

MANSION

Home Brew



\$882,200
Wenlock Street, Angel
Formerly the Duke of York

A three-bedroom, two-bathroom apartment on the first floor of a Victorian pub that closed in the late 1990s. The property measures 1,022 square feet, and has a private terrace. The building retains some features of the original pub, including an open fireplace.
www.winkworth.co.uk



\$737,850 and up
Paul Street, Shoreditch
Formerly the King William Pub

A collection of nine apartments on the fringes of the City of London financial district. The King William's Victorian ground-floor facade has been preserved. Prices start from \$737,850 for a one-bedroom, one-bathroom apartment of about 500 square feet to \$1.1 million for a two bedroom, two-bath apartment measuring about 800 square feet.
www.paulstreetEC2.com

In London, Moving Into the Corner Pub

Continued from page M1

Pub living appears to be catching on. Dan Gillespie Sells, lead singer with the pop band the Feeling, and artist Matt Collishaw both own homes that are converted pubs.

Some Britons, including local politicians, are aghast at what they see as the loss of a cultural touchstone, and they're stepping up efforts to block such projects.

Following a public outcry over the potential closing of the Phene Arms, for instance, local officials blocked the proposed conversion. Mr. Bourne is appealing to the government to get the decision reversed.

"The great British pub is a singular, unique institution that goes back 1,000 years," says Dale Ingram, an adviser to a group called Campaign for Real Ale, or Camra, which tracks pub closures. "You can go in and rub shoulders with the lord of the manor and the [garbage] man. The whole community can meet on equal terms. It is a great social leveler—and you don't get that through Facebook or Twitter."

Pub closures are running at 18 a week nationwide, an "extraordinary" rate, says Ms. Ingram. She blames high taxes, high rents imposed by breweries (which are estimated to own 75% of Britain's pubs) and high beer prices for the development. An explosion in home-entertainment technology, coupled with reduced spending power during the recession, means Britons simply spend less time in the pub than they once did.

In Kensington and Chelsea, where government figures show house prices rose by 12.8% in the last year, compared with a 1.1% rise nationwide, a third of the area's pubs have closed since 1980, leaving just 110.

In response, the alarmed local governing council has drawn up new planning guidelines that will expand its power to reject conversions of pubs into homes.

"We believe that it's important to look at ways we can protect those places which perform a vital community function," says Tim Ahern, the council's planning spokesman. "We've lost a lot of pubs over the years and want to do what we can to make sure that the tradition of a pint and a chat in the local pub doesn't vanish because of our high residential land values."

The council's biggest victory to date has been the case of the Cross Keys in Chelsea, a pub owned by entrepreneur Andrew Bourne, a nephew of Robert Bourne. The building is



elaborately decorated with a relief of swans and likenesses of St. Peter and a scantily clad angel on its facade. The site has had a pub on it for about three centuries, planning docu-

ments show. The younger Mr. Bourne applied to replace the Cross Keys with a five-bedroom home, complete with a basement rec room. But in Septem-



TAVERN ON THE WANE

Conversion work has begun at the Grouse & Claret, above, but owners of the Phene Arms, left, and the Cross Keys, bottom, have run into resistance.

ber, planning officials upheld a decision by local authorities to bar the conversion. The local council cited the building's historic significance and "communal value."

Supporters who campaigned to save the pub were overjoyed, but today their victory feels pyrrhic: The Cross Keys is boarded up, occupied only by a few squatters who moved there in October. It's not clear what the owner plans to do with the building, but there are no signs that he is preparing to reopen it. Mr. Bourne didn't respond to calls for comment.

Like many local residents, Derek Elcock, 65, who has lived within a few streets of the pub since 1976, is saddened by the situation.

"Pubs in this area are just disappearing," he said. "They are either closing down or becoming very expensive, and there is no other local community facility like them."

Finchatten's Mr. Michelin says critics of conversions would be better off heeding the direction of the market than clinging to nostalgia.

