

Commitment and creativity in managing ‘a way of life’ at the Carpenters Arms



Bob Jeffrey

The Carpenters Arms in the village of Miserden, is owned by Admiral Taverns, a pub company (PubCo) that owns or leases about 1000 pubs and they pride themselves on developing community public houses. The pub serves a small village community, in which all the property is owned by the village estate, originally Musards Manor from the Domesday Book, and now owned now by an established family. All property is rented to tenants and the estate tries to ensure that the village has a good mix of generations in order to maintain the village school, church, village pub and shop. The village had a population 449 in the 2011 census and is seven miles from the nearest town. It has an active church, a shop/post office and has a weekly bus to the nearest town. The village is also rare in that it has no visible signs of 20th Century street paraphernalia such as telegraph poles or modern signage. It is often, therefore, used as a backdrop for films and TV series.

The Carpenters Arms was, from 2000, leased to its current publican, Chris, and he ran it with his wife Carole for about 5 years when they decided to try their hand in a bigger, more town centred pub. Admiral appointed a few leases after Chris and Carole left, for about a year, but they didn't work out and it closed for a few months in 2005. Chris and Carole offered to step back and take over the lease again and it appears that Admiral snapped them up as they were aware of the good job the pair had done in the early 2000s. They have been there ever since and so have managed the pub for last 16 years or so except for a year's gap. Chris argues that they are favoured by Admiral because they manage it well and they recognise their strong creativity and management skills.

International, country and county wide reach

The publicans and owners who ‘love’ the village pub, see it as a way of life and are committed to preserving its existence and culture and go the extra mile to ensure its survival. Our village pubs are today both a village pub and a port of call for tourists from across the world, exploring specific architectural and rural areas of special interest,

What’s nice about this pub is that even though you could say every day is the same, it’s not; it’s different because it’s the customers that make it different; you never know who’s going to come through the door because we get such a wide range of customers. We get visitors to the Estate and gardens and walkers, but we also get a lot of Americans or Canadians that come here; many of them because they are looking for relatives in the church. So, we get a lot of foreign customers as well and as I said, it’s always nice because you never know who you’re going to meet [Callum].

Village pubs now advertise their services via the internet, social media, responding to Trip Advisor and welcoming customers, irrespective of ethnicity, geographical location, age, class and culture. One venture for the Carpenters Arms has been Bed and Breakfast. The publican says he has turned the upstairs room into a B+B and he renovated it and put in new sofas etc. and since he advertised it on Air B+B it has been booked every weekend.

He has lots of bookings from foreign visitors. He adds a cleaning charge to the £10 per night, which he gives to a villager who cleans it. He reckons that renting it for B+B for 8 days a month will realise the same income as renting it permanently for about £800 per month. He says that next summer he will be able to rent it out as a B+B 30 days a month. He notes that the film for ITV of a famous local author, who lived in the next village Slad, starts tonight. The film company used Miserden due to its lack of 20th century paraphernalia and he hopes this will raise the visibility of the pub and village for future business. He always takes the guests around the outside of the pubs to the rooms upstairs rather than through the bar so it seems like they have their own entrance and he allows dogs as visitors may come for walking

Opening their arms to people across the world is now something village pubs have developed, partly due to the global nature of the technological revolution and partly because village publicans are a

welcoming group. They are also a special place to imbibe alcohol and food as this tour coach leader describes who has been bringing tourists to the Carpenters Arms for twenty years,

‘In Belgium, we have restaurants, we have cafés, but we don’t have pubs, and a pub is something special. I believe everyone should have seen a pub at least once in your lifetime. All the things you see at the table, the way people react and are so giving, this is the real thing. You hear people crying, shouting there, et cetera, you see all life. It’s learning that a pub is a part of life here. My tourists encounter a lot of locals together’ [Tour guide]. Chris gains their attention and tells a history of the village and the pub and asks the tour guide to translate.

The publican is very creative with his social media,

‘I put up videos on our Facebook as well. They can watch it all the way through; there’s no advertising but then if you look further five hundred and forty-one people have seen the sort of music we do and then you’ve got comments as well’ [Chris].

Then there’s the regular pictures put up daily,

‘I do loads of this, I take photographs of the poker night, people, even the dogs, everybody’s pet that comes in, I adopt them all and I put them on Facebook. I put up Carole’s cooking before and after, saying “it’s ready come and get it”’ [Chris].

He hammers social media.

I’m on it every single day socially bang, bang, bang, every day I put up something about that’s going on in the pub, what offers we’re doing and every time you come in the pub I ask you to follow my pub on Facebook because if you follow me, everything I put on there you see. I posted the film crew filming Laurie Lee’s book, Cider with Rosie. I posted that on my Facebook page, and I think eighteen hundred people saw that for free. Its generating business through social media, I take a picture of the cat on a Sunday sleeping and say the pub cat’s having a right snooze by the fire, so people see it and then later they ask, ‘where is this cat’? It gets the Carpenter’s Arms in their head again [Chris].

