



This programme was first broadcast in 1997

Sue: In Private lives today we meet Richard Harvey. Richard is 37 years old, and he was born and brought up in Birmingham - a large city in the middle of England. Richard is a publican - he owns and runs a pub. A pub is a building where people can buy drinks, especially alcoholic drinks like beer, and then sit or stand to talk to friends. In Britain today, the pub is the most popular place of entertainment outside the home. And during the programme, we visit Richard's pub, and hear about the customers who socialise there. Richard explains which are the most popular drinks served in pubs today, and the kinds of entertainment that his pub offers. Richard also talks about what he thinks it takes to be a good publican, and he introduces us to his girlfriend. But first, Richard recalls his earliest memories of spending an evening in a pub-like environment. When he was a boy, the whole family would go to the local Working Men's Club where women and child were welcome on a Friday evening.

Clip Richard Harvey

My father was a member of our local club - in a small area called Bartley Green in Birmingham - called the Bartley Green Working Men's Club. And my father spent most of his life there! So myself, my brother, and my sister, as children we'd sort of traipse down the road with mum

and dad on a Friday night and spend the evening in the local social club, which was a very sort of pleasant evening really - we used to stuff ourselves with crisps and orange squash, and my recollection of coming home at 11 o'clock, was that I'd got smoke in my eyes, felt very tired and I'd got a very orange tongue!

Sue: Richard spent many years of his adult life working as a salesman and then a manager for a brewery - a company which makes beer. A couple of years ago, he decided to set up on his own. Together with a friend, Martyn Jones, he created a company which will own and run a small number of pubs. All the pubs will have the same name, the same interior decoration, and the same range of services for customers. Richard introduces us to his new company.

Clip Richard Harvey

I called it the Distinctive Pub Company Ltd and the reason why it's called the Distinctive Pub Company is because the pubs will actually be very distinctive. What makes them distinctive is firstly the name, which is Ducks Don't Float - yes, that is Ducks Don't Float - and the interior and all the sort of services that the pubs offer.

Sue: Richard and Martyn have recently opened their first Ducks Don't Float. The pub is situated in the old market place of a small town called Evesham. Evesham is not far from Birmingham, where Richard and Martyn grew up, and it's surrounded by beautiful countryside. In the summer months, Evesham is very popular with tourists, who come by car, coach and caravan. Ducks Don't Float catches a lot of what Richard calls "the passing tourist trade", and of course, it's frequented by "locals" - the local people - some of whom live in Evesham but

commute to work in Birmingham. The first things you notice when you walk in to Richard's pub are the unusual layout and the brightly painted walls! Most pubs are decorated to look rather like a cosy living room in someone's house, but Ducks Don't Float looks more like a large, open-plan cafe or bar, with bright red and yellow walls. And unlike traditional pubs, Ducks Don't Float offers a wide range of organised entertainment - such as "giant games nights", where customers play giant versions of family board games. Richard also organises "disco nights", when a local DJ will get everyone dancing to classic hit records, and, because there are a large number of bedrooms above the pub, Ducks Don't Float offers "B and B".

Clip Richard Harvey

Whether you're a tourist or a local, there's various things on offer at Ducks Don't Float. First of all, if you're looking for accommodation, there's bed and breakfast. We also offer live music, and particularly Irish music, and I do actually sing and play guitar myself so I often get up and sing a few songs to entertain the crowd. We also have DJs and we also have a Quiz night which is very successful.

Sue: Richard explains that last night, he organised a party in the pub to celebrate Martyn's 40th birthday. It was a memorable evening, with all the customers socialising together and singing traditional drinking songs. Richard led the singing and played the guitar. He says that he's "a bit of a showman", and this is one of the qualifications a good publican needs. And he reaches for his guitar to give us a song.

Clip **Richard Harvey**

Well, this is a traditional Irish folksong really called The Wild Rover, and as the words describe it's about a young man that travels off around the world, drinking and doing other favourable pastimes! It's called The Wild Rover.

*I've been a wild rover for many a year
and I've spent all my money on whiskey and beer!
But now I'm returning with gold in great store
and I never will play the wild rover no more!
And it's no, nay, never, no, nay, never no more,
will I play the wild rover, no never, no more!*

You certainly have to like people - you couldn't come into this business unless you actually enjoyed being with people, talking to people. It helps if you're a little bit of a showman, and whether you can turn that on or off, it makes a difference really - if you're naturally like that then that's fine, or if you have the ability to act out the role -it does help if you have this sort of showmanship element in your personality.

