

LICENSEE OF THE YEAR AWARD 2019 WINNER

DAVID HAGE FBII & MARK OSBORNE
THE RAILWAY, LOWDHAM, EAST MIDLANDS

THE RAILWAY IS A MUCH-LOVED GASTROPUB, JUST SOUTH OF NOTTINGHAM, REFURBISHED BY DAVID HAGE FBII AND MARK OSBORNE IN 2017, AND NAMED BEST PUB IN THE COUNTRY AT THE NATIONAL PUB & BAR AWARDS EARLIER THIS YEAR, TAKING ITS AWARDS SCORE TO 10 IN TWO YEARS

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Just moments after being crowned champions, in what head judges Ashley McCarthy CBII and Sue Allen CBII describe as the highest calibre of finalists in any awards that they've judged before, *BII News* grabbed David and Mark for their first interview as Licensee of the Year Award 2019 winners.

"I'm the most surprised and gobsmacked that I've ever been about anything," laughs David. "Having just won Licensee of the Year Award at probably the biggest event we shall ever go to, in front of 800 people – it doesn't get any better than that."

Mark says: "I'm overwhelmed. It's really amazing. I really didn't expect to win it. Our fellow finalists were all so good – the competition was exceptionally strong."

David continues: "Only yesterday we were at the Sky headquarters for the interview panels and it was

such a hard day, having to talk to the industry experts in 'Apprentice-style' little pods. It was probably the toughest thing I've ever done. Afterwards we beat ourselves up, wishing we'd done better, but we obviously did okay. It's incredible! I've never been shocked by anything, but this is awesome."

Despite being old hands at winning awards, with 10 already in the bag, Mark explains how the whole process had been very different, because it had forced them to question themselves and their business at every stage.

It has been a positive experience for them, as David explains: "We're about to open our second pub, so winning this gives us some great marketing opportunities. But it also cements in our minds that what we have developed as a business and have got as a team is something really good and very special."

"To take this award back to 25 people in Lowdham in Nottingham, so we can all celebrate as a team, will be immense. They will enjoy winning this as much as us, because The Railway is a unique team of people who have created a very special thing in our village."

"It's the team that has made us win this," adds Mark. "We couldn't have done any of this with just the two us. This is for them."

Both David and Mark were also excited by the prospect of being able

to play a greater role in the industry and within the BII, as Licensee of the Year Award winners.

The trade, David says, is facing ever-greater challenges, from how younger generations spend their

leisure time (with one in three being teetotal)

to the rising costs of business rates and the living/minimum wage. "We need to think about what the pub of the future, in 20 to 30 years' time will look like."

And they thanked the BII.

"The BII has been a huge support to us," says David. "Helping our business with things like HR issues, through to the processes involved in dealing with the big pub companies."

"BII is like the big brother who puts an arm around you to give you the support you need. Having seen how the previous years' finalists have become very involved with the BII, I'm looking forward to the opportunities that winning this award will present to us over the coming year."

Mark concludes: "Winning will give us a great way to promote BII to other Midlands pubs and encourage them to get involved as well. The fact that this little pub in Lowdham has scooped this award will allow them to think 'we can do that' too." ■



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