When the pub cat had been run over, he posted a message on his Facebook page and over 12,000 people read it. He tells me that he advertised his pies on his Facebook page and offered those who ‘shared,

liked the page, and commented with a message' would be put into a draw for a free pie dinner, a pint and a bottle of champagne. 10,000 people did it and he will make the draw after Christmas.



Only one winner though, even if they live in Scotland. Tens of thousands will receive this posting and share it. He advertised a free main meal if readers of his FB page, liked, shared and showed they had done

so when they came to claim the offer on a quiet Tuesday.

They have had to assure visitors from outside the locality that their pub is both attractive and has high standards,

The floral baskets at the front of the pub border the lane and a series of benches occupy the space between the baskets and the pub entrance and an adjacent window. Round this window are more potted plants consisting of blue/purple pansies and darker blue geranium like flowers. A black gate adjacent to the window has a chalked message which says, 'And low the mists of evening lie and lightly skims the midget', John Betjeman, Poet. These are changed regularly by a villager [FN-Sat. 25 Sept. 2015].

Awards are important to their strategy to become destination pub, It's 13.30 on this pre-Christmas Saturday. There are three couples having a drink and some lunch - one couple being walkers. The publican is in a cheerful mood as he has had a good year culminating in the PubCo that owns the pub nominating him as 'Pub landlord of the Year' in the British Innkeepers Association competition. He is chuffed at being chosen and wonders whether he could walk into any pub in the country as a landlord if he won it. He tells me the Admiral Taverns local rep, who manages 50 pubs thinks he is a role model as to how to make a pub profitable [FN-Fri. 16 Dec. 2016].

Chris never stops working. He says. 'when I sit down I am always planning what to change and develop'. When the Environmental officers

came to inspect the kitchen ‘they were here for nearly 4 hours and we were awarded a top mark of 5’. He was, obviously very pleased. He is always positive. One can’t imagine him ever moaning. If he has a problem, he prides himself on being able to sort it out.

Regulars, from outside the village, have now become a part of the pub’s main footfall replacing to some extent the general fall in village/local support. The affection which regulars place upon village life helps maintain the pub as they provide, as it were, a regular boost of adrenalin which, without it, the pub would not survive, and the village would be heart broken.

Unfortunately, we are not living in a village now, so I think it’s wonderful that you’ve got a community here whereby you’ve still got a village school, you’ve got a pub that’s still part of that community. We talk a lot, remembering neighbours that used to lean out of windows and who you were friends with and with whom you’d have coffee. If it was raining, we would bring in their washing. The people who come to this pub are all ages, young people and parents here with children, who come up here on a Friday late afternoon after picking up their children from school [Colin].

The Carpenters Arms looks beyond its local boundaries and sees itself carrying out an educative role by encouraging groups from the nearby city to perform and entertain,

It’s a Bank Holiday Monday on a sunny warm day at about 2pm. Visitors are continually pouring in and out of the pub quietly but with cheerful smiles. Many are walkers and a local rambler’s group are eating. The call for ketchup can be heard regularly as the kitchen handles dozens of meals. There are over 70 people with a continuous flow along the small village lanes, which just copes with the volume of cars ferrying people out for a Carpenters Arms’ lunch.

Surprisingly the main public bar is relatively quiet but then most people are outside. However, not many regulars are here - probably knowing how busy it is on this Bank Holiday and planning to come by later. The landlord calls out ‘anyone waiting’ and he sees an old customer – a West Indian with dreadlocks - and he greets him enthusiastically and hugs him. He is called Rabbi Levi and visits schools showing them how to play music as he plays lots of instruments. He tells children about anti-racism

and how we are all equal. ‘He came to the pub with a load of instruments and gave everyone an instrument and told them all play when I tell you’ says Chris, ‘we all played, and it was brilliant’ [FN-Mon. 29 Aug 2015].

At the same time as maximising global interest in this ancient estate village, its managers, whose owners are a PubCo, must keep down costs, act creatively to increase profits and develop strategies to ensure customers keep returning.

Cutting costs, maximising income and customising service

The co-publicans have a large allotment they rent from the estate, and much of their vegetables is fresh,

‘We just use vegetables that we grow. That’s the way we like to cook at home. We like to go with the seasons. If aubergines aren’t in season, then we don’t provide them. I try and use the vegetables that are in season because otherwise it just gets too expensive. One of the reasons is that it’s too expensive is because if it’s not in season you’ve got to import it. Whereas if it’s already in the ground up the road you’re going to use that, aren’t you?’ [Carole].



