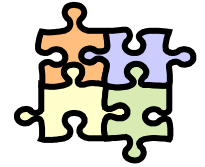


Support Floods In For Shop Local Campaign



THE owners of a West Wiltshire Toy Shop which this year celebrated its 40th Anniversary has thrown their weight behind our campaign to Support Your Local.

Clive and Christine Brown took over The Toy Shop in Bank Street, Melksham, in 1968 and opened up another branch in Castle Street, Trowbridge, in 1983. Their son Matthew now acts as general manager and the shops specialise in providing both high quality traditional toys as well as the latest playground crazes. Matthew, 33, said: "Anything which is supporting independent or local businesses I would support 100 per cent. I think it's important that people support our town centres otherwise they will just disappear and the supermarkets will take over. "They will, I feel, suck the life out of our town centres and they will lose their character with the independent, specialist shops. "It's worrying - everywhere could become like clone towns with the same national chains in every one." His parents, who are both originally from the area, took over The Toy Shop when it was also a newsagent and tobacconist and they have transformed the business. Once the Melksham shop was up and running they felt able to expand by taking on the one in Trowbridge. Their son said in the last few years they have noticed a difference in how the supermarkets are competing with them. "Ever since 2000/01 Tesco and the other supermarkets have been taking on toy departments as part of their main stream range to back up groceries," Matthew said. "It's increasingly difficult for independent traders to continue in the face of such large competitors. "We pride ourselves on our selection and service and hopefully that's how we win our customers." He said although the supermarkets might sell the latest doll for example, his family's business will make sure they sell all the accessories and clothes to go with it too. And although they might not always be the cheapest, they will certainly be the same price as the supermarkets.

Mr Brown has experienced a slight fall in trade recently but believes it is vital for people to shop locally to avoid the high streets becoming like ghost towns. He said: "We have noticed a decrease in footfall recently, yes, and I think that what's going on in the press worldwide does have an effect on people's spending and mindset. "Everyone is tightening their belts and we have to do the same but if people aren't coming through the door it will have a knock-on effect.



Wiltshire Times Friday, 14 November 2008