

CREATING A GEM FOR MASHAM – exciting developments!

For a while now you may have heard rumours of a community to buy Reah's grocery store at 15 Silver Street, Masham. The aim - to convert this historic building into:

- A heritage grocery (think Beamish but indoors!)
- A heritage tea rooms (think Betty's but smaller!)
- A history centre in the historic bakehouse (think talks, photos, maps!)
- And, four affordable one-bedroom flats for local people (think home!)

Sometimes though, it can seem like just talk.....but so much has happened under the surface!!

It can feel a bit back to front.

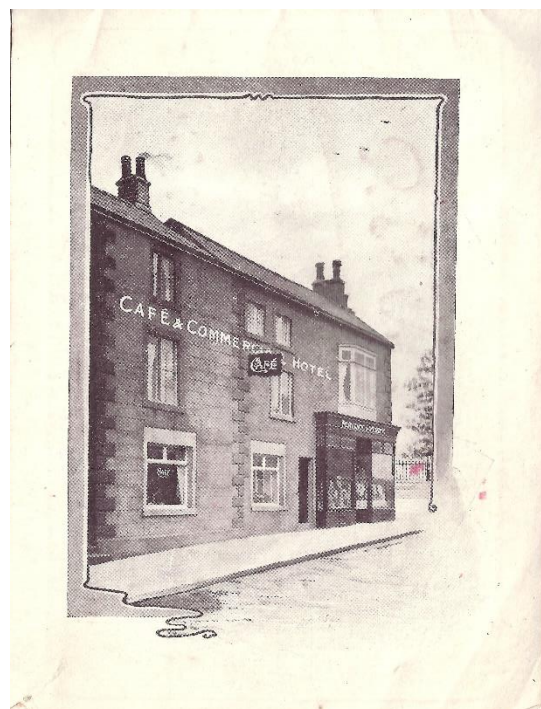
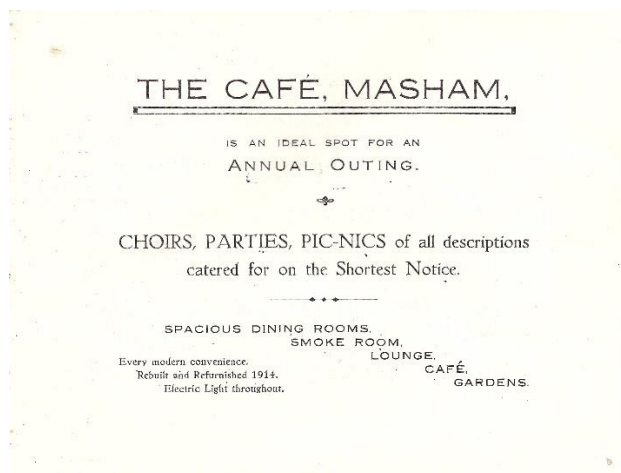
As a non-profit community group relying on grants, unlike developers, we can't buy the building first and then design how we will use it.

We must do all the planning work – even down to the cost of every nail we will use – before our capital funders agree for us to purchase.... and this planning takes A LOT of time!

So, what have we been up to?

A not-for-profit company – Peacock & Verity Community Spaces Ltd – has been set up with the aim of planning, purchasing, refurbishing, and operating the building. The name was chosen because, as older Mashamers will know, the shop was run as Peacock's, and then Peacock and Verity, before becoming Brayshaw's.

It was opened as Peacock & Verity following a refurbishment in 1914



Volunteers from the local history groups have already put in lots of time researching the history of the shop. We have worked with North Yorkshire County Records Office, hunted through newspaper archives, and looked VERY closely at any old photographs and maps of Silver Street!

We have spoken to local people and organisations, and Masham Parish Council, about the need for all aspects of the project but especially for accommodation for local people. We have clarified with Harrogate Borough Council that we can set the allocation of housing units to prioritise people who have a long-term family or existing work connection to Masham.

Before “the current unfortunate situation” we physically explored every corner of the building, poking into corners, and accessing long-unused areas including the bakehouse and cellar. This has given us the information we need to work out how a refurbishment might happen, and how the special, historic elements of the building can work together to create a welcoming and unique local venue.

The current owner, Mrs Lilley, has been helpful and welcoming to us throughout, despite the difficulties caused to her and her business by the February floods and then covid-19, and we are continuing to work with her. Initial discussions – about a heritage and education centre alongside the existing store – had been with Mrs Lilley and her husband, and since his untimely death she has been an understanding partner in the development of the current larger-scale plans.

Through our investigations, we have been able to come up with a plan of how the building might look with mixed usages. This involves not just the exciting stuff listed above, but the all-important infrastructure questions of how many toilets are needed, what and where the electricity supply is, how watertight everything is, and how to protect and cherish the building’s heritage features while making a feature building for the 21st century. Above all, we have looked at how we can make the building accessible and welcoming for everyone, and how the building can be used to celebrate the history of Masham and Mashamshire.

PVCS has already secured substantial funding from Harrogate Borough Council and Homes England towards the professional costs needed to obtain outline planning permission for the project and put together a strong business proposal for the eventual conversion, which we hope will be funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Architectural Heritage Foundation, among others.

The HBC/HE funding has enabled us to employ the architects, surveyors, historic building specialists and project management staff to work alongside P&VCS’s directors to take the project to the planning stage.

We have also worked with a local housing association to discuss the layout and costings of the four housing units which will be “above the shop”. A parish Housing Needs Survey led by HBC has shown that there is an acute need for accommodation for young adults who want to remain in Masham having been brought up here, or who work in Masham and want to move here, but in both cases are priced out of our limited housing market. This project offers a first step towards providing affordable housing for this crucial cohort of young people, who will then be at the heart of Masham life for the next generation rather than lost to Ripon, Harrogate or beyond.

The publicly accessible areas of the project are being planned with equal care. Staff from Beamish and Betty’s are helping us to design and plan the shop and tea room so it will be a real treat to visit. We need to make sure that these areas are stylish and historically accurate while still meeting current trading regulations and operating as viable businesses.

Having access to The Making of Mashamshire's Edmundson and Gowland Collection has been fantastic as we can use wills and records to find out more about the history of the business and the owners. Recent discoveries have included William Heslington, a grocer at 15 Silver Street in the early 1800s who gave most of the money to found Kell Bank School, and this picture of Hannah Duffield, a Peacock and Verity "bun-walloper" who delivered hundreds of thousands of bread rolls to soldiers at Ripon during World War 1 and was awarded a hut (!) for her services.



Honour to whom honour is due
This hut was presented to the
NATIONAL COUNCIL Y. M. C. A.'s by
Miss Hannah Duffield (Bunwaller)
In grateful remembrances of millions
of her buns which passed through the
BRITISH ARMY without causing a single
casualty during the GREAT W. W. A. D. 1914



As well as all this exciting work, the P&VCS directors, building group and volunteers have been working hard to ensure that the organisation is resilient, and the business model is strong. It is a long process and we are having to be very patient, but we can see something truly amazing taking shape, and many of the partners who will help to take it forward, like the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Plunkett Foundation, are understanding and sharing our vision.

Over the next few months you might see:

- Surveyors, architects, and heritage experts on site at 15 Silver Street
- Notices of planning applications for the potential conversion
- Requests through community groups, on Facebook, and on our website for memories of the shop
- A community survey to gather thoughts and ideas of what to include in the shop, café and heritage and education centre
- Opportunities for you, your business, products, or organisation to be part of the final offer

If you would like to help or would like to know more about the project, please get in touch at info@peacockandverity.org.uk