



CORONAVIRUS COVID-19 EMERGENCY NEWS

Ensuring we are well fed

The Sportsman Inn has also risen to the challenge of a much-changed business environment, delivering meals to residents of the Wildbrooks parishes three days a week. Here, Sophie Cooper gives an insight into how she and fiancée Lee Forbes are coping

What was the immediate impact on your business when the lockdown was imposed? What actions were you able to take?

The week leading up to lockdown saw a significant drop in trade. Boris Johnson's message telling people to stay away from pubs and restaurants but not actually closing us down presented its own challenges. People stopped coming out but we had to remain open as there was no indication of any support from the government at that stage. After a worrying week we did, thankfully, get the order to close by the government.

At what point did you decide to provide a takeaway service and why did it have to become a delivery-only operation?

We had begun to offer takeaways last year and they had started to become quite popular on Friday nights. This, fortunately, set us up quite well for lockdown as we had an idea of how it would work. What we hadn't realised was how difficult it would be to continue with our original takeaway service with no staff to help us.

Having furloughed all our staff it became impossible to take orders, cook the food and arrange staggered collection times in order to maintain social distancing. We had to take a step back and look at how to most efficiently and safely provide a service to Amberley, and so came up with the Food Delivery Scheme. With customers pre-ordering we are able to order just the ingredients we need, therefore cutting down on any food waste. We were also lucky to have our six fantastic delivery drivers offering help before we had even started. Sourcing food containers hasn't been too much of an issue as we already had good relationships with our suppliers and after the initial 'panic-buying phase' that the country experienced the suppliers were able to catch up with demand and we have had very few issues.

What has been the biggest challenge?

Similarly to most of the country, the hardest part has been adapting to a new way of life in a very short space of time and not seeing our family and friends. We really miss our little Sportsman family and it is all a lot harder without the help of our staff. The work itself is a welcome distraction for us and we enjoy providing the service.



Lee Forbes and Sophie Cooper, with the volunteer delivery team (from left to right): Judy and Roger Agate, Dean Roberts and Sue and Andy Ford

Lee is army trained and, therefore, used to catering for large numbers, but there must have been practical difficulties, including long hours and very hard work?

Lee does have a very long day on cooking days. He goes in the kitchen about 9am and leaves about 8.30-9.00pm. He has 23 years' experience behind him and has the ability to know what to order, how much to make and how to make it taste good – I just wouldn't have a clue. It really is a talent. Luckily, I did have a bit of experience in the kitchen last year so can be trusted with a bit of vegetable prep, but mainly I do the washing up!

Were there any problems with suppliers? Are the breweries continuing to deliver beer?

We had a few issues at the very start when the whole country was panic-buying so we had the same problems sourcing certain products, the same as everyone else. However, once the country calmed down and realised there was enough to go round, we haven't had any problems buying exactly what we need. We do have to order a few days in advance because our suppliers are so much busier, delivering to residential properties rather than restaurants and pubs, which means their workload has increased massively. Harveys contacted us initially to say they were not going to continue brewing. They then decided they would continue to sell bottled beer – much to the relief of some residents of Amberley [especially me! – Ed]. Goldmark brewery, based in Arundel, has also continued to supply us with Microbus on keg – much to the relief of our delivery drivers! We are also awaiting delivery of some Pippin Cider from Crafty Brewing in Dunsfold. Many of the major drink suppliers we use have completely shut down.

How much encouragement – and help – have you received from the community?

The response has been fantastic and we are so happy that we are here in Amberley, living within such a supportive com-



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munity. Andy, Sue, Roger, Judy, Dean and Natasha all offered to help before we had even started the delivery food scheme. Similarly, we had a lot of regular customers offering to help before we were forced to close. We are, of course, really pleased that people are enjoying the food and the service, and their words of thanks and support mean the world to us.

Looking ahead, what does the future look like? Assuming there will be a relaxation of the lockdown rules in due course, how are you going to cope with social distancing, for example?

This is a trickier one to answer! Lee and I are trying our hardest not to speculate, but nobody knows for certain what is going to happen. What we do know is that it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to open with restrictions in place. All of our utilities and staffing costs would increase to 100 per cent but we would only be able to accommodate 20-25 per cent capacity due to the size and layout of the pub. Our biggest priority is ensuring the safety and health of our staff and customers and if we cannot guarantee this then we will not open. Meanwhile, we are committed to providing our delivery service for as long as Amberley needs it and will adapt as and when required.

What happened to your wedding plans, as you were scheduled to get married on May 16?

We were very disappointed when we realised we would have to postpone our wedding, but it helps to know we are not alone and there are many thousands of couples in the same position. We have provisionally booked a new date for May next year to give us something to look forward to and we are just waiting on confirmation from a couple of companies before we confirm the date.

Finally, is there anything you would like to add?

We would like to thank Amberley for all of their continued support and encouragement, not just during this time, but from when we moved in two years ago. We are so fortunate to live in such a wonderful community where everyone looks out for each other. We look forward to welcoming everybody back as soon as it is safe to do so.

- If you would like meals delivered by the Sportsman contact Sophie at forbesinns@outlook.com or call (01798) 831787 for details.

Tell us if you have been tested

Testing is becoming more widely available. So that we can track the spread and effect of Covid 19 in our community we would be grateful if those who have been tested could register the results of the tests, either positive or negative, by phoning 07484 157156. As with those who have registered with presumed symptoms of Covid-19 infection, the results will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Take care out there

Criminals and fraudsters are taking advantage of the current Covid-19 emergency. Here are some of the scams to be aware of



On-the-spot fines

Police are warning against fraudsters claiming to be collecting on-the-spot fines for breaches of the Government's coronavirus guidelines. Officers were made aware of a teenage man being approached by three men in Brighton who claimed to be undercover police officers and issuing him with an instant fine for being out during the coronavirus lockdown. The men also had a device which took the payment there and then. Sussex Police will not ask you to hand over money or make a card payment when they issue an on-the-spot fine, and officers will always be able to provide ID.

Doorstep crime

Criminals are targeting older people on their doorstep and offering to do their shopping. Thieves take the money and do not return. None of the community hub volunteers in the district will knock on your door unless you have asked for help and they will have ID.

Online scams

E-mail scams try to trick people into opening malicious attachments, which put people at risk of identity theft with personal information, passwords, contacts and bank details at risk. Some of these e-mails have lured people to click on attachments by offering information about people in the local area who are affected by coronavirus.

Fake online resources, such as false Coronavirus maps, in fact deliver malware such as AZORult Trojan, an information stealing program which can infiltrate a variety of sensitive data. A prominent example that has deployed malware is 'corona-virus-map[dot]com'. E-mail scams should be forwarded to report@phishing.co.uk. To report fraud online visit the Action Fraud website: <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/> or call 0300 123 2040.

Refund scams

People seeking holiday refunds should be wary of fake websites set up to falsely offer holiday refunds. Instead they collect your personal data.

Counterfeit goods

Fake sanitisers, face masks and Covid-19 swabbing kits are being sold online and door-to-door. These products can often be dangerous and unsafe. There are reports of some potentially harmful hand sanitiser containing glutaral (or glutaraldehyde), which was banned for human use in 2014. Note that sanitisers bought from a reputable source are safe to use.

continued on page 23