



COSY CLUTTER: a fascinating display of china adds a quirky charm to The Bull

Two blokes and a load of bull in a china store

"SO why's it called The Bull, then?" I slurred sluggishly to my pal Tony as we lunched.

"Dunno," he dribbled back.

I was disappointed that Tony couldn't provide me with the necessary info.

After all, we'd solved a few thorny problems in The Bull that afternoon.

We'd discovered the meaning of life, agreed a formula for peace in the Middle East and, best of all, explained why Velcro fasteners are less popular than shoelaces.

Pretty impressive when you consider we'd already sunk a fair few pints between us.

Yet here we were, sitting in the legendary Brummie boozery - now under Irish management - struggling to figure out how the pub got its name.

Shameful.

"Maybe it's the bull people talk once they've had a few in here," I suggested.

"If that's the case, they'd call it the Lorne Jackson," sneered Tony.

I glowered angrily and thought about belting him.

Then I realised: (a) he was bigger than me, (b) he had a point and (c) he was bigger than me.

While I was mulling over the possibilities of hiring a hitman to do the job instead, something hit me.

Not Tony's fist, luckily, but another possible explanation for why the pub was called The Bull.

"It must be all the crockery," I said. "There's so much china round the bar it should come under the jurisdiction of Chairman Mao."

"Get what you mean," said Tony. "Instead of a bull in a china store, the Bull is a china store."

EATING OUT

THE BULL, BIRMINGHAM

Although it probably wasn't the genuine reason behind the Bull's name, it certainly made sense at that moment.

An essential ingredient of the drinking establishment's quaint and quirky charm is the crammed clutter of crockery in its cosy quarters. The effect makes the pub look more like grandma's parlour than a boozers' den.

Meals on offer are also just like granny used to make - wholesome and home-made.

To soak up the ale, Tony ordered braised steak (£6), which was well cooked and full-flavoured. It also arrived with a good selection of vegetables.

Trendy

If this had been a trendy restaurant he'd undoubtedly have received the following:

One slice of carrot, carved in intriguing shape. Slither of turnip, delicately placed at right angle to carrot (thereby introducing explosive dynamic between the two vegetables). Squirt of mashed potato, in style of Monet (late period, of course).

But this was home-made pub grub. So what Tony got instead was a great big wodge of... stuff.

The plate was packed and stacked with greens... and oranges... and whites.

Perhaps it wasn't the kind

of thing you'd display in the Tate Modern, but as a meal it was a masterpiece.

My partridge cooked in red wine (£6) was equally impressive.

Once more, it came with a hefty helping of veg, and even better - a gravy boat!

Pouring on the rich, brown liquid made me feel like one of the Bisto Kids.

Which made a change. After all, I'm usually only associated with the Hellman's Mayonnaise ads.

The partridge was tastier than any bird I've spotted in Broad Street.

Its flesh was soft, mild in flavour and relatively dry, without the greasiness of duck or chicken.

We'd both enjoyed our meals, and certainly couldn't have consumed any more food.

Luckily we still had room for another pint.

Just as I was heading to the bar, Tony snapped his fingers with delight.

"I've got it," he said. "I know why this place is called the Bull."

"It's obviously a spelling error. It should be called the Full - 'cos that's exactly what you'll be after a feed here."

I couldn't have agreed more.

The total bill, excluding several pints, was £12.

LORNE JACKSON

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