

# The Quarterly Horse

Issue number 2 - February 2012

The Sorrel Horse, Hollesley Road, Shottisham, Suffolk

[www.thesorrelhorse.com](http://www.thesorrelhorse.com) tel: 01394 411617



Key numbers: 174 shareholders, shareholder funding £380,500 with 761 shares issued. 139 shares/£ 69,500 still to be sold

Rather sadly the first Newsletter doesn't seem to have broken into the WH Smith top ten best-sellers list for non-fiction works, but it's pleasing to get some positive feedback from people who've gone through it thoroughly and pointed out some rather hideous errors, such as Anthony (Chairman) apparently having moved into Joyce's house. Apologies for any confusion and we hope the new arrangement works out well !?

At the risk of boring you if you already know the background to the pub's purchase, (*you're perhaps a visitor to the pub for the first time and of course very welcome*) a quick resume:

On 25th August 2011 The Sorrel Horse was purchased by more than 150 shareholders, most of whom have a local connection, or saw our publicity and very kindly rallied to our cause...not to save a failing pub but to take advantage of a very unusual opportunity to participate in the 'community led' purchase of this traditional public house.

In the 10 weeks from the first informal meeting in May 2011, over £330,000 was paid into an account by prospective shareholders, and with the help of a loan (on very generous terms to the pub), the pub purchase was duly completed at the end of August 2011.

The speed at which the purchase was completed is particularly remarkable given the size of Shottisham (approx 60 dwellings) and we now have the distinction of being one of a very small number of UK pubs to have completed a community-led freehold purchase.

We're now contacted from time to time by other groups who've seen what we've achieved and are interested in picking our brains.

The sale of shares continues unabated and of course we'd encourage you to participate if you're able to, and/or pass on the good word as and when appropriate.

For more info: [www.thesorrelhorse.com](http://www.thesorrelhorse.com)

## We will remember remember the 5th of November

Blimey...or words to that effect.

More than 500 people joined us for the fireworks, with well over 100 cars parked at the campsite and more scattered around the village, and to be frank, we were rather overwhelmed.

With the daylight fast fading, rain just finished, last minute adjustments to the safety ropes, flares lit and kids' games just about prepared, we were just about ready for the off and there we stood.....waiting and wondering ?

From 6.30pm a slow but steady stream of families started arriving in the village to be directed to the campsite for parking. As 7pm and then 7.30pm approached the stream turned into a deluge and not only was the pub car park a heaving mass but around the pightle, where the bonfire was lit, a good number of people waited patiently for the fireworks to begin.

Not quite Sydney Harbour but the overwhelming feedback afterwards was how fantastic the fireworks were. Robin Pendle (or Pyrobin as he's now known!) had enough pregnant pauses built in that would give a midwife kittens and finished with a tremendous flourish of rockets and explosions.

Such was the attendance that we were swamped at times, particularly in the bar and food areas; important lessons have been learnt for 2012 and sincere apologies to everyone who queued extremely patiently.

Thanks to all the staff who worked flat out. Special thanks to Janine for singing all night and to all the volunteers in the car-park, around the bonfire, running the kids' games, collecting glasses, collecting donations and setting off the fireworks - we couldn't have run it without you - thanks a million.

## Pub opening hours until 31st March

With winter upon us the log burner in the dining room, which has been somewhat redundant for a couple of years, is now in good working order and blasting out some warmth.

	Food	
Monday	12.00-14.30	18.00-21.00
Tuesday	12.00-14.30	18.00-21.00
Wednesday	12.00-14.30	18.00-21.00
Thursday	12.00-14.30	18.00-21.00
Friday	12.00-14.30	18.00-21.00
Saturday	12.00-15.00	18.00-21.00
Sunday	12.00-15.00	18.00-20.00

	Bar	
Monday	12.00-15.00	18.00-23.00
Tuesday	12.00-15.00	18.00-23.00
Wednesday	12.00-15.00	18.00-23.00
Thursday	12.00-15.00	18.00-23.00
Friday	12.00-15.00	17.00-00.00
Saturday	12.00 all day until 00.00	
Sunday	12.00 all day until 22.30	

## Not quite Mastermind but.....

Every other Wednesday is Quiz Night which starts at 8.30pm. Forthcoming dates for your diary: 15th and 29th Feb, 14th and 28th March

Join the regular teams such as The Shining Wits, Blockheads and Grey Gardeners (to name but a few) and pit your wits against some of the best brains in Suffolk, or like most of us sit there and scratch your head muttering 'it's on the tip of my tongue'.