"People have a romantic love affair with pubs, but they don't actually want to go to them anymore," he says Mr. Michelin. "Particularly in this sort of affluent area, people are more sophisticated. It is not as though we are forcing them to sell up. If pubs were still making money, nobody would be selling them."

In the case of the Grouse & Claret, he notes, the pub had already closed before he bought the building. "The pub itself was not viable," he says. "It was on a quiet street, with no passing trade. Fifty years ago people would walk to their local pub for a drink, but trends have changed."

Dylan Thomas for The Wall Street Journal (3)



SPREAD SHEET

At Christmas Time, Money Grows in Trees

PINING FOR a Christmas tree?

Last year, 27% of U.S. households reported buying a real tree—the highest percentage since the economic downturn—and spent an average of \$34.87 per tree, according to the National Christmas Tree Association. That amounts to 30.8 million conifers sold, compared with 9.5 million artificial trees sold in 2011.

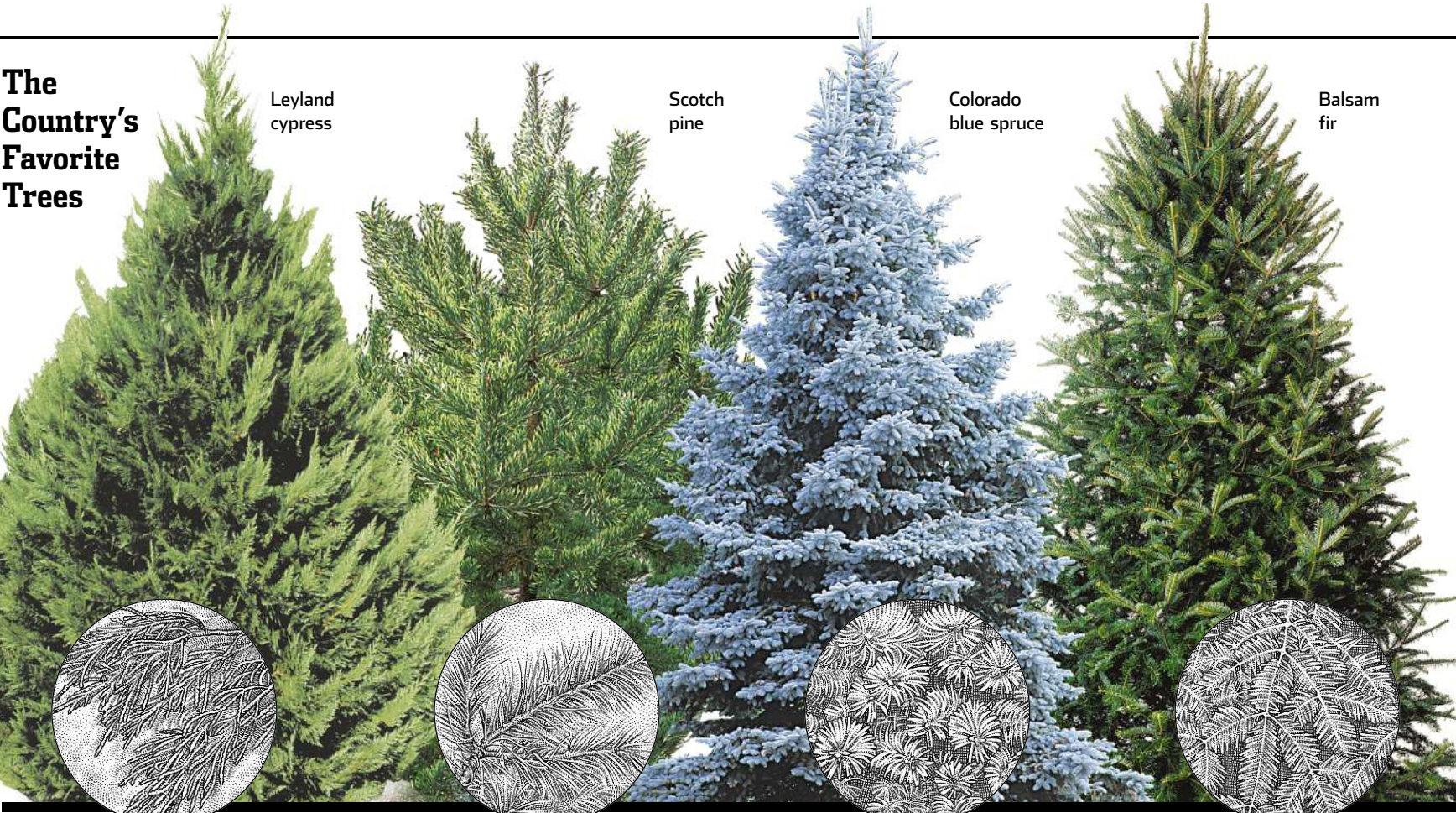
People in the West typically purchase the largest share of real trees—35% of households in that region reported buying a real tree—because Oregon, Washington and California are home to a lot of tree farms. The weather also plays a role. "In the Midwest, nice weather will really boost sales. But in the Northeast, no one is going to buy Christmas trees until we get our first snow," says Rick Dungey, spokesman for the Chesterfield, Mo.-based trade group.

