# Millionaire prosecuted for removing iconic tiles from historic Brighton pub



A millionaire property developer is facing prosecution by local authorities for what has been described as 'wanton vandalism' of a historic Victorian pub in Brighton. Charlie Southall, who purchased the Montreal Arms, a 150-year-old establishment, during the Covid-19 lockdown, has come under fire following the removal of its distinctive glazed green tiles. This act has sparked outrage from residents and local political figures alike, prompting an emergency stop order from the council to prevent further damage.

The Montreal Arms, constructed in the 1870s during a period of significant expansion in Brighton, has long served as a community hub. The glazed tiles, installed around 1927 after a merger of local breweries, not only contribute to the pub's unique character but also reflect a rich heritage. According to local resident Harry Magee, the tiles, known as green faience tiles, exhibit varying colours depending on the angle of light, making each piece irreplaceably unique.

Southall acquired the property for approximately £425,000 and initially intended to transform it into a co-living space for Ukrainian refugees. However, the proposal, which included a request for public crowdfunding to cover an £85,000 renovation, raised suspicions among locals. A public meeting culminated in accusations that his intention to provide accommodation was merely a ruse to alter the property's use without proper planning consent.

The situation escalated dramatically when, shortly after taking possession, Southall hired a team equipped with a pneumatic drill, which proceeded to remove substantial portions of the historic tiles. This aggressive action prompted a swift community response, with local residents gathering to confront the developers. In just six hours, nearly one-third of the prized tiles were stripped from the façade before the council intervened.

Local officials have since taken a firm stance, with Brighton & Hove City Council confirming that they have initiated legal proceedings against Southall for failing to comply with an enforcement notice mandating the restoration of the pub’s exterior. Cllr Tim Rowkins stated that a summons has been filed, indicating that the court will soon schedule a hearing regarding the matter.

The legal complexities surrounding the Montreal Arms have not deterred community efforts to protect its heritage. A government-appointed planning inspector recently upheld the enforcement notice, demanding that the removed tiles be replaced, citing their significance to the building’s character. This ruling was lauded by local residents and Brighton Pavilion MP Caroline Lucas, who described the incident as 'utter vandalism'.

Furthermore, the pub has been designated as an asset of community value—a status that underscores its social significance and provides time-limited opportunities for community groups to bid for its ownership. This designation aims to safeguard the pub's future, ensuring it remains a central part of local culture and history.

Despite the ongoing legal challenges, including a current sale listing for the Montreal Arms at £425,000, Brighton & Hove City Council has made it clear that the obligation to restore the tiles will transfer to any new owner. If the tiles are not reinstated as per the enforcement order, the new owner could also face prosecution, thereby ensuring that this important piece of Brighton's heritage is preserved for future generations.

As the community awaits the court's ruling and potential restoration plans, the saga of the Montreal Arms highlights the tension between property development and the preservation of cultural heritage—a balance that remains precariously fragile in urban landscapes.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14765657/Millionaire-property-developer-Victorian-pub-smashed-tiles.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/23666784.brighton-montreal-arms-owner-ordered-repair-historic-tiles/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14765657/Millionaire-property-developer-Victorian-pub-smashed-tiles.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.brightonandhovenews.org/2023/07/17/montreal-arms-tiles-must-be-replaced-inspector-rules/), [[5]](https://www.brightonandhovenews.org/2023/07/19/montreal-arms-tile-decision-welcomed/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.brightonandhovenews.org/2025/03/26/sale-wont-stop-green-tile-prosecution-council-says/), [[6]](https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/23920573.brighton-montreal-arms-listed-asset-community-value/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14765657/Millionaire-property-developer-Victorian-pub-smashed-tiles.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[7]](https://www.brightonandhovenews.org/2024/06/05/montreal-arms-tile-replacement-plans-approved/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14765657/Millionaire-property-developer-Victorian-pub-smashed-tiles.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/23666784.brighton-montreal-arms-owner-ordered-repair-historic-tiles/> - A millionaire property developer has been ordered to repair or replace historic green tiles removed from the Montreal Arms pub in Brighton. A government-appointed planning inspector rejected an appeal by owner Charlie Southall, demanding the reinstatement of the tiles. The incident, which occurred in March last year, led to public outcry and was described as 'utter vandalism' by Brighton Pavilion MP Caroline Lucas. Brighton and Hove City Council issued an enforcement notice requiring the tiles to be replaced within one year.
3. <https://www.brightonandhovenews.org/2025/03/26/sale-wont-stop-green-tile-prosecution-council-says/> - Brighton and Hove City Council has stated that the sale of the Montreal Arms pub will not halt the prosecution of its owner, Charlie Southall, for removing historic green tiles. Despite the pub being listed for sale, the council emphasized that the enforcement notice requiring tile reinstatement remains in effect. If the new owner fails to comply, they could face prosecution. The council's decision aims to ensure the pub's restoration and protect its heritage.
4. <https://www.brightonandhovenews.org/2023/07/17/montreal-arms-tiles-must-be-replaced-inspector-rules/> - A planning inspector has ruled that the owner of the Montreal Arms pub in Brighton must replace the green tiles he removed in March last year. The inspector dismissed an appeal by Charlie Southall against an enforcement notice requiring tile reinstatement. The decision mandates that the tiles be restored to their original condition, emphasizing the importance of the glazed ceramic tiled façade to the building's character.
5. <https://www.brightonandhovenews.org/2023/07/19/montreal-arms-tile-decision-welcomed/> - Residents and politicians have welcomed the planning inspector's decision requiring the owner of the Montreal Arms pub in Brighton to restore the green tiles he removed. Brighton Pavilion MP Caroline Lucas expressed hope that the ruling would lead to a positive future for the pub, emphasizing its value as a community asset and the significance of its antique green tiles.
6. <https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/23920573.brighton-montreal-arms-listed-asset-community-value/> - The Montreal Arms pub in Brighton has been listed as an asset of community value following a campaign by local residents. The status recognizes the building's social value to the community and imposes a moratorium on its sale, allowing community groups the opportunity to make an offer. The decision has been welcomed by councillors and residents aiming to safeguard the pub's future.
7. <https://www.brightonandhovenews.org/2024/06/05/montreal-arms-tile-replacement-plans-approved/> - Plans to restore the green tiles removed from the Montreal Arms pub in Brighton have been approved, subject to strict conditions. The approval allows the owner, Charlie Southall, to proceed with reinstating the tiles, provided he submits detailed plans and samples for council approval. The decision aims to ensure the pub's historic façade is accurately restored.