

COMMUNITY PUB CASE STUDY



The Antwerp Arms Tottenham



KEY DETAILS

Primary trading activity	Community pub / managed
Amount raised for business	£125,000
Share price	£50
Official opening date	May 2015
Population area served	130,000
Number of shareholders	400
Legal structure	Industrial and Provident Society (now recognised as a Community Benefit Society)
Freehold price	£580,000

About the Antwerp Arms

The Antwerp Arms has been part of Tottenham life since around 1860 - and the building was already a pub for around a decade before it took the name. Although the pub is located in the beating heart of urban north London it is nestled in a quiet conservation area surrounded by trees, parks and the vast Tottenham Cemetery – making it a quite green and peaceful corner of the metropolis. In his Evening Standard column the poet, John Betjeman called the Bruce Castle area surrounding the Antwerp Arms: “Constable and Cotman country in Tottenham,” and little has changed since then.

However, in football season the roar of the crowds at the gigantic newly built Tottenham Hotspur Stadium can be heard at the bar of the Antwerp, or at least they would be if they weren't drowned out by the crowds inside the pub who gather to watch matches on the large television screen. Football has been a fixture at the pub for many years with both the new stadium and its predecessor, White Hart Lane, just down the road. And football continues as a key ingredient in its success as a community pub. Spurs fans have been regulars ever since 1882 when EL Sprylions, a bible teacher at nearby All Hallows Church, first set up Tottenham Hotspur FC for the local Tottenham grammar-school boys attending his classes.

As of 2020 'The Annie' is the oldest working pub in the area and continues to delight today as it continues to develop in its latest incarnation as an essential part of the community.

Journey

In 2013 the Antwerp's owners Enterprise Inns put the pub up for sale. Residents formed the Antwerp Arms Association (AAA) and successfully applied to have the pub listed as an Asset of Community Value, as they launched a high profile campaign to “Save Our Pub”. The campaign received backing from their local MP David Lammy and caught the attention of local and regional media, including the London Evening Standard. Owing to its unique place in local hearts and minds the pub received the backing of Tottenham Hotspurs Football Club, a relationship which continues to this day. The group began to raise funds through a share issue in order to buy the pub for the community, eventually reaching their target and purchasing the building. The sale was completed by the end of March 2015, and The Antwerp Arms became London's first community pub.

Vision

From the beginning of their campaign to save the Antwerp Arms, the local people who formed the AAA knew they wanted to transform the pub into something more of a community hub. As a community pub, the committee's vision was for a “friendly and welcoming place run by our community for our community”.

Volunteers help with community work, maintenance, and gardening. The AAA committee meets monthly to oversee the strategic and community aspects which are:

- To improve the local environment
- To increase employment opportunities
- To develop community cohesion

The pub's biggest step in boosting its role as a community hub came in 2017 with the construction of a new extension to the rear of the pub and the support of a paid Community Engagement Coordinator to develop the Antwerp Arm's Community Programme.

Examples of the Antwerp's community early aims include:

- Working with Friends of Bruce Castle Park to improve the local park
- Sourcing Bicycle racks by the pub to encourage cycling
- Decorating the pub frontage and hung flower baskets to upgrade the street view
- Offering space free of charge to local groups and community or meetings and events
- Host Community lunches and picnics for those in need
- Hosting quizzes and live music nights to bring people together

Fundraising

To fund this ambitious community pub project the AAA were initially given a small grant of £9,000 by the Social Investment Fund to help develop the community pub vision and to incorporate as an appropriate vehicle to take it forward. Practical assistance was given by the Plunkett Foundation to help us find an appropriate model for the group and its constitution.

To purchase the building a share issue was opened to supporters and the community and raised £125,000 by the sale of £50 shares. The pub now has approximately 400 shareholders. The Social Investment Board then contributed a further £285,000 to purchase the freehold of the pub from the property developers, who had acquired it for redevelopment as flats. The AAA then received a further £112,000 from Power to Change in order to refurbish and develop the building as a community pub.

Legal model

The Antwerp Arms Association was registered by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) in April 2014 as an Industrial and Provident Society, which owing to legislation introduced in 2014 is now treated as Community Benefit Society.

Members elect the management committee at the Annual General Meeting. Members are entitled to receive information from the management committee at regular intervals and to be consulted on matters of general concern before decisions are made.

Social impact

By attending any of its community activities the The Antwerp Arm's role in the Tottenham community quickly becomes clear. People in the surrounding area often view the pub as a lifeline – especially when it hosts events such as the free lunches for the lonely. Through a multitude of activities the pub brings people from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and with varied needs together.

Mary Morgan, a Tottenham resident, enjoyed attending the 2019 Christmas lunches and witnessed the benefits of a community pub. She said: “I have friends here – and I come mostly for the company. I can get very isolated by myself and I watch YouTube at home – but I get tired of that. Coming to the lunch is good for your health, mentally.”

Events regularly held include: Community lunches, local theatre group performances, friendship and conversation events, local history fares, neighbourhood engagement meetings, charity quizzes, Christmas carol concerts, book club, local litter picks, open house event to encourage local engagement, International Women's Day celebrations, contemporary and classical music performance.

Support from Plunkett

Practical assistance was given by Plunkett to help find an appropriate model for the society and its constitution. Specialist advisor support was provided again in 2018 by a Plunkett advisor.