The kitchen garden is an activity that keeps the publican busy in quiet times; it produces very fresh, seasonal food and enhances the Carpenter’s Arms individual image to attract those from further away,

We’ve got a massive kitchen garden out the back, up across the back here; I grew seven hundred leeks last year. I didn’t buy any lettuce from June to October; I grew every single bit. I had five hundred metres of carrots. Our garden takes the lettuce; green beans go in there and courgettes go in there. I grew fifteen courgette plants last year; we had

courgettes coming out of our ears. Then I had a twenty-metre row of green beans, which all came in here to the greenhouse; broad beans first and when we had used all of them, we planted the beans afterwards. We had tonnes of broad beans. I've still got some in the freezer and we've got beetroots in up there. It looks wintry up there now but there's swedes in; there's a few leeks left up there; there were still some sprout tops up there and there's half a row of carrots left [Chris].

Late Victorian and Edwardian pubs offered coffee and food in the morning, hot pot at lunch or set meal and they allowed customers to bring own food. Itinerant food sellers visited the pubs to sell shellfish, [Jennings 2007]. However, villages today and their pubs have had to do more to survive, reaching far and wide to bring in visitors and regulars, to welcome them with open arms leading to many changes a village pub in the last few years.

Their menu consists of two boards either side of the bar, one for meat and fish dishes and the other for the same number of vegetarian meals,

Well, when I very first came here the vegetarian board was a pudding board. The only thing that was ever on there for a vegetarian was a mushroom stroganoff. People would come in and they would say 'have you got anything different?' So, over the years, more and more people are becoming vegetarian or they're gluten free or they're dairy intolerant or something. If you haven't got it in the kitchen you can't make it, because you can't pre-make it. And I don't buy ready-made stuff in because it goes off and you must freeze it again anyway. So, I got a vegetarian book out and I asked the locals that are vegetarians what would they like to see on the board. A lot of people that are not vegetarians eat it because they just say it sounds nice. I make up recipes myself and see if they work [Carole].

A customer asks if he can have a vegetarian - but vegan. 'No problem' say the bar staff and they then mention nuts and the publican calls out 'tell the kitchen and they will take them out'. One asks for liver and he says, 'would you like it cooked and what would you like with it?' The pub is less a restaurant than a pub that serves food. The publican suggests to one group 'sit in front of fire, its warmer' [FN-Mon. 29 Aug 2016].

They are very creative in responding to customer's demands, I remember one time I had made a 'hot' curry and indicated so on the menu board. Chris came into the kitchen and said, 'A lady doesn't like it hot and asked if you can make it milder?' I said to him, 'I can make it hotter, but I can't take the heat out of it'. He said, 'but I told her you can'. I said 'well, how am I supposed to do that?' He said 'well, put some cream in it. 'I said that's not going to do anything!' Do you know the only thing I could think of was to put mango chutney in it and apparently she loved it' [Carole].

Customising their products is essential to the survival of the pub,

'There's a person that comes in here, and they always ask me to cook the liver rare. And you should not have liver rare. But that's how they like it cooked. I have a friend that comes up, and she'll say can you do me a steak? She has it cremated. I can't see the point in eating it. But it's people's choice of how they like to eat food' [Carole].



They also serve breakfast from Monday to Saturday 09.00 till 11.00 am Sunday 09.00 till 10.30 am and afternoon cream teas for walkers with added Processo for special occasions.

Our research shows along with others that pubs play a role in economic development through social aggregation and they generate employment for young people, e.g.: developing B+B, as outlets for local micro-breweries and casual employment of local youth. They help generate social capital, defined as the whole of human relationships, skills and social values embedded within individuals operating in informal networks.

Another innovation was to provide a sweet shop in a dead corner of the bar for children,

This was an empty space and there was a table in the corner doing nothing else; nobody ever used it;



nobody used to sit here in the winter because it's too cold and in the summer they were outside. They didn't sit here so I made use of it. Kids come in for Sunday lunch. That was one of the best Sundays in here. Everyone was just constantly taking sweets from here, constantly, kids, and adults as well; they all bought chocolates and all the rest of it [Chris].

At the same time as developing their 'destination pub' village pubs also work hard to maintain more local regulars, especially supporting local activities and providing offers at celebratory times of the year, even if they all come at once, for they have to be open to all opportunities to keep the pub going,

We did a Shoot Breakfast at 8 am and we had the National Trust Christmas Dinner at 12.30, 26 of them, and another private party of 15 at the bottom of the pub doing Christmas dinner. Then the shoot came back and there were 18 of them for a shoot lunch at 3.30 and then they left and at 7 o'clock we served the Gloucester Army Reserves Officers for a Christmas dinner with 22 of them. Following that we did Gloucester Morris – 18 of them, all in one day.

