

Peak District pub entrepreneur set to reopen historic Ashford Arms after almost losing everything during Covid

Submitted by: Feather & Fern PR

Tuesday, 26 September 2023

Rob Hattersley, 39, from Bakewell in the Peak District founded Longbow Bars & Restaurants, an independent hospitality business, shortly before the pandemic hit. After selling his house to fund his first venue, The Maynard in Grindleford, Rob almost went bankrupt after opening just 6 weeks before the first lockdown.

However, fast-forward three years and he is preparing to open his third venue in early 2024, The Ashford Arms in Ashford-in-the-Water. A beautiful 17th century pub at the gateway to this popular Peak District village, The Ashford Arms didn't survive the pandemic and has been closed for the past three years.

Rob has undertaken the lease on the pub - which was once owned by the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire of nearby Chatsworth House - in August 2023, and has kicked off an extensive 1.5m GBP refurbishment, with the ground floor, hotel bedrooms, gardens and kitchen undergoing a complete transformation.

"The Ashford Arms will look strikingly different as it undergoes necessary structural work and a complete redesign of the restaurant, bar and nine hotel bedrooms," said Rob. "As with our other two venues, we will be offering a premium pub experience that ticks all of the boxes; whether visiting the Peak District as a tourist, seeking a pint with friends, a romantic date night by the fire or a lively gathering with loved ones."

The restaurant at The Ashford Arms is expected to cater for 107 diners with Raymond Blanc trained executive chef, Adrian Gagea, designing the menu, and Westside and Southside's Young Chef of the Year, Chris Parker, stepping up as head chef. Longbow's Josh Butler, who was awarded the Visit Derbyshire and Peak District Young Tourism Hero Award 2023 has worked his way up the ranks within Longbow and will lead the venue as general manager.

Longbow only uses local Peak District suppliers, a move that has gained recognition in various hospitality awards such as East Midlands Business Awards, Visit Peak District & Derbyshire Awards and The National Wedding Awards where The Maynard was awarded best wedding venue in East Midlands two years running, taking the national runner up place in 2022.

"It's vital and a non-negotiable for me that we support Peak District businesses. In a cost-of-living crisis and a hospitality industry that has seen so many venues suffer extreme losses and closure, we want to make sure we always contribute to our local economy," said Rob.

"Our meat is sourced from local suppliers, who raise and nurture their own livestock through traditional farming values. Our seasonal fruit, veg and herbs come direct from Peak District farms, and we use local breweries and distilleries such as Peak Ales, Thornbridge Breweries and Shining Cliff Distillery to name a few. We never compromise on freshness, taste and quality. I'm delighted we are able to contribute to an uplift in business for our local suppliers through The Ashford Arms."

The Ashford Arms will join The Maynard, which has won numerous awards as a wedding venue, restaurant, and

hotel, and The George, an award-winning historic bar, restaurant and hotel in Hathersage, which was frequented by Charlotte Brontë.

Upon reopening after the second lockdown, The Maynard enjoyed 66% growth, putting the team in a position to open The George Hathersage in late 2021.

Following continued consistent growth, despite a rapid increase in costs, Longbow Bars & Restaurants Ltd is ready for a third venue to complement the achievements of The Maynard and The George.

Rob started his hospitality career working in his parents' restaurant, Aitch's Wine Bar in Bakewell, before working as a chef and manager throughout the UK and a few years running beverage operations for Royal Caribbean Cruise Liners.

Rob Hattersley said, "Hospitality was one of the hardest hit sectors in the pandemic and personally I wondered whether I'd ever financially recover. I had no choice but to go on Universal Credit in lockdown as the team and I struggled to keep The Maynard afloat.

I'm so proud of the team and what we have achieved over the past three years, and there is a great deal of excitement about the new addition to the Longbow family. As a Peak District lad, nothing brings me greater pleasure than breathing life into unviable hospitality businesses in my home county. I can't wait to share The Ashford Arms with everyone, whether they are local or from further afield, in the New Year."

The refurbishment will be a collaboration with Heineken. The Ashford Arms is expected to open in early 2024 with recruitment for new team members starting in October.

- ENDS -

Further information

Contact:

Jennifer Bell, Feather & Fern PR, on behalf of Longbow Bars & Restaurants.

Phone: 07955 031 986

Email: jen@featherandfernpr.co.uk

Images and video:

For high resolution images please visit

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1UpdY8K-hFjnUPrODnp-4ByrG_R7zG1_m?usp=sharing

For web sized images for online content please visit

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1i4WDEcLKDf5APQAxa-U5smja1freNX-n/view?usp=sharing>

For video content of Rob Hattersley speaking outside the Ashford Arms, please visit:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1PoHgv0hhSmhiOXpEVFFir8ajLsJHOPwN?usp=sharing>

About Longbow Bars & Restaurants Ltd:

www.the-maynard.com

www.thegeorgehathersage.com

Longbow Bars & Restaurants Ltd is a growing independent hospitality business located within the Peak District. Currently operating two venues; The Maynard, an award-winning wedding venue, bar, restaurant and hotel and The George Hathersage an iconic and historic bar, restaurant and boutique hotel.

The Ashford Arms in Ashford-in-the-Water was acquired in August 2023 and is expected to reopen in early 2024 following an extensive refurbishment in collaboration with Heineken.

From dog walkers in muddy boots, to couples enjoying the Chatsworth Suite on their dream wedding day, The Maynard and The George appeal to a wide audience. After many years of exclusive use, both venues are always open to all; whether tourists enjoying a Peak District staycation or the immediate community looking for their local pub.

Food is fresh, hearty and delicious. Everything is made from scratch in state-of-the-art kitchens led by executive chef, Adrian Gagea who trained under Raymond Blanc. The menu changes to reflect the seasons and utilises the freshest sustainable premium ingredients from local farms and suppliers. Food intolerances and allergies are catered for with 90% of the menu adapted to make gluten-free or dairy-free with a wide array of vegetarian and vegan dishes.

Recognised in The Wedding Industry Awards, Peak District & Derbyshire Tourism Awards, The Maynard and The George enjoy well-deserved recognition for exceptional fresh food, brilliant service and a warm, friendly ambience.