

The Butchers Arms Sheepscombe: A village pub with a big heart (Pre Covid 19 Digital Version)



Bob Jeffrey

This digital version was written prior to the Covid 19 pandemic and a paperback version with images will be published in the Spring of 2021 and include a chapter on the effects of the pandemic on the business, the village and the publicans.

Introduction

This book celebrates the life of a village pub and provides example of how to survive in a time when over 13 pubs a week are closing. The data was collected over two years from 2017-19 and included conversations with the pub's tenants and its staff as well as fieldnotes written in situ by the author. The book is divided into three chapters interspersed with shorter vignettes of the pub's life. The pub survives by being embedded in village life and at the same time attracting visitors from across the county but particularly from the three large towns a few miles away Cheltenham, Cirencester and Gloucester. They come to experience a Cotswold country village pub with a long rural history and it also attracts the plethora of walkers who roam the Stroud valleys and hills. It is hoped that these visitors will value taking away a copy of this village pub story as a memento of their visit.

Chapter 1 - From the publican's front room to the public house: From publican ownership to public ownership

A brief history

In earlier times before the 1st World War, the front rooms of village cottages were the place from which beer was dispensed. While the men were mainly out in the fields working the land, women began brewing in the back of their cottages and after work they would welcome back the men with the offer of a pint of ale, probably a dark one. They would go 'out back' to draw the pint and bring it through to their main room. Between 1650 and 1777 in the West Riding of Yorkshire it is recorded that 14% of women were licensees. Labourers took out licenses as well as mariners, horse breakers, bakers, tailors, shoemakers and farmers who would also set up public houses in the 19th century. Where the publican had another job, his wife ran the pub. Marrying a woman with experience in the trade was a good move. In 1891 in Easingwold 7 of 16 pubs had publicans with other jobs but in urban areas this declined later. In the census of 1851, 3434 publicans were farmers.

This brief picture shows how the origin of the village public house was once the publican's front room. The villagers gave their custom to the publican they liked or with whom they had good relations. If these relations deteriorated at any time drinkers would move on to another 'front room' in the village.

During the late 19th century village pubs became less used by women, particularly in rural areas where the Victorian culture disapproved of women and children in pubs, although later some bars were reserved for women. However, in 1939 both the Butchers Arms and the Plough in Sheepscombe were being run by women with Mrs Sollars at the Plough and Sophia Halliday at the Butchers Arms. Nevertheless, the culture of open front rooms, mainly for men, persisted up until the post war years, for example Painswick had something like 12 pubs up to the 1980/90s and Sheepscombe had several public front rooms.

The modern village public house

In contemporary times many pubs have closed - 13 a week across the country - and the survival of the English village pub is precarious. In order to survive our village pubs have had to become destination pubs and at the same time become open to all ages, gender and classes. They are no longer a publican's front room and they are much more a place that seeks 'customers' from across the county, as well as regulars, in order to gain enough income to survive. Regulars, dogs, children, county and global visitor, blow-ins (casual visitors) and clubs have now taken ownership of our village pubs.

The bar itself also attracts regulars who stand or sit on bar stools. They take ownership of this central part of the pub, like the captains on the bridge of a ship. Their ownership is made clear by the intimate way they converse with the bar staff and other regulars who enter and join them greeting each other warmly. They often form a semi-circle in front of the bar making it clear to the more casual visitor that this is their pub and the managers or owners join them from time to time emphasising their ownership. Some stand with elbows on the bar and chat to other regulars across the bar space who may be sitting in their favourite seats away from the bar. The pub for these regulars is their 'third place', which they regularly inhabit alongside home and work.

Children are now allowed in all parts of most pubs and they express ownership by clambering on to foot rails to see over the bar and occasionally order drinks; sometimes using the whole area as a playground. Toddlers are often allowed to wander round the bar from time to time, followed at a distance by a parent, waving and saying hello to all and sundry and everyone engages them as do the bar staff. They are sometimes encouraged to join in the merry throng by playing noisy games with adults with the occasional shriek or quiet games such as chess and cards, seeing the pub as their third place alongside home and school.

Dogs also own the spaces in a pub as they probably have since early times but today, they come from far and wide along with their owners. They also take ownership of their spaces, some on soft beds provided by their owners so they can lie on them to make them feel even more at home. They wander around under tables begging for food or clearing scraps from the floor or some sprawl their large frames flat on the floor grateful for the large space in front of the fire while staff who have welcomed them, gingerly step over them while delivering meals. They are often welcomed, by the regulars, who pet and stroke them and the bar staff who often provide treats for them and they can become so familiar with the engagement that on entry they immediately head for the space at the bar where they are used to being given treats.

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 stone cottages, accessed by narrow lanes and rural features. Visitors sit in an environment, which dates back centuries and enjoy the history of the pub. These are occasional visitors who rent a space for a couple of hours as they reserve 'the table by the window'. They provide a vital income for the village pub which would not survive otherwise. Most village pubs have social media visibility and seek local and national awards to encourage more trips to their public space. Saturday and Sunday lunches are fully booked in popular destination pubs; holidaymakers 'blow-in' during the week as well and local town and county parties take their celebrations to them – all aiding village pub survival.

Pubs today, as they probably did in the past provide the settings where individuals or groups of people start initiatives that generate positive outcomes for the community or whole society, such as volunteering and charity activities, or a channelling of passions and interests into a more structured effort, such as a social club or sports team.

A public house for all.

A pub today is home to the kennel club, the knitting circle, the literary circle, music clubs, sports clubs, religious events such as Carol singing and friendly societies. They are also today: a children's playground, a job centre, an epicurean centre, an arts centre, an historical archive, a library, an entertainment centre, a social club, a games centre and a haven. They are an infinite resource for locals, regulars, villagers and the publicans who manage them and provide an added value in terms of the emotional and spiritual connections for their members.

The village pub has evolved from a front room to a major public space; the pub is no more the publican's front room; a space and a place where they once determined the culture and style of the pub. The owners and managers of our village pubs have created a truly public house where they have less control over the space they own or rent than they might have done in the past in order to solve the problem of making a pub pay in small communities.

Some may deprecate the loss of control of these public spaces by publicans to customer dominance, but they reflect the more general breakdown of limits on access to public spaces across gender and generations. We live in a culture where alcohol is more available from supermarkets at low prices and where many families now live in only two places, work and home, where access to a variety of entertainment is now available through digital technology and it is cheaper to entertain at home. The public house has reached its zenith in that all are welcome, and all behaviours are tolerated.

Fieldnotes – Section A

FN1- The modern village pub as a space for all.

