

JIM'S JAUNT

Knighton & Clarendon

by Jim Reay

Knighton was an ancient medieval village mentioned in the Domesday Book Survey of 1086 as the hamlet of Cnitetone. Originally a separate village a couple of miles south of the centre of Leicester, many original features remain, although due mainly to the demand for housing during the Victorian period, Knighton became absorbed by Leicester, linked via the area known as Clarendon Park. Historically, the name Clarendon Park derives from the fact that until the nineteenth century the area was a park owned by the Society of Friends (Quakers), whose meeting house is still situated in the area. Due to the Quakers temperance beliefs, when the park was sold to The Clarendon Park Company for development, a condition of the land sale stated that no pubs should be erected, which explains the dearth of longstanding traditional pubs in the immediate neighbourhood. However, the end of the Victorian era saw the introduction of trams enabling the good folk of Clarendon Park to avoid the prohibition with more ease and as a consequence, the last tram back from Leicester was notoriously full of cheerful passengers.

This jaunt starts in the mainly residential area known as West Knighton at **The Aberdale** on Shackerdale Road. The bus stop nearby is accessed via Arriva 44A which leaves Leicester from Charles Street Stand EB. The pub has a large U-shaped public bar, which has a pool table and darts board, and an even larger lounge bar made up of two distinct areas. The



Lychgate Entrance

area nearest to the car park has no servery, is basically furnished with tiled floors, and appears to be ideally suited as a child friendly family room. The other part of the lounge is carpeted, more plushly furnished, and has a conservatory annexe. The single Real Ale was Everards Tiger.

Leaving **The Aberdale** I turned right along the busy carriageway known as Asquith Way before crossing over into Aberdale Road from which the spire of St. Mary Magdalene church was clearly visible straight ahead in the distance above the rooftops. At the end of Aberdale Road I crossed straight over Welford Road into Overdale Road then first left into Meadvale Road and left again into Kingsmead Road entering Knighton Conservation Area over the Wash Brook via St. Mary's footbridge. This footbridge was opened in 1979 by an acquaintance of mine and the then Lord Mayor of Leicester, Cllr. Albert Watson, an event commemorated by a plaque attached to one of the five adjacent enormous washstones. Albert's most outstanding achievement during his year of office was the Scanner Appeal, for the provision of the then most up-to-date whole-body X-ray scanner equipment for the Leicester Royal Infirmary. He succeeded in raising a sum in excess of £1,000,000 believed, at that time, to be the largest public appeal in the history of the City.

Continuing straight on along the footpath I soon came to the bottom end of Church Lane



Oram Cottage



The Cradock Arms

where, to my left, was the impressive lychgate entrance to St. Mary Magdalene Church, just across the road from which is the picturesque thatched 17th century Oram Cottage, one of the few surviving examples of a timber-framed building in Leicester and Grade II listed. A small plaque above the front door of the cottage reads: "A. D. 1961, the restoration of this cottage was a gift to the City of Leicester by Briseis E. Oram, widow of Daniel John Oram of Knighton Hall Leicester."

I passed the gateway & lodge to Knighton Hall to my right at the top of Church Lane from where **the Cradock Arms** was in view on the corner of Newmarket Street and Knighton Road.

Up to the mid-1800s, Knighton was largely owned by the Craddock family, who first bought land there in 1720. However this early 17th century pub predates the Craddock's and the original village inn was named **The Bull's Head**. Part of the Everards estate since 1925, this partially thatched pub has relatively recently undergone major refurbishment whereby one irregular rambling open plan area embraces all the original individual rooms on three levels following the contours of the external terrain. In parts the building still retains a traditional ambience with exposed oak ceiling beams and joists and quarry-tiled floors. The pub has a large enclosed back garden where both the patio paved with York stone flags, and the lawn, are furnished with ample picnic tables. Real ales available were: Everards Beacon, Tiger, Original, Sunchaser & Sleighbell plus Black Country BFG. A real cider

was also available in the form of Henry Weston Family Reserve Cider.

I turned left from **The Cradock Arms** along Knighton Road then second left at the traffic lights along Queens Road until reaching the traffic lights at Clarendon Park Road cross roads where the Knighton & Clarendon Park Conservative Club was facing me. Admission to the club is available to club members, member's guests and ACC (Association of Conservative Clubs) affiliated members.

