

Our Story so Far

Following the successful sale of his first restaurant business our CEO and founder, Peter Borg-Neal, set about developing a new casual dining pub and restaurant format.

His vision was to create the perfect environment where like-minded people could come and enjoy some great food and drink whilst catching up with friends, family, neighbours and colleagues.

In 2005, with funding (and moral) support from family and friends, Oakman Inns was formed, winning a place in the hearts and minds of local people and becoming a local institution.

2007

In December of 2007 the doors opened at **The Akeman** in the prosperous market town of Tring. Prior to our magic touch the site was a Victorian house, designed in 1901 by acclaimed local architect, William Huckvale. At some point it had been converted into an office but we soon stripped this back to reveal the original fireplace that we could huddle some cosy seating around. The car park soon became a landscaped courtyard and decking area; a much loved sun trap from spring until autumn.



2009

February **The Old Post Office** is in the centre of Wallingford, another busy and prosperous, historic market town. As its name suggests the building was originally the main post office, and as such, is not only in a prime location but also considered in the locality as iconic of Wallingford itself. A traditional red post box still takes pride of place in our front courtyard.

March

The excellent design values of The Akeman received wider recognition when it was named as **UK Pub Design of the Year** at the 'industry Oscars' – The Publican Awards.



November

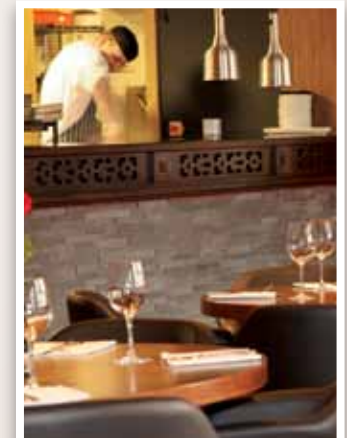
The Red Lion in Water End was our first business located in a more rural setting. Whilst there are lots of beautiful villages surrounding us, and the benefit of being situated on a busy thoroughfare we thought we would try something a bit different to make the longer journey even more worthwhile. Along came our infamous wood-burning pizza oven, expert pizzaiolas from Napoli and a superb reputation for authentic Italian pizzas. Couple that with our expertise in running great pubs and you've got your dream destination. Now we're not one to boast but (on the hush-hush) we have recently been visited by Hollywood A-lister, Michael Fassbender...twice.



2010

December

The Kings Arms was a run-down 18th century coaching inn in the centre of Berkhamsted. But following a £1.25m refurbishment project we transformed it into a stylish bar and restaurant with 14 well-appointed bedrooms and an elegant function room. Legend has it that The Kings Arms is most famous for being frequented by Berkhamsted-born author Graham Greene. In celebration of Greene's literary connection with the Kings Arms, each of the bedrooms is named after a character from his novels or his personal life, and the function room is named after the author himself.



2011

September

The Red Lion wins UK Best Italian Food Pub at the *Great British Pub Awards*.



December



The Blue Boar is a beautiful 17th century Cotswold coaching inn overlooking the market square in Witney. It was previously known as The Marlborough in honour of the Duke (Blenheim Palace is nearby) for two

hundred years before being restored to its original name; The Blue Boar. Following a four month investment programme costing £1.3m, The Blue Boar now boasts a restaurant and bar area, a function room, an imposing courtyard garden and 20 boutique style bedrooms. In keeping with the town's history, we have a Witney blanket in every bedroom.

2013

January

Oakman Inns & Restaurants is awarded a **Best Companies** one star accreditation by the prestigious Sunday Times' Best Companies to Work For.



Oakman Inns & Restaurants is named **Pub Company of the Year 2013** at the inaugural *Eat Out Awards*. The awards are dedicated to the pub and restaurant market, and celebrate the very best business practice in this fast-moving sector.



February

Oakman Inns picks up the operational reins of **The Cook and Fillet** in Kingswood (just outside Waddesdon). The deal involved Peter Borg-Neal, CEO, reuniting with former colleague, Chairman and MD of Grand Metropolitan Estates, Bob Williams.

