

South East

Horse & Groom, Ningwood, Isle of Wight

Martin Bullock noticed a lack of family pubs on the west side of the Isle of Wight and deliberately set about rectifying the situation.

The Horse & Groom finally opened its doors to families in April 2006 after a 17-month closure for refurbishment and sorting out the ownership of the pub. It was formerly owned by Whitbread and then passed into Laurel's hands before Enterprise Inns acquired the site.

The old kitchen, which was little more than a shed, was torn down and replaced with a purpose-built commercial kitchen together with an extensive remodelling of the leasehold site.

Now, all the food is freshly-prepared on site and cooked to order with only a few desserts coming from outside suppliers.

An overgrown area to the rear of the pub was levelled, grassed and transformed into a large



Bullock: spotted gap in market

children's play area.

Around £15,000 was spent creating the area with facilities such as a bouncy castle, climbing frames and tyre trail, a mini football pitch, and a nine-hole crazy golf course.

Justification that Bullock has tapped into a formerly-neglected market comes when he says: "Between 80% and 85% of our customers are family groups."

While the school holidays and tourist seasons contribute heavily to the pub's annual turnover, the locals are not forgotten. Over 2,300 customers have joined a loyalty scheme that gives them a 5% discount on all food and drink.