This year, there is more time to string the lights, too. Usually, there are four weekends between Thanksgiving and Christmas. But because of an early Thanksgiving, tree outlets have five weekends to woo customers this year.

Tree sellers are also branching out, letting buyers make purchases over the Internet. Even the shapes and sizes are changing somewhat. While the most-common tree height is 6 to 8 feet, trees are now coming in shorter, skinnier versions that fit better in apartments and dorm rooms. "It's not a one-size-fits-all situation anymore," Mr. Dungey says.

Nigel Manley, director for the Rocks Estate tree farm in Beth-lehem, N.H., says his farm began offering narrower trees and "Victorian trees," which have gaps between the branches to allow more room for ornaments.

The Country's Favorite Trees



CYPRESS

Leyland cypress: South Atlantic seaboard

PINE

Virginia pine: Texas, Okla., Ark., La.
Scotch pine/white pine: Central Midwest
Monterey pine: Southern California

SPRUCE

Colorado blue spruce: Rocky Mountain states

FIR

Fraser fir: Northeast, upper Midwest
Balsam fir: Minnesota through Great Lakes
Noble fir / Douglas fir: Northwest

There are more than 35 different species of conifer trees grown for the Christmas market, Mr. Dungey says. The most common types in each region depend on which species can be grown there. Monterey pine and Leyland cypress, for example, grow well in warmer areas, while Fraser fir and Balsam fir are popular up north.

Maura Gazerro, 37, of Warwick, R.I., typically buys a Fraser fir each year for about \$70. "They tend to be the most expensive, but they're so beautiful

and full and tall. Plus, they smell great," she says.

Ms. Gazerro, a projects manager for the Rhode Island Department of Public Safety, says her tree usually measures about 8 feet and goes up in the living room. "Sometimes we have to cut off the top because it's too big," she notes. "We have all these marks on the ceiling."

—Sanette Tanaka

► How well do you know America's favorite holiday tree? Take a quiz at WSJ.com/Mansion.

How the West Won

In a battle of the Christmas tree, Western states beat out other regions. Percentages indicate the number of people surveyed who said they purchased a Christmas tree and are broken down by region:

YEAR	Northeast	Midwest	South	West	U.S.	Avg. Amount Spent
2011	30%	16%	23%	35%	27%	\$34.87
2010	24%	20%	16%	35%	25%	\$36.12
2009	27%	21%	18%	31%	24%	\$40.92
2008	33%	21%	17%	30%	24%	\$36.50
2007	34%	24%	20%	32%	27%	\$41.00
2006	30%	22%	19%	34%	25%	\$40.50
2005	35%	25%	25%	35%	29%	\$41.90

Source: Survey of 1,003 households by Harris Interactive for the National Christmas Tree Association

