If called on the parish council should support its causes with higher authority. There is also the possibility that a parish council may be instrumental in setting up a type of 'co-op shop' run by the villagers for the village, but it seems that should only be undertaken after a great deal of consultation with experts.

it would seem that a number of village shops have closed down because the uniform business rate has been the straw that has broken the camels back. Perhaps this is an area that the community council could take up with devon county council. Various other activities qualify for county subsidies such as bus travel, why should not small businesses qualify in the same way. This is just a thought, I admit that I am not qualified to expand upon it. However I think that you will appreciate from the letters from the villagers enclosed, the importance of the local shop to the village. In our village it is far more important than the once a week subsidised bus.

Hope this is of some use to you. Best wishes.

Guy P. Eddy
Chairman - Ringmore Parish Council

cc: Mrs. R. Tate

MRS. ARDEN BERNETT
HILL COTTAGE
RINGBURY.

Guy

From the point of view of the Parish Council, I think your notes are admirable. If you would like something from the point of view of a customer, my feelings are as follows:-

From the point of view of a village resident, it is hard to over-emphasize the value of a village shop and post office. This goes far beyond the great convenience of being able to buy a stamp or a loaf of bread without taking out the car. It provides a living centre for the village.

When we lost our shop we rarely met other residents except at church, at the Women's Institute or sometimes walking their dogs. Most people either left the village during the day for work, stayed in their houses or went out in their cars to shop.

Now that we have a village shop again our village seems far more alive. One not only meets people in the shop itself but also walking backwards & forwards to and from the shop. There is a far greater feeling of neighbourliness.

We know that we must support our shop, even if prices are a little higher than in the supermarkets. The shop is a treasure and we don't want to lose it again. Arden.

MRS. JULIE TRUMBLE,
CROSS MANOR,
RINGMORE.

VILLAGE SHOP IN RINGMORE

Living in the beautiful South Hams with its glorious countryside, wonderful beaches, coves, spectacular estuaries and rivers has its obvious advantages. Ringmore is an attractive village lying in the heart of this beautiful countryside six miles from the nearest shopping centre and twelve miles from the nearest sizable town. This isolation clearly has its disadvantages especially for those who are lacking in personal transport or for the very young and old who often rely on limited public transport. The village community are reliant to a greater or lesser extent on the village shop. For me it is not only a convenient place to acquire last minute or forgotten shopping but is a wonderful source for the daily supply of fresh bread and of course milk and newspapers. This focal point of the village is a friendly meeting place for all to enjoy.

From: Anthony Steen, M.P.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

ADS/e

24 January 1991

Mrs M Wood
Clerk to Ringmore Parish Council
2 Sunnybank
Coastguard Cottages
Challaborough
South Devon
TQ7 4HT

On 17.1.91

Thank you for writing with details of your problem.

However, moving village letter boxes are really not for me here in Parliament, and must be a matter for your District Councillor. I am therefore passing your letter to Gilbert Sercombe (Idstone Farm, Loddiswell, Kingsbridge - tel 550244.) I am also taking the liberty of passing a copy to your County Councillor, Simon Day (Keaton House, Ermington, Ivybridge - tel 691212.)

I know it is something your able Councillors will vigorously support. If either of them feel they should involve me, they know they need not hesitate; but I know they will discharge their responsibilities with their customary efficiency.

Simon Day
Ch. Day

RINGMORE PARISH COUNCIL

Mrs. M. Wood
2 Sunnybank, Coastguard Cottages
Challaborough
DEVON TQ7 4HT

21st January 1991

Mr. A. Steen M.P.
House of Commons
LONDON SW1A DAA

Dear Mr. Steen,

Letterbox at Ringmore

I am writing on behalf of Ringmore Parish Council to enlist your help in getting the Post Office to get a move on in reinstating our village letterbox.

The facts are as follows. The old existing postoffice closed down in July 1990 and after a frantic struggle a new community post office opened to operate 2 hours a day from Monday - Friday inclusive.

