



A harrowing experience at the Harrow Inn

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Lisa Orme, co-owner,
The Harrow Inn, Lidsing

www.theharrowlidsing.com

Kris and Lisa Orme, who run the Harrow Inn Public House, in the small hamlet of Lidsing, reflect on their past experiences and encourage people to review their fire risk assessment and ensure their fire alarm system is working.

The night of 18 December 2010 could have had such a different outcome for the family if they had not had a working fire alarm system. With snow on the ground, it was a cold night so Kris and Lisa lit an open fire in the main bar, unaware that there were two dislodged bricks in the chimney stack next to the roof void, as a result, the roof of the pub caught fire.

Lisa explained; “The fire alarm system triggered and as we evacuated the building, I placed my hand on the wall — it was so hot, it was actually bubbling. Once stood outside, we could see the severity of the fire as tiles started to fall off the roof — it was extremely frightening.”



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Julie Oliver
Kent Fire and Rescue Service

At the height of the blaze there were six fire engines at the scene, but it wasn't until the next morning that the full impact was apparent, Lisa said: "Seeing my daughter's clothes and teddy bears all charred on the ground outside really hit me hard. Even though people were telling me my daughter was fine — she's not here; it was the thought of what might have been."

Lisa recalls: "It really was not a nice place to be, having no business and no home to live in for eight months." Aside from the emotional impact and the loss of the family home, financially the effects on the business were catastrophic. The pub could not trade for eight months and lost thousands of pounds from the Christmas, New Year and early summer trade; however the pub eventually reopened in August 2011.

Julie Oliver from Kent Fire and Rescue Service agreed with Lisa and Kris that "Keeping the fire safety measures up to date and maintaining the fire alarm system probably saved the lives of the family and the customers."

Kris and Lisa have now rebuilt their business and extended the pub with a separate function room, complete with bar, sound and light system and situated in the gardens, catering for events such as christenings and other parties as well as meetings and conference facilities. "It has been a long haul and a lot of personal pain and hardship, but we have a successful family business again." The chimney was fitted with a liner and wood burning stove during the refurbishments and is a central feature of this cosy, rural restaurant.