



# Kett's Books

2023-2025

A not-for-profit, independent  
community bookshop run  
by volunteers

Kett's  
Books

Wymondham Community Bookshop

## 2 INTRODUCTION FROM THE DIRECTORS

In the introduction to our last report in 2022, we proudly announced: *The physical space of Kett's Books is tiny - but as a presence in the community we are so much bigger than our four walls.*

We had no idea what was coming.

So much has changed. Yet on reflection we would actually say that only two words in that statement have changed. It's true that as a physical space Kett's Books is no longer tiny, but as a presence in the community we remain so much bigger than our walls - even if we have many more now than before.

Tracy went to the Friends group in November 2022 to offer two pictures of Kett's Books' future, and asked if they wanted to take a risk, build on our momentum, and give more to Wymondham, or to stay put in our cosy original space - which certainly wasn't a risk-free option. We'd thought long and hard and had come to the conclusion that however radical, the first option was in fact the safest for the long term. The Friends had our back, and South Norfolk District Council, The Norwich Freemen's



Charity, the Booksellers Association, and the government's Community Ownership Fund soon followed.

Our strategy, in five words, is to **Keep Kett's Books for Good**. The sense of this comes from how back in 2013 we saved the shop from closing, we continued to operate during lockdown, we grew in the face of difficulty, and now we know that we will be able to continue to open our big green door, every day, into the future.

It's a thrill and a privilege for us to work in the bookshop, but the deeper satisfaction comes from knowing how many people believed in Kett's Books, kept it going in the early years, and contributed to make it strong for the future.

It's all good fun, but we take the responsibility seriously. We hope you enjoy reading this review of our story of the last few years, as well as taking reassurance of our plans to be robust, resilient, and proactive for the future.

**Kett's Books Directors**  
**September 2025**

**At Kett's Books we're here to sell books. But it's not just a transaction - our volunteers are all here because we want to see you and to help you find the right book for whatever you need right now.**

Some of the things our volunteers help us to deliver:

- We open the doors six days a week, 52 weeks a year. In 12 years we've only ever missed one shift for not having enough volunteers.
- One Community, One Book is our book project remembering our friend Geoff Kirk, to get the whole town joining in the conversation.
- The Ellingworth Prize remembers our friend Trevor Ellingworth, and recognises a recently published book that informs our experience of life in the East.
- Author events are back, and now we have music! We plan to have both every month.
- Every February we take receipt of up to 8,000 books, and a crack team of volunteers run an assembly line to pick and pack books so every child,

no matter how rural they live, gets a World Book Day book.

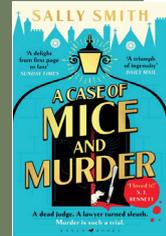
- We love taking our books into schools, meeting children and parents and sharing excitement about reading. We can do assemblies too!
- Our bookkeeping, deliberating, insurance renewing, card ordering, events organising, DIY - all this and more are delivered by our tireless volunteer team. We would not be where we are without them.

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**'I'd never read a book before I started coming along to author events. Now I'm listening to audio books. And I like it.'**  
Kett's Books' volunteer

## The life cycle of a book at Kett's Books

- 🌿 Tracy meets with publishers and selects books to order
- 🌿 The team meet to plan its promotion
- 🌿 Molly creates social media posts
- 🌿 Chloe includes the book in the weekly email
- 🌿 Volunteers read preview copies to be ready to recommend
- 🌿 Volunteers take delivery of the book and shelve it
- 🌿 Jilly includes the book in the window display
- 🌿 Customers discover the book and take it home!
- 🌿 Volunteers realise it sold quickly and re-order it
- 🌿 We are invoiced for the book up to eight weeks later



## 4 DONOR IMPACT



**Kett's Books' journey was made possible by the confidence and encouragement of our Friends, the tireless hours of our volunteers, and the generosity of so many donors.**

We are deeply grateful for the support so many of you have given, from choosing to buy your books from us, to the major grant we received from central government to buy our building. We recognise that every contribution helps us toward fulfilling the vision behind wanting to occupy 11 Market Place.