Last week we had Christmas parties every evening. Last Friday we had 24 from 'Foster Care Matters' from Gloucester. They had their Christmas dinner then I do a quiz for them for free and then I put on the Karaoke and that's all in their package. Twenty-two of them of them spent £1295 at £58 each. Once they have had their dinner you only need a bar person. We then did a shoot lunch for 18 later. Once the Gloucester folks had finished, I moved them down to the lower bar for their quiz and did lunch for the shooters in the main dining area [Chris].

Looking after local clubs is an essential part of ensuring survival and enhancing the life of the village but without taking advantage of being the only pub in the village,

'I look after about 7 shoots, not those from the estate next door because they feed them in the big house. Why the others come to me is that I give them all the same and I don't rob them. I do sausage and mash and a Yorkshire pudding for £10.95 and a crumble for £4 so meal is 14.95. If you go somewhere else and say you are a 'shoot lunch' they'll charge you £27. It's the same as putting 'wedding' in the title. I treat them right and don't rob them. They can see through the others straight away. It's good business' [Chris].

Chris and Carole work hard to ensure a good income but also fulfil a central role in village life.

Maintaining a beating heart at the centre of the village

A feeling of community in rural villages is a form of communion at the level of an individual's subjective experience of consciousness.



Communion relates to a quality of human relationship, a kind of meaningful intimacy, which may have no geographical basis at all but which, it is believed, occurs more commonly in villages, even in underused pubs with few visitors. These

communities can be constituted by a community of regulars along with village locals. They have a van which advertises the pub wherever it goes and is prominent as they travel around the local area.

Research into small community groups identifies three characteristics: proto-political small-scale activities (raising money for local resources); the creation of common moods (through ceremonial and celebration events); and narratives of friendship and kindness (care and support), each which have been seen in our study of the relationship between the village and its pub. Publicans work hard to place the pub at the centre of benevolent village ventures,

Chris and Carole see the village and the pub as community; they look after the villagers. They have the old age pensioners in for a



dinner, I think it's once a month. He sets up trips, such as the trip Ludlow Races for a day out and it was good. He organised it all, it was all done through Hereford brewery. It was very good, so I drove them up, brought them back and it was good fun. Like I say, they are nice people, so you enjoy your time when you come up for a drink [Colin].

Research carried out between 2000 and 2010 shows a strong, statistically significant impact of pubs on levels of community cohesion sustained over time. Considering random variations in time, results indicate that the magnitude of the impact of pubs has increased over the past decade. It is critical for pubs to survive in order to sustain rural life and well-being in the area.

On a Friday, from four o'clock till eight o'clock all the village bring all the kids in. They spend as much as adults don't, they, why wouldn't you have them in? Spending more money and they all love Cokes, pop, sweets and crisps. The kids go and sit on that table; mum and dad sit here, and they will give them a quid just to keep them quiet so they can have a pint on their own. Two grams of sherbet lemons and two grams of something else. If you don't let the kids in as well the parents wouldn't come out. They love it because they can come for a pint and they all meet their friends in the pub, they'll all have a couple of pints, then out they go; it's all the villagers. If they wanted to come out on their own without bringing the children, it's 30 quid for a babysitter for three hours; can't do it. It makes your £20 evening out 50 quid because of £30 quid for a babysitter; if you let the kids in, four o'clock till eight, it's nothing. The thing is they'll have a glass of wine, walk over the road and take the kids with them because none of them are driving. It's good business [Chris].



The pub's other charitable activities include more international connections such as the one from a regular link with a children's charity from Chernobyl, They bring a doctor, a translator, 14 children, and they must pay for that. So, every time we have a quiz for them - we do six a year for them - that brings one child. However, we usually pay for eight of their children to come over. When the children

come over, we have a party in here for the children; 14 children; it's a tea party, and it's free; we don't charge them for it. A tea party with them, a can of Coke, they have jelly and ice cream and they have burger and chips because they don't get burger and chips where they are. I put a little bit of a disco on in here for them, and they love it and we do karaoke, a treasure hunt around the village, and that's free. When they're here you just see their faces, don't you, and it's great [Chris].

The pub has gained from being more than just a pub business but embedded in village life. Becoming integrated in village life is at the heart of the publicans' life,

'Laura is the new girl at the post office and because she hasn't run a business before I've gone through the business rates and all the things she can claim and what she's entitled to. She wouldn't have known that because no one would tell her. To start with she just paid the full whack, but I went through and I said, 'you don't have to' [Chris].

