

The Hog Inn

Re-opening a village pub
after long term closure



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Re-opening a village pub after long term closure

The Hog in the village of Horsley had a population 820 in the 2011 census. It is and five miles from the nearest large town and has only been open in its present form since 2013 after it had been closed for seven years. The village has a shop, a school and buses pass through it every hour or so in the day.

The past

A national pattern of PubCos selling their pubs to make a large profit from rising house prices means pubs are still closing at a rate of 13 a week and the pub in Horsley village was one of these casualties,

What happened was a wonderful couple who used to work in another local came in as new landlords. They spent a lot of money refurbishing this place, thousands and thousands and thousands of their own money. They got it up and running. I was living opposite at the time. I'd just moved in and I watched them literally turn the place around. They had a drinking society again in here and they had a food side that was doing well. So, the brewery waited until the books looked brilliant and then they told them they were selling up and taking it out from underneath them' (Bethany).

The Bell and Castle, as it was known, closed in 2009. This was a blow to the village which had a long history of having a pub in the past and was a central part of village life,

Everybody used the pub back then whereas now they don't. They were locals. They all grew up here. All the old boys used to drink with the young people. There was no age differentiation. Everybody drank together. They had quiz nights in here and the whole village used to come in and take part in the quizzes. This was the hub of the village. We had the village hall next door and anything to do with children was done in the village hall. Anything to do with adults took place here. We had a Horsley 'It's A Knockout' when I was seven and I can remember all the little hamlets had different teams and then we came in here to celebrate

the winner and the cup was given out in here but things began to change in the '90s' (Bethany).

Susan and Dave came to the village 30 years ago in 1987,

Eric was the first landlord we encountered, and he was, in my view, a bit dour. I remember somebody coming in for some food and he said, what do you want, cheese or ham? It was very basic when we first got here although his wife used to do a very good Sunday lunch. There was a restaurant area at that end, just mainly used on Sundays and we had a public bar. It was never high class. The food was very ordinary, basic pub food, which was okay. It was okay, but we had such a turnover of landlords and landladies, we had about ten every couple of years when the PubCo - Enterprise Inns - owned it, (Susan).

Enterprise put it up for sale in 2009 and the village gained a six-month space to allow them to see if they could purchase it before the proposed private sale.

We talked about issuing shares for people. We had a village pledge system, and there were others more involved than I was, but people were pitching anywhere between a few thousand pounds and £25,000 to buy. We wanted to see if we could buy it as a parish council as well, on the basis that we could buy it with a developer and, therefore, we would put housing in where the three houses are now and we could put some houses in there, and then do the pub up as a pub site. However, the landowner wanted £400K and we had it valued at £200K as a pub and we could not raise that much, (Dave)

The new owners then sold it on to a property developer who did a good job in renovating the pub from a three-bar pub to the open one we see today. He also built three houses in the large car park, sold them and now leases the pub to the current publican.

Meanwhile the current leaseholders, who were locally based and already had a café business in the nearest town, had shown an interest in taking over the pub if the village could not afford it. They

‘attended all these meetings in their parish, in the church, sitting there just listening to what people were saying. To be truthful we very strongly hoped there wouldn’t be a co-operative because in our opinion when you run a pub and put all the hard work in, you want to run it as your own business. We wouldn’t want to work for anyone else. Imagine being told

I don't like that beer; a committee is just not a business model, and it doesn't really work', (Helen).

The developer agreed to renovate the pub and lease the pub to the current publicans, and they re-opened it in 2014.



The renovation was considered a good one overall with its clean lines, plenty of sunlight, appropriate pub furnishings and an interesting open kitchen area. The new development was an L shape with the bar on the curve and the kitchen at one end of the L nearest the bar.



All the other seating and space is open and flows with the shape of the bar. Over an old fireplace is a large blackboard indicating the daily specials. The furniture is all a light brown wood with comfy looking chairs.

At the other end is a space that could be reserved for a party or for TV viewing and there is a small alcove adjacent to the entrance opposite the bar which again is a small space for a four people. There is plenty of wall space for large pictures.



