

## ONE YEAR ON AT CRICKS

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Last December I wrote about Mark and Colin, who were moving on after many years as our village butchers. In January the lease for the High Street premises was taken over by Jason Robinson. Some 12 months on I thought it would of interest to have a chat with Jason and see how he is finding business in Wheatley.

Jason grew up in the Northway Estate in Oxford and started early in butchery, working part time from the age of 13 for one of the 15 butchers then operating in the Covered Market. Having learned the basics of his trade by the age of 18 he widened his experience by working in other shops, in the wholesale trade and in an abattoir. Now aged 46, married to Nicola, and with sons Samuel and Oliver, Jason lives in Witney from where he commutes each day. He and Justin, his assistant, who also started work in the Covered Market and lives in Witney, leave home at 4.30am so as to reach the shop by 5am. The next two hours are spent preparing their various products and ensuring that the window is fully dressed ready to open the door at 7am.



Jason buys carcasses of beef, lamb and pork which he and Justin butcher to provide the great variety of meats, sausages etc you find in the shop. The alternative would be to buy these products ready prepared from a wholesaler. Jason prefers to butcher the meat himself because it gives him full control of the product and, of some importance, allows him to time its sale so that it is at its most tender.

Readers will recall that for a while Jason included the sale offish at Cricks because customers assured him that there was a strong demand for it. And so there was for a few weeks, but the enthusiasm was short-lived and once the business became unprofitable it could not last. When I asked how he was enjoying being our only practicing butcher Jason was very upbeat and feels that he has been made welcome in Wheatley. He has grown the business and although a few of Mark's customers may have drifted away they have been more than replaced by people impressed by the variety and quality of the meat available and the helpful service provided.

As one might expect, running his own business and commuting daily from Witney leaves Jason very little time for other activities. He plans a day off on Wednesdays, but due to deliveries and other circumstances this is not always possible. He supports Oxford United, from a distance, and he and Nicola occasionally take a holiday, preferring a destination such as Weymouth rather than going abroad.

We are fortunate in Wheatley that our local shops include a butcher and a baker, though not as yet a candlestick maker! Jason and the other traders deserve our support.

*Chris Sprent*