

Couple facing redundancy in Sudbury make a fresh start running a country pub

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The new owners of the Swan Inn at Monks Eleigh: Julie and Stephen Penney

A couple facing redundancy from their jobs at Delphi Diesel Systems are now embarking on a fresh challenge - running a country pub, the Swan Inn, in the picturesque village of Monks Eleigh.



The fate of the grade II listed pub looked uncertain earlier in the year, after the previous owners, Suffolk Country Inns, closed its doors in February.

The pub has since been spared from permanent closure by Stephen and Julie Penney, both 50 and from Sudbury.

In buying the pub, the couple have also secured the future of the village store and post office, which are both run from a building in the pub's car park.

"We have extended the lease for the shop and post office for another seven years, so that we can give the village community peace of mind that we won't be closing it down," Mrs Penney said.



She explained that the pub's previous owners had decided not to reopen after the cold weather at the start of the year had burst the pub's pipes and the staff couldn't get in during the snow.

But buying the pub was a long, drawn out process for the Penneys. "We made an offer in May and didn't get the keys until this month," she said. "But during that time, I have been going to parish council meetings and getting to know lots of lovely local people.

"Everyone has been so supportive."

Mr Penney is now combining his new pub landlord role with working shifts as an engineer at Delphi.



The reopening of the Swan Inn in Monks Eleigh. Picture: Libby Grosset

Delphi Diesel Systems announced in August last year that the site will fully close by 2020, [with the loss of around 500 jobs](#).

“He is facing redundancy, and I was made redundant in April,” Mrs Penney explained. “I have had experience in the hospitality industry before, but for Stephen, this is a complete career change.”

The cream-washed, thatched inn, which is located opposite the village green, is the only survivor from the four pubs that traded in Monks Eleigh a century ago.

The pub, which has parts dating from the 14th century, was refurbished by Suffolk Country Inns after they took it over in 2014.

Suffolk Country Inns is currently also selling its other Suffolk pubs, [the Anchor in Stoke by Nayland](#) and [the Angel in Nayland](#).

Mrs Penney explained that she and her husband thought their new pub needed some work doing to it, and had initially planned to spend this month redecorating before holding a grand opening in October.

“The villagers were so keen to see their pub back open as soon as possible that we decided to open early,” she explained.

They held a reopening party on Friday, with what Mrs Penney says was a “massive turnout.”

“Its been a lovely warm welcome from the people of Monks Eleigh,” she said.

One villager, Arthur Grosset, said: “It was fantastic to have so many people at the reopening of our pub last Friday. What a great atmosphere – great company – and great drinks”