Sue: Richard is very aware that running a pub is running a business, and it demands discipline. It also demands diplomacy, because if customers have had a "few too many" drinks, they can become depressed or aggressive. But perhaps most importantly of all, a publican has to be able to talk to different kinds of people. Richard discusses pop music with his younger customers, and swaps local news and gossip with their parents and grandparents!

Clip Richard Harvey

In a typical sort of evening, you may be talking to a group of youngsters and all they're interested in is what the Spice Girls have done today - and although I don't know much about the Spice Girls, you know, I have to make it my business to know who they are and therefore hold a conversation with the youngsters. And then you have to move from those sort of people to, you know, the middle-aged sort of locals that are in. All they want to talk about really is the gossip - what's going on in the town. With it being a small town, you know, everybody seems to know everybody, and everybody knows everybody's business. So the ability to hold a range of conversations with, you know, various types of people does help.

Sue: Pubs are often described as the heart of local communities in Britain. And pubs still have a unique status in British culture as places where people of different ages, and to a lesser extent, different classes are likely to socialise. Children are not usually allowed in pubs, and you have to be over 18 years old to buy an alcoholic drink in a pub. However, the under-30s go to pubs more than any other age group in Britain today, and many pubs, including Ducks Don't Float, aim to attract young people. One way of doing this is by selling alcopops. These are soft drinks with a relatively high alcohol content, such as the alcoholic lemonade, Hooch. But the traditional pub drink is beer - drunk out of a pint glass.

Clip Richard Harvey

The last five years have seen an absolute explosion of different types of British brands and also imports of an awful lot of foreign brands. The one that's sort of taken the whole country by storm really is Budweiser which is from America - that's the biggest one. That's very quickly

followed by Becks which is from Germany and numerous other sort of Czechoslovakian/Spanish/French beers that have all flooded the British market and the uniqueness of these really is the fact that they're drunk out the bottle!

Sue: Most pubs serve food, but usually only at lunchtime. Food is served at Ducks Don't Float until 7 o'clock in the evening. On the menu, there's a meal called a Ploughman's. This is a very popular pub meal consisting of bread, cheese, pickles and salad. Richard says that, whatever the time of day, customers expect a pub to be a friendly place where they can feel relaxed.

Clip Richard Harvey

The important word as far as pubs are concerned is atmosphere. Pubs are all about atmosphere. If you could buy it in a package, and put it into your pub, then you'd be a multi-millionaire! What we try to do at Ducks Don't Float is create a different atmosphere for different sessions throughout the day. Of a lunchtime it's dominated by food and therefore the music is very relaxed, it's easy going, it's quite quiet. And then as the day moves on and the food dies off and we come into the early evening - the lights go down, the music changes to sort of more modern, disco-y, uptempo, upbeat type stuff. So as the lights go down, the music goes up, and we go into the night time period, which is more sort of loud and fun-loving, and that's how the atmosphere changes throughout the day.

Sue: And what does Richard do on a night off?

Clip Richard Harvey

A night off? The simple answer is I don't get one! No - I am able to afford the odd day off

now and again. The way I relax personally is by holidays. I love holidays and that's a big way for me to relax. I like the theatre, I like the cinema, I like drinking wine, and I like eating nice food. So if I get the chance to relax, if I can combine all those four or five things, being on holiday, going to the theatre, having a meal before with a bottle of wine - then that's about the perfect evening!

Sue: Richard lives in several rooms above the pub, with his girlfriend. She sometimes works behind the bar in Ducks Don't Float, serving drinks and chatting to customers.

Clip Richard Harvey

My girlfriend's name is Joanne. We've been together for about 2 years and she lives with me in the pub. I actually met her in a night club which is unusual for me really because I don't normally meet people in nightclubs, but there you go. Jo works full time herself for a recruitment agency, and she actually is very supportive in the pub as well. When Martin and I first opened the pub she was an absolute brick, and as I say, she works in the pub - she thoroughly enjoys bar work anyway - and so she's great fun to not only live with but work with as well.

Sue: Running a pub is hard work, and Richard is always thinking of new ways to attract and entertain customers. He says that pubs have changed a lot over the years - for example, they're far more woman-friendly now. When he was a boy, women were not really welcome in traditional pubs. To end the programme, Richard looks into his future.

Clip **Richard Harvey**

Two to three years down the road I anticipate that there will be approximately 6 Ducks Don't Float, all operating in the same manner, all operating with the same services, the emphasis on fun and entertainment. And then we will keep the 6 going as long as Martin's and myself's energy keeps going. Once that starts to wane, then I think it's probably time to sell up, and Martyn'll probably go and live in Tenerife, and I'll go round the world singing songs no doubt!
