

The Master Robert Inn, Buriton, Hampshire



Tim busy re-stocking the chiller cabinet

October 2004 we began the search for our dream, our own business. We had some idea of what we wanted, a country bed & breakfast. Within days we came across The Master Robert Inn, a village pub with guest rooms, set in the village of Buriton in the heart of the Hampshire countryside. In order to gain as much knowledge of the business as possible we researched the village. Whilst doing this we learnt of the "Village Association". We contacted them and the story really begins.

After many meetings and even more coffee, we learned so much about the village, the most important was that the village lost its shop and post office some 18 months earlier. It was clear that the Village Association were committed to resurrecting the shop but had come to a standstill as to where the shop could possibly be sited. Our business idea quickly changed to include in our plans the village shop. Having looked at the pub, Tim and I saw the potential of transforming the pub's existing "function room" into a village shop.

January 2005 we moved into the pub, and so the work began. We recognised

that a key element of the shop's success was to engage the support of the village by way of the shop association. We had the enthusiasm and drive along with the space but they had the knowledge and contacts, so between us all we worked together towards the same aim to provide the village with a shop and Post Office.

By October 2005 we began trading in our new village shop and Post Office. We held our "official opening" in March 2006; the new village shop was firmly on the map!

I am not going to pretend that the journey was an easy one as it was full of ups and downs but I am pleased that we have done it. The shop is a success and added to that it compliments our other business the pub. The two work hand in hand.

I had never run a shop before, so everything about it seemed very daunting but I quickly worked out the best tool I had was my voice! And I used it on everyone I met seeking help advice contacts etc. I visited other village shops and asked them what seem trivial questions now but at the time were major to me, like

how to I stock fresh daily bread? Etc. We had to re-educate the village on its shopping habits and constantly remind them that we are here. I have introduced a "village discount" scheme on certain product lines, which has proved popular. I also allow other small business's to display their products within the shop and I receive a percentage of the sales, money for nothing!

The shop is now a vital village amenity, and by shopping at the village shop everyone benefits, as every couple of months I donate a percentage of the shops profits back into the village by way of "thanking" the village for all their help and support in making our business a success. To date we have helped the local Nursery School the village church and sponsored a member of the community running the marathon in aid of the Anthony Nolan Trust. By giving back this truly is a reflection of the shops success!

Pauline Davey & Timothy Smith



Pauline serving in the Post Office