In 2011 close to £1,000 was raised for charity as a result of the £1 per person donation from participants in each of the quizzes.

We have a very loyal family of quiz goers and are enormously grateful for their (your) support, charity contributions throughout the year and for the time each team devotes to coming up with their questions - thanks to everyone concerned.

At the last quiz of 2011, on 21st December, £500 was donated to the Riding for the Disabled Association who have a local centre on the outskirts of Shottisham. Additionally £200 will be donated to 'Sailing for the Disabled' in memory of Tom Owles, a regular quizzier, who very sadly passed away in December 2011.

## Ugly Sisters !?

**Jim Wedderburn - Pub Manager**

It is very sad when grown men attempt to dress flamboyantly and fail miserably, but you've got to give Jim credit, his hair looks great even if his make-up looks like it was applied by a horse !!



**James Blowes - Head Chef**

Now this is worrying and we should leave any other comment at that, except to say, be afraid, very afraid, this man(!) is making up your food.



Rather sensibly Alice and Steph declined to have their pictures taken for fear of offending the boys in how to dress and act like ladies.

For other 'interesting' and actually some quite pleasant photos go to the 'Photos and Gallery' tab on the website: [www.thesorrelhorse.com](http://www.thesorrelhorse.com)

## Next pub surgery - Fri 17th Feb, 6pm

Please join the directors for an informal discussion on **Friday 17th February at 6pm** to bring up any questions, suggestions or comments that you have about the pub.

The surgery is only scheduled to last an hour so hopefully shouldn't break into your evening too much, but do join them for a chat over a drink.

## Notes from the previous surgery

On 14th November we held the first open meeting or "surgery" for shareholders and members of the community to ask questions and give comments and suggestions to the directors. Many thanks to everyone who turned up.

Whilst the idea of this surgery was to be informal we thought it might be worthwhile summarising what was discussed at the time.

Anthony made some introductory remarks to update everyone on what's been happening in the weeks since we acquired the pub. The good news was that takings are significantly up and indeed are currently running ahead of our business plan targets for the second year. There had been a lot of community involvement with helping us get the pub in better shape with much of the mess in the sheds cleared and the pigtle and field opened up.

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## *Surgery notes - continued*

The fireworks night was a great success, involving many people in delivering such a fun night which was far more popular than planned! However, volunteers pitched in to make it both a community and a financial success.

We knew there were two significant planning issues to deal with when we bought the pub. The first was the need to move the gas tank which has now been completed, the new tank buried in the pightle, safe and out of the way. The second one concerns the upstairs accommodation - the directors are working on a plan to put to the local authority in the New Year.

A gardening group has been set up and is already putting together plans for the front and the pightle. Derek was specifically thanked for the work he has already done at the front. A decorating group has also been formed and is well advanced in developing ideas for internal improvements, particularly in the dining room.

Finally, Anthony mentioned the new wine list and the new menu that James has introduced, encouraging everyone to complete the feedback cards that are in the pub.

In reply to questions raised;

- It was confirmed that the cost of moving the gas tank had been known when we agreed the purchase of the pub. In fact the cost has come in below the sum assumed in the business plan. The move to Flogas should save us around 20% on our propane costs. Further the move of the electricity contract to Scottish & Southern will save us more than 20%.

- The re-thatching has been agreed by the Board and will commence on 10th April, the day after Easter Monday, and is likely to take between two and three months to complete. Although there had been some concern about having a scaffold up for an extended period it is planned to promote the re-thatch as an attraction in its own right.

- It is intended to have a calendar of events. There are many things that were learnt from the fireworks night which have been reviewed, and the Board recognises the need to be sensitive to those that don't wish to attend any events.

- There was a lot of praise for the fireworks and a particular success was the entertainment for the children - Terrie and team were specifically thanked.

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- Selling the remaining 170 shares (*at the time*) is still a priority and there is still a flow of new sales. However, it is important that all the shares are sold and a major push to sell any remaining in the Spring is envisaged. We will be able to send in the relevant Enterprise Investment tax forms in the New Year, hopefully meaning that we can send shareholders their claim forms before the end of the tax year.

- Some redecoration colour options were on the wall and everyone was invited to give their views. The aim is to brighten up the dining room. Some uncomplimentary comments were made about the carpet and how it will look with the new paint. It is planned to include an upgrade to flooring and furniture though timing, budget and phasing are still under discussion.

Very kindly there were thanks to the directors for all the work that they are doing and everyone present thanked Robin for his tireless work over the previous weeks and his pyrotechnic excellence.

