

8th June 1988

Proposals
for
ALEXANDERS
Cafe-Bar
125 Telegraph Road,
Heswall

Introduction

During recent years there have been major changes in the public's attitude and expectations regarding the provision of food and drink outside the home, both as essential fuel but also as a legitimate leisure activity - enabled by the greater mobility and available disposable income which are enjoyed today. These changes - particularly when considered in the light of proposed alterations to current liquor legislation - signal the advent of a new social structure for tomorrow's Britain.

The implications of E.E.C. regulations on tied houses, together with the possibility of more flexible licensing hours, has precipitated a radical reassessment throughout the licensed trade of future strategy. The response by the major brewers has been a divergence from traditional concepts and an unprecedented investment in the development of venues geared to the new market place; some have been planned by the retail-trade divisions of the breweries themselves, but many more are the result of a close liaison with independent entrepreneurs. A.G.A. Leisure (Investments) Ltd was established as a vehicle to generate such joint-venture projects.

Incorporated in April 1988, A.G.A. Leisure is the result of a decision by the principals of Brookcase Contracts Ltd and Nelly's Trump Catering Consultants to pool their resources and expertise to create a retail trading company with its own facilities for the conception, design and refurbishment of a wide variety of licensed outlets tailored to meet the needs and expectations of a new breed of clientele.

The Cafe-Bar Concept

Research has indicated there is room in the market place for the type of establishment which would seek to cater for sections of the community ignored by mass-appeal venues. Disregarded is the discerning business customer with a limited lunch break, whose place of work is situated in a small Wirral town-centre. Likewise, for example, a party of three shoppers, who desire, respectively, a cocktail and a sandwich, a cup of coffee and a spicy salad, and a glass of lager and a substantial meat pie, will almost certainly be frustrated in their quest. Outside the range of popular provision too is the couple in their mid-thirties, too old for the music-blarney "fun-pubs", too young for the Darby & Joan, who seek a quite evening drink, and perhaps a bite to eat, in relaxed informal surroundings.

To meet the needs of these apparent pariahs, we have developed a format, founded on a design scheme for neither a traditional pub nor a restaurant, which would meld together a well-researched portfolio of beverages - including cask-conditioned beers, a range of premium lagers, a selection of reasonably-priced wines and a variety of cocktails normally found in only the grandest of hotel bars - to a menu covering an innovative range of food, designed to cater for both the humblest and most sophisticated palates.

The Venue

Having determined that our target clientele would be drawn from the professional classes, it was deemed that the premises most suitable for the project would occupy a prime-site location in one of the predominantly middle-class towns on the Wirral or on the outskirts of Chester. Accordingly, approaches were made to the major breweries with an outline of intent and a favourable response was received from Tetley Walker Ltd. An invitation was offered to view the Drift Inn, located at 125 Telegraph Road in Heswall. The premises, with a current Justices' licence for beer, wine and cider, had been vacant for some 18 months, previously trading as a wine bar and restaurant.

A preliminary survey of the premises revealed that there was definite potential for the proposed project, but careful note was made of the structural and cosmetic alterations which would be necessary. It was realised that it was essential to obtain a spirit licence in order to dispense cocktails - an integral part of the scheme. Subsequent costings by the principals of Brookcase Contracts revealed that refurbishment would entail a figure of some £25,000.

It was decided to undertake a feasibility study of the project, commencing with an assessment of other venues in the Heswall area holding full Justices On-licences.

Market Research

A Saturday evening was chosen in order to show each pub at its busiest, and on 12th March, 1988, the following observations were made:-

THE SANDON ARMS, MILNER ROAD

Whitbread "Community Pub". Large single lounge bar, refurbished some 18 months ago in neo-traditional style after a major refit 4-5 years ago. Mixed age range. Substantial car park. Known locally as a darts pub. No food served in the evenings, although hot and cold meals are provided at lunchtimes, Monday to Saturday. Reasonably full at 9pm. No cocktails and apparently no wine list, the majority of customers drinking beer or lager.

THE HARVEST MOUSE, PENSBY ROAD

Relatively new pub built some three years ago in the novel style of a windmill. Owned by Greenall Whitley, it is designated a "Millers Kitchen". Hot and cold food are available until 9.30pm every day. Procedure for ordering food requires the customers to find a vacant table, noting its number, and placing their order and paying in advance at the counter; the food is then served to the table. Drinks are purchased separately at the bar. At 9.15pm the pub was quite busy, with evidence on the tables of a brisk food trade. Varied drinks, including a concise wine list on the back of the menu, but no cocktails.

THE DEE VIEW, DEE VIEW ROAD

Whitbread "Community Pub". Small to medium-sized single saloon bar, in need of redecoration. Quite full at 9.45pm. Mixed age group, but predominantly middle-aged. The majority of patrons drinking beer or lager. No food served in the evenings, although it has a good reputation locally for home-made lunchtime fare. Apparently no special features. No cocktails and no sign of a wine list.

