



The Royal Oak, Leighterton re-opens after massive renovation

The Royal Oak, in the Gloucestershire village of Leighterton, has just opened its doors again after an extensive eight month renovation programme. The new owners aim to deliver a “best in class” country pub and restaurant, providing fabulous hospitality in the perfect countryside setting that surrounds Tetbury.

New owners Paul and Antonia Whitbread identified the beautiful Grade II listed building, nestled in the wonderful Cotswold countryside, as the perfect place to develop a first class country inn and dining room. The aim is simple, to serve properly cooked, locally sourced, seasonal food, in the nicest possible surroundings.

The building itself is over 300 years old and was first opened as a public house in the 1850's. In need of some major TLC, Paul and Antonia began an extensive refurbishment of the property in March 2010 and reopened on the 6th of December. The idea was to create the ultimate country inn. The bar area has all the ingredients and features one would expect - roaring open fires, low ceilings and exposed beams.

Referring to the design concept Paul Whitbread explained “it was important to strip out years of accumulated pub clutter, but remain faithful to this fantastic Cotswold stone building. So what we have is all the best and original features restored, showcasing some of the finest architecture the area has to offer.”

Paul and Antonia are new to the food and drink business but share a long held passion for all things hospitality related. Paul's background was previously in marketing and advertising and Antonia was a solicitor. After falling in love with the area, they moved lock stock and barrel to Gloucestershire with their baby son Jamie, to embark on their new profession.

Paul said “We spent two years researching the business, which included me enrolling on an intensive six month Cordon Bleu cookery course at Gordon Ramsey's Tante Marie School. Even

though I'm not cooking at the Royal Oak it was important for me to understand all the fundamental building blocks for creating great food commercially.”

Whilst rebuilding the Royal Oak, Paul and Antonia started putting a team together to fulfil their ambitions for the business. After working in America and the UK, latterly for City Inn Hotels, Christian Wragg joined as Head Chef. Christian has spent a number of years training to be a pastry chef, an extremely skilled area of cookery, which he is applying to great effect in the form of the wonderful Royal Oak pudding menu.

Jane Thompson then arrived and heads up the front of house. Jane was General Manager of The Mill Race, an award winning food led pub in Ross-on-Wye. Jane brings her considerable organisational skills in running a busy restaurant, to the Royal Oak, as well as a passion for all things equestrian – a very important attribute for the area.

With all the key ingredients in place, The Royal Oak, Leighterton has been building steadily since opening and the word of mouth reviews have been sensational.

Paul said “We truly believe we have the winning formula for a successful business here. People say that the concept of ‘the pub’ is dying but I disagree. If you put all the right elements together i.e. great, value for money, food and drink, served efficiently and with a smile in a lovely setting, then people will always want to come and enjoy those things. The great British pub is here to stay.”

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