Here are some highlights from what your contribution has achieved:

### **We are on the high street**

We've ensured that Wymondham has a destination shop which draws people to town.

### **We run nine book groups**

We are reaching some people who had never previously read a book.

### **We're growing a culture of reading**

Adults who read are more resilient and have an advantage in working life.

### **We provide a place for people to go**

Social relationships are one of the most effective interventions for improving health and longevity.



IMPACT IN NUMBERS, NOW WE'RE IN MARKET PLACE

59  
The average % increase in our turnover

3 The number of new jobs we have created

2,206 The number of books we've provided to Ashleigh Primary School for their book assembly - a weekly event which has the children roaring with excitement

3,761  
The number of books we had on the shelf end of tax year 2025

7 The number of organisations we have rented out our community space Kett's Yard to



80 The number of people who joined our *One Community, One Book* event this year

14,300  
The number of World Book Day books we supplied in two years, to make sure every child has a book

594 The number of hours our volunteers regularly give per month - which means they are also getting mental, social, and health benefits

315  
The number of hours of work experience placements we have been able to facilitate

6 The number of coats of paint on the blue trim in the bookshop

## 6 PEOPLE

### SO WHO'S KETT'S BOOKS?

At Kett's Books our first thrill every day is opening the door to see who will come in: we are here to share books with Wymondham. We know our customers have options about where to buy their books. We love knowing that they're a caring bunch of people who know what's important, and want to support a real bookshop with real people.

**Friends** are customers who believe in what we're doing as a not-for-profit, and want to do a little bit more than just buy books. Friends currently pay £20 for a year to be a card-carrying



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‘Last year when my family were bereaved, coming into the bookshop was the only way to get away from it all. I needed to be here. It helped a great deal.’

supporter, and in exchange we offer a 10% discount or more on almost everything they buy. It's not so much about the discount, as about showing they believe in us.

**Volunteers** have an agreed role in helping the bookshop to operate successfully. Most volunteers come in at a regular time and do a regular task, but some are 'on call', ready the minute we need their help. Behind the scenes a larger team does admin, DIY and helps with our garden. We now employ a Communities Manager who looks after the wellbeing and safety of all our building users, and our volunteers in particular.



**Members** are a group of people who meet once a quarter to consider the direction the community bookshop is heading. They have a vote and help the directors to make important decisions.

**Directors** are those named at Companies House, responsible for the running of the business.

Four paid members of **staff** make sure that critical tasks are completed, as well as supporting the volunteers to make sure they are successful in the time they spend with us.

If you would like to get involved at all, please see a director or a member of staff.

## BOOKS PEOPLE WYMONDHAM

*Kett's Books For Good* is an operating model as well as an ethical compass. Our projects and all activities will be built around four pillars of **People, Place, Purpose** and **Prosperity**.

Here are a few of the changes we have made in each of these areas to build resilience.

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‘Sometimes the team in the bookshop are the only people I talk to all day.’

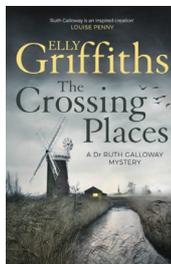
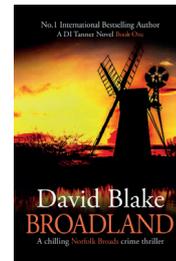
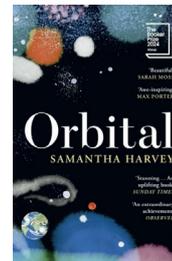
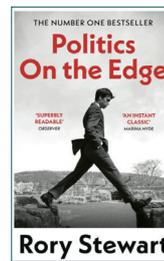
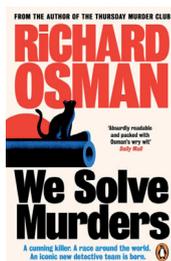
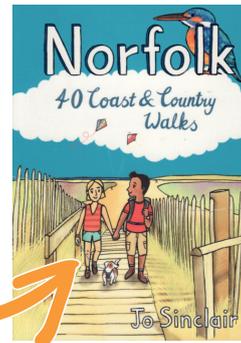
	BEFORE	AFTER
PEOPLE	We recruited people to help keep the doors open, based on book knowledge	We recruit professionals who bring the skills to grow Kett's Books, as well as loving books
	We worked on goodwill and trust	We have contracts for transparency and 'good practice', and work with an HR company to ensure fair treatment
PLACE	We rented a small space tucked away in a courtyard	We own our impressive building in a prominent position, so we can keep the bookshop for generations
	We were open only during the day	We are beginning to use the shop more in the evenings
	Accessibility is poor, with no ground-floor facilities	We are working to develop accessible spaces
	The building needed renovations	We are making good progress on renovations
PURPOSE	The Friends scheme benefitted operations	We plan to use the Friends scheme to grow reading and writing skills
	Our book selection followed general interests	We will provide and promote a good range of dyslexic friendly books
PROSPERITY	Records were kept on a spreadsheet	We use industry-standard software Xero for financial recording
	We bought stock at standard trade rates	We've negotiated better trade rates by buying larger quantities