The Butchers Arms opens at 6.30 on a Wednesday in early December and an elderly couple take a table in front of the fire and a solitary figure takes a table adjacent to the fire and reads a daily newspaper while waiting for his evening meal to arrive. The pub would expect to be quiet at this time in anticipation of the Christmas celebrations to come later in the month. At 7 o'clock the main bar begins to fill with a party from a local political organisation who are here for an early dinner and have two large tables reserved for them in what the pub calls the West Wing. The twenty plus participants stand around in the main bar welcoming one another. It is a mixed party and ages range from the early 30s to pensioners. It is a jolly atmosphere and at 7.30 they are called for dinner and gradually make their way towards their decorated dining tables. The bar becomes quiet again and the three people in it lower their voices so as not to disturb the other.

Another group of about 8 people in their 30's then enter the bar talking quietly and after a short discussion with the bar staff by their organiser they seat themselves on a large table to the right of the main bar. They mainly appear to be visitors from outside the UK, and as is the custom abroad they wait to give their drinks orders to a member of the bar staff at the table. It is surprising to see, in an English village pub, that all the men drink either soft drinks or large glass bulbs of specialist gin concoctions filled with ice and fruit and the only two women with the group take pints of ale and are presumably the leaders of the group. After a few minutes they order their meals, as they would in a restaurant.

At about 9 o'clock a lot of flashing blue and white lights speed past the window seats and bar members wonder if the emergency services have arrived. However, after a few minutes the mystery is solved when the pub door opens and in come a dozen cyclists decked in colourful lycra and mud splattered arms and faces. They have driven up from Bristol with their bikes on their cars to carry out some night riding around our steep and undulating valley. They each get a pint of ale and lager and take over a small area in the Snug.

A village pub today must be a destination pub to survive, visitors arrive because of the special place of the pub in a beautiful rural setting. If these three groups had not made reservations the pub would have had just 7 locals until at least 9 pm and probably very few locals arriving after that. The pub often closes just after 10 pm in the winter if there are no drinkers. Outsiders to the village are critical in ensuring the survival of its pub.

FN2 - The Gloucester Morris

Very little is known about the origins of this custom, but as a ritual and a form of pleasure we know that it dates back at least to the 15th century and is perhaps much older. Morris dancing has been traced all over the English Midlands and further North, but it is particularly associated with our own Cotswold area, where the most evolved form of Morris was, and still is, to be found. Here it is performed generally by six men and a musician, accompanied in most cases by a 'fool' and sometimes a 'beast'. The men wear a colourful costume or 'kit' often based upon white, the old sacred colour. They also wear bells, wave hankies or sticks so say to ward off evil spirits. It was invariably a men's dance with very strong ties to the Whitsun time of year with fertility and encouraging crops to growth very much in mind. In the past, most Cotswold villages had their own individual dances and tunes, but by the end of Industrial Revolution the tradition had almost died out, as the Victorians had introduced many other pastimes and sports. Fortunately, there was a great revival of interest in Morris Dancing in the early years of this century, led by Cecil Sharp who was the person mainly responsible for collecting and noting the dances we perform today.

A Tuesday in May. 7.45

The Morris have arrived to entertain the locals as advertised on a notice board by the bar. Unfortunately, there are not many here on this relatively warm May evening. One well known couple have come and gone having had their dinner and a couple of interesting gin cocktails and another regular couple leave before the Morris begin. As the Morris organise their start there are only 3 people sitting outside. The bar has about 20 diners spread throughout the pub, but most haven't come for the entertainment. A few dancers queue up for a pint before their energetic exertions and another two regulars leave just as the dancers begin to gather in two squares for the first dance. 'What are we doing?' is heard and a caller announces that 'we here today to brighten up your lives' as a car leaves down the winding lane.

The accordions begin and the clack of sticks vibrates across the pub exterior and a master-Bagman- with a couple of sad balloons on his mallet oversees the first dance and at the end the dance is clapped by the three people outside and the dancers supporters and one is heard saying 'that was awful'. A late dancer arrives jangling his bells and is welcomed with 'it's always those who live nearest who are late'. Another dance is called and this time white handkerchiefs are waved as they salute each other while hopping from one leg to another. When it finishes a more approving applause is heard from the supporters and another car leaves.

Their antics have not persuaded any diners or drinkers to venture outside into the increasingly colder evening as the sun drops behind the village houses to the west. They take a short break as another car arrives. The Morris are dressed in white with bells attached to red ribbons attached to arms and legs and they wear wonderful summer hats adorned with flowers. They change their orientation to a row of two facing partners dancing to the accordions and the waving hankies and one occasionally sees a prominent belly moving in time to the music.

These are Gloucester Morris as they announce at the beginning of every dance and another couple leave the pub while they were dancing. After their fourth dance the leader in a wonderful black frock coat chimes his way through the bar asking for donations for a prostate cancer charity and the diners are generous. One of their number asks for another two pints and they begin gathering again for the second half at 8.30 and another car leaves the pub. The dancers are happy in their own company and enjoy their singing as diners strain their necks to see them through the wonderful bay window of the warm pub. The sticks come out again and the master joins in a square. They dance in the middle of the road and they are guarded by two of the collection who prevent any cars from traversing the lane until they have finished.

FN3-It's party time at the BA – A Sunday in late September

It's nearly 5pm. A large family arrive for a child's party in a dining room at the west end of the pub. There are at least 6 children under 8 and they occupy one table with drawing materials and tablets. The adults sit at an adjacent table chatting. They bring their own chocolate cake and ask the staff to provide a plate and serviettes. When the meals arrive, the parents eat on their table and children on theirs. There were no other customers in this bar.

Another cross generational group arrive with at least one small child and spread round the outside tables drinking and taking photos. Eventually they take up their table in a small dining room at the furthest eastern end of the pub. A third group join them with 3 youngsters at the other table in this east end bar. A fourth group arrive and are placed in another small room with two tables between main east end bar and the main bar in the middle of the pub. It appears that the publican has kept the main bar free of children, which is occupied by 8 or so adults. Those left in the main bar carry on their quiet conversations, perhaps grateful that they are in the 'quiet bar' but aware that this is a community pub. There are, at 5.30pm 27 adults in the pub and 14 children; more than 50% are children under 10 and 80% of them are under 5.

Our village pubs survive by serving a very wide community, often all at the same time.

FN4 - A Coffee Morning Charity Friday 10.15am

The pub is having a coffee morning in favour of Margaret McMillan cancer trust. They are currently having fund raising activities all over the county. The publicans are here along with their regular bar person Barry and another young person who is cleaning walls in one of the bars. Villagers gather in the West Wing with coffee and cakes steadily arriving from the kitchen. They all donate to the charity and are given tea or coffee and a slice of cake in exchange. The village magazine editor is here and about a dozen people so far. Aileen has been and gone. One of the organisers, can be heard describing the cakes and she then slips down to the main bar to ask the staff for an Earl Grey for one of their number which is quickly arranged by the staff. Barry speeds though the bar with another 2 carafes of coffee and the chatter is warm and mellifluous. This is just one of the charities the pub supports over the year. Another member arrives in a blue anorak as there is a shower outside escorting 2 dogs who sit quietly anticipating some possible crumbs from the table above.

