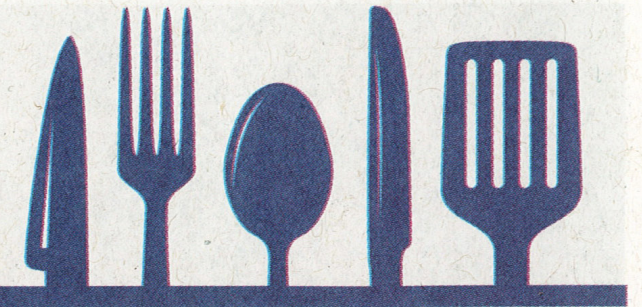


# FOOD AND DRINK



## Bar with the common touch

BY JON WALLER

A NEW Forest commoner has launched a family-run wine bar celebrating the history of the area and its ancient traditions, with a modern design twist.

Commoners Wine Bar, in Brookley Road, Brockenhurst, combines trendy, Art Deco design with historic features – such as a 100-year-old Sway farrier door – which will delight both diehard locals and well-heeled visitors fascinated by the locality's niche history and spectacular surroundings.

Created by combining a former antique shop and estate agent, the new watering hole and eatery is the brainchild of successful businessman Sean Perry, his wife Denise and their two daughters, Jessica and Thomasina.

The spacious, airy bar features a selection of charcoal and fine line drawings by Jessica, a talented budding artist. They depict commoning scenes such as the annual pony drifts and pannage, while the walls feature trinkets and information about the traditions that have shaped the Forest.

With an extensive wine list and the grazing menu providing diners with a heady selection

of snack bites and main meals from its new kitchen and pizza oven, the venue also features four apartments upstairs for holidaymakers and a generous outside terrace perfect for sunny days.

Sean (55), who latterly ran the village's Forest Park Hotel for five years, is a practising commoner who first moved to the Forest in the 1970s.

He said his love for the area and wish to see its history and prestige built on had inspired the bar.

"It's always been a bit of an ambition of mine to create a drinking establishment in the village, because it can get a bit quiet after about 4pm here," Sean said.

"Over the course of time I've rented and bought different shops in and around Brockenhurst with a view to doing this eventually, and when this opportunity came up I knew I had to buy it.

"Brockenhurst village is really starting to pick up again now with people coming in, but it seems people are quite often having to go out of the centre of the village for a few drinks, whereas now they can



Sean and Denise Perry with their daughters Jessica and Thomasina

stay and enjoy themselves all within walking distance of their homes.

"I think we'll get a lot of staycation customers in the

summer months and they can come in and also find out more about commoning and learn about the area. I've had livestock on the Forest and

I absolutely love the local area and think it needs to be appreciated."

While Sean and Denise will oversee the bar, it will be mainly

run by their two daughters. Sean, who also runs a building enterprise with his son, said he was "delighted" they were on board.

"It's fantastic to be able to hand it over to them. They have helped with the design and have some fantastic ideas and it's great we can keep it as a proper family-run establishment," he said.

Assistance was also provided by Bronya Szatkowska, who runs nearby business Bronze Design at The Design Hub and first met Sean when they went to school together more than three decades ago.

"Visitors and tourists will love coming here and locals will love coming here to a nice, new bar in the middle of the village," said Bronya, who designed the branding and oversaw the interior design.

"It's perfect in so many ways for different things and it offers an alternative to everything here already, run by a local who cares about the locality, so I think it's going to do really well."

Sean has employed 10 local people on his staff and hopes the venue, which currently

has a licence until 10pm every night, can eventually host themed evenings and wine-tasting events.

The bar features plenty of recycled materials. The wood served as the floorboards at the previous establishment, and Sean has kept the historic fascia frontage as requested by planners. He said he received good support from Brockenhurst parish and New Forest district councils.

While the eatery does not yet offer breakfast, it will do soon and it also has a flat screen television and USB ports for those who want to work remotely.

The menu will expand with demand, and the bar also has underfloor heating to warm up patrons after a long Forest winter walk, and it is both child and dog friendly.

Sean added: "We're really trying to push the Forest and its ways, as the New Forest is probably one of the best places on earth to live. It's really, really important we keep it going and honour its past and this bar really does do that."

Visit [www.commonerswinebar.com](http://www.commonerswinebar.com)

