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Dog & Bee brings a bit of Britain to Beeville

Dog & Bee Public House's owner hopes to 'set the standard.'

By **Vicki Vaughan** Updated 8:02 pm, Monday, August 22, 2011



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The bar at the Dog & Bee pub.

A mini population boom has brought a bit of San Antonio's River Walk to Beeville in the form of a British-style pub.

This month, the Dog & Bee Public House, a wood-paneled, antiques-stuffed restaurant and bar, threw open its doors to residents and newer folk who're drawn to the area as a result of drilling in the Eagle Ford shale.

The Dog & Bee is the first franchise of Mad Dogs British Pub, a fixture on San Antonio's River Walk for 16 years.

Mad Dogs' CEO **Terry Corless** said last year that Houston, Austin, Dallas and San Antonio were in his sights as favored spots for the first Mad Dogs franchises.

It didn't work out that way, but that's not a problem. Within a month of **Mad Dogs British Pub Franchise LLC's** getting the legal green light to offer franchises, San Antonio architect **Lyndsay Thorn** mentioned the franchise opportunity to his client, **Brenda Hughes** of Beeville, a city of almost 13,000 that's 90 miles southeast of San Antonio on U.S. 181.

Thorn thought a pub would be a good project for Hughes, for whom he is designing and building condominiums in downtown Beeville.

Hughes and her husband, Beeville oilman Dan Hughes, visited Mad Dogs on the River Walk. "We instantly fell in love with the concept," Brenda Hughes said in an email.

Brenda Hughes now is the owner of the Dog & Bee, while Corless' Mad Dogs inked a contract to design the pub and manage it.

In designing the pub, Corless worked with longtime friend Thorn, a partner at Thorn + Graves Architects in San Antonio. Both men are natives of Great Britain.

Hughes declined to say how much she's spent to build the Dog & Bee. "It was an extravagant indulgence, but worth every penny," she said via email. "Cost is secondary in the process of revitalizing the town that you love.

"The hope is that the Dog & Bee will set the standard," she said, and be a catalyst for new business investment to follow. "The town is at a very exciting time right now, and we are sure that the new pub will lead the way for others to follow suit."

Corless said no expense was spared in building the pub, although "the market is far from our ideal profile."

As for clientele, the pub is “learning towards the more affluent,” Corless said, drawing people traveling to the coast or going from South Texas to San Antonio. “And we’re getting a massive response from anybody related to the oil industry,” he said. “They’re coming in well-attired and clean-shaven. They’re not coming straight from the oil fields.”

More about the Dog & Bee:
<http://www.dogandbeepub.com>

The designers shipped a 40-foot-long container stuffed with \$100,000 worth of British antiques for the pub, including **Gothic church pews**, antique fireplaces and a back bar that came from a building on London's exclusive Park Lane.

The Dog & Bee's in-town competition includes Chili's Grill & Bar, the **Beeville Country Club** “and a couple of independent restaurants,” Corless said. “We deliberately priced ourselves very competitively,” he said, with prices about 20 percent lower than on the River Walk.

Construction of the Dog & Bee presented some challenges, since it required renovating a shoebox-shaped building built in 1909. The pub's design was altered to include a second building, boosting the plan for a 2,400-square-foot pub to one of 5,000 square feet, Thorn said.

Corless said the initial investment for a Mad Dogs franchise would range from almost \$602,000 to \$1.4 million, depending on the size. That includes a franchise fee of \$40,000. Franchisees will pay a royalty fee of 6 percent of gross sales and will contribute to an advertising fund.

Joe Montez, executive director of the **Bee Development Authority**, said that 20 years ago, when he was Beeville's city manager, “we had a dying downtown.” Almost three-fourths of the buildings were vacant. Now, 95 percent of downtown buildings are full.

“Millions have been invested in downtown,” Montez said, including the addition of the Dog & Bee.

After a recent lunch at the Dog & Bee, Montez said the pub “is a beautiful building, with good food and atmosphere. It's a major plus, not only to downtown Beeville but the community is general.”

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