An outside terrace by the entrance and adjacent to the main road is popular in the summer and a car park at the back of the pub completes the area.



Behind the pub is the churchyard with access at one side and on the other a lane leads to the village shop and large open space for young people and festivals. The school is a 100 yds past the pub and backs onto the playing fields. So, the main part of the village has the pub at its centre.

This pub is now perceived as a good place to come to, a nice place to come to, warm and friendly, and the food's good, I think more and more people are happy to come. On the day that they opened on that May Bank Holiday you could not move in here. There must have been 200 people here. People were just so glad to see each other and come to a pub, and actually you feel quite proud to say we've got the Hog at Horsley' (Susan).

The first three years – creativity and engagement

Alongside establishing a business basis, publicans need to continually enhance the pub's image across a wide social breadth and geographically, as far as they could reach. The partnership worked hard to create a positive ambiance and relevant connections, making the most of their entrepreneurial creativity and gaining a good reputation and awards. They were creative and revelled in engagement and looked to extending their businesses.

The first two years were an exciting and creative time for the family managers. They enjoyed their ownership of the project, the opportunity to provide a social centre for the village, to bring new menus and ales to their business, to enhance local networks and to be creative in developing the village pub.



Control over the operation of the pub was important in that it wasn't owned by a PubCo or a brewery that could restrict their management,

'The fact that it's a free house means we can have whatever we like. If there's something new that a company has, we can say, we'd love to have that. We can set the prices ourselves, which is awesome because we're not tied to a formula' (Helen).

Familial connections also enhanced commitment,

'Because my family owns it, I am more passionate about the business. I try to view it from the customer's point of view, and I love to see it doing so well (Eliot).

Eliot has virtually given up his social life for his work and at this point was only 17,

'I've only got six really close friends. I don't go out to Stroud and go partying, which is kind of why I think I am a bit different because I work 35 hours a week. This is my life. I occasionally go out once a week, but it's not like I'm at college where I could go out partying as I'm not really into that sort of thing. If someone's ill I'll say, oh yeah, I'll cover your shift, that's fine' (Eliot).

Cabras (2011) researching in Cumbria found that village pubs acted as incubators and facilitators of community cohesion from the perspective of individual components... pubs tend to have a major impact on leisure activities within the parish which includes the presence of sporting events (such as cricket, football and rugby matches), youth activities and elderly activities. There are arrangements with groups such as the local football team,

'The footballers come on a Saturday usually when they're playing. They have an agreement to bring their opposing team with them and if the opposing team don't come then they don't go to the opposing team's place when they go there. I give them free chip butties...and they drink lots. It works well. They're also having their dinner dance here. They're also coming in for a breakfast this week where they want beer with their breakfast before they go on a coach trip' (Elliot).

The village pub is a place to develop different kinds of social relations, an investment in an extended social life. There's intimacy between staff and regulars,

‘It is quite nice; one of my favourite things is knowing everyone. I know all the footballer group and I know what they drink, and then I know all these regulars; I know all these guys on this table, and I know there’s a couple that always sit on that table and have two fish and chips, that one of them doesn’t like tartar sauce and one of them has peas. It gives me pleasure because they come in and I can chat to them; I know all their interests and I know all their names’ (Elliot).

Children were another group of customers making a return to the pub. The growing emphasis on food also pointed this way,

We haven’t really had any problems with kids. Sometimes on a Sunday afternoon the parents will be in here, and they’ll sit chatting and they will let the kids run around if there’s no-one else in the pub, that’s fine. But if there are other people in the pub and it’s bothering them, I would expect them to sit. We have loads of babies in here: it’s no problem. We’re kid-friendly in that way. I love them (Helen).

Music is a part of all the pubs in the sample and people congregate to listen, appreciate or even just to be part of the congregation as do other specialist groups.



Two locals arrive and sit at the bar and get a lager barrel changed to accommodate them and a few others leave but the band keeps on playing. Two people clapping can be heard above the chatter and occasional shriek. The lead singer announces their penultimate song and tries a joke which is lost in the social revelry (FN-Mon. 31Aug, 2015).

