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Sad passing of a pub with a heart

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by MARTYN HALLE

THERE WERE more than a few tears watering the beer on Sunday evening as another nail was hammered into the coffin of the traditional English pub.

Last orders were called for the last time at the Lord Palmerston, Euston. On Wednesday the council took over. And next summer it is to come down as part of the Tolmers Square development.

Standing on the corner of Drummond Street, it hasn't changed much when it was built 117 years ago.

It's one of those establishments you either love or hate. Inside, the bars have high ceilings with huge iron columns holding them up. They are furnished with heavy wood panelling with priceless mirrors, beautifully painted with birds and lakeside scenes. Lights hang down dimly from the ceiling on slender tubes, the furnishing is sparse, in the main hard chairs, with the occasional bit of upholstery.

Despite the forbidding interior, the atmosphere is very warm. It's the old style chit pub, no music in here. A few years ago the brewery tried to modernise the pub a bit by installing a television. They didn't get very far. A platform erected above the entrance to the men's toilet stands idly, as an indication to their failure.

The only distraction to drinking and chatting are cards and dominoes, generally played on Sunday lunchtime.

The pub's closure has come as a real blow to the regulars. There just isn't another pub like it in the area.

"Many of them come in here for their plat, a chat and a bit of a sing song. None of the other pubs in the district will cater for them. They're all full of loud juke-box music, which people in here won't like," said the manager John Towell.

One of the regulars, Joe McCreery, or Silverdale, Hampstead Road, has been into the pub "seven days a week for the last 45 years".

He said: "To me it's an ancient pub. Governors come



● A final cheer to send the Lord Palmerston on its way after 117 years. Raised high by his customers is the pub's last gov'nor. John Towell.

and go but we've always had a friendly atmosphere in here.

"After today I shall probably go into the pub across the road — but it's not got the same atmosphere.

"You've got a really cosmopolitan atmosphere in here. We get all sorts of nationalities, people from Thames TV, students, squatters and political groups.

"They all like it because of the friendliness of the place. They know they can come in for a quiet chat.

"A lot of people are going to be very sorry to leave here."

Another regular said: "We don't have the fashionable upholstered, carpeted bars and false atmosphere of the modern pub. This place has got a heart."

Said Nick Wates, former community worker for Tolmers Square, which the pub covers, and author of a recent book on the fight for Tolmers Square: "We always argued that they could keep this pub in their plan for the area, and build round it. Instead, they are going to knock this pub down and build a new one on the same site. Obviously the new pub won't suit the needs of the people who use this place. It's just another step in running down the old community."



● The imposing edifice of the doomed Lord Palmerston pub on the corner of Drummond Street and Hampstead Road.

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