



## Community Pubs Month: Crowd pleasers

FORMER Swindon Town footballer Paul Hunt is still pleasing the crowds after taking up the managerial reins at the Wheatsheaf in Stratton St Margaret. The Swindonian, who played under Ossie Ardiles and Glenn Hoddle, took the plunge with his first pub venture last July. He has added extra football and darts teams to the roster and continued his long-standing association with The Robins. The former centre forward, who became a terrace hero during a non-league career after leaving the County Ground, has built up a healthy fan base at the pub in Ermin Street. "Running a pub is exactly the same as football," he said. "It's about pleasing a crowd that comes to be entertained. When I was on the pitch I used to be the fans' favourite and I enjoyed integrating with the supporters. "Now I do it by providing a nice, friendly, enjoyable environment. We screen all the live matches and have added a lot of sport, along with music every Saturday night. "There are a lot of pubs closing down but if you give people what they want, they will come to you." Paul keeps up the connection with Town by hosting charity nights, which raised £600 for the club's designated good causes on one occasion alone. He will put his boots on to join Paolo Di Canio and other former stars for a charity match in aid of Wiltshire Air Ambulance on May 2. Paul is even planning a reception at the pub afterwards with the tantalising prospect of enticing Di Canio and AC Milan legends Paolo Maldini and Franco Baresi through the doors. But the warm welcome extends to families just as much as the giants of the Italian game. Paul, 41, has kept things uncomplicated by omitting food and made the Wheatsheaf one of the cheapest places in town for a pint. Darts teams meet on Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays and the number of football teams has been increased from one to three. Paul and wife Adele seems certain to carry on a fine tradition at the Grade Two listed Arkell's pub, which dates back to 1834. "The village has taken to me and my wife," he said. "Hopefully we will create a really vibrant pub which gives just as much to village as the village has given us."

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