

*" I vividly remember being brought into a pub as a young boy with my father. The smell was the first thing that hit you. [...] The low lights and the smoke gave it an otherworldly atmosphere. I would be told to sit in the corner and offered a 'mineral' and maybe a bag of crisps. My father would then bring his pint of Guinness – a thing of beauty." (Brendan Conway, 2016)*

We understand the present within a frame, which relies on historical memory and fantasies about the future. Neither is entirely reliable but even so, our communities thrive or not, within such frames. Perhaps, to dismiss the past and lose sight of our history is to lose touch with the essence of who we are. And who we are has always been a complex story of evolution and change. Here in "The Grosvenor Arms" the Conways aim to provide a space where the past, present and future are all acknowledged; where communities that have long existed in this area can continue to do so, alongside those that arrive due to unstoppable regeneration, as well as allowing for communal, moral obligations, welcoming those in need into our shared landscape. This objective is challenging in a world where progress driven by markets and ideology can't help but reconfigure, dissolve or erase the past entirely. The digital revolution, which we are still in the midst of, has created many positive opportunities but it has also generated often-frightening visions of 'cyborgs', which we see manifested dramatically in cultural entertainment. It has contributed to the reality of automation - leading to fewer jobs; and at its heart begun to reconfigure the very nature of language itself.

All of this fuels the uncertainty we are witnessing in society, evident in a polarised discourse where, dependent on your chosen media, opposing arguments often remain entirely absent. Perhaps some of this insecurity can be countered to some extent if we are able to join the Conways in their endeavour.

Brendan, who looks to the past when he narrates the touching memory he has about his father and the local pub, quotes social scientist, Gregory Bateson in his written work; "Stories are the royal road to the study of relationships. What is important in a story, what is true in it, is not the plot, the things or the people in the story, but the relationships in them." (1972)

These images document social relations that are integral to here, this place and to now. They acknowledge multiple layers of past and make it welcome not only in the present, but in our imagined futures too.

Sarah-Jane Field, 2017