As our last report was in 2022, we analysed our top 16 bestsellers across the three years ending 2025, and found a number of trends. (These numbers are illustrative, as some titles fall into more than one category.)

- 🌸 40% of our bestsellers are books about Norfolk
- 🌸 Books we get behind as a bookshop and hand-sell will always do well
- 🌸 Crime fiction represents 24% of sales amongst our bestsellers
- 🌸 'Romantacy' is the fastest-growing section in the shop, with many readers buying multiple editions as collectors' items. However, amongst our bestsellers list it still represents only 1% of sales
- 🌸 Literary fiction does well, with 9% of our bestseller list being literary fiction, and 7% in translation
- 🌸 We keep up with some national trends, with 9% of our bestsellers classed as 'commercial' fiction
- 🌸 Children's books do very well in the shop as a broad category, but amongst the bestsellers they only represent 2% - meaning children buy a wider variety of books.

## TOP TEN BESTSELLERS 2024

*Norfolk: 40 Coast and Country Walks* has been our top-selling book each of the three years, representing 18% of the total sales from the 16 top-selling books.



## BOOK GROUPS

We now run nine book groups, which means that an average of 1,134 hours are spent each year forming friendships around books.

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‘Thank you so much for encouraging me to join a book group. I am usually surrounded by so much negativity, but in that one hour a month, I get to have proper conversation with really friendly people. I’ve made new friends, and I’m so happy. Thank you for helping me find this.’

SI, book group member

## HOW MANY BOOKS DO WE SELL?

Number of books sold each year...

2014	3,220
2015	5,475
2016	6,314
2017	6,829
2018	7,693
2019	7,403

2020	6,375
2021	7,801
2022	8,910
2023	7,724
2024	12,801
2025	15,635



## 10 FINANCIAL REPORT

**Being a Community Interest Company puts us in an interesting position: we don't particularly want to show a profit. Our accountant agrees that our aim is to break even, to show we are meeting our social purpose by returning our excess to the community.**

*Here's a fun fact: Did you know that on our opening day at Market Place, 30 September 2023, we took in almost as much money as we'd earned the previous 29 days!*

### KETT'S YARD

Our plan for 11 Market Place was always to extend our community ethos into creating a community business hub. Kett's Yard is a centre for small businesses and lone workers to operate amongst others, build friendships and find shared support amongst these close neighbours. In Kett's Yard we currently have three tenants: Cup-O-T children's mental health services, Lucas & Western Architects, and HWW Fashion Design. The income we receive from their tenancy helps us to meet the cost of running the building, particularly

through the winter when utility costs are high. We have a large room and a small room available still to let.

### DEBT

In order to raise the full amount of match funding we needed for the Community Ownership Fund grant, we took out a mortgage of £44,000. In addition we had a total of £37,502 in community loans from our supporters, most of which are interest-free.

**Using our increased turnover and the funds from the rental space, this spring we were able to start repaying the loans.**

We move forward with our vision, preparing for the fact that in March 2030 most of the community loans will be fully repaid, and the mortgage cleared on or before March 2035. This will free up considerable income for us to reinvest into the company – and the community. The directors are aware of the responsibility of managing our debt as well as planning toward when we have more resources.