In October 1990 planning approval was given for the removal of the letterbox from the old post office wall. Unfortunately the man responsible for the installation of a new letter box (Mr. G. Carter of Torquay) was away for some weeks, and the matter was overlooked.

On Friday 28th December 1990 the post office at Torquay was informed that the letterbox would be removed from the old post office wall on Wednesday 2nd January 1991.

This was done and the village has been without a letterbox ever since. On 3rd January 1991 Mr. Carter visited the village and a site was identified for the new letterbox. An estimate was called for and given by a local builder and since then nothing. The lady running the community post office, Mrs. Rosemary Tate is quite happy to accept mail for posting during her hours of business, but that does leave a big gap from Friday lunchtime to Monday morning. The nearest letter boxes are a mile way in either direction, which I think you will agree is an unsatisfactory situation for a village of predominantly elderly people. It has been suggested that we are not really entitled to a letterbox because of the small amount of mail generated.

In conclusion we would ask you to use your best office to get the post office to treat this as a matter of urgency.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Good

Mrs. M. Wood
Clerk to Ringmore Parish Council

date . 17 January 1991
your ref
our ref EXE/28982



Mr McCafe
Windwood Farm
Ringmore
KINGSBRIDGE
Devon
TQ7 4HJ

Customer Care Unit
Bedford Street
EXETER
EX1 1AA

Telephone 0392 436633
or 422718

Dear Mr McCafe

Thank you for your recent letter concerning the removal of the letterbox from the wall of Toy Cottage, Ringmore.

The post office was aware that the box had been removed. The area has been visited and a new site for a replacement box found. Estimates for the work are under consideration and in due course the box will be replaced.

I fully understand the inconvenience caused by this temporary loss of service but trust that the foregoing will be satisfactory.

Assuring you of our best attention and at all times.

Yours sincerely


A RICHARDSON
CUSTOMER CARE UNIT

ROSEMARY TATE

0548 810238

Cross Park, Ringmore, Kingsbridge, Devon TQ7 4HW

21st June 1990

Mr G Eddy, Chairman, Ringmore Parish Council

Dear Guy

I should like to place on record my thanks to the Parish Council, and to you personally, for the help, encouragement and support given to me during the recent 'saga' of the proposed continuation of Ringmore Community Sub-Post Office at 'Cross Park'.

I shall endeavour to fulfil your 'vote of confidence' by providing friendly and efficient Post Office Services to the parishioners of Ringmore.

Yours sincerely



Rosemary Tate

RINGMORE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk to Ringmore Parish Council
2 Sunnybank
Coastguard Cottage
Challborough
Devon TQ7 4HT

9th June 1990

Mr. G. Dimeck
South Hams District Council
Planning and housing Department.
Follaton House
Plymouth Road
Totnes.
Devon TQ9 5NE

Dear Mr. Dimeck.

Mr & Mrs. Tate
GMD/DJG/9/40/0735/90/3

Thank you for your letter dated 1st June 1990.
Ringmore Parish Council discussed Mr & Mrs. Tate's application on the
5th June 1990 and all were in agreement with the amendment i.e.
' extension to dwelling to provide community post office facility,
dormer window, and detached double garage '

As you state, the present post office is closing and the Parish
Council are giving every assistance to Mr & Mrs. Tate in their effort
to continue this service. Torquay Post Office have also agreed that
if granted the extension would be suitable as a community post office
counter service operating at least 10 hours per week.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Margaret Wood

RINGMORE PARISH COUNCIL

Mrs. Margaret Wood
2 Sunnybank
Coastguard Cottages
Challaborough
DEVON TQ7 4HT

24th July 1990

Gayle Kirrage
Community Development Fieldworker
The Community Council of Devon
County Hall
Topsham Road
Exeter EX2 4QD

Dear Mrs. Kirrage,

Village Post Office

Having read about various village post offices closing down you may be interested in our experiences at Ringmore.

