

BERKS BEERAGE



OR
THE BALLAD OF READING ALE

READING

Nearly all the beer is real by effete Southern standards and vastly overpriced. There's a lot of Courage, Whitbread and Morland and not much Holts. Some of the Morlands pubs seem to have their beer engines connected to the local gasworks and the local branch don't seem to give a monkeys.

Reading itself is pretty boring but this will be improved by new lovely buildings to imbue it with an Arndale/Hulme ambience. If you're starving, forget the restaurants, which make Bradford look like Bradford. Aficionados of cornflour soup will not be disappointed but may need a second mortgage in the only Chinese in town.

Town and gown (or tattered rags in the case of Reading students) are quite separate so there's not much fighting by Miles Platting standards. Genuine amber nectar can be enjoyed in three Gales pubs (geddit?) in Mapledurham, Reading's answer to Mottram St Andrew. It's so posh it's not easy getting there on t'tram but the hoi polloi are welcome to Wokingham, where Brakspears can be poured down the discerning gullets of Hooray Henrys, the cravat brigade and other assembled poseurs.

THE PUBS

THREE TUNS (Courage) Boring pictures and generally dull decor relieved by juke box in vault. Directors at 71 and Best Bitter at 64 competes with SIPA Keg at 57p.

ADMIRAL (Halls) To feel at home you'd better go in with a parrot with a wooden leg. Tuesdays could be your turn in the barrel. Sickeningly barmy decor and staff dressed as Popeye lookalikes or juvenile and somewhat bland Captain Blighs. Bitter 70, Burton 80

BUTLER (Fullers) All customers under 26. Smoking compulsory. Herrings welcome. Strangely, no juke box. LONDON PRIDE 70p, ESB 80p.

COOPERS (Courage) Boss seems to have Angstrom Barnley complex, so being as pissed as a rat and 15 doesn't matter but you'd better wear a suit. Prices match the pseudo majestic but nevertheless characterless place. Best bitter 68p, Directors 76p.

COLLEGE ARMS (Truman) Tastefully deWatneyfied but extortionate. Bitter 74p, Best Bitter 76p, Samson 80p. Aspidistra contrasts with electronic advertising display.

GEORGE (Berni free house) Hi De Hi bejacketed employees do little to rescue the atmosphere of this former coaching inn from resembling the public reading room of Bournemouth library on a wet Tuesday in November. Arkell BBB 72p, Truman BB 72p, Webster bitter 72p

BOROUGH ARMS (Whitbread) Small brown room devoid of all decoration except fruit machine and jukebox. Bitter 64p, Special Bitter 68p, Winter Royal 80p

RAILWAY TAVERN (Halls) A real gem. Surprise chaotic ethnicity among a sea of hoity toity middle class mediocrity. Bitter 66p, Burton 72

LION (Whitbread) Brick fireplace in vault. Bar billiards. Mild 62p, Bitter 64p, Special 68p

SWEENEY TODD (free) A posh pie shop with little wooden tables and a sawdust bestrewn floor. It is to a pub what President Reagan is to Mensa. Eldridge Pope IPA 72p, Royal Oak 78p, Wadworth IPA 74p, 6X 78p.

WALLINGFORD ARMS (Morland) Friendly, faded blue pub in the best possible sense. Mild 62p, bitter 64p

OSBORNE (Charrington) Proletarian decoration contrasts with ornate work of demented blacksmith and neither manage to relieve the gloom and despondency of the drab and tasteless furnishings. IPA 68p

QUEENS HEAD (Courage) Irregular polygon decorated with silly pictures and cards from cancer stick packets. Popular with students and unpopular with everyone else. BB 67p, Directors 74p

WESLEY ARMS (Whitbread) Tasteful display of simulated herbiage. The collection of beer labels which Whitbread has made extinct make more impact than the notches on a eunuch's key fob. Bitter 65p, Special 69p Winter Royal 81p

BLAGRAVE ARMS (Courage) Built last year from bits of 100 year old pubs -mostly in the right order. Plastic fruit liable to melt under heat from real genuine gas lamps. BB 68p, Directors 75p

RISING SUN (Brakspear) This pub made such an impression on our inspector that all he could say was that it was spacious and had been painted. No mention of a nude roller disco or wet T shirt competition. Bitter 64p, Special 68p, Old 68p.

ELDON ARMS (Wadworth) Plastic flowers enhance the Gandhi pattern wall-paper and Gorbals carpet. Lots of bottled beers to look at, a real treat for the Guinless. IPA 64p, 6X 68p

FISHERMANS COTTAGE (free) Collection of pianos in various stages of dereliction - from recent Russ Conway Appreciation Society cast offs, through out of tune Liberace baby grands to sawdust on the bar room floor. Bagder BB 70p, Tanglefoot 74p, Wadworth 6X 70p, Old 78p, Young Special 70p.

DOVE (Brakspear) Fairly cheap and eminently quaffable beer in an otherwise unexciting and plain estate pub. Marked absence of wallabys in ladies' toilets. Mild 63p, bitter 65p, best bitter 67p.

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| 1 Borough, Kings Road | 2 Butler Chatham St |
| 3 Bugle, Friar Street | 4 Coopers, Market Place |
| 5 Dove, Orts Road | 6 Eldon Arms, Eldon Terrace |
| 7 Fishermans Cottage, Kennet Side | 8 George, Minster St |
| 9 Lion Gt Knollys St | 10 Osborne, Greyfriars Rd |
| 11 Railway, Greyfriars Rd | 12 Admiral, West Street |
| 13 Rising Sun, Forbury Rd | 14 Blaggrave Arms, Blaggrave St |
| 15 Sweeney Todd, Castle St | 16 Wallingford Arms, Charles St |
| 17 J Holt, Greyfriars Rd | 18 Three Tuns, Wokingham Rd |
| 19 College Arms, Wokingham Rd | 20 Queens Head, Christchurch Rd |