April

The Beech House becomes our first step over the county border into Buckinghamshire, in Beaconsfield's affluent new town. This was the first time we had opened one of our businesses in a building that had never before been used for dining or drinking; in fact, until a few months beforehand it had been operating as a high street branded newsagents. Since opening, the Beech House has firmly established itself as a popular, informal all-day venue.



July

We are awarded our first star rating at The Akeman by the **Sustainable Restaurant Association (SRA)**. The SRA is an independent, not-for-profit organisation committed to promoting sustainability across the UK's restaurant industry. They measured our endeavours in three major areas; sourcing, environment and society. This accreditation was soon awarded to all our pubs, and continues to be so with each new business we add to our collection.



September

In the summer of 2013, we purchased the **Penny Farthing**; a small but well-known and respected hotel in Berkhamsted. The hotel is well used by business travellers but became tired and run-down over time. Following a phased refurbishment we now have 19 super-comfy, well-appointed bedrooms nestled just off the main high street, with private parking and quick access to the main train station into London Euston.

Our Story so Far

November

Oakman Inns & Restaurants is voted Pub Company of the Year at the *R200 Awards*, organised by Restaurant magazine. *R200* is the networking partnership of the top 200 restaurant group operators in the UK. We won this award through nomination by our peers within the group, some of whom are actually competitors which makes the accolade an even greater honour.



December

Certainly the most challenging of our conversions (to date) was the addition of **The Crown & Thistle** in Abingdon-on-Thames. After a lengthy £1.8m refurbishment, this magnificent 17th century Grade II listed coaching inn re-opened with three bars, a restaurant, a café area, 19 bedrooms and a gorgeous, rediscovered function room. The business sits almost as a self-contained village, clustered around an attractive cobbled courtyard which, in turn, is framed by a 200 year old wisteria, believed to have been planted when the first mail coaches arrived back in 1605.



Our Best Companies one star accreditation is renewed by the prestigious *Sunday Times' Best Companies to Work For*.

The Penny Farthing is awarded Overall Top Rating status by *Venere.com*



March

Oakman Inns & Restaurants wins two major awards at *The Publicans*: our industry Oscars. The first award – Best Community Pub Operator is recognition of Peter Borg-Neal's founding philosophy for the company; a pub and restaurant aimed at local customers. Our second award – Best Pub Employer (2-50 sites) – is an accreditation of the excellent working environment we aim to provide, including comprehensive training, staff motivation and a meaningful career path and development structure for our teams.



September

We opened the doors of **The Beech House in St Albans** to rave reviews and amidst a flurry of social media activity. Encompassing an artisan coffee house, bakery/deli, pizzeria and barbecue concept this business has brought our all-day dining endeavours to a new, faster-paced environment.



Take-away and retail are as much a part of our business as eat-in, and many of our guests are fascinated by the Big Green Egg in our kitchen; a ceramic oven which enables us to barbecue indoors, invoking the big flavours of a nostalgic summer... all year round.

At night, the bar really comes to life, with our expertise in craft beers and gins drawing discerning drinkers from around the city.

October

Oakman Inns & Restaurants, through constant perseverance and ongoing initiatives, gains a two star accreditation with the *Sustainable Restaurant Association*.



November

Drawing on the very recent success of The Beech House in St Albans, we revisit our original **Beech House in Beaconsfield**. Over an intense three day period we install the Big Green Egg and pizza oven and introduce our now-legendary artisan coffee, craft beer and gin range. Now that we have two Beech Houses we hope this is start of our first brand.

The Akeman Inn (formerly the Cook & Fillet) opens following a major refit. Purchased in September as a joint venture with Downing, the Akeman Inn is a popular all-day eating and drinking destination on the main thoroughfare between Waddesdon and Bicester. We chose the name for this old coaching inn both for its location on the ancient Roman Akeman Street and as a nod to our very first business in Tring.

New – as yet unwritten – chapters:

At the time of writing this document we have purchased two more businesses. Both are beautiful buildings at the heart of their towns; one in Chipping Ongar, Essex the other in Ampthill, Bedfordshire. The Kings Head in Ongar is a former coaching inn which we hope to open early in 2015. Following closely on its heels is the White Hart in Ampthill: an imposing three storey icon at the heart of the town.

*Our Story
so Far*