

## Retirement

# RAISING THE BAR

Pubs are springing up in retirement villages – much to the delight of their residents

**C**OULD you imagine EastEnders without the Queen Vic or Corrie without the Rovers Return? Unthinkable.

Losing the pubs would rip the hearts out of both Albert Square and Coronation Street. Just as the closure of pubs is destroying the social hubs in the nation's villages and towns.

Happily the charm of the hostelry is being nurtured in retirement communities — and surprisingly becoming a focus for both residents and locals alike.

At Rangeford's retirement villages ([rangeford.co.uk](http://rangeford.co.uk)), the bars are a short stroll from the properties making them easily accessible for residents. At Mickle Hill in North Yorkshire, where apartments are priced from £199,950, the bar is run by the residents themselves, and at Wadswick Green in Wiltshire the coffee shop, bar and restaurant are all open to the public.

Bill Nelson 79, a retired chemical engineer, looks forward to his evening social get-togethers at the bar at Audley Chalfont Dene

([audleyvillages.co.uk](http://audleyvillages.co.uk)) in Buckinghamshire, where he and his 83-year-old wife Muriel live.

'The six o'clock club meets each evening — and attracts up to 16 residents, including a mixture of widows and widowers.

'The Bar is at the heart of the village,' says Nelson. 'It doesn't look like a village pub, but we try to replicate the ambience of one

and it is the focus of social activity for many people.'

Audley's managing director Paul Morgan has noticed that bars in retirement villages are becoming a magnet for locals, too. 'The bars and bistros at our villages are open to friends, family, and people living locally,' says Morgan.

The bars at Gifford Lea retirement village in Cheshire and

Austin Heath in Warwickshire are open to the public and operator Inspired Villages ([inspiredvillages.co.uk](http://inspiredvillages.co.uk)) even employs a sommelier to host wine tastings.

'With more traditional local pubs closing and becoming part of chains with modern revamps and loud music, the village centre bar is more important than ever,' says director James Cobb. According



Cheers: A tasting at the Millbrook village bar by Inspired Villages in Exeter

to Statista, there were 47,600 pubs in the UK in 2018, a decrease of 7,200 pubs in the past decade, and more than 13,200 pubs since 2000.

Greene King, the UK's largest pub retailer and brewer found that almost half of Britons (48 per cent) now find it harder to meet people as they grow older, with one in five regularly feeling lonely on a Friday night.

**T**HE Clubhouse at Fairmount Park, near Saltaire in Yorkshire, prides itself on its bar, which has proven a major selling point, according to Konrad Czajka of Czajka Care Group. 'It has a traditional look and feel, and is popular with our residents because it feels more like a pub than a coffee shop.'

The Fairmount has 37 houses and apartments priced from £180,000 and an on-site nursing and care home ([czajka.co.uk](http://czajka.co.uk)).

Even high-end care homes such as the Signature ([signature-care-homes.co.uk](http://signature-care-homes.co.uk)) at Wandsworth Common in South London, which will open in March, features a bar.

'The Sky Lounge on the 5th floor will be a focal point that will bring residents to meet with friends and relatives for drinks and watch the sun go down over the panoramic London skyline,' says manager Lesley Andrews.

Let's raise a toast to that.

**JANE SLADE**