The organiser wonders whether to spread into the main bar as more arrive and there are no vacant chairs. 'We weren't expecting so many' she says. The local Bridge and Carol Concert organiser arrives, and a previous village magazine deliverer arrives and her other half. An extra chair is carried up from the main bar as the 18 or so supporters huddle together enjoying a variety of cakes made by the organiser and Angela, the publican. The former asks Barry for more plates and the Barry says jokingly 'as long as you wash them up'. It's a jolly atmosphere as friends meet each other and less familial acquaintances exchange pleasantries with those they

have not seen for a while. The sound of ale pumps being drawn, cleaned through and ale changed is the background musical.

More villagers arrive and the West Wing is crammed full. It's nearly 11 and Angela clears some spent coffee and cups and returns with a pot of tea in a glass container. There are 11 cakes: chocolate fudge, Orange Almond and Yoghurt, Ginger, Pressed Chocolate (gluten and dairy free), as yet untasted, Viennese Swirls, Carrot and pineapple Muffins, again not yet taken, Gluten free Lemon and Almond, Sticky Toffee, Barabirith (no dairy), Blueberry and Bundle and Cherry and Lemon with muesli topping. Angela says any left will be on the bar for the rest of the day and given away for a donation during the day. The after 11s arrive and are welcomed by all and sundry as another leaves. In the first hour or so at least 25 persons have passed through and supported the charity. The final amount of money raised was a creditable £368.51. This pub is embedded in the village and the organiser of this charity is embracing its pub to ensure it survives.

FN5 - The Shoot Lunch

It's been a busy lunch time on a late Saturday in November but has quietened down at 3pm. Only 10 persons are here having a late lunch. However, the local shoot has been out since early this morning after a breakfast. They had a morning shoot, a break at 12 and then another afternoon shoot. It's much warmer than the last few days but nevertheless they are well wrapped up in warm sleeveless jackets with large pockets on top of the thick jumpers and shirts and country tweed caps are seen peeking out of the pockets.

They all wear plus 2s and gather at the end of their long day at the BA for their late shoot lunch. A shooter carries his gun in its case on his shoulder in the bar as a few of them gather for a drink prior to a late 'Lunch.' A group of Spanish young people hardly seem to notice them as they eat on the table adjacent to the bar. A young lad and lass join the shooters wearing the same uniform and the organisers daughter also joins them. More shooters arrive and a few move to the dining room to rest and drink. One of their number gives his excuses and thanks the young folk for their 'beating duties' (driving the bird's skyward). This is a local shoot in the Painswick Valley organised by villagers and local landowners. It's only a small shoot says the organiser, but with a smile says, 'we gather some of the birds from the bigger shoots around here as we beat them skywards'. He says his is probably their best shoot (83) and offers me a brace but I say I am looking forward to enjoying one of the pub's pheasant breast dishes later in the following weeks from the shoot.

The organisers grandsons point to a plump one that 'definitely comes from another breeder'. It's open country and this family shoot takes advantage of any wider local gifts as does the local pub.

Barry, Michael and Adele are front of house staff and they enjoy working together as they have known each other for many years and all of Adele's life. Bertram, a local lad helps them. Some clapping is heard from the 'Lunch', probably for the best total of shot pheasants.

Bertram and Adele deliver the lunch of 3 local sausages and mash with gravy which is gratefully consumed by all 15 of them warming their inner selves in the West Wing which they have to themselves. Angela has delivered a busy lunchtime menu to locals and visitors and a lunch for 15 at precisely 15.30. After most have consumed their feast one of their number orders a few more drinks and they settle back to discuss present and past shoots and the joys of rural life. It's notable that some of them discard their outer clothing as they gradually warm up in this very warm pub.

They begin to drift away at 4.30 and the co-organiser pays the tab for the whole lunch which was part of the cost of their day. As she leaves, she engages some 3-4-year-olds who have arrived with local parents and mention their school. She says to them 'I also went to the village school some 40 years ago as he did' pointing to a 25-year-old standing nearby. Every place has a history, but it is warming to see it being created in the village pub. A couple of hours later a core group is still in the pub discussing 'the last two drive's' and other esoteric analysis of the days shooting. The village and the pub are at one.

FN6 - Christmas Carols

We arrive at 6.45 on the Wednesday before Christmas and trade is steady with groups settling for dinner adjacent to the main bar and in the West Wing. However, most of them are locals as they know this is a special night in the village: the main bar is reserved for the carol singing. At about 7.15 the bar starts to fill up quickly with singers and regulars, people welcome each other for one of the first Christmas celebrations.

The chatter level rises as more locals arrive. Programmes are circulated when Hugh - the carol singing leader - arrives with his pianist. The editor of the village magazine is here, with her group to enjoy herself. It appears that everyone here tonight is a villager, which is unusual as this is a destination pub, but the locals have ensured

this is one of their nights. A regular, passes by with drinks and at least four pairs of reading glasses either borrowed from the bar or brought with him for his company to read the carol programme.

A quiet 'O Come Emmanuel' starts up and it is clearly appreciated, though most of the drinkers resist singing. However, as soon as 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing' begins more join in quite naturally and one soprano voice is heard above the others. A descant is sung, and everyone quietens until the Hark... refrain returns. An unfamiliar rendering of 'While Shepherds . . .' is sung by the choir which they have obviously been practicing. The 'In the Bleak Midwinter' strikes up and almost all join in quietly reflecting its wintery theme.

Next the choir sing 'Away in a Manager' with a modern tune, a chance for the regulars to pursue their conversations. One lad in a window seat is transfixed by his mobile phone while his grandparents chatter. Another unusual carol is sung, and it receives applause for the contrapuntal effort. The choir leader says 'excellent'. Ben, a two-year old enjoys it as he claps his father's cheeks. Those at the bar revert to chattering through the carol as do a couple who have been unceasing in their conversations about the pub's history. It all has a comfortable village harmony.

The call comes from the leader for number seven, 'Egypt', and one or two make every effort to join in a carol they have not heard before. A regular arrives for, perhaps, a quiet drink and still manages to find a spot at the bar to get a pint. 'The Holly and the Ivy' is announced as the last before a break. One person claps loudly at the end and the choir disperse looking forward to a drink. The main bar is as full as it ever could be as the choir takes up the space and the staff bring round mince pies for everyone.

