

# A ROUSING TRIBUTE

## *to Bob Templeman and his Speen Stores Team*

*Speen Stores Working Group*

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Sometimes, a job and a person fit so well that they seem inseparable. So it was with Bob and Ali Templeman and Connie and Ian, throughout many years of outstanding service to the village shop and Post Office. Last summer the business changed hands and it was time to say goodbye to Connie and Ian – although Bob and Ali continue to support the new shop owner Ruban, with running the Post Office.

Covid conspired to delay plans to pay tribute to Bob and his team. But Speen relishes a tea party and at long last, on Saturday April 2nd, a happy crowd of well-wishers gathered for a wonderful celebration in the Chapel hall, with lively conversation, much laughter and of course, excellent tea and cakes provided by a band of willing cooks organised by Gloria Holmes and Sandy Mitcheson.

Henry Lane paid tribute to each member of the shop team, thanking Bob for his hard work, friendship, fortitude and good humour. We owe the survival of the shop in no small measure to Bob's grit and determination to keep going during the last two challenging and stressful years. Perhaps, Henry suggested, Bob is the proverbial swan: calm and serene on the surface (as when chatting about the fortunes of Risborough Rangers) while paddling frantically below.

Like Bob, Ali possesses a huge work ethic. She was a constant presence, helping to establish the shop at the centre of village life. She combined a serious and tough approach to getting the job done, with an ability to engage with people and an off-beat sense of humour guaranteed to lighten the mood. Ali's inspirational streak produced unexpected delights for the village, like the chocolate eggs adorning the trees at Easter, delivered unseen by a mysterious nocturnal rabbit.

Connie, Henry reminded us, is simply incomparable – a brilliant time keeper, utterly reliable and on the ball, business-like but ready to chat or commiserate and reassure. Ian brought to the shop his easy, outgoing and relaxed style of working, always offering unflappable 'service with a smile'.

Together, the four were an indomitable force, working tirelessly through all weathers and covid lockdowns. At times a spontaneous comedy quartet, they were also a source of great kindness to customers needing a helping hand or in any kind of distress.

Contributions from villagers enabled us to present Bob with a crystal decanter and whisky glasses engraved with a message of thanks, and a bottle of malt to fill them. Ali and Connie received bouquets of flowers, and Ian a bottle of wine. In view of the earlier postponement of the party, the village had already given cash gifts to Ali, Connie and Ian before Christmas.

We are very grateful to Ruban and Vicky for taking over the shop with such energy and commitment, quickly refurbishing it and making it their own enterprise. Until the Post Office completes its procedures, enabling Ruban to manage this part of the business, Bob, supported by Ali, has generously agreed to continue as sub-postmaster. As Bob said himself at the party, he is not one to give up!



*Photos by Ian Warr*