The pub gained from being more than just a pub business by contributing to village life. The village Horticultural Show offered another opportunity,

‘The publican throws herself into things and she organised the Produce Show as well as providing the bar. So, we’re getting out. We’re not just in the pub; we’re getting out into the community, literally physically’ (Amy).

The early years were successful, but it was hard work,

We’ve both been doing sometimes 100 hours a week or more. We’ve put our hearts and souls into it; the year’s gone very quickly. We’ve turned over three times what I forecast which is amazing. I never realised. But the challenge is to make the profit now we’ve been here a year. We’ve got the basics right, people like us. We’ve got good food, we’ve got good drink you know there’s a good atmosphere here now we’ve got to make it into a profitable business because I gave up nearly 27 years as a midwife to manage this business, (Helen).

The Hog publicans renovated the accommodation above their pub for renting as flats for Bed and Breakfast, as did the Carpenters Arms.

‘It’s going really, really well. We’ve got them with AirB&B. It seems like I’m getting one every weekend. Occasionally, the regulars come second to the opportunity to provide an alternative financially viable project.

We’ve got our fourth wedding reception, August, Friday, Bank Holiday and so we’ve got to get the bed and breakfast rooms up and running by then because they’re staying in it. They want the bar closing until seven, and then they’re happy to have other people in which is nice of them. There’ll be about seventy people so it will be crowded. We’re saying that we’re fully booked; we’re not saying that we’re closed but the chef won’t be able to take any spontaneous orders because he will be prepping and all the rest of it for the party (Helen).

In order to survive our village pubs have had to ‘embrace change. You need to be flexible, which is why we’ll need to change the bar again. We have good days, for example, on Thursday last week we had a local education and care centre, the whole staff came up, and it was packed. It was good, happy; we did some food for them, like a buffet, and they were playing the piano all night. It was a really nice atmosphere, it was lovely. And the whole weekend was really good’ (Eliot).

Embracing change means keeping up with new interests, especially when they offer the opportunity to be creative,

We have different cocktails that we create ourselves; you can always put your own spin on what you're doing. Esther, one of our other workers, walked in one day and said, 'I fancy making a cocktail' and we served it for two weeks and everyone loved it, so you can come here and work and have a creative input. The publicans are very happy for us to be creative. They're very accepting of other people's ideas because they like young fresh ideas, probably because they have young staff and they want to attract a whole range of audience, (Henry).

They cultivated regular returnees,

I've got them to go on a mailing list now; just something simple. So, they give me their email address, and I send them special offers. Obviously one could complain and get off it, but the email says, 'unsubscribe' at the bottom of it, but it lets everybody know, each week, which games we are showing on TV, which foods are on, or special evenings we are doing, and the beers that are coming on, (H&H–Helen).

The effort needed to ensure the village pub's survival is one that is taken with gusto by publicans and owners, acting creatively, for the benefit of the pub's existence, for the delight of the customers and regulars and also for the joy and emotional satisfaction gained from the experience itself.

Cabras (2016) notes that there has also been a change of business focus for pubs over the past decade, a the shift in rank order from leisure to food facilities and he confirms the significance of the gastro pub phenomenon in rural and remote areas of England, with possible positive externalities on local economies emerging from the shift, for example, pubs purchasing from local supply chains. The publicans worked hard to build responsive, supportive, integrated, symbiotic business networks with local suppliers,

'We try and get as much as possible within a 20-mile radius. I think a lot of people like that about the pub, so if they come here on a Sunday and they see local pork on the board, they appreciate that it's not travelled very far', (Helen).

Awards were crucial for the newly restored Hog to gain visibility given its closure for the past seven years.

Our award at the ceremony for the best Community Pub in our county area was good fun. It was on our wedding anniversary as well, and we

had a table of ten. It was £50 a ticket and we paid half for all the staff. Then during the evening, they all clubbed together and bought us a bottle of champagne for our anniversary which was very nice of them. I think we had three articles in the paper about us, including winning the award and we certainly had a bit of an upturn in business. I think word gets around and you get a bit more business but it's a nice thing to have on the bar isn't it? (Helen).