The second half starts but main bar chatter is now a major competitor. The young lass and her family join the main choir from the window seat and the choir sings an uplifting harmony.

The room gets warmer and the owner joins the choir which has grown with enthusiastic participants. The singing ends with 'We wish you a Merry Christmas' and Ben departs carried by his dad clutching a mince pie.

Chapter 2 - Life behind the bar

The employment of staff in pubs is a continual merry go round of temporary appointments that change very often. Locally employed young people move on, older folk may stay longer but still move on regularly as their circumstances change. In particular, the turnover of chefs is notoriously high. Village pubs have pBarrylems in that not only do young people move on but that the few bus services and their geographical location means those not living in the village have to be able to drive as there are no bus services after 6pm and for many and taxi fares are too expensive.

However, at the time of publication the Butchers Arms in Sheepscombe, had several staff who have been at the pub for many years and they travel between 4 and 15 miles away taking up to 30 minutes. Ashley, who works three lunchtime shifts days a week has worked at the pub for 11 years since 2007. Barney, the chef, who works full time, a 40-hour week, has worked at the pub for 10 years. Barry, who works about 32 hours a week, has worked at the pub for 7 years and Anita also works full time and has been there nearly five years with Abby having been here 3 years, working part time. The current publicans Angela and Michael have been there for 12 years. We identified three significant aspects of these long-term employments, Coming to Work, Working Relationships and the Added Value of this job in this particular pub.

To begin with the staff recognised their work as a job that satisfied them in terms of remuneration and conditions of work. There was something about this service role that led to job satisfaction,

I suppose you come out and you feel like you've come to work as well. I worked as an art technician, but I didn't feel like I was going there, and I was working. I didn't go there and feel it was fun and I didn't go there and feel like it was fulfilling work either. So at least with this sort of job you feel like you're going to work, and you've served your customers so you feel like you've done a job, and you can stand back and think, oh, we've been really busy today, we've had a lot of people in, (Anita)

Nevertheless, there are times when it is quite an exhausting job though engaging at the same time,

I always say it's like a love-hate thing, because I love it when it's busy because you get a bit of a buzz and you're just sort of on a mission serving people but afterwards you're just exhausted, you're tired, and then you need to try and regain your energy. So, it's nice when it's busy and hectic because it's a good buzz. On those bank holidays you can see everyone having a nice time, but if the sun is out you're thinking, 'if I wasn't at work I'd be those people enjoying themselves', but, at the same time there is just a good buzz with everything really and with everybody, (Anita).

She goes on to assert that 'working in this job is better for your mental health'.

They like the challenge of 'stepping in' and adding new knowledge, 'In my eyes you never stop learning in this trade, be it in the kitchen, be it in the bar, everything, you never stop learning. I enjoy keeping my hand in, in the kitchen, because obviously if Barney ever goes off sick, there's always Angela and myself who can jump in there straightaway' (Barry).

Job attraction

The place itself has is an attraction, 'Look at that view out the window of the pub. That inspires me every day and the drive here from Gloucester, where I live, is good. So, I can walk out there, to clear outside tables or whatever in the morning and just think this is my job. That's probably what's kept me here', (Ashley). The 'drive in is lovely through Slad with all the views. It's better than being stuck on a motorway for half an hour, (Anita).

The nature of a village pub and its role as a destination pub also has its attractions,

When I applied for the job I didn't know where the pub was, I'd never been here, I didn't know where I was driving to, I didn't know that it was just in the middle of a little village. I don't think I'd want to be in a big busy pub in the middle of town with lots of youngsters and under-age drinkers. I like the fact that it's food and drinks, a mix of people, locals, people on holiday, people just from a stone's throw away such as Gloucester and Cheltenham, who come here regularly but also it's nice to meet people who you've never met before. You can have a chat with them, where are they from; you learn things, don't you, about where they're from and what their towns are like. When I worked on soft furnishings and sewing, I was working on my own or with a very small team, so I only interacted with those few people.

Whereas here every day is different, you get different people in, there's always someone new to speak to, (Anita).

A major factor in job attraction is the flexibility built in by the publicans 'I've still got a teenager at home, but it was a brilliant job when the children were all at home. Michael was flexible with times and I was able to fit work in around school times, being there to take Jack to school and pick him up (Ashley). It was the same for Barry,

It suits me better doing two evenings and I'm happier doing a lot of more lunchtimes so I can be with my children, as I am the main carer'. However, it makes sense for me to do Tuesday and Thursday evenings when my children stay with their mum. Michael and Angela have been helpful especially when the children were younger and growing up. I quite often used to bring them in at the weekend. Obviously, there's been problems in the past where my youngest one has been poorly, and they've been very supportive of that. They say, 'don't worry, stay at home, it's fine' and I don't think I would have got that anywhere else to be fair.

Abby has had two maternity leave periods during her three years here. She took only 11 weeks of the first maternity leave period after the publicans agreed to give her leave even though she was not really entitled to it as she had not worked long enough at the job. They also tried to get her maternity pay even though she was not entitled to it. 'Yeah I was really surprised actually because, I think, a big corporate place would have just said get out' (Abby). The publicans did not want to run their pub like a big organisation,

Everything we've done here has been the antithesis of what we were doing in the previous company, because we were in a brand. So, everything that you would do with your staff would be formulaic. You followed procedure, from interviewing to induction to appraisals and nonsense which I don't like. Obviously, there is a formula I go through, but it's not as regimental. In a company you had to do your stepping-stones stage one and then you had to move on to your stepping-stones stage two - all this malarkey that went with being in a brand and I didn't want any of that really, (Angela).

The nature of the work and the job attraction led to some significant commitment.

Commitment

Commitment included maintaining high standards,

The enjoyment I get is all working towards one goal, to keep the customers happy, to give a good impression of the pub to keep the standards up, to keep us high on trip advisor. We're all probably passionate about keeping that going. I do talk about it being my pub. When I talk to people, I'll say 'you have to come to my pub'. It's important, the quality of what we do. We are a representation of Michael and Angela, I suppose. When they're not around, we're doing it for them and for Heartstone Inns really, (Ashley). (Heartstones Inns owns the pub but leases it to Angela and Michael).

The flexibility of the publicans with regards to work hours has its benefits, 'Having that flexibility that they gave me at the beginning when my children were young meant giving back 150 percent. It's helped me because of the situation I was in at the time, with two young children to bring up and a mortgage to pay and everything was difficult. I don't think I would have done it without Michael and Angela' (Barry). They believe that 'it's just nice to be nice. You get more out of people if you show them respect. That's how we look at it. We think they'll respect us if we respect them and they'll be flexible with us if we can be flexible with them, (Angela).

