

### Celebrating the Drovers Return

It was an exciting day in Gussage All Saints on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> July when the doors of the beautifully refurbished Drovers Inn re-opened for the first time, following closure in November 2014 and its subsequent purchase by the Gussage Community Benefit Society in March 2016.

Les Madell, Vice Chairman of the Committee and Project Manager for the refurbishment work, enjoyed the first official pint of beer out of the pumps and commented "it is amazing to see the result of the tremendous hard work put in by so many volunteers since we completed the purchase of the pub on March 11<sup>th</sup> 2016. Over forty volunteers took part in the refurbishment working alongside professional contractors with everyone bringing their own unique set of skills to help with the extensive work. A huge and heartfelt thank you goes out to everyone who made this happen, and the icing on the cake was being able to open the doors in time to celebrate our Village Fete which was also a great success."

The first customers to enjoy a meal at the Drovers were Gill & Tony Beach, with their Granddaughter Lucy, who were celebrating their Diamond Wedding Anniversary and visiting the Gussage All Saints village fete. Tony recalls the Drovers when he used to cycle out to Gussage All Saints in the 1940's.

The pub's new landlords Stephen and Barbara Aldred say they have been amazed by the villagers' determination to make their dream come true. Stephen Aldred said, after learning the pub was going to be developed for residential use, villagers had organised themselves into an "inspiring and formidable group" to save it.

Commenting on the communities hard won 18-month plus campaign to save this vital community centre Mal Madell, Treasurer of the Society said "it is remarkable to see all that can be achieved when a diversified group of individuals come together and work tirelessly side by side with dedication, determination and passion towards a heartfelt goal. We never gave up and every time we hit a new hurdle in the campaign we always found our way through. In addition to all of our shareholders, supporters and volunteers we must thank those organisations that really helped us to navigate our way to success including: The Plunkett Foundation, The Cranborne Chase AONB and CAMRA who all provided vital support along the way.

Now the doors are open everyone can sit back and enjoy a much appreciated local pint alongside great freshly produced, locally supplied food all in a warm and friendly atmosphere. Landlady, Barbara Aldred commented, "we are looking forward to providing a traditional village pub that is the hub of the community and that will also attract visitors throughout the year."

Sally Marlow, Secretary of the Society commented "it was a really emotional occasion to be back in the pub after so long with friends, family and visitors. At one point I paused looking around at the pub and garden which were buzzing with groups of friends and family of all ages and dogs of all shapes and sizes all equally excited to be back in the pub they love."