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£1.25m

paid by the
new owner of
the Churston
Court Hotel

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BUSINESS

Pub sold for £1.2m

A TORBAY country inn has been sold for £1.25m.

An unnamed private investor has taken on the popular 16th century Churston Court Hotel which sits alongside the village church. The new owner is said to have ambitious plans for the Grade II-listed property, says Charles Darrow director Jon Clyne.

“The purchasers have a plethora of hospitality experience and have grand plans to significantly invest in the property before a grand re-opening in 2023,” he said.

Dating back in part to the mid-1500s, the Churston Court Hotel is a Saxon manor set in 1.4 acres of grounds. It has 18 letting bedrooms and a restaurant for 78 diners.

TV design consultant teams up with carpentry business

TV DESIGN consultant Julia Kendell, best known for her appearances on DIY SOS, is teaming up with Newton Abbot joinery and carpentry company Wistman's.

Well-known for her Grand Designs award-winning property design and working alongside DIY SOS presenter Nick Knowles, Ms Kendell, pictured, created the interior design for the wedding venue of Knowles and his wife in 2012.

A specialist in designing kitchens, bespoke cabinetry and lighting design, she regularly writes for leading interior magazines and is writing a book on how good

design can improve cognitive ability, mood, and health.

Formerly known as Rendle & Elliott, the company moved from Dartmouth to larger premises at Heathfield in 2021.

Director Jeremy Robinson said: “We have a dedicated team and our in-house craftsmen pride themselves on creating bespoke furniture to a client's exacting requirements. I'm delighted Julia has teamed up with us to help our customers design their dream kitchen. She fits with our ethos and values perfectly, complementing what we do.”



New owner for hotel

A NINETEENTH century Torquay hotel will remain in the tourism businesses after being sold for an undisclosed fee.

The Tor Park Hotel in Vansittart Road, half a mile from the sea front and town centre, caters to coach groups and private guests.

Originally built in the 1870s, the Tor Park Hotel has 63 en-suite bedrooms and extensive public areas including a large restaurant, bar and ballroom.

Christie & Co's South West hotels team director Stephen Champion, who handled the sale, said: “The hotel attracted interest from buyers across a wide variety of sectors and for a host of different uses.

“However, we are pleased to announce that the new owner plans to keep it trading as a hotel.

“This is a prime example of continued confidence in the South West hospitality sector, with buyers still keen to acquire well positioned assets across the region.”

When chips are down you count your blessings and try to ride out the storm

by BUSINESS STAFF

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ATORQUAY fish and chip shop owner has spoken of the difficulties he faces in keeping his business going.

Hanbury's is weathering unprecedented economic headwinds due to the cost-of-living crisis with owner David Hanbury saying fish and chip shops have been particularly hard hit by the soaring costs of ingredients.

He said part of the problem was that 40% of the cod sold is from Russia which is shipped to China and if it reaches UK shores a 35% tax is slapped on it.

Hanbury's does not stock Russian fish, preferring Faroese cod and haddock.

Mr Hanbury listed the extent of rising costs. He said: “Cod's gone up 50%, oil's gone up about 35%, we use sunflower oil. Packaging has gone up 44%. Chicken has gone up 15-20%. So, particularly the fish and chips shops are in a pretty bad situation but other takeaways are also struggling.

“Not only food costs, which aren't as severe as for fish and chip shops, but wage costs and of course energy costs. It's a perfect storm created by world economics that has made it very difficult for small businesses to survive.

He added: “It's pretty tough with prices increasing way above inflation. 50% for cod is just unbelievable. I've been in this trade 41 years and I've never known anything like it.”

Other costs are counted on top of this as well. There is a 20% VAT tax on hot takeaway food due to it being classed as a luxury. Mr Hanbury has also invested in a new hi-tech electronically controlled



» David Hanbury in his Torquay fish and chip shop

fryer which cost an eye-watering £61,000.

Hanbury's has had to increase its prices by 12%, roughly in line with inflation, to cope. He said a lot of customers sympathised with the decision.

He said: “One thing we've done which I think has helped us keep busy is we haven't really changed anything. We haven't reduced the portion sizes, we haven't reduced the quality of our fish or potatoes and we've got the same people cooking here who have cooked here for the last 10 or 20 years.

He says the name of the game for 2023 is simply to say afloat. By owning his premises Mr Hanbury doesn't need to worry about landlords or paying rent, a luxury for a small business.

He said: “I think the main thing is to survive this recession. But it is very concerning.

“I mean I'm sure we'll be fine because I've been in this business for 41 years and I've built some assets around me but there are a lot of businesses where renting premises along with their customer bases going down and their costs going up that are going to find it very difficult to survive.”

“I really feel if this goes on too long with high energy costs and high general costs it will mean there's going to be a lot of casualties in the coming months.”

As a result of the Covid lockdowns Hanbury's now has four delivery vehicles which are on call through its app

which supports click-and-collect and delivery services.

Mr Hanbury said: “We're very proud of that because that's what kept us afloat for the past two years with the pandemic. We're certainly going to carry on with that.”

Hanbury's used to have its own restaurant next door to the takeaway but it shut after 25 years of trading successfully. In March 2019 it closed its doors for 18 months due to the pandemic. Eighteen months later in November 2021, the restaurant reopened, but only for six weeks before having to close again.

Mr Hanbury said: “We spent a bit of money on the restaurant, actually. We repainted it and got new equipment in but we could only keep it going for six weeks because it started off alright for the first three or four weeks but then omicron [a Covid-19 variant] came along and our takings went down by half.”

The restaurant space, which he is paying tax on, is now being used for storage but he has a planning application to convert the restaurant into apartments.

He said: “At my age I just want to live a quiet life with the takeaway. It's a tough gig in Torquay to run a restaurant. The problem with Torquay is there are too many restaurants and too many coffee houses all fighting for the same customers, particularly in the summer.”

Mr Hanbury believes experience is what sets his business apart. His manager has been with him for 20 years and one cook for 32 years.

He said: “We've got a lot of experience in the place which makes Hanbury's what it is. A lot of my staff enjoy working here, they've got a nice work ethic and they can trust me.”