The connection between the other institutions in the village is a strong one,

'The Saturday before Christmas we did mulled wine outside the church, and I made some shortbread biscuits before they went into the church for a wedding. I'm also the British Legion standard bearer, when they do the Armistice parade at the war memorial', [Chris].



The publican has also connected all the business websites in the village,

'And of course the Estate wants the shop, the pub, the school and all our websites linked together. So if you go on my website there's a green

button that takes you to the shop and there's a green button which you touch and it's a link to the garden centre, and there's another green button that links you to the egg man' [Chris].

Of course, there is often a monetary gain for the pub.

'Claire, of "Riding for the Disabled", for whom I carry out events to

support their charity, has just come into the pub. She brings her family in at least once a month and there'll be ten of them and they'll spend two to three hundred pounds [Chris].

Owning or managing a pub also means being immersed in doing as much as one can to maintain village life,

When the old people were running the shop we used to do the bread, milk and everything, because they'd only open for certain hours a week just to make it a shop, so they could have the house, as it was a term of the tenancy to run the shop. I'd go down and go and pick the papers up in Gloucester because they weren't open, and I was picking the Major's [the owner of the estate that owns the village] papers up as well. I'd pick up all the papers for everyone's in the village [Chris].

The pubs act as a repository of local history,

Chris also acts as the village tour guide, 'The church comes into the pub a lot because when I have coaches here I tell them the history of the pub all the way back for years and all about William Bradley who used to own it as a carpenter's shop. I explain all about that and the age of the church and the

fact that a famous horse woman is buried there and then I send them to go and have a look at the church because it's a thousand-year-old Saxon church [Chris].



Horses and riders often stop off for a welcome drink.

Keeping the history of the village in the pub is another example of deep engagement,

'Oh yeah we've got a load of brass plaques round the pub walls with names on. They're for the old gents that used to sit round there. I think the most recent one was George. The family asked for it to be put there. The publican paid for that one because he'd been looking after him up to the point where he died. He used to work here. They'd keep an eye on

him and help him. I think a lot of the old pubs used to do things like the little brass plaques and stuff like that, just with the name [Callum].

Callum goes onto to argue that,

One of the pictures we've got around there has got a group of blokes in it, sat in the window seat, and some of the blokes that are in it, their names are on the seats. If you can connect with the history of a place it makes you part of the village then. We are part of the village because we're in the village, but it makes you more of a part of the village. I think that's what makes the difference; if people can link to the past you've got more chance of staying on into the future then [Callum].

In conjunction with the village church the bar staff assist visitors looking up antecedents,

I think in the same week we had two lots come in that had been looking in the church and they didn't know each other but they were both looking for the same relative. It wasn't until the second one said the name that he said I thought, 'hang on, that's who the other lot were looking up'; that was about three or four days ago. We've had people come in and ask about the picture of the pioneer's court and recognised it as the place in which they stayed during the Second World War. They were stationed in the main house. One bloke came in the one time and recognised his dad on the wall, but he lives up north now. However, he did say when he comes down next time he's going to try and remember to see if he can find some pictures of the time his dad was stationed down here. It's surprising how many people see things on there and suddenly realise, that's my dad or granddad [Callum].

The publican of the Carpenters Arms

'likes getting the older pictures and putting them up as you can see. It's an archive of village life. Once upon a time the centre of village life was either the church or the pub. If we have people come in and say, 'oh yeah my dad or my family used to come from here' we ask if they have you got any pictures and if so we ask them to photocopy them so we can put them up or put them in a scrapbook. We have got the book with the village history and lots of people look at that and we know there are a few people that have looked in there and found relatives in there [Callum].

Festivals

Christmas, Bank Holidays and special festivals are an essential part of a village pubs culture and events. They raise valuable extra income and are part of establishing the pub as a place to enjoy with friends and family and to return regularly.

July Cider Festival



It's 2.30 at the CA cider and folk festival on Sat 6 July. A folk band has just finished their session and the Gloucester Morris begin the jolly act of clashing sticks and dancing in hops in circles. After this introductory dance they join with Miserden Morris for a

dance called 'How'd you do'. Six dancers swirling handles and stepping out to allow the bells to jangle loudly. After a couple of refrains the audience join in with the name of the dance. Two dancers feign a kick at each other in the middle of the circle as three accordion players keep the tune and two of the dancers, breath heavily at their exertions. The steps are intricate and took time to learn but they go with the music and they shout 'up and go' as they leap in the air still waving handkerchiefs. They are in the formation they started in three pairs. 'Constant Phillips' is announced and some Miserden Morris ask if they are invited. The heavy breather goes again with determination. However, the start is delayed as two cars drive through the middle of the dance but once started others wait.