### TOTAL VALUE THROUGH THE TILL OVER TIME

2014	£34,504
2015	£65,607
2016	£72,096
2017	£79,417
2018	£98,552
2019	£97,975
2020	£97,679
2021	£114,568
2022	£103,416
2023	£167,963
2024	£197,396

## PEOPLE

**Making reading accessible.** We are working with Bloomsbury Books and Barrington Stoke, and have found editions of bestsellers in dyslexic-friendly formats. We are now looking at the shop layout to create a section to help those with dyslexia to better enjoy reading.

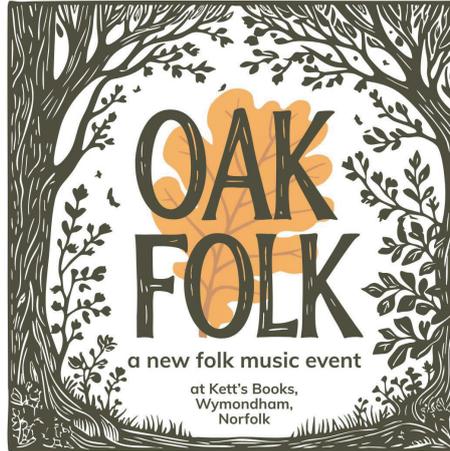
## PURPOSE

**Writing groups.** We are committed to introducing writing groups as soon as our facilities will allow us to.

## PLACE

**Kett's Yard.** We hope that in 2026 we will be able to use the ground-floor room at the back of our building as a meeting room, to better support our tenants and offer use to the community.

**Opening times.** So many people tell us they benefit from visiting Kett's Books, that we are committed to be open more often. We are now opening more evenings for events, and we continue to explore how we could open on Sundays - which will be of benefit to all of Wymondham.



**Oak Folk.** Our aim is to become the destination venue for folk music in Norfolk, and we already have an impressive line-up of monthly sessions booked into the spring.



## PROSPERITY

**Operations.** We continue to explore new lines, particularly around the Christmas season. We have also recruited a volunteer to help with the returns process, which is an important part of cash flow in the book trade.

**Building maintenance.** We allocate funds from Kett's Yard into building maintenance, and as the loans are repaid in five years' time, we will be able to further prepare for potential building costs.



Many of you know that Kett's Books started when a group of strangers met in a pub in late 2013, determined to keep a bookshop in Wymondham.

But you may not know why we chose the name Kett's Books.

Kett's Books is named after Wymondham's most famous son, Robert Kett, a wealthy and respected landowner.

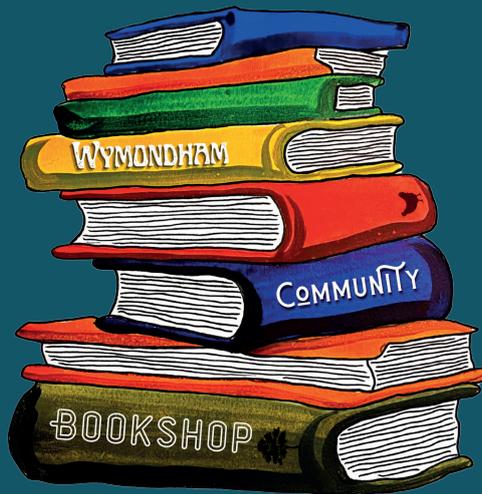
In 1549 Robert Kett gave his support to the townspeople who were rallying against the enclosure of their common land. He tore down his own fences and sacrificed all that he had to lead their revolt.

From under an old oak tree between Wymondham and Hethersett, Kett made a rousing speech offering his life to the cause. He and 16,000 rebels then stormed Norwich, defeating troops sent by the Government to put down the uprising.

However, the campaign soon ended as Kett was later captured, tried for treason and hanged from the walls of Norwich Castle.

**Nearly 500 years later, Kett's Books uses his name as a tribute to the values he upheld for the people of this town.**

This shop is owned and run by the community it serves, with any profits being used for the benefit of the people of Wymondham and the surrounding area.



**Kett's Books is an independent community bookshop in Wymondham**

Open 9:30am-5:00pm  
Monday to Saturday

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