Staff commitment arises from being treated respectfully, having an attractive job and one that employs a positive working environment and structure.

The Added Value of working at the BA

Work plays a large part in people's life: it provides an income for sustenance; it shapes our daily lives; people probably spend more time at work than at home; it provides pathways for developing careers; it may also provide a context for a stable social and life and it gives meaning to life. There are added values inherent within some work practices and, in the case of those working at the Butchers Arms in 2018, social and emotional connections developed into something of a family culture.

Working in a pub or a bar has a full range of social emotional connections that are not unique but may be unusual. The staff engage in relations with work colleagues, but they also carry out a service in a highly social

environment. They are close to the people they serve physically, like a café, but they see more regular customers, maybe every day, and talking and chatting to customers is regarded as a large part of the ambience of the pub. They are not just ‘serving’ customers, they often engage in social discussions, sometimes intimate. If one thinks of other service industries it is difficult to think of one that is like a pub. A hairdresser may see lots of different people and chat to them for an hour so, but they won’t see that customer again for some time. Air stewards are only locked in a cabin for a few hours with their customers. A café does not really encourage staff to chat as they make their way back to the kitchen when they have served their meals. Conversations are a major aspect of a pub or bar culture and in some cases, they lead to long term relationships,

I’ve made friends with one girl I met here at the pub. She used to travel from London to meet her grandmother who’s 102 and her aunty who comes in from the Forest of Dene and this is where they liked to meet for birthdays celebrations usually. I struck up a lovely friendship with her and have even though she’s moved to Brighton when we were down in Brighton in the summer, we met up with her, (Ashley).

Ashley goes on to talk emotionally about what her job means to her, I’ve never made any secret of the fact that I love my job’ and that means managing the bad times, ‘without being morbid I’ve seen a lot of people come and go or pass on. Isn’t it funny how one is a local here even though I don’t live here? I’m trying to think of his wife’s name; she’s lovely, she’s got white grey hair, she’s still alive. We become attached to our regulars; we also see them come and go’.

The emotional connections with work are enhanced by the extent of social engagement, ‘It’s quite nice that the younger ones are coming and going because it means you’re working with different people every day. It’s probably the mix of both. I work with Ashley every Tuesday and I love that I’m working with her every week; but then it’s also nice to have the youngsters come in each week, and you’re seeing different faces and working with different people’, (Anita).

The staff recognise their good fortune in working in a pleasant and attractive environment, ‘To me it’s not like coming to work here, it’s not, it’s a friendly atmosphere, it’s the fun element as well of it. You know all the locals, you’re friendly with them, you look after them and they are always very polite, always very nice to you and I think it is just the friendliness of the place’, (Barry). He goes on to say how much the social aspect of this job enhances his enjoyment,

Every week you see all your regular faces. You (the author and partner) were in Tuesday night and the guys that were sitting on the window there, they come in every Tuesday and there’s other people that come in every Tuesday and yesterday lunchtime. We had the basket weavers in every Wednesday lunchtime. They do a basket weaving course in the village hall every Wednesday morning. They’re great, it’s just familiar faces all the time and lots of new faces. Everyone knows it’s a friendly familiarity, you have a good chat and a laugh, and a joke and they enjoy it, and you enjoy it.

For those who are child carers, it provides a more adult environment for a change as do most work environments but this one has an added value in terms of its content, ‘Pub life to me is marmite, you love it or you hate it. I wouldn’t say it’s an escape from family responsibilities but it’s my chance to have intellectual conversations with people, to interact with people that I never normally would if I didn’t work here. You could be talking to a Doctor of Science one minute and you could be talking to the builder the next, (Barry)

The publicans of the Butchers Arms have been here for over twelve years now. They have seen their daughter through the village primary school and onto secondary school and they have embedded themselves in village life. They run a very successful business, where on one Sunday lunchtime in January 2019 they delivered over 80 lunches to a clientele, 80% of whom had not been to the pub previously or only come a few times a year. The popularity of the pub, both for locals, regulars and occasional visitors is due to its location as a typical Cotswold pub but it is also due to the familiarity between staff and customers that has been built up over the many years they have worked together. They work as a family, committed to the pub’s success but also to maintaining a working environment that the staff find attractive, enlivening and pleasurable.

Epilogue

At the end of February 2018 Ashley left her work to go touring with a close friend for three months although no doubt she will be welcomed back if she showed interest in doing so. Abby left about the same time for her third period of maternity leave and returned a year later.

Fieldnotes - Section B

FN7 - Surviving the Snow and the value of a Village Pub

During the recent onslaught of the 'Beast from the East', the bar managers and chefs of the Butchers Arms couldn't reach the pub. Angela and Michael, together with a young volunteer who trekked through heavy snow from across the valley, and Adele, their twelve year old daughter, who couldn't get to school on the Friday, managed it alone. All the table reservations were cancelled but the village regulars, most of whom were snowbound and couldn't get to work either, used the opportunity to relax with neighbours in the comfort of the warm pub. One working couple, who had not stocked up, came every day for sustenance and conviviality. On the Friday thirty walkers descended from the next village, where their own pub was temporarily closed. It was a very busy time for Michael, Angela and Adele who cooked, served drinks, dealt with the general catering and engaged everyone with a cheerful welcome. As Michael noted 'It was very enjoyable. There was less pressure to serve customers quickly with drinks and food because nobody was in a hurry. It was more of a bar/café atmosphere and it was a pleasure for the three of us, as a family, to be part of this defiance of the "Beast from the East"'. By Sunday night they were exhausted but looked back on a unique experience with considerable pleasure, knowing that they were a haven for the village in times of adversity.

FN8 - The BA as an ale heaven.

The Butchers Arms Sheepscombe has been in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide (GBG) in recent times for at least the last six years. There are only seven pubs from the whole Stroud area in the GBG which stretches from Stonehouse in the west to Painswick in the north, Nailsworth and beyond in the south and Frampton Mansell in the East. There are only about 50 pubs in the whole of Gloucestershire in the guide.

How has the pub managed this admirable feat?

Firstly, they have been assessed as a 'Very Good Candidate' the second highest category for entry in the GBG through beer quality assessments carried at least three times a year by a small team of CAMRA members living in the Stroud District. At least two members pay an unannounced visit to the pub and taste all the cask ales available and grade the beer in terms of quality from a 1-5 range. The pub is then assessed as to the quality of its 'ambiance' which includes not only atmosphere, but community engagement and other services such as food. These assessments are logged by the local CAMRA team and in January/February the Gloucester CAMRA Branch discuss candidates for the GBG for the following year. The Butcher's Arms passed all these hurdles with flying colours.

