

## Feature



Spectre Leisure, who have taken on and reopened The White Hart in Boxford, below  
Pictures: SPECTRE LEISURE/GOOGLE



Cally Brooks (right) of Box River Café



Cheese and meats at A Leeder Butchers

# Community's joy as Suffolk village gets two of its pubs back

**Danielle Lett** looks at the appeal of 'small but mighty' Boxford



**V**oted by The Sunday Times as one of the best places to live in the East of England, Boxford is a gem.

With a population of just over 1,000, the phrase 'small but mighty' certainly applies here, as while the village is quaint, it seems to be thriving – despite an ongoing, nationwide slew of business closures due to the cost-of-living crisis.

Not only have two of Boxford's pubs recently reopened, but its community shops and cafe offer top-notch produce, drawing in visitors from far and wide.

Resident Penny Wilby has lived in Boxford for nearly two decades and explains what's kept her there for so long. "I think it's got a really nice demographic of people here. With a lot of villages, it's often expensive to live there, but Boxford has a lot of affordable housing, meaning you get lots of different types of people and families moving in. And with that, you get people really engaged in village life, such as the monthly farmers' market."

The market is known for selling freshly-baked sourdough bread, jams and chutneys, homemade fudge, pies, and gluten-free bakes to name but a few. The village even boasts its very own honey, courtesy of Number 18 Honey in Stone Street.

"It's only recently, in the last couple of weeks, that we've had two pubs open again. But whenever the pubs have been open, they've been really good. There's always been really nice beers on tap, and great, high-quality produce available on our doorsteps, such as Red Poll cattle from Lavenham."

At the end of December The White Hart was taken over by Spectre Leisure. At the time new owner, Tony Bayliss, was quoted as saying: "I hadn't really been aware of Boxford, but when I got



Boxford Stores. Inset below, Alan Leeder of A Leeder Butchers. Also inset, inside Boxford Stores  
Pictures: CHARLOTTE SMITH-JARVIS

there, it just felt very homely. Something about it just felt right, and the pub was really nice.

"We are going to try and listen to the community and see what they want. For me, pubs are very

much for the community so I really want it to be about them. Because it is a freehold pub, we are able to look anywhere for different beers from around the area. Again, we will listen to the regulars and see what they like to drink and cater for them."

Food director

Martin Ingram adds:

"We've got our main menu which features pub classics, and then we've got a finer, more upmarket a la carte menu. We're also doing themed nights, like two-for-one grills and a bottle of wine for £32.99, as well as burger nights, fish nights, that sort of thing."

The pub menu will change seasonally, focussing on cooking with locally-sourced ingredients. "All of our suppliers are from around Boxford and Hadleigh way," he adds.

The pub's opening has sparked a lot of positive reaction in the village, and it has already been

inundated with bookings ahead of its opening on Friday, January 20.

"We've had a warm welcome and great reaction since coming to Boxford," says Martin.

"There's clearly an appetite for good food here, pun intended," Penny adds. "I think with the two pubs reopening, we'll see more people coming to Boxford as there will be more appeal to try both. It'll encourage people to have a drink in one and a meal in the other, and vice versa."

