

New chapter for pub following a fraught decade

Watering hole to have motorcycling focus

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For over a decade the former Bishop Blaize pub in Burdrop has led a tumultuous life, having been renamed twice, had planning for a change of use refused and endured years of battles with the council and villagers.

But now owners Geoff and Jacqui Noquet are preparing to relaunch the pub as a mecca for motorcyclists, renamed the Blaze Inn Saddles. It will open on November 24, from 10am.

Geoff said: "I think all the planning is history, it's about where we go from here.

"The lightbulb moment came when we went to Cafeine and Machine, five miles outside Stratford. We drove in and were amazed at how packed it was. The emphasis was on cars but because we haven't got that much room for cars we thought let's devote ourselves to bikers.

"We've got a terrace which we could utilise and a wonderful garden that lends itself to bikers enjoying the ride out and the spectacular views."

At the time of their visit, the pair were in the middle



The sign for the Blaze Inn Saddles

of an appeal against Cherwell District Council's planning committee decision over a change of use application.

Geoff said: "We were geared up to do this whether we won the appeal or not. I was getting so excited about it, even if we had won the appeal I still would have done it because I believe this new model could turn the pub around, we both do."

The pub is said to be on desirable riding routes and a stop-off for riders going on towards the Cotswolds and beyond. When the pub launched its Facebook page, it had 10,000 views in two days.

"We've had a massive interest from Bicester bikers and then there's Midlands bikers, Birmingham, Coventry all over. After we get Christmas and New Year out of the way and we get a nice crisp day people will say, 'let's go to that pub' and by next summer it will be on the map."

The pub will be open weekends only offering hot-dogs, pizzas, soup and other foods as well as alcoholic drinks and coffee. The outdoor heated area is nearly finished.

There are also ideas for merchandise, events and camping options.