The sound of clashing weapons is heard again and some laughs from the dancers as they get the clash in time with the music and the rest of the non-dancers sing a refrain from the dance. A small dark accordion joins the three larger ones and the latter sing the refrain and the dancers join in singing with heavy breathing. Loud clapping greets the end of this dance and the dancers crawl towards their cider expressing some

relief. They are grateful that one of their number sings a shanty with his accordion and we all join in with refrain ‘ poor old man’.



At about 4 pm the pub is getting more crowded. All the tables at the front of the pub are full as are those in the car park and the music from the folk bands and the Morris provides the background to this jolly afternoon and at one point inviting the publican and others to join in.

The burger bar is taking orders regularly and chips are available from the kitchen inside the pub. There must be about 80 people here now and Chris says ‘those that turn up at 4 will stay to the end at 12 pm. Many more bands are coming including a Robbie Williams encore singer. The local CAMRA group are also here to celebrate the award of the Stroud CAMRA cider pub of the year.

It’s a grand summer afternoon in a wonderful Cotswold village pub.

About 5pm a wonderful folk trio begin their performance which includes the singer singing the main verse and the other two singing the chorus altogether.



Entitled ‘I’ll get no time to lay down’ sounding like a sea shanty and people join in quietly.

Kevin and Debbie started planning the Cider Festival a year ago making sure it did not clash with other national and local events. They were able to get many of the Ciders free of tie from Admiral Taverns.

They are big on us having events this year due to the extra ale sold and it makes the PubCo look vibrant and active. However, I told them I needed to be able to get ciders from outside their list from smaller producers



who would provide an interesting wide variety of ciders and they agreed maybe because I buy all the ciders they have on their list all the year round. I wanted to go to Wales, Somerset and the midlands to get ciders not available from the PubCos and additional to the main cider producers such as Westons and Thatchers.

He borrowed the stage from a mate locally and put it up and the same friend provided all the PA system and gave a day of his time to manage it because he knew the festival was for charity. They use the same charity as the Gloucester Morris which this year was for Prostate Cancer. Last year it was a local hospice and the pub raised £2700 from the pub. They collected £700 at this year's charity at the cider festival. Another friend and villager lent him the marquee and they put that up and another friend did all the electrics and signed it all off as he is an electrician. He already had an outside bar in storage with all the chillers etc and therefore that didn't cost anything either. He refurbished two hand pumps that were put in the skip after the fire and used them on the outside bar. They looked good. The Bar B-Que belonged to the pub with the hotplates and grills and they set that up outside and gave the contract to Craig, their part time chef and son in law. All friends and family.

We had 12 bands and all except 1 played for free. We pay all those bands throughout the year to play at our weekly folk club and the proviso is that they provide a slot at the Cider Festival for free as it is for charity and I guarantee them a slot next year on Folk Night. The one band cost me £250 and they did a full slot of one and a half hours. However, another mate of mine paid half of this to support the pub and the charity. Another entertainer friend came up from Stevenage with his family and I let them have the pub flat for the weekend and so he worked for free. In between each band the Gloucester Morris danced. They use the village hall for weekly practices, which I got them for a special rate as I am on the Village Hall Committee and I pay half the cost of hire because after each practice 25-30 come in here quench their thirst liberally and we give them chips free with lots of salt. They organise themselves for one driver

and 5 to a car each week. There is also the Miserden Morris who practice in the village hall and I pay half their fee (Chris)

However, they did not have an empty pub that evening as most people were outside. They leased the pub out to 40 people for dinner and Debbie cooked in the kitchen. It was a long, profitable and enjoyable day if a little exhausting.

We finished at 11.15 as we promised the village. It was very successful. At about half past ten it started to rain lightly but it didn't matter the whole village was here dancing away. Obviously, the pub did well that night taking more than we would normally on a Saturday. I enjoyed it, watching people enjoying themselves and we felt good about providing the whole thing. Didn't drink much either. It made us happy. We got to bed about 2 and up early to clean up and Debbie was in the kitchen by 9 am and we did 120 lunches.

All in all, it was a successful day for the pub, the customers, a local charity and for all those who contributed their property and free time.

Christmas Eve Raffle

Village pubs join forces with the village church and school, integrating some activities such as Carol Concerts, Harvest Festivals and Easter Egg Hunts, whereas in the past they probably operated separately.

It's at festival times that one can see the pub representing the heart of the village, such as the large Christmas raffle held at the Carpenters Arms on Christmas Eve,

Its raffle night at the CA. The publicans have over 50 prizes to hand out to the lucky raffle winners who have been buying tickets for the last month. The main prize is a full petrol driven quad bike for a young person. It is busy with every seat occupied and a few people standing. A family with a baby and a child all join in a card game that invokes banging one's hand down on the table with a loud noise and everyone laughs at these antics. There is a busy hubbub, but it is not over loud and we can hear older locals talking quietly in a soft local accent. Small groups sit together talking quietly and the only voice to rise above the chatter is an occasional wail from the happy baby. Some tables contain presents and one woman has on a Christmas hat. Christmas bags sit alongside some table legs, awaiting a delighted hand to delve into them.