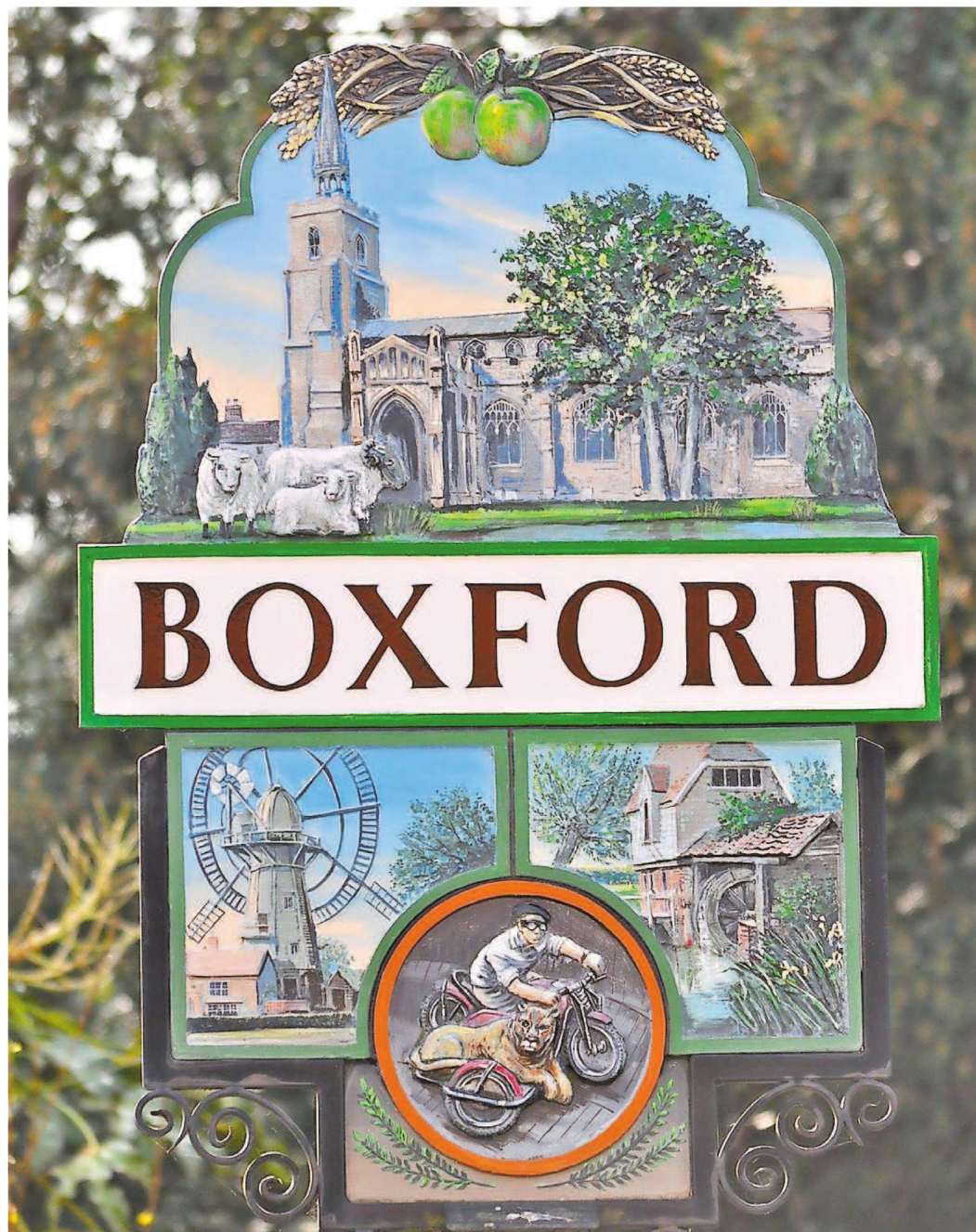
Another Boxford business under fairly recent new ownership is the Box River Café. Owner and local resident Cally Brook took on the café at the end of last August, and hasn't looked back.

"It was a difficult time to take on a business but I was let down by another job so came to work here. The owners at the time were going to give it up but gave me the opportunity to take it on," she says.

Since taking over she's given the café a new lease of life by changing the menu slightly, and upping the quality of ingredients used.

Some of her bestsellers include full English breakfasts on weekends, and her variety of freshly-made cakes.

"At lunch, we also do toasties, paninis, sandwiches, and salads. We bake all of our cakes completely on-site, and we always



Boxford has recently been voted as one of the best places to live

Picture: JAYNE LINDHILL

try to have gluten-free and dairy-free options on offer."

Think Oreo, Biscoff, Victoria sponge, apple and cinnamon, and coffee and walnut to name just a few.

"And we're also trying a few new things – we've got tapas coming up once a month, and other themed nights such as Valentine's night in February, and we hope to do a Mexican night in March," she adds.

For such a small place, there really is a lot on offer in Boxford.

Newer businesses aside, one of the oldest and proudest institutions has to be its butchers. Alan Leeder (of A Leeder) has been the village butcher for 16 years after he purchased the much-loved business from the previous owners.

"A butchers shop has been here for over 100 years though," he says. And the secret to its longevity, and beating out competition from supermarket-bought meat? Staying as regional as possible, he adds.

"Everything we sell is all fairly local. A lot of it comes from Colchester, and our main wholesalers are in Burnham-on-Crouch. We make everything ourselves, such as our sausages, which are our own recipes."