The Stroud Life Business Awards, awarded Helen 'Business Person of the Year' in 2016, for her creativity at the Hog and the Canteen.

This spurred them on to apply for more awards,

'And then we won another award, a skills award from the local District Council for recognition of being a good employer, training and staff support of particularly young people; young and old and we had a Young Business of the Year award', (Helen).

In their third year at the Hog they invested in another business, a cocktail and tapas bar in the centre of the local town. Their entrepreneurial approach meant spreading their personal investment more thinly, but their projects stimulated them both with Helen having a close affiliation to the pub and her partner expanding into the nearby town,

The regulars at the Hog had been delighted to have their pub open again and liked the new publicans so news of their third business project worried them a little,

A couple of people have said, 'don't leave us, will you?' and I said, 'what do you mean?' They said 'well, when you have your wine bar, you won't go, will you?' And I said, 'no, people don't need to see me in a wine bar'; it's a big wine bar, and it's going to be much more impersonal and we don't need to be down there all the time (Helen).

Investing in three service outlets as the publicans at the Hog are doing meant that their reputation at one of them affected the others.

Now, it's positive. I don't think anyone has been negative about the new wine bar project. I certainly feel that Horsley would feel let down if we left. Now, it's not a problem raising investment cash at all. People are saying, 'oh yeah, we know you; we've heard all about you. We think you are really up and coming new businesses; we admire you and your partner'. They say, 'you're brave, we love the look of your businesses;

they're vibrant, they're young, they're a little bit different, and we think you've got a really good positive future ahead of you', (Helen).

The life of the place

A May Bank Holiday Ale and Music Festival

They have a weekend beer festival undercover outside with a melodious band playing country, a pizza oven and some pulled pork burgers. The publican is making the pizzas and her daughter is behind the bar'. Elliot, their son, has crashed out exhausted. There are about 60 people here and it has obviously been busier. The band sings their own version of a Buddy Holly song, 'Rave On'. The black face Mummers are still here having done a performance. Now it's Roy Orbison. The sky clouds over and it becomes a little chilly with some putting on jackets, but the enjoyment cannot be diminished. Some have been making balloon animals for the children.



The smell of the charcoal from the Pizza oven wafts over the area and a woman uncovers to feed her baby. Someone pours a drink over her fellah/relative and the group fall about but it is done without raucousness for they are all over 30. One young woman licks an ice cream with gusto and some sausages are delivered to hungry customers and the band continue singing soothing country songs at a level which

allows general conversation. It is a jolly happy atmosphere. Occasionally a member of staff calls out a number for those who have ordered a pizza. Girlfriends are cuddled, babies caressed, families teased, and the band plans a final participative song. There's a real mixture of local folk from babes to pensioners. The publicans and family talk warmly with many of the customers who they obviously know. It feels like a real village party and the publicans are very welcoming.



A Friday Fish night in summer

We have booked a table for their fish night. There are 5 locals outside smoking and drinking and another group of 5 people including 3 infants at the bar who have colonised the bar area together with pram and toys. Another working local is doing a crossword sat at the which has just three stools. The usual bar music is now subdued as the chatter from the customers overpowers it. Another three locals occupy a table which is reserved for 7.30. A party of four and a babe in a highchair occupy a table at the back of the pub.

A worker moves through the bar group as soon as she sees us enter dressed more formally and ask if we have booked a table and thoughtfully changes our table away from the bar group. Within five minutes of us seating she asks if we are ready to order and we ask for a few minutes to have drink. This is obviously a management decision for someone to rove around the bar ensuring everyone is comfortable like a restaurant culture. Helen, the publican, spots us and reintroduces herself. The family leave and the music is heard more clearly now but it is slightly diminished by the sound of frying from the open kitchen. Two women and the children from the group we thought had left return complaining about the cold late May evening. Another parent strides in with two young girls who dance their way into the pub indicating it is their local.