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## **www.thesorrelhorse.com**

The pub website has been completely updated and contains more or less everything you'd want to know about the pub: food, wine lists, a plethora of photos from various events and all the background information to the pub's purchase and how shares can be bought. We've also got a Facebook page up and running which you can find by going onto the pub's website.

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## **The Ladies and Dining Room**

The Ladies' toilet, the butt of too many jokes, has been re-tiled and decorated (a huge thanks to Ivan Bendon). The Dining Room, also looking rather dowdy, had a partial re-decoration just before Christmas to clean and brighten it up.

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## **New Years Eve - Strictly Come Dancing**

Its fair to say that 2012 got off to a bit of a bang in the village...banging hangovers that is!

Denis and Les, with the pub staff standing well behind them just in case they got roped in for an impromptu tango, organised a fantastic evening up at the pub along the lines of a Strictly Come Dancing theme.

There were more Ugly Sisters than you could shake a stick at with Mo, Cyril, Roy et al doing their best to put the Beverley Sisters to shame. Thank God they didn't break into song

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## Financial update

As we approach half way through our first year we're sure you'll be pleased to know that the finances are going well. In our business plan we knew we needed to make sure that turnover increased by at least twenty per cent over the first two years, though we hoped for better than that. It is, of course, still early days but the great news is that our turnover is up over a third year-to-date thanks to everyone's tremendous support. We need to make sure that this continues through the quieter months and particularly into the key spring and summer months.

Costs, on the other hand, are also higher and we are being very cautious in controlling expenditure whilst trying to make all the improvements needed. Excluding extraordinary costs, such as set up and moving the gas tank, we are ahead of our budgeted profits so far, though naturally we are cautious at this stage of predicting the full year.

The funds required for the re-thatching and other plans for this year are in place but we want to put a special focus in the spring to make sure that we sell the remaining shares so that we can complete the fundraising to secure the future. Maybe when you get your EIS rebate you might want to invest the money in some more shares? It's certainly already looking like a good investment!

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## EIS Tax Rebates

Over four months have passed since the pub's purchase - this being the time frame laid down by HMRC before the Enterprise Investment Scheme (EIS) applications could be submitted. The pub company sent off the EIS 1 forms to HMRC (showing individual shareholder details).

HMRC has processed the EIS 1 and sent back an EIS 2 form to the pub company confirming rebate eligibility. EIS 3 forms will be posted by the pubco to each shareholder. EIS 3 can then be submitted by shareholders to HMRC to claim the tax rebate. Expect EIS 3 forms to drop through letterboxes imminently. Please seek advice in regard to your own personal tax circumstances.

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## Volunteers' Meal - Friday 2nd March

If you've very kindly given up time to the pub in any capacity (pre- or post-purchase), we'd like to invite you to a *Volunteers' Meal* as a thank you for your help - please look at the website for more details: [www.thesorrelhorse.com](http://www.thesorrelhorse.com)

## New Years Eve - continued

as the mere sight of them was enough to turn your pint !!



A fantastic night was had by all with the last revellers staggering home some time after 2am. Thanks to everyone for coming and making the evening as memorable (in so many ways) as it was and a big thank you to all the staff.

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## Sky News

Back in November the pub was contacted by Sky News who had heard about the pub purchase as a result of the fireworks evening. They were interested in featuring the pub in a short news story they were planning to run on community projects. Events down at Dale Farm conspired to keep the pub off air until 18th December but if you log onto our website and go to the tab called '*Buy The Sorrel Horse*' then '*TV, Radio & Press*', you'll find a link to the Sky article.

So that's BBC tv & radio, FT and Sky News amongst others, so if you've any contacts in the media please feel free to tell them our story.

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## Menus a-go-go

One thing that we've picked up from time to time in the 100s of review cards that you've kindly filled in is that you'd like a menu that changes more regularly - it's great feedback and something that we've been working on behind the scenes - that's why you won't now find a printed food menu in the pub, as we've chucked them out !

Through to spring we're offering a **Specials Only** menu, marked up on the blackboards, that will change on a weekly basis. You'll still find your favorites such as Fish and Chips, Burger, Scampi, etc., but not all the time.

We want to offer you a varied menu that offers some surprises and makes you pause for thought when you come in for a meal - please let us know what you think and enjoy the food.

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## Help needed on The Pightle

If you're able to help with preparing the pightle for the summer, please get in touch with Claire Norton by email: [admin@thesorrelhorse.com](mailto:admin@thesorrelhorse.com)