Secondly, Angela and Michael have shown dedicated commitment to the introduction for regulars and more distanced visitors to a wide range of ales from around the country. They have seen it as their responsibility to generate an interest in ales thereby helping the on-going discussion in the pub about the nature of ale and highlighting for us the varied flavours available from small and medium sized county brewers. They have had ales from over thirty small brewers from as far away as Yorkshire to Brighton. Some memorable ones for me have been: Moor Brewery- Nor'Hop (Bristol); Moorhouse-Stray Dog (Lancashire); Dark Star- American Pale Ale and Sunburst (Brighton) and the Pig & Porter- Fatal Flaw and Skylarking (Tunbridge Wells). They frequently have ales from county brewers such as St Austell, Otter, Wye Valley and Butcombe, all from the South West.

Thirdly, they researched local tastes carefully and decided on a very flavoursome permanent ale, Prescott's Hill Climb from Cheltenham which, for a 3.8 ale, is packed with flavour.

Fourthly, they added an upcoming Ale Board to the side of the bar to inform regulars which ales are in the pipeline, giving the ever discerning and adventurous customer something to look forward to and tempting those who like the regular ale to be a little more daring.

Angela and Michael like ale and are interested in providing a service beyond the ordinary and to help our travels across the ale world of the UK. They are not afraid to put on ales from small breweries that cost sometimes, 30-40% more than standard mass-produced boring beers because what matters to them is ale quality and ale adventures.

FN9 - 'A Post cricket drink' - A Saturday in May 6pm

The cricket team are the main group here after an unusual drubbing away and they have come home to drown their sorrows, but with quite a few jokes and laughter. (They came 2nd at the end of the year and were promoted). They begin outside and a short shower drives them indoors and they fill the main bar. This is their time. There are a few families with the team and as these youngsters - about 7 - play up in the garden and in the

car park and they use the snug as a running thoroughfare, back and forth with occasional shouts' This is a family cricket late afternoon when the pub belongs to them, their village pub. Everyone knows each other, the local organiser of the valley shoot pops in for a snack, a father and son who are local farmers join them. The sun comes out in the early evening and the last of the cricketers, drift outside. Their place in the bar is taken up by visitors who have come out for Saturday evening as 7-7.30 approaches. This is a village pub for village events, cricket matches, monthly quizzes and a weekly book club. Locals meet on early Friday evenings and on Christmas eve and after village hall events such as the panto and the monthly village cinema and annual Mayday fair. At many other times it is a destination populated by visitors who may only come a couple of times a year. It is a popular pub with holidaymakers and visitors from across the county, a third place for village regulars and the place to catch up with friends and celebrate village activities. An inclusive pub for these times.

FN10 - The pub sees off a local hunt

It's a Monday in late November and a hunt have gathered at the BA at 10.30. About 20 locals including landowners and followers have gathered as the hunters gradually arrive and install themselves along with the hounds in the car park. The Landlord is heard asking his staff, 'are you serving them their drinks or standing there chatting' in his ironic friendly tone and one local greets a rider with 'it's always a pleasure and never a chore'. The riders sup a port and are passed a nibble by Elaine as they also control their horse.

There is a quiet chatter as riders welcome each other and ask after each other's welfare. The hounds are well behaved hanging around the Masters' horse in a small area and not wandering far. The publican offers me a hot mini sausage and more plates of goodies are passed to the riders by the bar staff and gratefully received by the riders on this chilly but dry day. 'It's a good turn-out' says one of the regulars. A village incomer says, 'those horses are the most beautiful I have ever seen' and a latecomer arrives to join the gathering on a smaller pony. Alice arrives on a lovely grey but hangs around the outside of the group. She gratefully receives a port from Vicky but must cope with her frisky horse. An anxious hound barks his frustration at being curtailed and another rests its paws on a cheerful friend, perhaps its owner. Alice just manages to grasp a sausage and dip it in the mayonnaise before her horse moves on again. There's a traffic jam as a vehicle find itself trapped in the narrow lane in front of the pubs. The publican offers me a port and I cannot resist, nor the warm sausage roll from Jenny.

It's about 20 minutes since the first riders arrived and they all seem to be enjoying the second part of the day; the first being saddling the horses and getting dressed in dark blue jackets and cream trousers with white cravats. Those in charge of the hounds -3 of them - have red jackets and the hounds remain quiet and obedient under the hooves of the masters' horses. A rider takes a second port and Alice's horse takes another perambulation. A warm spicy skewered piece of chicken is handed round and one of the bar staff ask the publican for more pork. Another van crawls past slowly pBarryably amazed at the sight.

One of the riders, The Master of Hounds (a woman) addresses the riders and thanks the BA, Michael and Angela for their hospitality and then they ride off away from the village down the lane towards Painswick with the hounds leading the way for their drag hunt. Some hunt supporters, local farmers, spade up the horse droppings and add them to the pub's flower borders in the car park. They then jump into a couple of open small trucks and follow the hunt presumably to carry out other duties along the hunt such as opening and closing gates. Gradually the locals disperse, and the village gets back to its normal Monday activities. It's all over in less than 45 minutes except for the six staff who and are now clearing up and getting ready for their busy lunchtime after a very early start, especially by Angela who has been cooking since 8am.

The Butchers Arms is a major player in maintaining some of the traditions of the village, but it still needs to attract county wide interest, in order to survive, as is the case for most village pubs. The pub supports the village in many ways, and it needs reciprocal village support, especially during the winter, when visitor numbers are reduced.

FN-The village pub as a destination venue.

When the Butchers Arms opens at 6.30 on Wednesday, 5th December and elderly couple take a table in front of the fire and a solitary figure and table adjacent to the fire and reads daily newspaper while waiting for his evening meal to arrive. The pub would expect to be quiet at this time in anticipation of the Christmas celebrations to come later in the month. However, at about 7 o'clock the main bar begins with a party from a local political organisation they are here for an early dinner and had two large tables reserved in what the pub

calls the West Wing. Most of the 20+ participants stand around in the main bar drinks and welcoming one another. Quite a lot of wine is ordered along with the occasional pint of ale. It is a mixed party with a majority of men and a ages range from the early 30s to pensioners. It is a jolly atmosphere and at 7.30 they are called for dinner and they gradually make their way towards their decorated dining tables. The bar becomes quiet again and the three people in it to lower their voices so as not to disturb the other. Young workers carry cold starters to the party's table through the main bar. One of the number trips down to the bar to get a refill ale sporting a paper Christmas hat.

