

Meet *the* MEMBERS



THE BII'S STRENGTH IS IN THE DIVERSITY OF OUR MEMBERSHIP: OVER THESE SIX PAGES, WE MEET THREE MEMBERS FROM VERY DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS WHO ALL SHARE A LOVE OF THE INDUSTRY

40 / SPRING 2023



LIZ SILVA MBII

LIZ SILVA MBII RUNS THE BUSH INN WITH HUSBAND, ANDY, IN ST HILARY, NEAR COWBRIDGE IN GLAMORGAN – A PUB THEY'VE HELPED RAISE, LIKE A PHOENIX, FROM THE ASHES. HANA RHODES MBII REPORTS

Twelve years ago Liz Silva and husband Andy took on 16th century pub, The Bush Inn, then with Punch Taverns. The Bush had been decimated by fire; the thatched roof was all but gone and the building itself was badly water damaged, having been doused for hours by the fire brigade.

With Andy having solid pub trade experience, the couple had been thinking of taking on a pub together when they first came across The Bush. They were on a trip back to their home town in Wales when they followed a tip-off from a friend, who had been working on The Bush Inn's refurbishment. The pub obviously captured their imagination as they took a huge leap of faith and signed a 15 year lease – although it was another year before it was able to begin serving the residents and visitors of St Hilary, near Cowbridge in Glamorgan, SE Wales.

Situated in a village with just 50 houses, the couple have gone on to change the fortunes of The Bush Inn, which is now a popular destination spot for food, with some people travelling for miles to drink and dine.

Running the business as a business

While husband Andy had worked in the hospitality industry since he was a teenager, it was Liz's first venture into the sector. They share responsibilities, with Liz using her skills to head up

the administration, bookkeeping and ordering aspects of the business, while Andy leads in their kitchen.

Keeping an eye on GP percentages and costs daily is something Liz says has helped them successfully grow and develop the business, from navigating the pandemic to handling the current cost of living crisis. Their ability to make fast and informed decisions has been key – from knowing what fish is that day's best buy to using specials to keep variety on the menu, while giving them complete flexibility.

Liz says: "Having a regular finger on the pulse of the business since day one means we've been able to confidently grow and expand our offering, even during the pandemic when things were so uncertain."

Growing their food offer

Being able to react quickly to any opportunities became a real boon for the team at The Bush Inn, never more so than during the



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pandemic. In the second lockdown, they took the opportunity to build a new shelter to replace their temporary marquee and furnished it with lights and heaters.

It became such a popular space that customers were still eating their meals outside throughout the Christmas period and beyond. It was then that Liz says they decided to put on some clear, Perspex sides, which made it a really warm and inviting evening dining spot. The sides are removable too, creating a fully flexible space no matter the season or the weather.

Other changes included introducing a pizza oven to this space. They trialled it at first, by hiring an oven, as they'd never had pizza on the menu before, but wasted no time in purchasing one once they saw the success pizzas were having. With their commitment to high food quality, the team even enrolled on pizza making training, including learning how to handle the dough and getting the toppings right.

"We had a really great session in learning about making great pizza. The staff all loved it because we had some delicious food to enjoy afterwards!"

Training and quality control on the

products they serve is important to the couple and has helped them grow their reputation not only as a locals' community pub, but also as a destination for walkers, holiday makers and cyclists.

Pedal power

The rolling hills of the Vale of Glamorgan are perfect for keen road cyclists, and it was 10 years ago when a group of local cycling enthusiasts tried to convince Chef and Landlord Andy to join them. It wasn't long before Andy was hooked, and The Bush Inn Cycle Team was formed. It now has around 30 members.

The group meets on Saturdays for the more serious riders to pedal tough or long distances, with Sundays offering a more leisurely circuit. Everyone meets at the pub for coffee and pastries before returning at the end of the loop for a pint and some lunch. The team have their own Bush Inn red jerseys, which provides fantastic advertising for the pub as they make their way around the countryside.

Having a pub team in darts or pool has long been a successful way to create a community in your pub, bringing revenue at otherwise quiet times. The organic growth of The Bush Inn's cycle team is testament to the fact you can achieve this with other activities loved in your local area, bringing not just the participants into the pub on a regular basis, but also their friends and families.



Quiz night

Since reopening after the lockdowns, Liz and Andy have kept the opening hours as

Wednesday-Sunday with an 8pm close time on Sunday evenings. Resuming their ever-popular pub quiz on a Sunday though, aims to extend the evening custom throughout what could be quieter months in the first quarter of the year.

Campaigning #notjustapub

As well as overseeing the day-to-day running of The Bush Inn, Liz is also a fierce campaigner for the industry. Around the time of the budget announcement towards the end of last year, Liz was interviewed on LBC Radio. She spoke with James O'Brien about the help required from Government on business rates, energy costs and the wider need to be able to forecast and plan for the future. Liz's enthusiasm and passion for the sector is a great example of how engaged our members are and how valuable this is to gain support when it's needed. ■



The Bush Inn has made great use of its outdoor space

LIZ'S TOP TIPS

Know your numbers – keep a finger on the pulse of the business daily

Look after your team – two days off and team nights out, etc

Encourage the team to share their ideas

Keep flexible and don't get stuck in your ways – consider diversifying and trying something new

Engage your local community – they'll be there when the holiday makers have gone home