In amongst this central hubbub the main floating staff member can be seen pouring water from a jug for people at another reserved table

that has just been filled. One of the central infants is encouraged to rock in a small rocking stool. The girls sip orange through straws as they make their way outside for some fun. The children and the bar group leave at 7 o'clock, although one woman remains with her quiet babe at the bar together with the boy in the rocking chair and their dad who is with them. The cacophony of chatter, enthusiastic greetings, occasional outbursts of laughter kitchen activity, background soul music, occasional high-pitched voices of the children, overhead comments about dishes with almonds and 'good menu' from a group drinking wine - all go to construct a living environment full of joy and pleasure.

The rest of the girls' extended family arrive, and they take up a large table in the back of the pub. Two other tables have customers drinking wine and the table nearest the open kitchen is occupied by a lone guy leafing through papers. We take our leave having had a very good meal and experiencing a warm lively atmosphere.

The Hog Carol Concert – The Sunday before Christmas

The Horsley Choir is supposed to be here, but it has not appeared yet. There are four sitting groups and a couple at the bar totalling about 23 but the singers soon start arriving with song sheets. They have just sung in the village church behind the pub. The bar is modestly decorated with holly; some baubles and a few large paper stars hang from the natural holly and some these branches overhang the bar decorated with more baubles but their alcove by the front door has a more lavish decoration celebrating the time of year.



Two piping children's voices are heard playing above the quiet hubbub. The Christmas lunch/dinner menu offers two courses for £20 and 3 for £24. The choir perform locally, sometimes in the church, but they are independent of it. Interesting song. sheets are given out and we manage to make a connection with one of the participants and arrange to set up a chat about their village activities. We see the publican Helen and ask whether she is looking forward to Christmas and she indicates some reluctance to embrace it as special and says. 'it's just another working day' as it is for the village pub.

The choir strike up with a Gloucestershire Wassail and there is some part singing. The pub quietens down and the children are shushed. My musical partner gives a warm overheard gesture of approval and delight. I get another half for us as their second Wassail begins.

About twenty singers are stood underneath the blackboard menu adjacent to the open kitchen and the bar and their Choir's conductor leads their singing. Some of the local audience sit on a long bench put there for this event and the rest who join in are sat in front of this group as they attempt to sing along with Wassails which most will not know.

The next contribution is a specialist contribution just from the choir and they get a cheerful but sporadic round of applause. They sing the German version of Silent night. During this touching rendition the children's voices can be heard at the back of the pub piercing the tonal offering. The choir leader takes a swig of ale and then launches the choir into 'The holly and the Ivy'. Some of those sitting further away join in and a quietness descends between the verses and the children are quietly told to behave. It's a grand idea given that have a village choir and shows how the village pub strives for an inter-dependence in all that happens in the village. The choir strikes up singing the Coventry Carol and the chatter dies away and the children are silenced again, and they escape to the outdoor area. When they return, they are conscious of the need for quiet and the scamper about whispering like mice chasing one another and the Choir finishes on a high note. The last one we hear before we leave is a part song called John Bull. There is cheerful applause and an adult entertains the children to keep them quiet. We leave with a jolly and comfortable feeling that this is a real village pub as they embark on another unknown part carol.

The next two years – Trauma and survival

Many of the old industrial and village communities surrounding local pubs have changed out of all recognition, reducing the number of devoted pub regulars in some areas. Village pubs try to make their pubs look attractive to those with more money to spend and they encourage them to do so. Change was necessary for pub survival as there were important shifts among the villagers and the change in the role of the village pub was, at times, contested, by the new incomers,

You had some villagers who wanted it to be a vegetarian restaurant. You had some that wanted it to be this and that and everything else; it's a difficult thing to balance. Some villagers had ulterior motives. Some wanted it to be an arts centre but it's a village pub at the end of the day, and it just needs to stay a pub. Now we're trying to redefine that balance of it being a functioning pub and restaurant, because a lot of people view us now as strictly as a restaurant (George).

There is a conundrum for village pubs regarding village support. As we have seen village pubs have to search far and wide for customers making their pub a destination pub as well as a local. For it to be attractive as a destination pub they have to offer good quality meals and maybe charge more than ordinary pub grub for it to be good quality. It's a tough business with so many variables affecting turnover such as: changing cultural habits and in some cases village antagonism; employment issues diminishing local use; competition; local structural transport improvements.