THE HOTEL VICTORIA, GAYTON ROAD

Large complex incorporating two bars, restaurant, ballroom and letting bedrooms. Bass Charrington beers are sold. There are obvious signs that the premises have been allowed to deteriorate and are in need of refurbishment. This is particularly evident in the "Albert Bar" - some years ago a smart lounge bar, now used as a public bar with a pool table. The Cocktail Bar - lacking any indication of cocktails or a cocktail list, however - seems quite cosy, but is used as a lounge bar, rather than its original function of serving the restaurant. Reasonable level of trade at 10.30pm, though it was not possible to see into the restaurant to judge trade.

THE HILL HOUSE HOTEL, MOUNT AVENUE

Incorporating a small number of letting bedrooms, a branded "Berni Inn" restaurant, and "Duries Bar", the Hill House Hotel was created from former council offices by Cheshire Hotels some 18 months ago and sold to Grand Metropolitan in December 1987. "Duries" is a modern bar with a conservatory extension. At 10.45pm it was patronised by a clientele of disparate age-range who had apparently sought its inoffensive atmosphere as a welcome contrast to the hurley-burley of the pubs in the area. No cocktails, and although there is an adjacent restaurant there was no sign of a wine list. "Duries" features a separate servery for bar snacks but food service ceases at 9.30pm. It was not possible to see into the restaurant to judge trade.

Establishment

We concluded that no other venue in the Heswall was offering anything similar to our proposed venture, and, moreover, as all of the people we canvassed agreed that they would welcome such a cafe-bar, we decided to proceed. Agreement was reached with David Yates, Tenanted Trade Director of Tetley Walker, that contracts for the lease would be exchanged on the successful grant of a full on-licence.

On 9th March 1988, with Bermans Solicitors acting jointly for A.G.A. Leisure and Tetley Walker, a protection order for the existing licence was granted to Anthony Zausmer of A.G.A. This was ratified at the Licensing Sessions at Wallasey Magistrates Court on the 31st March 1988.

Detailed plans of the proposed conversion and refurbishment works were drawn up and submitted to the relevant authorities. A draft menu, cocktail list and operational procedure manual were compiled, and the case for a full on-licence was presented by Anthony Zausmer, aided by Bermans, at the Licensing Sessions at Wallasey Magistrates Court on 19th May 1988. After lengthy deliberations, the justices agreed to grant a provisional full on-licence.

The lease documents for the premises were duly signed by the directors of A.G.A. Leisure and returned to Rutherfords, the solicitors acting for Tetley Walker. However, due to inter-departmental developments within Teteleys, the provision of the lease was withdrawn without warning.

The premises were subsequently transferred to Tetley's Managed House Division to be developed into a Bowler's Wine Bar. The designs undertaken by Janice MacDonald for A.G.A. were retained, and the actual refurbishment undertaken by Brookcase Contracts.

Beverages

Emphasis will be placed on the quality of the Brewery's products as a selling factor - particularly its cask-conditioned ales dispensed on traditional hand-pumps - with an appropriate choice of non-alcoholic beverages and quality wines to keep pace with the current growth patterns of drink consumption. A feature will be made of an extensive range of spirits and liqueurs to suit every palate, and cocktail list the envy of all but the grandest of hotels.

ALEXANDER'S RAGTIME

Spice up your life with a blend of Melon liqueur, Ginger Wine and the chocolate flavour of Creme de Cacao.

"One later than ragtime and you're banned!"

FIREMAN'S LIFT

Assistance is at hand when Vodka is coupled to Cherry Brandy and Orange Juice with a dash of Port and finished with Grenadine.

"Going up beats coming down!"

HESWALL HILLBILLY

Strike it rich with Gold Rum and Apricot Brandy, blended with Blackcurrant and the sumptuousness of Fresh Cream.

"Liquid gold to oil the heart!"

BALALAIKA

A shake-up of Vodka with the fruitiness of Cointreau and the tang of Lemon Juice.

"From Russia with love!"

BLACK VELVET

The sophisticated taste of chilled Champagne and creamy draught Guinness.

"Smoother than satin!"

BRANDY ALEXANDER

The classic cocktail of Brandy shaken with Creme de Cacao and Cream.

"It's what made Alexander the Great!"

CASABLANCA

In all the bars in all the world, you'll never surpass the verve of Vodka blended with Pineapple Juice and Coconut Cream, streaked with Grenadine.

"Play it again, Sam!"

CHAMPAGNE NAPOLEON

Wellington's booty of fine French Champagne and Mandarine Napoleon liqueur, topped with fresh Orange Juice.

"Not tonight, Josephine!"

MAI TAI

White and Gold Rums combined with Curacao, splashed with Lime, Grenadine and Amaretto.

"More influential than the old school tie!"

UPSIDE-DOWN MARGARITA

Tequila, White Curacao and Lime Juice, served in our own inimitable style.

