



## Chairman's Report

**Year ended – 28 February 2019**

### Introduction

I am pleased to present the second annual report of the Society's activities and the first one to include a full year of having the pub open for business. In this report I will cover our achievements to date and plans for the next year.

Our biggest achievement has been to keep the pub open despite an unplanned change in tenant. We have managed to cover our costs, pay down debt and avoid any unnecessary taxation.

We have satisfied our funding organisations that we have achieved our objective of being "more than a pub" and made a positive impact on the community.

### Achievements

**Keeping the Yew Tree open:** The previous tenant, Steve Forrest, trading as Forrest Inns Limited, caused us a number of difficulties during the year. In retrospect, the business was underfunded and failed to generate sufficient income to remain trading.

From March to September we met at least weekly with Steve to review each week's performance and consider recovery plans. Our main focus was to keep the pub open and to help Forrest Inns to succeed.

We took practical steps to help to fund the business, while protecting the interests of the Society and its Members. Over a period of six months, we brought forward rent free periods that were scheduled for later in the tenancy, we took over assets owned by the tenant in exchange for payments due to us and provided business support and advice on cutting costs and generating more income. Despite our efforts, Forrest Inns ran out of money and in October we took action that terminated the Lease.

Fortunately, we had anticipated that the tenancy may have to be terminated and had a contingency plan in place for volunteers to take over the management and operation of the pub, until we found a new tenant. We are grateful for the effort that our volunteers put in and for customers who continued to use the pub during what turned out to be a six week period.

We managed to find new tenants very quickly and it's thanks to the commitment of local residents, Wayne and Sharon Marsh that we managed to have a signed lease in place with their company, Popin Pubs Limited, by 30 November 2018.

**Reduced borrowings:** during the year we have considerably reduced the amount of our loan funding by paying off debt. During the year we managed to pay back over £36,000 of loans including £11,529 of the Key Fund loan and £25,000 to private lenders who funded our initial working capital.

**Increased assets:** As a result of our dealings with Forest Inns we have increased the value of our assets by £5,498 and now own the crockery, cutlery, kitchen equipment, audio system and alarm system in the Yew Tree.

#### **Interest payments on investments:**

We will not be making any interest payments on investments for the last financial year. Members will be aware that the basis of shareholding is that shares need to be held for a minimum of three years and that no interest is payable in the first year of shareholding. After that, interest is payable at the discretion of the Management Committee.

This year, the Management Committee took the decision to repay debt in preference to paying interest as it seemed illogical to approve a payout when there was considerable debt outstanding.

The ability to make an interest payment will be reviewed each year.

**Increased shareholder numbers:** We have continued to sell shares to new investors and we now have 133 members, who have invested £307,550 in the Society.

**“More than a pub” activities:** As previously reported, part of the requirement of our funding organisations, Plunkett for our Grant (£40,000) and Key Fund for our loan (£60,000), was that we showed that the pub was central to the social wellbeing of our community. We submitted our first annual report to our funders last year and received no requests for clarification or additional information.

Our new clubs continue to meet particularly the Walking Group and the Bridge Club, There is a Notice Board in the pub together with a book exchange. By far the event that made the biggest social impact was the Soapbox Derby of 2018. This event was revived with the encouragement and support of the previous tenant and was enabled by the location of the Yew Tree at the bottom of the hill next to the finish line. Volunteers from both within the village and the wider community staged a hugely successful event that drew around 2,000 spectators and competitors to the village bringing enjoyment to all and windfall takings for the pub. We are grateful to all who made this event a success and the contribution that it made to the community and committed to maintaining our support to the organisers.

#### **Management Committee**

There has been no change to the Management Committee membership within the year. The seven Committee Members have met, as necessary, to take decisions on behalf of Shareholders and to protect their interests.

Despite gaining approval to increase the Committee size to ten, we had no new volunteers to serve on the Committee last year. There are still vacancies and we are particularly keen to hear from Members who wish to be elected who have skills in communications, marketing and administration.

### **Repairs and improvements**

We were unable to commit funds for the replacement of two windows and some guttering and drainage that requires attention. However, we hope to be able to attend to these during this year.

### **Opening and running the pub as The Yew Tree**

Our decision to have the pub operated through a tenancy remains. This means that the responsibility for the day to day arrangements for running the pub remain with the Tenant. Wayne and Sharon have continued to promote has music nights, they have installed TV's to be able to show live sports and other events and have tried a variety of chefs which have been well supported and they have encouraged local groups to meet in the pub.

### **Future plans**

We will cover the Society's financial position at the AGM, however the cost of any plans for future developments will have to be met either from the Society's existing funds, or from loans or new fund raising activities. We will only be able to embark on new projects that are clearly funded.

We will undertake repairs and renewals work as and when we need to and funds allow.

### **Summary**

The last year's activities have required much more time and effort than any of us anticipated. However, we have managed to keep the pub trading while protecting shareholder's interests. We are in a strong position going forward and continue to support our tenants in running the pub.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow committee members for their dedication and support, without which we could not have achieved our current position. In particular, I want to thank both Mike Blakeman, who acts as my deputy and who has led on all things building and planning related and Trevor Gill, who as Secretary and Treasurer has successfully carried an enormous workload, often singlehandedly.

Darrell Muffitt

1 July 2019

