

Hi Friend

happy new year, hope you had a good one...

...we had a nice time up here in Brendon Valley ([click for map](#)). Not too busy, not too quiet, which was nice! Meant we could enjoy Xmas & NY without being rushed off our feet all of the time. Most of the holiday cottages hereabouts were occupied so that kept us busy with meals during lunch and evenings. We also had a number of visitors who came up to see the lop-sided fireplace following our last newsletter, intrigued to see if it was true. Seems some people thought it was a publicity stunt!

We've been here exactly 5 months now and things are all going to plan. The redecoration has finally, finally been completed, and now we are just waiting for the arrival of new furniture - tables and chairs that sort of thing. Its a big relief to have it finished, especially as we originally scheduled 2 weeks for the work which ended up taking 2 months! Not because the builders were slow, but we unearthed many problems that weren't immediately apparent when we started. Dry rot in the wood panelling, damp in the walls and floor, old electrical wiring that needed replacing, etc, etc. Parts of the building date back to the 17th century so it should've been expected really. As we peeled off the layers so the troubles revealed themselves - a bit like an elderly stripper! Luckily November and December were very quiet compared to the craziness of August when we first took possession and meant disruption was kept to a minimum. September and October were good, but it was like somebody flicked a switch on 1st November, suddenly there's nobody about! However, sometimes, having two bar rooms out of action was difficult as it left us with only 7 tables to cater for diners, especially over Crimbo when more people were about. Indeed there was one occasion when 6 different groups were waiting for a table to eat. They didn't mind too much and seemed quite happy enjoying the relaxed atmosphere of a busy festive pub.

The pub's owner, Mark Hanrahan, came down with some interesting friends from London, a fascinating bunch who all work in media (we'll tell you about them in the next newsletter). As he was entertaining guests and bound to be in good spirits we figured this would be a good time to tell him about rising costs and over-expenditure in the building department. Anyway Mark lives and works in London where he is in the business of making TV commercials and comes down to visit as much as he can, usually once a fortnight. Like us Mark is new to Devon and, also like us, he fell in love with The Rockford on his first ever visit to Exmoor when he came to view the pub. Clearly the The Rockford was in trouble, which was why it was up for sale again. A number of previous landlords had tried to bring success but the pub's unique position is also its greatest problem; its remoteness. Being stuck out in the middle of the moor with no passing trade isn't exactly great for business. The Rockford certainly faces a challenging future but he is determined to make a success of what is a little jewel in Exmoor's crown (with a little help from us we might add!). He sometimes brings people with him and rather enjoys showing off a little, impressing them about the valley, the moor, the people and history. Anyway they were all sitting in the bar listening to Mark when one of his guests told him that he already knew quite a bit about the pub having a read a short story about The Rockford Inn that had been published on the internet. Mark's eyes lit up momentarily at this new piece of information eager to know more about the pub's history. His friend continued to explain that it was written by an ex-landlord and entitled ***Extracts from an Exmoor Pub***. Mark listened attentively. The opening chapter was called ***"The first experiences of a very naive Pub owner"***. Now, Mark is not an inexperienced pub landlord having run a couple of, lets say, difficult pubs in Central London. However his jaw dropped when he was told the first line of the story; ***"One of my major mistakes in life was to buy a West Country Pub called The Rockford Inn....."*** His friend went on to explain that the story was really a collection of incidents at the pub which highlighted the problems Mark was likely to face trying to get the pub back to its glorious past. Problems that Mark, even with his inner city pub experience couldn't begin to imagine. This was indeed a worry!

As it happened Mark had his laptop with him, and we have WIFI, so out it came and Mark quickly found the website that contained the story. His friends gathered round and hunched over the screen together they read. As he devoured the words a smile began to creep upon his face. This soon turned to laughter and merriment. Thats all we'll say - you too can read the story at [www.buyingapub.com](http://www.buyingapub.com)

Enjoy

Cathryn & Sarah

[www.therockfordinn.co.uk](http://www.therockfordinn.co.uk)

01598 741 214