'They have to do food now. This isn't a drinkers' pub anymore because nobody can afford to drink in the pub like they used to. So, it's not the hub of the village for the villagers or for the village activities anymore', (Bethany).

However, the publicans worked hard to meet possible village interests. They tried making the pub the source for the local school meals,

'The other thing is that we did tender to do school dinners for the school, but it just wasn't worth the money. We would have made a massive loss on it - just couldn't do it. I think they said 87p per head and we just couldn't have done it, for that (Helen).

Public relations are crucial and where you have an open kitchen, as they

do at the Hog, it may be more difficult to maintain a good reputation,

Although having the kitchen in the bar was a bit off putting to the chef when he first arrived, people sit there and watched, and I think that's a theatrical aspect to it; that's part of why it works. However, it does bring with it some unusual rules, like no swearing in the kitchen, (Helen).

Maintaining a good reputation is day to day work when businesses are subject to Trip Advisor comments,

Some people are very rude, I'm amazed. We had one bloke come in once, he was a very big commanding sort of man, and he'd just been playing golf and he came and he said 'What's with the furniture; when I come out I want to be sitting somewhere more comfortable than my own home, not on this tat'. People are very inconsiderate sometimes. He was horrible. I said to him 'I'm sorry, you're actually sitting at my kitchen table from my own home. I'm sorry if that isn't up to your standard but this is my standard'. It really offended me, (Helen).

Running three businesses meant that administration increased exponentially,

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday I'm working, either at café or I'm doing office stuff, hiring and firing people and doing all the admin and planning down at the office at The Wine Bar. So, I haven't had any days off for a month yet in a row. Running three companies means there's a hell of a lot of admin to do and if I slack off, I find that there's a mistake that happens down the road such as failing to do performance reviews and things like that. If they don't get done and no one gets a contract then they quit and I don't have a leg to stand on; so, all those things are important not to miss, they still need doing. There's always a problem with staff. We employ 45 staff; there's always a problem with one of them, and if that's not foreseen down the road then that's my fault, (Helen).

Meeting the expectations of the regulars became more difficult and local support began to slow down at the Hog,

So, it's been tough which might be partly why there's been a little bit of a downturn. I've have been here, at the pub but I've not been that visible to customers. They probably think that I can't be bothered any more. It has been hard. It's just been very hard. They don't see us here all the time, and they think that we're not here. I think it is important. What I tend to

do, if I'm not actually running the ship, I'm up and down the stairs like a yoyo every evening saying 'hi' to customers, checking that everyone is okay; so, I am here still working. I might be on the computer upstairs doing marketing or something but I'm always popping up and down. However, if the customers don't see me, the next time they see me, they say, 'why weren't you at the pub the other night?' (Helen).

Unlike other publicans they have had to spread themselves over their projects,

The café has had a complete makeover, so we've painted everything, bought some new furniture; completely done everything. So that was last week, and we got a new entrance as well, so I've already seen more people coming in, so that's great. Now I've got work here in the pub. So, I, concentrate on one business and then concentrate on the other, and then move on. I can see one suffering if I'm not around all the time' (Helen).

However, they enjoyed the buzz of expansion, 'The architects that are working with us on the new wine bar are lovely and amazing. They're really quite confident in it and they said, if it does really well, there's no reason why you can't open six more', (Helen).

During this entrepreneurial expansion there was some bad news for the Hog in 2017, 3 years after reopening, when the main road to the pub from the local town was due to shut for three and a half months, which turned into five, to deal with the road sliding down an adjacent steep valley.