The Publican's voice is heard announcing the start of the raffle. He asks people to draw a ticket from a box and then the number is called out. The winner gets whatever has been assigned to that ticket. The publican calls out that someone has won the TV. One winner is presented with a loo holder and his family with the baby tease him about his luck. Two volunteers have sheets of paper with details of all the tickets that have been sold and the buyer's names. After a winning number is identified someone else draws an envelope from the pack carried by the publican and the lucky person wins the item identified in the envelope. The Publican tells one winner the prize cost £60. A cheer goes up as a woman wins and she opens the envelope to find she has won a 'finger and toenail kit'. Everyone in the fireside bar sits relatively quietly, apart from raising the occasional cheer and the publican says, 'that's worth £30' and another guy wins a 'dessert wine'. His wife says it will go with our Christmas pudding. It's a mixed age clientele with a fair distribution of ages.

Chris and Debbie offer free drinks for three separate 30-minute periods putting £500 behind the bar from the profits of the raffle. The whole event appears to be low key. We haven't heard one shriek all evening, but it may be that this is a feature of the village pub where it is supported by the locals and where young people are aware that their elders are here. Jed who won the quad bike has donated it to a 4-year old boy who has had heart translate. The Publican says, to laughter, that the winner will have to bring round his van to take it away tomorrow to get it out of the way. However, Jed tells the publican that he is handing back the bike to the pub so long as they donate it to the young heart transplant boy. He is happy for the pub to garner the press coverage which delights the publican. The donor celebrates, every year, the life of the person who donated him a heart over three years ago by bringing a bottle of champagne in on Christmas Eve to share with everyone. He bought quite a few tickets. There is cheer at the announcement but



in typical local tradition the show moved on and one of the organisers celebrates winning a box of chocolates. The last ticket is sold, and everyone claps the publican for the event but again it is not overdone. Someone wins a 4-dimensional doll and the winner says ironically 'I've always wanted one'. Then it's all over and the publican clears up the crisp packets on the tables [FN-Sat. 24 Dec 8.15, 2016].

The pub is open from 12-2 on Christmas day and they only cook one dinner for a regular who lives on his own in the village. They have been doing it for years.

Managing vicissitudes

The investment the publicans' make in their village pub and to the village cannot be underestimated, including long hours, living on top of the job, and a personal commitment that is all embracing. When a fire at the pub in January 2017 destroyed the pub kitchen and closed the pub for six months, they were initially bereft, 'We went away last week but that wasn't a holiday because you can't relax. You don't know what's going on and you can't relax. You're sat on holiday and you're still thinking about it; you can't get away from it. I'm bored. You can't go from working sixty, eighty hours a week, seventy-five hours a week to nothing. Saturday's the worst day because the pub is quiet; the village is a ghost town [Chris].

They had to foot their expenses for the first few months until the insurance agreement was settled.

Yeah, it was a bad year for us really, wasn't it? The first two months were the worst. We didn't know if we were going to go bankrupt or if the insurance were going to pay out. And the amount of money involved to put this back together is more than I had in the bank, I can tell you. We actually paid all the bills for the first three months until the insurance started paying; I reckon we were into about £40,000 by the third month, of our own money, out of our own accounts, not the business accounts but our own accounts. We were using our own money to pay the staff wages. But then the insurance company started paying and we got it all back. We're still owed a bit of money; we're still waiting for the full final settlement but that will come. But we're trading, we're stocked up,

we've got money in the business again at the end and it's got more in the business account than before the fire. We paid ourselves this week for the first time since January [Chris].

However, the ever positive publicans made the most of the closure after a while,

'Yeah, quite enjoyed it when I actually got my head into it, the fact that it had burnt and it was gone I quite enjoyed putting it back together. You saw us out the back refurbishing everything; we refurbished every table, every chair; we did it ourselves. I enjoyed the process of putting it back together. Before the fire I had a lot of pride in the place because we had built up the trade, but I hadn't done the pub. We had put the pictures in slowly over the years, but the actual layout of the pub was done by someone else before me; it was done 20 to 30 years ago. Now we've refurbished...not refurbished, we've rebuilt it because of the fire but, in fact, we put it back the same as well' [Chris].