"More mystifying than a Mexican mistress!"

Food

The presentation and availability of competitively-priced food is of paramount importance to the success of the venture, as a high volume of catering for lunchtime and early-evening patrons is predicted.

A slightly off-beat menu is proposed to counter the ubiquitous "Chilli/Lasagne/ & chips" by staging, in part, a return to traditional cooking with beer and cider very much in evidence.

A colourful selection of salads on display would form the basis of cold platters for snack-seekers.

Sandwiches, freshly-made to order would be available at all times, additionally offered as a takeaway service.

On The Bread Line

*"Life is like a humble pie sandwich ~
the more bread you've got, the less
humble pie you have to eat".*

**We have no humble-pie but you can build
your own banquet in a bun, or heroes
without villains, from our daily supply
of the baker's best & the chef's cold display.**

King Edward's Wardrobe

*Choice potatoes baked in their jackets
bursting at the seams with goodies*

APHRODITE'S CHILD

Cucumber & Spring Onion in a mint-flavoured yoghurt.

CANNERY ROW

Tuna, Cream Cheese & red peppers with Worcester sauce.

PETER PIPER

Mushrooms & Onions in a mustard & pepper sauce.

PORKY'S DILEMMA

Sausage meat & leek in a tangy cheese sauce.

SOMBRERO

Vegetarian chilli, with kidney beans, peppers & olives.

The Picnic Hamper

Take your pick from the salad bar

BLOODY MARY SALAD

*Tomato and fennel, with finely chopped onion,
tossed in a spicy tomato dressing.*

CHINESE SALAD

*Bean sprouts, Celery, Beans, Spring Onions & Sweet Corn
tossed in a Soy Dressing*

COLESLAW SALAD

*Crisp white cabbage shredded with onion and carrot,
blended with creamy mayonnaise.*

FRUIT & NUT SALAD

*Apple, banana and raisins with chopped mixed nuts
in a lemon and orange relish.*

GREEK SALAD

*Cool chopped cucumber and mint
in a garlic and yoghurt dressing.*

FRENCH SALAD

*Lettuce, beans, spring onions, green peppers
& watercress in a classic vinaigrette.*

MEXICAN SALAD

*Kidney beans and black olives, with sweet red peppers,
tossed in a honey & chilli sauce.*

POTATO & RADISH SALAD

*Chunks of potato with crunchy raw radish
in a tangy horseradish mayonnise.*

Tongue-ticklers

SOUPERBOWL

*A hearty home-made soup, different every day.
Served with crusty french bread.*

CALIFORNIA SUITE

*A mousse of Tuna & Cream Cheese with red peppers.
With a pinch of Cayenne & crusty French bread.*

THE ICARUS ADVENTURE

*Chicken wings in a hot & spicy tomato sauce.
On a nest of crisp lettuce, to save you from disaster.*

GRANDMA BECKY'S FISHBALLS

*A melange of minced fish with garlic & herbs.
Served with garlic mayonnaise.*

LUCIFER'S CHICKEN LIVERS

*Stuffed with onion, parsley, cayenne & black pepper.
Wrapped in bacon and roasted in the oven.*

PEKING GARLIC PRAWNS

*Prawns & button mushrooms in a tangy seafood sauce,
seasoned with garlic & soy.*

International Bowls

SOMERSET CHICKEN

Tender chunks of meat, apples and shallots, with a hint of cinnamon, in a cider sauce finished with fresh cream.

DIJON PEPPERED PORK

Bite size pieces of meat sauteed with onion & mushrooms. Served in a creamy mustard & pepper sauce.

CHICKEN TIJUANA

A spicy tomato salsa with kidney beans & onions. Herb Alpert can blow his trumpet about it!

WELSH LAMB HOT POT

Diced lamb, baked with leeks & carrots in a minty gravy. Topped with sliced potatoes.

POLYNESIAN PINEAPPLE PORK

Chunks of meat & fruit in a tangy ginger sauce. Garnished with sliced sweet green peppers.

BLIND SCOUSE (V)

Braised vegetables in a thick vegetable gravy. A variation on a classical Liverpool theme.

Pie-In-The-Sky

BEEF IN ALE PIE

Chunks of prime beef braised in rich beer gravy. Topped with a melt-in-the-mouth puff-pastry lid.

KOULIBIAK FISH PIE

A blend of salmon, prawns & white fish in cream. Served with a puff pastry tifter.

FIDGET PIE

Gammon, apple, onion & potato, seasoned with Thyme. A speciality from Shropshire.

STEAK & KIDNEY PUDDING

Prime beef & kidney braised in a rich gravy, Encased in melt-in-the mouth suet pastry.

PIGGLEY PIE

Ssausagemeat, onion & leek in a beer Rarebit sauce. Topped with a puff-pastry tifter

Gourmet Goodies

*For the chef's choice of the day,
see the blackboard.*