» continued on pg 18

System & District Social Club
High Street, Syston

A VILLAGE SOCIAL CLUB WITH A PASSION FOR REAL ALE AND HOLDER OF THE CAMRA EAST MIDLANDS "CLUB OF THE YEAR" AWARD

WE ALWAYS HAVE 6 EXCELLENT REAL ALES AVAILABLE AT REASONABLE PRICES

CAMRA MEMBERS FREE ENTRY WITH CARD

www.systonsocial.co.uk

CAMRA'S GOOD BEER GUIDE



Founded in 1886 in a purpose built premises, it comprises a large bar with an adjoining games room and a small lounge, known as the blue room, on the ground floor. On the first floor a large snooker room has three snooker tables and a small annexe room furnished with tables and chairs. In the basement, next to the beer cellar, is a skittles long alley. A dumbwaiter shuttles both up and down from the bar replenishing drinks as requested by snooker players and skittlers alike. The real ales available were Bass & Thwaites Wainwright.



Knighton Cons

as **The Bottle Store Off Licence** which was named the Independent Beer Retailer of the Year in 2000 at the Guild of British Beer Writers Awards. The next year the proprietor converted the business to the **Babelas Continental Bar**. Still resembling a shop from the outside this small pub consists of an intimate bar on the ground floor and a first floor room with plenty of extra seating. A wall in the bar is adorned with three eerie paganesque like sculptured wooden faces resembling Medusa but with serpents substituted by copious sprouting tree branches. During warmer weather the large front windows can be opened creating a continental ambiance. On tap were Timothy Taylor's Landlord, Castle Rock Harvest Pale & Oakham Ales Citra.



The Clarendon

Turning left out of the Club I continued straight on, crossing over Queens Road and along Clarendon Park Road and then first left into West Avenue whereupon **The Clarendon** was a short distance ahead on the left. This is a traditional local's pub consisting of a large public bar and a lounge bar with egress to partially covered yard extensively furnished with tables and chairs in the open part and picnic tables' beneath the sheltered area. The four regular beers, Marston's Pedigree, Adnams Broadside, Sharp's Doom Bar & Draught Bass were supplemented by two guest beers; Wells A Good Stuffing & Brains I Sea Santa.

Turning left along West Avenue from **The Clarendon** I turned first left into Cecilia Road at which point my next venue was visible straight in front of me at the end of the road. **The Babelas** was formerly known

At this point, it's certainly worth a mention that in 2005, just five years after **The Bottle Store** was named the Independent Beer Retailer of the Year, the very same title was bestowed on another nearby prestigious off licence, namely the long established **Offie** of Clarendon Park Road. **The Offie** is run by Muree Squires, a specialist wine, beer and spirit merchant, whose passion for beer takes him around the world to bring his customers a choice of 500 different ales at any one time.

Leaving **The Babelas** I turn left for a short distance whereupon **The Dos Hermanos** was across the road. **Dos Hermanos** (Spanish for two brothers) is linked by a central vestibule to the adjacent **Barceloneta** restaurant, both of which were opened in 2002 by John & Andy Hussain, who previously operated the **Pump & Tap, Café Bruxelles, The Rum Runner** and



The Offie



Babelas



Bar Dos Hermanos

Mosquito Coast. Viewed from the street the front elevation retains the appearance of a shop. Distinctively suspended from the ceiling in the small front bar is a fleet of model galleons reminiscent of the Spanish armada whilst the ceiling of the larger back room is festooned with elaborate chandeliers. Available real ales were: St. Austell's Tribute & Robinsons Dizzy Blonde.

Remarkably, the six venues in this shortish urban ramble, had between them on the day, eighteen different real ales available. My journey home started on an Arriva 44A bus; if you are really averse to walking, or can't walk far, all of the above mentioned places are close to the 44A bus route.



Join us for the Brunswick Spring Cider & Sausage Festival

Thursday 12th to Sunday 15th March

- 40 plus Ciders & Perrys
- With Live Music



The Brunswick, 1 Railway Terrace, Derby, DE1 2RU • Telephone: 01332 290677
brunswickderby@aol.com, www.brunswickderby.co.uk