Another group of about 8 people in their 30's then enter the bar talking quietly and after a short discussion with the bar staff by their organiser they seat themselves on a large table to the right of the main bar. They mainly appear to be visitors from outside the UK, probably Europe, and as is the custom abroad they wait to give their drinks orders to a member of the bar staff at the table. It is surprising to see in an English village pub that all of the men drink either soft drinks or large glass bulbs of specialist gin concoctions filled with ice and fruit but the only two women with the group take pints of ale and are presumably the leaders of the group. After a few minutes they order their meals, as they would in a restaurant, and appear to make their drinks last for some considerable time. At about 8 o'clock another four village regulars take the window table in the main bar just for drinks bringing the total number of regulars to seven and the couple and the solitary reader slowly eat a meal.

At about 9 o'clock a lot of flashing blue and white lights speed past the window seats and the bar members wonder if the emergency services have arrived. However, after a few minutes the mystery is solved when the pub door opens and in come a dozen cyclists decked in colourful lycra and mud splattered arms and faces. They have driven up from Bristol with their bikes on their cars to carry out some night riding around our steep and undulating valley. They each get a pint of ale and lager and take over a small area in the Snug through the arch to the right of the main bar and present a colourful but unique sight in this village pub.

A village pub today must be a destination pub to survive, to be a place that infrequent or once in a lifetime, visitors arrive because of the special place of the pub in a beautiful rural setting and its picture postcard appearance of an ancient stone public house. If these three groups had not made reservations or 'blew in' as unexpected visitors from the next county the pub would have had just 7 locals until at least 9 pm and probably very few locals arriving after this. The pub often closes just after 10 pm in the winter if there are no drinkers. Outsiders to the village ensure the survival of its pub.

FN11 - Christmas Eve - Its Raffle Time

It's a Christmas Eve at nearly 10pm and most of those who have come some distance for dinner have departed replete and full of the joys of Christmas. The main bar is packed with villagers who are drinking and hugging and kissing each other as they squeeze by to get to another village friend. The bar staff use sign language and mouth questions over the loud hubbub to customers five deep at the bar. I have never seen the bar so full or so noisy with chatter and goodwill. A party that did eat here have abandoned their window table and stand in front it in the crowded space chatting to friends. One well known family leave just before the raffle with a call to friends that if they 'win the raffle will someone pop it round tomorrow'.

The raffle is due to be drawn after 10pm and the winner of the first prize must be here to collect it. A large goblet of gin being drunk by younger locals is prominent as is a finished couple of bottles of bubbly on the window table. There are about a dozen people in the West Wing and some in the Snug, but the main bar is the place to be on this Christmas Eve.

There is a whistle from the bar, and someone calls 'Order Order' and the publican shouts that it is time to call the raffle. The top prize is called, and someone immediately calls out 'not here' in the hope that it will be drawn again but the lucky winner comes forward with delight from a corner. The second is called and he is here, and a great cheer rises. He gets a choice of the next three prizes. The next winner is also here and makes his choice - Rugby tickets for Gloucester. The next one is called, and he is also here, and another cheer rises. The chatter gets louder and Angela uses her higher pitched voice to call the name. These are mainly young people between 20-40 with a sprinkling of older members. The name Bob is called, and it turns out to be me, but I leap up and shout 'put it back and draw it again. The publican says it is a case of beer and I am sorely tempted but I repeat my request for it be redrawn. A song breaks out. My partner then wins, but again I say redraw. I'm only here for the crack. A scream rises as a woman wins a prize at last and the cacophony continues unabated.

The West wing is now empty, and the bar seems fuller than previously. Another loud cry goes up and another woman is successful. The prizes keep coming and the jollity increases as more cheers go up, but it is impossible to hear the names of the lucky winners. Joints of meat, large cheeses and other festive parcels are won. Adele looks on with a quiet interest from behind the bar. And still the names are called and more winners shout with glee. A box of Butcombe Bitter bottles is won by someone holding a gin glass and an umbrella is claimed. Two prizes left. Meanwhile the staff continue to deliver ale and gin. Mia wins. The bowl in which the raffle tickets are drawn is offered for the last time to a reveller to draw the last ticket and James behind the bar wins. Both he and the landlord raise arms in celebration. The bar is still as loud as ever.

One watcher looks on from the nook in the West wing and joins the clapping as it ends. It turns out I have won three prizes and the publicans bring them over to me in the corner where I am writing this fieldnote. It's a bit embarrassing but they insist on me having them. The prizes consist of a micro barrel of Bath Ales Gem and four bottles from one of my favourite breweries – the Bristol Beer Factory - and a bowl crafted by a potter who lives in the village and is a pub regular. How lucky we are to live in such wonderful village with such a wonderful pub.

The bar thins out a little and folks get to the bar a little more easily to fill up their wine and ale glasses. One of the bar staff and her family leave, having dined and enjoyed the fun. She is now at University but has worked here for nearly four years and always works here during her holidays here even though she lives in Gloucester.

More farewell embraces are made as people gradually leave clutching a wide array of prizes and a dog on a lead is now able to explore a little as some space is found. One group have photographs taken of them with the 5 prizes between them. The chatter is still as loud inside even after the thinning out and the occasional whoop is heard. Preparing to leave is often a prolonged process of gradually donning winter clothing, including Christmas jumpers, and stopping from time to time to wish friends good cheer. How lucky we are to live in such wonderful village with such a wonderful pub.

Chapter 3 – A village publicans' life

Angela, Michael took over the management of the Butchers Arms in 2005 when Adele, their daughter was a baby. They enjoyed being in a community where 'everybody knows you' whereas all the big pubs they ran in the past the customers were mainly transient with just a core of regulars. They now feel part of something. 'Both Michael and I were brought up in villages in the middle of nowhere and that may be partly why we have enjoyed our life here; we like being part of the community' (Angela).

They have always been involved in the service industry and they met in the hotel trade. However, if you are working in a hotel you are expected to be quite formal and scripted, but in a pub 'the role is not scripted for you; you can be yourself. It gives you more freedom to be the jovial publican and have a laugh with customers and regulars and be a little cheeky'.

When we first came here, we wondered if we were ever going to find our way out of the village, but we had lunch and thought it was amazing. It was busy and it was buzzing, and we fell in love with the place. We knew immediately what we would do to develop it. We needed to set down roots and decided to do it here after all the travelling for 2-3 years we had done running different pubs. With our new little one it made sense to move here with a school down the road (Angela).

The locals loved this pub but 'it couldn't stay the way it was.

There were foreign coins and notes pinned to every beam and many were rotting, and it was dirty and filthy. Things had to go. We had to decorate, as it was nicotine orange. It was not attractive. So, I bought some swatches and pinned them to wall with a tally chart for locals to select the colour they thought best. It made everyone feel involved in the process. You can't come in like a bull in a china shop and change everything without antagonising people, so we tried to involve them. So, we bought people along with us as we developed the pub (Angela).

