

# Couple breathe life into village pub

Picture the perfect English pub. The chances are it will be a centuries-old building with roaring fires, lots of character, a warm and welcoming atmosphere, delicious food, and great hosts.

If it is, then you've just pictured The Fortescue Arms at Billingborough, which is enjoying a revival thanks to husband-and-wife team Carol and Nigel Freedman.

The couple took over the pub 18 months ago, and with their hard work, and the support of staff and customers, The Fortescue Arms is thriving again.

After having a succession of temporary managers, the pub was looking tired. But when Carol and Nigel first saw it a couple of years ago, they knew it was the place for them.

Manager Carol said: "I just fell in love with it because it has lots of character and I could see its potential."

The couple have decades of experience in the hospitality industry but, after working for big chains, they were looking for somewhere that they could really make their own.

Carol, as a trained chef, was particularly keen to give full rein to her own creative menu ideas so, when the couple



came across The Fortescue Arms, they re-located from Cheshire and have enjoyed the challenge.

They started by giving the 300-year-old building a facelift.

"It really needed brightening up. Everything was so dark and dated," Carol said.

But instead of bringing in bright new furnishings, the couple instead carefully rubbed down the old wooden tables, painted the dark walls and ceilings in light natural colours, and added new lighting.

The Fortescue Arms has a large but cosy lounge, a separate dining room, a traditional bar, and a snug. It also has a beautiful, spacious and sunny courtyard at the rear, which is perfect for the pub's outdoor events.

But it is the food and drink that has really started to earn The Fortescue Arms its new-

found good name.

With Carol at the helm, there is a regularly-changing menu with everything from nibbles and sharing dishes to hearty mains, traditional grills and daily specials.

Much of the produce is sourced locally, but there's one exception. The pub is proud to say that its popular authentic tapas dishes use ingredients brought in from Spain, where the couple have a home.

"If you're going to offer something that says it's authentic, then you have to have authentic ingredients," Carol said.

There are more than a dozen tapas dishes, either individually-priced or at a tempting three for £14 or five for £22. They are proving to be a roaring success.

The fixed price lunch, at just £9.95 for two courses or £12.95 for three, is also great value, with a choice of six dishes in each course.



Carol and Nigel Freedman are the force behind the refurbishment of The Fortescue Arms.

"We try to cater for all budgets and all tastes," Carol said.

There is also a vegetarian and vegan selection, and special dietary requirements are catered for.

The pub has a five-star food hygiene rating, and a Cask Marque awarded for the quality of its beers. It also has a huge selection of gins – about 45 – many of which you won't find elsewhere in the area.

Special events have proved popular, including two gin and jazz evenings, and four successful Spanish nights.

Upcoming specials to look

out for include a romantic Valentines menu being served from February 14 to 16, and a three-course Mother's Day lunch on March 31. Booking is essential for both.

Bank holidays are ones to watch for live entertainment, and the pub is also the perfect venue for all your special occasions, including the courtyard for outdoor parties, and the restaurant for smaller weddings.

Villagers have been happy to support the only pub left in the village, and customers have been travelling from further afield as word spreads

on social media.

"I think people are always happy to travel that little bit further for good food," Carol said. "Once people have been here, they love it."

