

Thank you from Angela and Paul



A Big Thank You

We are writing to you to thank you for your many years of loyalty and friendship as a valued customer of Bookworm. It is difficult to put into a few words how it feels to let go of a bookselling business after 31 years. We opened our shop on Friday 13th November 1992. For some, that particular date would have been a bad omen, but we felt very optimistic even though the previous September had seen interest rates rise to 15%. It wasn't the most encouraging of starts, but our venture into book selling had been in the planning for so many months and we had got to the point where we were determined to make it happen.

In the Beginning

The premises on Spa Lane (always known to locals as Lane, not Road as the signpost says) had only been built the year before in 1991, and some of the units had not yet been occupied by businesses. Unit One was one of the empty ones and came to us as a developer's shell. It had no ceiling, no lights, and even the floor had to be concreted before it could be carpeted.

Fortunately, we were given the name of a local shop fitter, Derek Mills. He was amazing and guided us through everything we needed to finish the building... and what a lot there was to do. The bookcases were selected by us from a bespoke bookshop fitting service. They were expensive but proved to be worth every penny and were such good quality that when we closed the shop after 26 years the shelves were relocated to various places. Most of them went to Five Leaves bookshop in Nottingham city centre. A few went to The Art Hub in Retford, and we kept a couple for ourselves... you can never have too many bookcases! At the time of opening the shop, Angela was still teaching in Mansfield, so life was very full-on, especially as we also had two infant daughters, Leah and Katie.

Over the next few years, many events took place in Bookworm, with the Retford Times reporting and photographing many of them. Shops didn't open and close with such regularity as they do now and there was a strong sense of community in town. Angela joined the Retford Business Forum and volunteered on the first Majestic Theatre committee. Paul was a school governor, on a PTA committee and he ran a Monday evening Tabletop Games club in our shop. We were young and seemed to have more hours in the day and certainly a lot of energy!



Changes on the Horizon

Traditionally, books have their price printed on the back cover, and until the early 1990s this was considered a fair price to enable bookshops to thrive throughout the UK no matter how remote the location or how small the shop. Just as Bookworm opened, the Net Book Agreement, which had begun in 1899, was overturned. Small bookshops found it difficult to compete with larger chain stores, and over the next few years hundreds of bookshops closed.

To stand strong against these tides of change we had to think of innovative ways to keep strong and be needed and valued. We began to specialise in certain subjects, especially local history and transport, and we also became a regional stockist for Warhammer Games. However, our ordering service was probably our greatest achievement and one of the best any bookshop could offer—we are very proud of this. It became our mission to fulfil every order presented to us. Customers enjoyed bringing their difficult requests and we enjoyed rising to the challenge.

Thirty-One Years Later

Many of you have become far more than customers, you are our friends. We know that some of you often saved your book-buying until you came to us. Even if you had seen a book you wanted in a store out of Retford, you waited and brought us the order. Loyal customers kept Bookworm going and we shall never forget that.

In 2017 our 25-year lease completed. We decided to move on and have a change of lifestyle. A buyer for Bookworm wasn't found so we took the ordering service home with us and continued to supply people with a home delivery service for the next five years. We have thoroughly enjoyed driving around Bassetlaw to deliver books to you, especially after 25 years of being based in a building. It was rather marvellous to see the countryside, the changing seasons and to see how lovely many of our villages are. We have popped books through letter boxes, cat flaps, into parcel boxes and greenhouses, garden sheds and under tables. But best of all we often met you at the doorstep for a quick chat, and we shall remember all this with a warm glow inside.

Bookworm Legacy

The physical shop on Spa Lane may soon be forgotten but we are pleased to know that Helen and David Saville are working hard to bring books to young readers through their *Wonderland Bookshop* on Carolgate. Helen sent this message, "Bookworm was a treasure trove and loved so much by the town - knowing that it was so loved and supported helped me to decide to go ahead with *Wonderland*."

Wonderland is a specialist children's bookshop where you can get expert advice and recommendations for children, teenagers and young adults. But did you know that you can also order any adult book, be it fiction, gardening, cookery, art or local history? Do give them a call or pop in their shop – their phone number is 01777 948580.

The Games Club that Bookworm began in the 1990s is still thriving as the *Retford Wyverns Gaming Club*, which meets at the wonderful emporium and cafe on Bridgegate called *The Leaky Teacup*, a regular venue for tabletop games of all types. It is a marvellous, all-inclusive place for the community to browse a diverse selection of goods and gifts or have coffee and meet friends.



Supportive Staff Who Became Our Friends

Over the years, Bookworm has had quite a number of staff members, plus youngsters on work experience and Saturday boys and girls, including our own daughters. When Bookworm closed we had to sadly say goodbye to Tina and Pam. Tina's knowledge of literature made her a perfect customer advisor. Tina was attentive, kind and patient with customers, and she would often tell us how much she enjoyed working at Bookworm. Pam had previously worked at *Pet Care* on Spa Lane, and brought with her many years of retail experience. Pam went about her work quietly and calmly so it took us by surprise when she confidently stepped in and prevented a shoplifter from filling his bag with books... what a pro!

Most of you will certainly remember Gareth. He was with us at Bookworm for many years and his love and knowledge of books was astounding. It was often quicker to ask Gareth about a book or author than it was to use the computer! We are truly grateful to all our assistants for caring for our shop as if it were their own.

A Few Highlights in Photos from Bookworm, The Retford Bookshop 1992 – 2018.



Bookworm Now

Bookworm is still supporting a few local authors who have published books with us. Many of you will be familiar with books by Adrian Gray, a local historian. Adrian enjoys writing so much he usually has the next book planned before the current one is printed! His books and many more can be found and ordered from our website www.bookwormretford.co.uk, or you can phone Angela on **07972367381**. Do leave a message and we will call you back.

Bookworm created many special memories for us but now we are making different memories with our grandchildren and hobbies. We are very keen wildlife enthusiasts and can often be found scampering across the countryside to enjoy the wonderful natural habitats and wildlife to be found there. Of course, we are still reading lots of books too!

With very best wishes

Angela & Paul

February 2024