We had a meeting in the village hall about it, and it was a fait accompli, 17 weeks, so that's the 31st of July till mid-November. It was the worst time for us. Well, they gave lots of excuses why they had to do it; they said, yes, it's the driest but also because they didn't want to disrupt the school. I said, 'what, till mid-November, well, that doesn't make sense to me'. I said 'thank you for asking the school, that's really admirable of you, but did you ask me, no; if you'd have asked me I'd have said that's the worst time, please do it in January/February'. I was angry with them. They said they would be happy to provide signs, 'Business is open as usual', but that's all. I've got an events and marketing manager now who works for me full time, and we're going to sit down and have like a campaign of marketing for the pub and think about how we're going to play this; either we play the victim role, pub, 'poor pub, help save the

pub' (Helen).

One of the consequences of the 50% downturn in footfall only three years after the pub reopened was that it had not yet provided a consistent good return on investment,

'It will only make about £30,000 a profit a year maximum, even if it's maxed out, we think. It's only one person's salary' (Helen).

Things got worse for the Hog publicans after the main road had been closed for longer than originally announced, three months,

The Wine Bar, being young as well, is doing well but it's still getting on its feet. The Café we own has bailed out the other two businesses. To lose over half our income due to the road closure has been, being frank with you, very damaging; on payday on Monday, we've got to find £21,000 to pay our staff for the month. We're about £8,000 short. That is crunch time. I think we'll find it from somewhere, I don't really know, but it's crunch time. We've gone, five months with The Hog doing badly. We should have shut it. But emotionally, we're so attached to this place. It's been tough (Helen).

However, Helen was determined to survive and keep the open the Hog,

We don't live here anymore. But I work here, on Friday nights, Saturday nights and Sundays and I am doing a shift here, to support the chef. As it's an open kitchen, if I see someone I say 'hi, how are you' and often come out and make a point of coming and talking to people and engaging with them. I'm here every day at some point during the day; sometimes I'll pop in for half an hour. However, I'm not as visible as I used to be; that's tough for people who want me here but I'm only one person and I hope that they understand that. I'm doing as much as I can. It would be easy to let go now, it's tempting; it's really tempting to kind of let it go but I'm not, I'm determined. We both put blood sweat and tears into this place and I'm not about to let it go. This pub is important to us. It's our reputation that's at stake (Helen).

The leaseholders were forced into more expensive strategies to save their businesses,

'We've been negotiating for a new 20-year lease just because of the road closure. We thought we really are in trouble if we do have to sell up, as we need to make the product sellable, and a new five-year lease isn't very

sellable. So, we are negotiating and they're happy to do that to extend it to 20 years (Helen).

The road re-opened just before Christmas 2017 and together with another new manager; they had a good one with villagers supporting their revival in more ways than one after Christmas as well,

The gas cooker broke down, so we had to do Sunday lunch for 72 on two small gas camping stoves. I don't know how we did it. I phoned around the village saying, anyone got any gas camping stoves. I managed to get two and we did 72 covers, full roasts. Bethany ran across with a camping gas appliance as did someone else, who lives just around the corner there and does bed and breakfast rooms. I said, 'I'm not cancelling 72 people, I am not greeting everybody on that doorstep saying no' when they've come for Sunday lunch because they can't book anywhere else, everywhere else will be full. I said, 'half these people are walking, I've got birthdays, I'm not saying no; let's find a solution'. I just said, 'this is what you do, and we're doing it' and they did it. Not one single complaint, everything went out lovely, fresh, hot and on time. That's the thing you must do, you must do that in this job; there's always something that goes wrong, but you must find a solution (Bert).

They were also planning to engage the villagers more by responding to their requests for simpler meals again,

'we're going to be doing an earlier menu but just a fixed price, so it's like a one-pot menu, so like a pie and a pint, or something like that, from 5:30 onwards; so you can just come in early and have dinner with a drink straight after work (Bert).

