

## **Revitalising the Black Horse Cranham and one's life.**

Emma and partner James are renting the Black Horse from the owner and took over the week beginning 9<sup>th</sup> September 2019. Emma worked here a few years ago under a previous leaseholder and she enjoyed it despite having to travel from Cheltenham. She has mainly been in hospitality, but her partner has a full-time job in Birmingham – Mon-Fri. She runs the pub during the week with her brother Jim, being the chef and at weekends they get in some part time staff to ensure some relief.

When she realised that the pub was available for rent or for purchase, she talked to her partner about it and then brought him up to the common for a walk and a look around the village. Then she took him into the pub and he said 'OK I'm sold', and they began working out how to take on the pub. Emma had always enjoyed working at the pub and being close to the village life and she was very excited about this new venture supported by her brother and partner. However, she distanced herself from the decision making about whether to take it over as she knew she would be biased as she 'wanted it from the start'. She describes themselves as a young couple without a mortgage and looking forward to a new challenge. She was working in hospitality on a minimum wage; working many hours and she was beginning to wonder how to improve her life. So, this venture means she is now self-employed doing a job that is providing added value to her life.

Their first night was a Friday and the village turned out in large numbers to welcome them and they were surprised to see that on their first Sunday lunch they did 48 lunches, which they hadn't expected. They then started opening twice a day from Mon-Thursday whereas previously it had been shut Mon-Wed and then only open evenings except for Sat Sun when it was open all day. They thought the weekdays were going to be quiet and didn't have high expectations but 'it's been really good as we have been busy with lots of walkers and locals have been up to try the lunch menu'. They try to offer a different evening menu which is prepared and cooked from local sources.

Over the past 2-3 years the pub has lost its appeal for visitors and locals during the oversight of a previous leaseholder and the owner had to regain control and has been running it on a limited scale for the past year. Emma knew they would have to try and recover that lost trade but so far, the pace of recovery has been good and exceeds her expectations. They aim to provide ales from across the 4 counties of Gloc, Hereford and Shropshire and Worcester and change them regularly.

The relationship with the cricket club who also have a licence is fine. When its quiet in the BH she finds time to go up to the club when its fine and join in there. This pub will be more of a winter pub but the community in the village are active and get together to support the pub and other village activities. 'There's a really good community spirit. If you put on something, the village provides good support'. She loves village life and is looking forward to bringing the pub up to its former glory. Village pub survival is precarious, and the Black Horse will need a lot of village support and to regain its once high reputation as a wonderful and worthwhile destination pub.

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## **Family and local catch-up at the BH Cranham**

Its nearly 6 pm on the last Saturday in September at the Black Horse Graham and the end of the third week under new management. The main bar is packed with many cross generational villagers. There are babes in arms being fed with bottles and a about 8 toddlers who either roam about enjoying the adventure inside and outside the pub. However, two toddlers sit quietly in a window seat drinking and eating crisps. Someone is heard banging on the dining room door to the bar and 2 small children rush to open it, being very familiar as to how to raise the ancient latch. Meanwhile many adults occupy the main bar in close quarters with jolly chatter that overpowers any high-pitched cries from the children. This looks like regular event on a Saturday, as no village teams have been playing. The owner, for nearly thirty years, is now renting the pub to the new managers, Emma and James, a young couple. He has become a proud grandfather by one of his two sons who were born in the village. He circulates in the middle of the bar, pint in hand, smiling at how busy and popular, is his pub. It has had a downturn over the past two years, and it is great to see it buzzing again. The owner is confident this friendly and committed couple will make a go of it and eventually purchase it from him. He says everyone here are all locals and very supportive and they all know each other.

A pint carton of milk sits next to a glass of Prosecco and a copy of the Telegraph and a handbag showing that the owners of them are here to meet others on their way home from shopping. The managers are doing food from 5 and this is useful to those who want a snack early and a couple of families have taken to the opportunity to have an early meal with their 5 babies and toddlers. Fathers drift around the bar with pint in one hand and babe in the other and another, plays peek a boo with a new very young one caressed by its mother. Three toddlers play in the dining room which will no doubt fill up later with older visitors for a meal. This is indeed a classic village pub with a wide range of inhabitants including many young families, which is good for the future of the village and the pub. However, the managers will need to regain its reputation as a great destination pub as well for it to survive as most village pubs have had to do in the current climate where cheap alcohol and home entertainment is popular. Nevertheless, the villagers are also committed to using the pub to avoid losing it.