South London pub reopens after £4million from



The Fellowship And Star in Bellingham, once home to boxer Henry Cooper, set to be heart of community once more.

The Fellowship & Star (formerly the Fellowship Inn) in Bellingham has been saved from dereliction and is back to its original purpose as a live music venue and vital community hub.

It is set to create much-needed jobs, opportunities and business in one of London’s most deprived areas.

Star-studded history

Originally built for returning First World War veterans and their families, The Fellowship was the first pub built as an integral part of a London housing estate. During a period of high pressure from the temperance movement, the pub was only deemed acceptable if it included community facilities such as halls, games rooms and refreshment rooms.

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>
> *Jim Ripley, Chief Executive of Phoenix Community Housing*

The result was a building vast in scale. Originally, it included two bars, a 200-seater dance and music hall, a function room,; an off-license bottle shop and family accommodation.

In 1963, heavyweight boxer Henry Cooper lived and trained there in the lead up to his first fight with Muhammad Ali (then Cassius Clay) at Wembley Stadium.

In the 1960s and 70s, it hosted many well-known music acts including Fleetwood Mac and Eric Clapton.

Community-focused future

Since the 1980s however, the Fellowship fell into disrepair. Its decline mirrored that of the area and Bellingham remains among the most deprived areas in London.

In 2016, social landlord Phoenix Community Housing was awarded over £4m by The National Lottery Heritage Fund to return the Fellowship to its former glory. They partnered with pub group Electric Star to return the building to commercial use, ensuring a sustainable future for Bellingham's heritage.



Three years and lots of hard work later, the landmark building is now taking its place at the heart of the community once again.

It includes:

- cinema
- new live music venue - at a time when many of London’s venues are closing
- café
- bar
- music hub and studios
- home of charity Lewisham Music which provides musical programmes and tuition to young people across the borough

Jim Ripley, Chief Executive of Phoenix Community Housing, said: “Some people might wonder why we have redeveloped a pub. For us, it’s simple: we want to help make our corner of Lewisham a destination, not just somewhere to pass through.

"Ultimately our ambition is to bring wider investment to our area and opportunities to the people who live here. The Fellowship & Star is already having a huge impact on this community, from the creation of new jobs to business opportunities, and this is just the beginning."