They didn't have many holidays in the early years apart from managing a week in Cornwall but the company for whom they worked didn't have many other pubs and there was no-one to cover. It was only years later when they bought more pubs that they hired relief managers and they could take longer breaks.

Managing the pub was our whole life but I may have missed out on Adele a little as I was working while she played with the villagers. I do like the saying that 'it takes a village to bring up a kid'. Adele was always down here and got to know all the regulars and they knew her. She would go and sit with whoever. She had a comprehensive upbringing but not so much with me. Nevertheless, she learnt how to live socially, in a safe place, learned respect and knew that people cared for her, (Angela).

The Butchers Arms offers hospitality by supporting and sponsoring the cricket club and they provide food after a game; they help the school where they can, and the Friends of the School meet here regularly; organising a quiz once a month. The Book Club comes once a month on a Monday; the Sheepscombe Society hold their meetings here as do the cricket club and the Q group – a gentlemen's club. They provide set lunches and dinners as a set price meal and some organisations use them as fund raising events.

They work with the Village Hall Committee e.g.: gaining use of carpark when they know groups of walkers are starting a circular walk here; if they have a function, the pub often provides beer at cost price although they have their own alcohol licence. They don't charge any group for using a room as they see it as providing accommodation in the hope that group members will use the on more informal occasions. 'There's a lot to be said from supporting local groups and, although we may benefit, we think it is our duty to do so. If you are not supportive and don't engage with local groups, you can become forgotten and locals will not support the pub' (Michael).

They are a country pub and in this sort of environment, the publicans think they should engage with the country culture.

The hunt meeting here is a spectacle for us and lots of villagers come to look at it and enjoy the drinks and nibbles we offer while the hunt is gathering in the car park. We have benefitted as they sometimes bring their supporters club here for a dinner later. Some people see it as a lot of work for which you gain little benefit, but we believe we benefit in many ways of which we are unaware. There's an added value.

You must have working organisations in a village that create a need for the villagers to get out of their houses and to get to know each other. It's great that we have a village hall and activities such as the village fete, but you also need the school and the pub. A lot of networking goes on at the village hall, the school gate and in the pub????

More intensive engagement has been the hallmark of the current publicans. They wanted to get involved with the village school while their daughter was there. 'I joined as a parent governor when my daughter was about 8 and felt that having a good school in the village, like a pub, helps the village. It attracts families and is therefore a good for the life of the village. It is difficult to maintain a high school population in a village where properties are expensive and therefore families may find it difficult to move here (Michael). He co-chaired the governors and then took it over on his own. It was a difficult time, having a full-time job as Chair as well as running the pub. 'We began to change things for the better and as a result the school population increased due to parents from outside the village choosing to send their children here as improvements were made and so the school is now a viable operation and in no danger of closing for those who do bring up their children in the village'.

Michael has also been involved in the village pantomime for 8 years. He did some amateur dramatics when he was young and living up north and really enjoyed it,

It's the camaraderie you get with all the people you work with during the 'read throughs' and rehearsals. You get to know people and to see something through from reading the words written on paper to the performance which I found quite exciting. Lots of the script, as it is put in front of you at the beginning is a bare-bones and then we add in ad-libs and references to the village, it becomes very enjoyable. I don't mind prancing around and making a fool of myself to be honest. I am quite confident in that way and so I don't mind doing it. It's quite similar in some ways to working behind, acting and putting on a performance and being a little cheeky where you can get away with it. Playing to an audience is a natural thing for a publican. My daughter has been doing it since she was a tot and I think that has helped mould her into what she is as she is quite outgoing character and good with people. I think the pantos encouraged her interest now at secondary school in drama and art and she is now heavily involved in dance and drama productions (Michael).

In the past couple of years Angela has joined in the pantos and its now a family activity. Although it takes them away from the pub for a while, they have a good team and they manage very well without them at rehearsal and production times.

Despite being managers for the last 14 years and having got the pub working the way they wanted it to and it being successful there is always something to worry about. Although many of our staff have stayed with them for a long time there are still new staff to train, year in, year out. Although business is settled and running the way they want it to they cannot ever be complacent, and they must change with the times. They are always busy and its relentless.

It's because we live on the job, our home is our job and our third place for pleasure unlike others who can separate, home, work and leisure places. If we have a day off, we try to find a pub that's like this one and close enough to have a drink, but we can't find one, so we stay here and sit the other side to the bar. Even when we sometimes sit down for a drink with friends, we still have our eye on the whole pub noticing tables that haven't been cleared????

Angela describes one Saturday when she had 27 for dinner bringing their own decorations and half of them were vegans which stretched her creative culinary skills. She had another large party earlier on in the day which meant changing around all the furniture between one departure and another's group's arrival. However,

It sounds like I am moaning but I am not, it's a great job and I love it. It's still nice when people tell us how much they have enjoyed themselves. That's why you do it. You wouldn't do this ridiculous job if you didn't enjoy making people happy. That's still our motivation.

Having settled in Sheepscombe it became the first place they had worked where they have made friends.

It's probably why we have stayed here so long because we have made friends with our neighbours. I became close to Serena, one of our early regulars, and we recently spent 3 weeks with her in Canada

where she now lives. All our friends are regulars. Alice and Richard are friends and we go around there for meals occasionally and we recently went to stay with Ian and Steve in their Spanish place for a week. They are not really customers but our friends who come and drink here but when sitting on the other side of the bar with them we each pay our round (Angela)

If they leave, they 'will have very warm memories and recall all the people we have got to know rather than the mundane work. Our friends we have made here will be life-long friends' (Michael).

The pub and the village are intertwined, and each relies on each other for sustenance, social welfare and mutual benefit.

Conclusion - Long Live the Village Pub.

Once a village pub is lost, while the location might remain, it is no longer a 'place'. Rural areas have been hit particularly hard with 13 pubs shutting each week in 2012 and beer sales lower than at any point since the depression of the 1930s; CAMRA report that 985 pubs across the whole country closed in 2017. There are many reasons for these closures e.g. alcoholic consumption is steadily declining; tastes and lifestyles have changed with many people now buying their wine and beer more cheaply from supermarkets. Anecdotal figures from publicans suggest that only 15-20% of villagers support their pub regularly and so the village pub must become a 'destination pub' attracting people who value being able to eat in a rural location with features that make their visit a memorable experience. Visitors can sit in these environments, some of which date from the 17th Century, and enjoy the history of the pub and village through the artefacts and pictures, crammed together on every wall, evoking, for them, an idyllic rural past. Nevertheless, it is still important that villagers support their village pub for to neglect it could mean its disappearance and then the village would lose much more than just the pub.