He was determined to revive the fortunes of this village pub and along with the main publicans ensure its survival as a welcoming home from home place,

Well, that's it; everybody who comes in thinks they're special. I don't worry about muddy boots for it'll take me two seconds to sweep up; or, if it's been raining outside I'll say, 'give me your jacket', I'll turn the heat up and chuck it on the radiator for two minutes; or I'll provide the dog with a bowl of water and a biscuit. It's just making every single person that walks through that door feel like they're special because at the end of the day it's their money they're spending, and that's what we want. You've got to make sure they feel special otherwise they're not going to

spend that money. It's taken me a long time to get to know everyone's names and what they like, so I know when Bob walks in he wants a pint of his special or that his wife wants a glass of Pinot and I know their kids' names. On New Year's Eve I had loads of families in. I was getting kids drawing pictures and sticking them on the wall and doing paper aeroplane races. Then I got the next load in at eight o'clock. It was the same over Christmas; I was buying sweets and different colouring packs and different bits to make everyone feel welcome. You've got to appeal to so many different stages of people, right down to the little baby that comes in, to the old lady who's 90 and comes in and has a sherry maybe once a month, (Bert)

Once again, the manager and the publican were showing the same sort of commitment that the main publicans' value and so building a valued village pub. The villagers were also keen for it to survive for it allows a different form of social relationship to develop from that of one's friends, one of mutuality,

I think it's important that with the loss of pubs and shops and all these sorts of things there's people we know in different categories, we've all got our close friends and if we're close friends we'd go to their house, they would come to our house, so those social networks are solid. But I think it's important in a community that there's a lot of people I meet in the pub here who aren't my best mates, we don't tend to go around each other's house for dinner but they're part of my community so you do care about them and you do want to say hello and catch up. I think that's the danger of the sort of community thing that could collapse otherwise, and I think I like to come in here and know my neighbours and people, very happy to have a chat with them, as they are with me, really important, but if this pub closed I would never invite each other for dinner, we're not that close. And I think that's an important social level which would disappear without a place like this, (H&H-Amy).

The village pub is a place to develop different kinds of social relations, an investment in an extended social life.

Village pubs have had to broaden their appeal as good food places with restaurant style service. They all lay tables ready for food so the pub looks like a restaurant with reservation slips or markers. They seek awards and commendations to improve their popularity. The Hog

leaseholders: developed websites and Facebook profiles; attended regularly to Trip Advisor and other assessments of their hospitality; they tried to generate interest through offers, charity events, special events, regular pub clubs and quizzes, musical entertainment, family days; children's events, advertising local walks and converted parts of the pub for bed and breakfast. They made strenuous efforts to embed the pub in the village community but, as indicated, there is not enough support alone, in the village, to keep the pub going. All these efforts demanded very long working hours by the publicans and continual and consistent well-being.

The family who lease this pub always have a creative plan or two up their sleeves, which village pub proprietors need to ensure pub survival. They understand clearly the precarious nature of making a living from leasing and managing a pub and have had to get used to a plethora of changing managers and chefs as the former often realise its limited career prospects and the latter are keen to improve their careers and move for a new experience or to reduce the high working hours needed. These are issues inimical to the pub trade.

Another lease of life

After five years the situation for the publicans had radically changed. Their business partnership was dissolved, and they went their own way with the Wine Bar being a casualty as it closed after two years. These were difficult times for the remaining publican, Helen, but she now has a new business partner, a family member and her brother in law has uprooted himself from Yorkshire and began managing the pub in May 2019. Helen is now overseeing the two businesses - the café and the pub and she is seen more often at the latter. The pub has a committed chef who has been with them for two or more years now. Her son, who learnt the trade at both businesses is back from a world trip and is looking for work and will no doubt contribute to the redevelopment of the Hog. Her daughter is working a couple days a week in the café and so they are even more of a family business than they were at the start.

In re-opening this village pub in 2014 the publicans worked extremely hard to ensure its survival and despite business downturns, personal relationship changes and damaging road closures are once again feeling positive about their future in maintaining this village pub. The family have signed a new 15-year lease on the Hog and are reviewing their past five years in this trade in order to improve the stability of the pub. They have seen some of their past efforts recognised as the pub was recently featured in a Sunday Times list of pubs to visit on 20 great walks in 2019 and with the help of the village and a new effort to regain their county wide reputation they seem determined to maintain this attractive pub for the village. However, like all village pubs they need continual support from their village, a continual and rising footfall from outside the village appreciative of the quality of their product and a continual surplus of available enthusiasm, determination and commitment.

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