Some of his specialities include sweet onion and chilli sausage rolls, pasties, pork pies, and bacon and cheese turnovers. Alan also stocks British and European cheese, smoked salmon from Lambton and Jackson (who supply high-end London hotels), and freshly-baked bread delivered daily from Lavenham.

Best-known for his varieties of sausages, he says people travel from other towns and villages to get their meat from him.

"We're well supported, and we have a good trade. People come in from places such as Sudbury, Hadleigh, Nayland, and Leavenheath, and I think the two pubs reopening will be very good for Boxford. Before Christmas we thought we might not have any pubs and now we've got two."

Another well-supported shop is Boxford Stores. With a trading history dating back to 1420, it's thought to be Britain's oldest shop. Owned by Neil Cottrell, he took on the shop and post office in 2015, and has helped it grow into the treasure trove it's since become.

As you walk in, its shelves are filled with goodies and essentials such as fresh fruit, oils, chutneys, crackers, crisps, fancy curry sauces, organic tinned goods, and cakes.

There's also a deli counter stocked with local cheese and cured meats.

"People are happy we're here and we're very well supported," explains Neil's daughter Sian Cotterill.

"We're very lucky to have our customers. Some people come in for a chat, and sometimes it might be the only chat they have."

A clear pillar of the community, it's small, independent businesses like these that help put places like Boxford on the map.

## I need a new home...

### Teige, large male Staffordshire bull terrier cross, two years old, tri colour

Handsome boy Teige has caught the hearts of us all here at the centre and we can't for him to find his forever family!

He loves meeting new people, bonding with his handlers and exploring long walks in the countryside with his canine friends too!

He is a young and energetic boy and can be very strong, so would benefit from having an active family and/or a big garden to put his zooming into practice.

Teige is currently learning loose lead walking at the centre and it would be essential for such training to be continued in his new home.

Teige is super intelligent, loves to learn and get tasty rewards for all his good behaviour.

Although he is full of energy, he also has a sweet sappy side and enjoys a belly scratch during his calming down time.

Could you be Teige's perfect companion?



Teige is looking for a home

Picture: RSPCA SUFFOLK CENTRAL

**For more information on him or any other pet in the care of your local RSPCA, please call 0300 999 7321 or email info@rspca-suffolkcentral.org.uk**

## ask the vet

**Nina Downing**, PDSA veterinary nurse



*My rabbit, Rosie, has started growling and running at me, sometimes baring her teeth. She's well otherwise. I'm scared to go near her, what can I do?*

Rabbits can show aggression due to fear, pain, hormones or frustration. Your vet can check her for pain, or may suggest neutering if her behaviour appears hormone related. This will also protect her from cancer of the womb, which affects 80 per cent of unneutered female rabbits. Bunnies are happiest living with at least one other neutered rabbit in a large hutch with a run where they can dig, run, and hide – but be sure it's rabbit proof as they're expert burrowers! Make sure your bunnies have plenty of hay to eat as well as toys and activities to help prevent boredom. Rescue centres can help pair your bunny with a friend of their choice. You'll need to make sure she's vaccinated though.

*My daughter's gerbil has a lump on her tummy. It doesn't seem to be growing or causing her any discomfort. What might be wrong?*

The lump could be an abscess, cyst, or tumour. An abscess is caused by infection and cysts are caused by blocked glands. All three can be very uncomfortable and can make your gerbil feel unwell. It's

important to take her to your vet as soon as possible to get this checked out and make sure she isn't in any pain. Your vet will need to check the lump so they can advise on the best course of treatment. They may recommend an operation to remove the lump, however, if they are not concerned about it and it is not causing the gerbil any problems, they might advise to leave it alone.

*I have a nine-year-old cat named Tinker and she's eating more but has lost weight. What might be wrong?*

It sounds like Tinker needs a vet check, as there can be a number of medical reasons for her losing weight but having an increased appetite. Unfortunately, just feeding her more food won't fix the problem. She could be suffering hyperthyroidism, diabetes or another medical problem. You can look for other symptoms, such as going to the toilet more often, passing more urine, drinking lots, vomiting, tiredness, or over-excitability. Your vet will probably want to do tests to check what's going on, so collect a fresh urine sample to take with you and be prepared for the possibility that blood tests may be taken. Once a diagnosis is made, your vet will be able to recommend the best course of treatment for Tinker to help her feel better.

**Nina Downing is a veterinary nurse at the PDSA, answering questions on pet-related concerns**

**pdosa**  
**PET SURANCE**