

Discovering another gem of an op shop...



Looking cute as a button – and the perfect place to find a bargain in Cobden.

By Carol Altmann

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DC943C;"]D[/dropcap>riving through Cobden on a very quiet Tuesday morning, I spotted a sign that is impossible to pass: Op Shop – OPEN.

The **Uniting Church Op-shop in Cobden** is part of a larger community house that actually looks like a cute, welcoming house: the sort of cottage that your grandparents might have lived in.

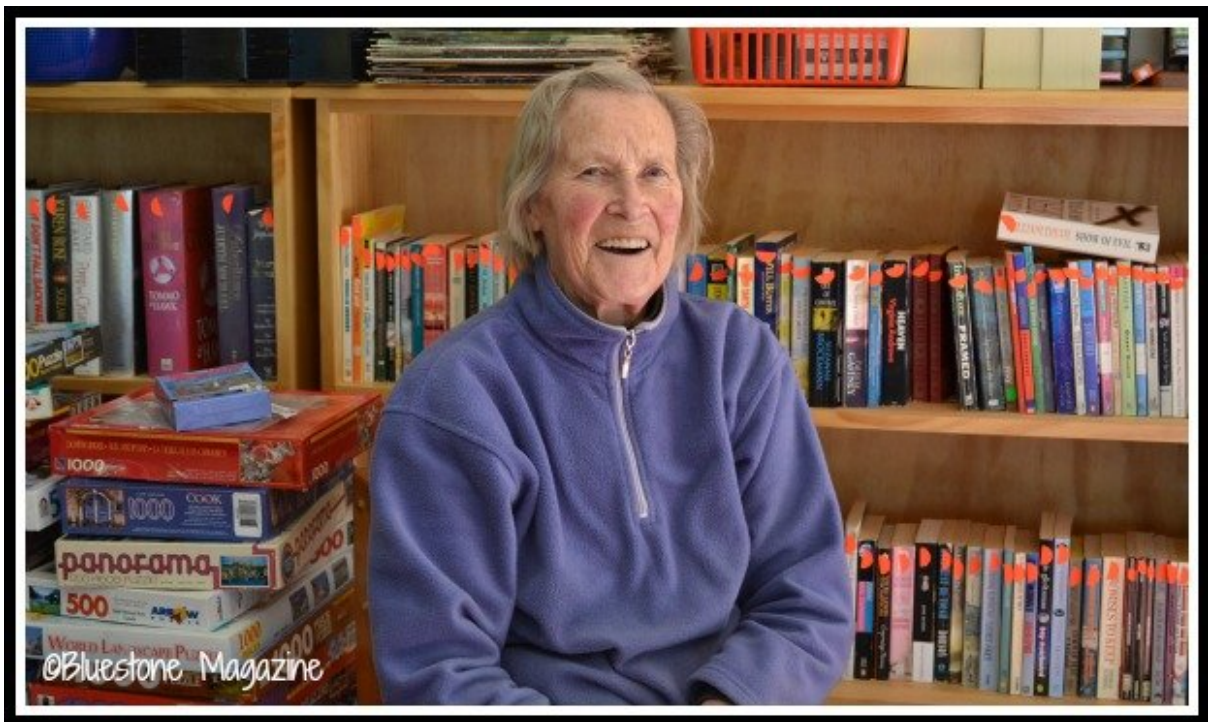
And inside I meet a smiling, blue-eyed woman who is just the sort of person we would all want as a grandma, if we didn't happen to have one.

"I am Mary Elizabeth Smith," she says by way of introduction.

"Mary Smith, I know, a very uncommon name," she adds with a laugh.

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and go in the draw for a
\$2000 artwork - here.

Mary doesn't own a computer and has no interest in ever doing so, but she likes the idea of a story about the shop in *Bluestone Magazine* and is more than happy to show this drop-in visitor around.



Volunteer Mary Elizabeth Smith – one of those who keep the Uniting Church Op Shop ticking along and the longest-serving volunteer to do so.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DC943C;"]
T[/dropcap]he op-shop, Mary explains, was recently expanded to allow more space for its wares and it is surprising to discover just how many rooms it occupies.

The back section, added as part of a major upgrade in 2014, is full of neatly stacked games and books and toys and well-organised racks of clothing, shelves of linen, and an assortment of larger furniture.

By selling some of the church's other assets, including buildings at South Purumbete and Purumbete, plus donations from the community, the Uniting Church has transformed the cottage into a welcoming and useful space.

The upgrade included not only more room for the secondhand treasures, but a community meeting room, full kitchen facilities and spanking new toilets.



The retro metal candle holder designed for a trio of candles, unearthed at the Uniting Church Op Shop, Cobden, for \$4.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DC943C;"]V[/dropcap]olunteers like Mary keep the place ticking over and I point out that, technically, she shouldn't even be there given it is 11.30am and the sign says the op-shop opens at 1pm on Tuesdays.

"I know, but if there is somebody available, we open, so don't

worry too much about the sign," she smiles.

"Take a look around, take your time."

And with that, I am off, peering at old paintings, checking out the cutlery, cups and plates and slowly entering that blissful state that comes over us op-shoppers when we are immersed in a new find.



[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DC943C;"]A[/dropcap] retro metal candle holder for a trio of candles is the pick of the day at \$4, followed closely by a long teak platter for \$1.

Now I am not sure it is right to eavesdrop in an op-shop, but as I take my treasures to the counter, I can't help but overhear a conversation about the imminent arrival of the person who will be handling welfare requests at the shop that day.

It is a gentle reminder that op-shops are so important in so many ways. If you are anywhere near Cobden, drop in to visit

this one.

[box]The Uniting Church Op-Shop is at 50 Curdie St, Cobden (the main street). The official opening hours are Mon-Thurs 1pm-4pm; Friday 10am-4pm; Sat 10am-12pm. Contact: 0475 699 483. You can [find them on the Cobden Business Network here.](#) [/box]



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