

LAST ORDERS PROJECT

The Play: Low Spirits

Peter Wheat is a pub ghost who is more scared of the regulars than they are of him. Then a dark stranger arrives, offering to train him in the ways of the expert spook. Peter certainly needs the help – but is the new arrival all that he seems?

Low Spirits is a comedy about death, rebirth and crisp flavours. It incorporates drama, music and storytelling.

Low Spirits, the play, is only one part of Heritage Lottery Funded project, Last Orders. Conceived last summer at Laurie-Lee famed pub, The Woolpack, in Slad, the idea arose following a discussion about the tragic decline of British pubs. (This one, thankfully, not included.) With last orders currently being called for the final time on 4 pubs a week across the Southwest, the aim of the project was to record and preserve memories and stories of pubs via an oral history project, and to boost Gloucestershire's alehouses by attracting audiences back to their locals to experience a quality draught of unique theatre.

"I've never seen anything like this. It's a really good idea!"
Audience Member at The Malt Shovel, Ruardean

Working alongside project partners, Gloucestershire Archives and BBC Gloucestershire, we have researched written records and recorded spoken histories, via the oral history project, that have inspired and informed the play, Low Spirits.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE ARCHIVES

Gloucestershire Archives were our heritage partners for the project. The following fact sheets were compiled by John Putley at Gloucestershire Archives:

- Pub History
- A Tipple From the Archives: pub-related misdemeanours taken from Gloucestershire court records
- Fascinating Gloucestershire Pub Facts
- Pub Names

Follow this link to see what they do and contact them to find out how to access the oral history interviews that were recorded for this project.

www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives

BBC GLOUCESTERSHIRE

The following link will take you to the Last Orders page on the BBC Gloucestershire website. Follow the links on the right to hear project related interviews on BBC Radio Gloucestershire with Lucy Heywood (Producer) Tim Telling (Writer) and Geoff Sandles, an expert on the history of Gloucestershire pubs.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/gloucestershire/content/articles/2009/03/13/pub_closures_feature.shtml

LAST ORDERS EVENT AT THE VILLAGE INN, NAILSWORTH

On Weds 1st April 2009, we organised a live interview between Radio Gloucestershire's Vernon Harwood and CAMRA's Geoff Sandles about the changing face of British pubs. This was hosted by The Village Inn, Nailsworth and, as well as the talk, audiences were treated to tours of the micro brewery and real ale tasting!

"The secret of a good pub is simple: good beer and well-kept premises: that's it!"
Geoff Sandles, Gloucestershire CAMRA

To find out more about Gloucestershire Pubs, please visit Geoff Sandles' website, where he is compiling a database including information and photographs of every pub in Gloucestershire, past and present.

Go to www.gloucestershirecamra.org.uk and follow the link to Geoff's "new pages".

PUB MUSIC WORKSHOPS

Workshops based on old pub songs, held at residential homes, Horton House in Gloucester and High Border Lodge in Leonard Stanley, were great fun and helped spark all sorts of fascinating memories.

LAST ORDERS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Producer, Lucy Heywood and volunteers, Beth Hackett and Jenn, returned to Horton House and High Border Lodge the following week to interview residents about their memories and stories of pubs.

"The Welsh did come up to Clearwell on a Sunday...charabang loads, mostly men, 'cause they didn't open the pubs in Wales on a Sunday."
Justine Govier, High Border Lodge

They went on to interview a wide range of contributors about their memories, stories and opinions of pubs and how they've changed.

Interviews were edited by students at Cirencester College and are conserved at Gloucestershire Archives.

Traditional pubs and inns are a vital part of British culture, heritage and communities. We are lucky in Gloucestershire that we have a good choice of decent hostelrys, but closure is a very real threat and so we hope that this project, as well as preserving memories of pubs and entertaining audiences across the county, will remind us all to support our locals and do our bit to keep pub culture thriving in these difficult economic times.

Cheers!

Lucy Heywood
Project Manager/Producer
2009
