

SHOPPING BASKET

"You are unlikely to save money by shopping at the large town supermarkets." So says a report recently issued by the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council under the heading 'Good News for Village Shops'.

But is this the case

O.R.C.C.'s Field Officer, Susan Isaac visited 6 village shops in the Banbury area and two Banbury supermarkets to compare prices on an average 'shopping basket'. Price differences were as little as 3p in the £1 cheaper in the supermarket.

"Transport costs are so high now" says Miss Isaac, "that the rural dweller is unlikely to save anything by travelling in to a town supermarket to shop".

The survey showed that on average, the village shopping basket was only 8p in the £1 more than the town supermarket. Bus fares and car costs averaged £1.26 and £1.40 respectively so the shopper needed to buy around £17 worth of food on each trip to town before they began to save any money at all! If spending less than this shoppers were actually losing money by travelling to supermarkets.

Well, if this is the case, then some of us in Chinnor have been losing money regularly, so we decided to do a survey of our own and the results differed tremendously from those of the O.R.C.C.'s.

We chose 20 items which regularly appear on the average family shopping list excluding fresh meat and vegetables, for these vary tremendously according to quality and personal taste. These are some of the results.

An E99 size Perul Automatic was cheapest at Sainsbury and Tesco, where it was priced at £1.93. That same commodity had a price ticket of £2.50 at the Co-operative in Thame, while in the village it could be obtained for £2.14.

Granulated sugar varied in price so slightly that it was hardly worth the effort of transporting it any further than necessary.

Eggs - 1 dozen size 3, definitely did not cost less at Sainsbury where they were priced 10p a dozen higher than So Lo.

If you have a sweet tooth and enjoy canned sliced peaches, then a visit out of the village is a must. A large tin in Budgens and So Lo was 39.1/2p and 37.1/2p respectively, whereas one could pay as high as 64p in a local store.

A 1lb tin of ham could cost you £1.68 at Sainsbury and as little as 97p in Chinnor.

Soft margarine, butter and teabags (PG 80) could all be found at extremely competitive prices in the village, but S.R. flour (Homepride) was very expensive indeed.

The family sliced loaf, so much in demand for making sandwiches, was again worth a trip to So Lo, Sainsbury's, Co-operative or Tesco, especially if the family own a freezer.

The totals of our shopping basket showed that up to £3 could be saved on these items, this being 25p in the £1. However, transport costs and the difficulties of leaving the village, except on foot, could easily cancel out this financial saving. Anybody who has queued for 45 minutes on a Friday evening in Sainsbury's may well consider renouncing the world and becoming a monk - although even monks have need of bread and milk. While the rest of us find urgent last minute requests may be more readily available with the friendly personal service of our local village shop.

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To round off the survey, we asked a random selection of people shopping around the village for their comments, which we now give you:

The questions which we asked were:

*Where do you go for your main grocery shopping and why?
How many times a week do you use the local shops, and which ones do you prefer?*

Mrs. Merrow-Smith

I shop mostly in the village by choice. I find the friendly personal service much more pleasing than the crowded sterile atmosphere of the large supermarkets, although I do admit to visiting Catermarket occasionally.

Mrs. Blowfield of Springfield Gardens

Most of my shopping is done in Thame or Princes Risborough, but I do use the Lower Road shops about once a week as they are local. I like to come up to Turners the Greengrocers as they are reasonably priced and of good quality.

Mrs. Butt of Station Road

We only moved here about 6 weeks ago from the North of England, but I do find the local shops very expensive. I shop at least 2 or 3 days a week locally but as yet we do not know the area well enough to shop around. I do like the greengrocers for value.

Mrs. Farrow of Musgrave Road

I usually shop at the Co-op in Thame or Princes Risborough. I find it is cheaper and they have a better variety of goods. I do not have children to feed but the savings in cat food alone make the trip worthwhile. For last minute shopping I use Barrys or Turners once a week as they are convenient for me.

Mrs. Denholm of Benton Drive

I shop once a month in High Wycombe, usually at Sainsburys because they are cheaper and as I am already in Wycombe it is more convenient. For last minute bits and pieces I go to the 2 Turners as they are the cheapest in the village.

Another shopper said 'I usually shop at Sainsbury or So Lo once a month as it is much cheaper'.

Despite anything which may appear to the contrary, this survey was not sponsored by Turners. The facts are facts, the figures are figures and the opinions are yours, the public's.

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