In the summer of 1989 the Post Office and General Store, our only shop, was put on the market - and is still on the market for sale today. This raised only a flutter of excitement in the village because we did not expect any rush of activity due to the state of the housing market.

However, at the beginning of May this year the village suddenly took notice because the owners declared that the post office side of the general stores would cease trading on the 7th July 1990. Advice was sought from the Post Office Counters Department in Torquay and I am happy to record that they have been most helpful throughout. We had to immediately advertise for any villager who would be prepared to take on the duties of community sub postmaster/mistress. Obviously it had to be reasonably central because those most in need of a post office are those who have no transport and we have a high proportion of elderly in the village.

We were fortunate in that Mrs. Rosemary Tate who lives within 50 yards of the old post office was prepared to take on the duties of community post mistress if the post office agreed. They came and initially interviewed Mrs. Tate and outlined her duties and responsibilities and checked that the site could be made secure. The next move was to get planning approval from South Hams District Council for change of use from private dwelling to parttime community post office. This went through with just one letter of objection, from the shop owners who were giving up the post office !

The next problem that raised its head was the one of business rate community charge due to the change of use from private dwelling to small business. This was of great importance because if a large rate was put on the business then Mrs. Tate would have second thoughts. The finance department of South Hams District Council were contacted for advice but they could not

help us. As they said, they only collected the money, they didn't make the rules. However they did advise us to get in touch with the local Income Tax Valuation Office at Plymouth. A telephone call to them requested a letter setting out the problem. A copy of our letter to them together with their reply are enclosed for information. The straight forward commonsense of the reply was somewhat staggering coming from a civil servant department, but we were reassured. The sum total of the information was a great relief to Mrs. Tate who was now happy to go ahead with setting up her community post office and to carry on without a break as soon as the other one ceased trading on the 6th July 1990.

A lot of work had to be done setting up the 'shop' it would initially be in a conservatory, but when the new entrance porch is finished it will be installed there. Throughout the operation Mrs. Tate has been advised and helped by the post office authorities at Torquay, not least of course in teaching her the operation of a sub post office.

On 9th July 1990 at 10.00a.m. the new sub post office at Ringmore opened its doors for business, with Mrs. Tate being overseen by a member of the post office staff for the first week. Our office will be open from 10.00 a.m. to 12 midday and the villagers have expressed themselves to be both relieved and happy at the new arrangements.

The Parish Council are more than pleased with the way it has worked out, and hope that this may act as encouragement to other parishes who may face the same dilemma. In particular we were pleasantly surprised by the attitude of the post office, far from being not very worried by the loss of another village post office they were very keen for it to continue if at all possible. Also the other departments we have had to consult have been very helpful when we have explained our problems. They may well be fed up with the number of questions - we wondered at the number of people that were on holiday when we rang - but a big thankyou for their help.

If you have found this account at all interesting you might like to hear about the saga of the red telephone box, which has been going on since mid June and is not expected to reach conclusion until the end of August at the earliest.

If you wish any further information on any points please contact our Chairman Mr. G.Eddy. Bigbury on Sea 810203 (0548)

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Margaret Wood
Clerk to Ringmore Parish Council

The Village Shop.

As the only two elderly residents left, who were born & bred in this delightful Devon village, we have been asked to say how we value the village shop.

In our opinion it is an essential part of village life, not only from the point of view of being able to get our groceries & other bits & pieces in quiet comfort far removed from the busy busyness of the Super market, but also as a place where you meet your friends & neighbours, who may be you would not meet often otherwise, enabling you to catch up on all the latest news of themselves & their families, a very important

part of Village life!!

As far as we know there has been a shop in Ringmore since the 1890's & was situated in what is now the Dining Room of the "Journeys End Inn" in those days it was called the "New Inn".

In 1991 we did unfortunately lose our shop for a few months, & missed it very much indeed.

But thankfully in July 1992 thanks to our postmistress & her husband, the Village Shop was reopened, long may it continue to thrive & give help & pleasure to us all.

Margaret Lock.
Alice L. Mason