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Shop is keeping up with the Jones's

ONE of Buckinghamshire's rural communities will be turning out in force on Bank Holiday Monday to celebrate the opening of its village shop.

It's ten years since Speen last had a shop.

The new store has been built on the site of the earlier shop, which had been in the village since the 1930s.

The latest venture is a joint effort between Wycombe District Council and Wycombe-based Buckinghamshire Housing Association.

The brick and flint store, built by the housing association with lottery funds, will be run like any other village shop, except the rent will be paid into a charity fund to help good causes in Speen.

Monday's festivities kick off at 10am when the shop sign – designed by children at the local primary school – will be unveiled by actor Colin Baker.

Parish council chairman Don White advises: "Bring your camera. It'll be a momentous occasion."

He remembers the day Emily Saunders opened the first shop at

the front of her parents' dairy before she had the new store built on the present site in 1932.

In the late 1930s and during the 1940s, the business was owned by Florence Janes, wife of Sidney, the village baker. It was the Janes' who added the petrol pumps.

Then came Arthur Garratt, from Greenford, who bought the shop in 1951 and sold out to the Jones', Fred and Nora, who took over in 1957 and built an extension in 1963. Don remembers: "Nora and Fred had Treetops bungalow built for her mother Mrs Gilbert in the sixties.

"Mrs Gilbert and her daughter Miss Gilbert, the village school-teacher, lived at Treetops.

"It was a big bungalow. They've knocked it down now for development."

After the Jones', the shop was leased to successive tenants – Mick and Doll Shiels, John and Ann Cross, Derek Westcott – "he was a good 'un," says the parish councillor – Mrs Walsh and Brian Pepper.

In 1980, the petrol supplier refused to sell petrol to the shop any more because the sales were



Memories: The Jones family who took over the shop in 1957

too small to make a delivery worthwhile.

By 1989, sales of groceries had fallen to the point where the business was no longer viable and the shop closed.

Five years later, when the idea of building a new shop was first mooted, sceptics said it wouldn't survive competition from the many big supermarkets in High

Wycombe and Princes Risborough.

But Bucks housing chief executive Jane Fleming, along with her allies on Wycombe District Council and Speen residents who championed the cause, overcame the opposition.

On Monday, the village will get its shop back. All it needs now is customers.