Now they are trading again, and they had a good Christmas 2017 and they are back with new ideas to promote the pub and to contribute to the life of the village,

We've come back with loads of new ideas. I use my brain instead of my hands when I'm away. Carole is quite happy settled here, new kitchen and all that. She loves it. It makes life easy, doesn't it? She's got all heated lamps, heated tables and everything out there. I've got other plans as well for this year. I'm going to put a roof on my top beer garden that will make it look like a pub indoors but outdoors. I'm going to have pub tables, pub chairs, an astro-turf floor, so when you're sitting there it's like you're sat in the pub in here but you're out there. It's going to have sides as well, which from the outside will look like fence panels or something like that. It will be good for the summer trade and then in the winter, I'll put heating out there. That's freeing up tables inside. And it'll look like the pub. They'll sit there and they'll have a cigarette while they're having their dinner. And there's no planning permission, it's not a permanent structure, it doesn't need planning permission [Chris].

Things got back to normal quickly and by the end of the year they were again busy with Christmas activities,

It's a quiet afternoon in the CA on the 20 December, but one that has

been designated as a 'drink afternoon' after an 11-hour day yesterday with 40 + meals with 5 different groups and lots of money taken. Chris and Carol were not meant to be working today but after the busy day yesterday Chris gave the staff the day off and he and Carol had a drinks afternoon with a few locals who had been on a shoot that morning. They will hand over to the employed staff at about 7 and settle back in their house to watch the TV after the an enjoyable 'drinks day'. There is local chat about the shoot and how tired are the dogs, 'I've never seen him run to a standstill she was today'. Carol drinks wine and they all sit in the main bar by the fire. It's a lovely atmosphere with publican and partner enjoying a session with their local regulars.

Conclusion

The Carpenters Arms is owned by a PubCo and leased and managed by a married couple who run the pub, with one fulltime barperson. The publican runs the bar on Monday and Tuesday on his own and his wife, the chef, does all the cooking and cleaning. They say they have Wednesday and Thursday off work and employ two people to take their place and they are back on full time duty for the rest of the week, employing maybe one other bar person for Friday/Saturday nights and Sunday lunch. However, they live next to the pub and can be found helping on Wednesday/Thursday, if necessary.

They have a unique approach, that of being creative, using social media, cultivating their own produce, offering attractive deals to groups, working with the church for both their benefits, supporting village life and making charitable activities a mainstay of their annual work. They are open to a wide range of activities that bring in a little extra such as the sweet shop and bend over backwards to satisfy individual preferences such as providing as many vegetarian dishes as meat and fish as well as vegan. They are full of new initiatives, but they are also aware that if you look after the pennies the pounds will look after themselves, so the kitchen garden is an essential part of their financial cost cutting. To this end they work many hours a week and keep the staffing levels to a minimum, the major cost of a pub business. This is probably one of the main reasons why this pub, in our research, appears to provide a reasonable income for the managers. They keep down costs and are careful not to show too high a level of increasing profits or the PubCo will raise their rent. They make such a good job in terms of financial control and returns so that when their last 5 yearly review of their tenancy was due they were able to say to the PubCo, 'If you put up our rent unreasonably we will leave' and they got their way.

The other characteristic that helps maintain this pub as attractive to locals, regulars and those from further afield is the warmth and jolly atmosphere that pervades the pub. This is down to the managers who laugh a lot and this ambiance is infectious and it seeps into all who visit the pub and they resolve to return to relive the infection. Every passing villager is hailed with a cheerful greeting and a chat about common

interests and every visitor is provided with the perfect drink and if they look cold in the winter months are ushered to the ever-open fire.

On quiet nights there are poker games [for drink tokens of course].

There is a regular weekly folk club for the village and if Saturday is quiet, out comes the Karaoke.



The village pub acts as that third place after home and work, where human interaction and social welfare is generated. During the six-month closure the publicans kept busy renovating stores at the back, reframing all the pub pictures and developing a terrace, typical of their enthusiasm and positive attitude. They even provided the odd purchased barrel of beer in the summer for the Morris Groups to dance outside and anyone in the village who attended. They and invited contributions from spectators and the Morris to cover the costs and send some to a charity.

The Carpenters Arms displays educational material particularly on walks in the local environment, and they see themselves as keeping the village alive and healthy. If you want to know anything about the village or the surroundings one goes to the village pub for information and historical tales. The regular annual festivals maintain a feeling of cohesion and community, of a congregation who provide energy and sustenance to the life of the village.

This pub represents, for the visitor, the value of being able to eat in a highly prized village pub which sits within a cluster of ancient stone cottages, accessed by narrow lanes and rural features that make the visit a whole experience. Visitors can sit in an environment, which dates back up to 500 years ago, and soak up the history of the pub and the village through the artefacts and pictures crammed together on every wall in the pub and evokes an idyllic rural past to imbibe.

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