



the history of the haunch

...Probably the oldest hostelry in Salisbury, the Haunch of Venison provides refreshment in the historic downstairs bar and in the unique restaurant upstairs. The enormous oak beams, which can be seen throughout, pre-date the building by several hundred years and are thought to come from early sailing vessels.

The first record of the Haunch of Venison is circa 1320 when the building was used to house craftsmen working on the Cathedral spire. At this time Minster Street had open running sewers, so entrance to the property was at the back of the building facing the Church. St Thomas's Church had significant interest in the Haunch in the early years, even during the 14th Century when the property was reputedly a brothel and to save any embarrassment to local and visiting clergy, a tunnel was built between the church and the tavern.

The current layout of floors reflects the ecclesiastical link as the many different levels were to accommodate the hierarchical structure of the Church. The so called House of Lords situated on the upper ground floor was built to accommodate higher clergy orders.

the haunch of venison bar

When the heating system was changed in the Choristers part of the Cathedral, the tiles were used in the bar to create a unique floor. The Bar has some other fascinating features, for example the pewter bar top, which is believed to be the last complete bar top of its kind in England and the original gravity-fed spirit taps.

On the first floor is the newly restored restaurant 'one', which carries on the long tradition of providing food to visitors.

Specialists were commissioned to undertake the recent restoration of the dining room so that the unique character and atmosphere were not lost.

In the 16th Century, the first restaurant was created when the adjoining Merchants house became part of the Haunch of Venison. In the main dining room is a working fireplace dating back to 1588. There is an additional private bar which has the only licensed landing in England and where the famous ghost is usually seen.

opening times

monday – saturday 11.30am – 11.00pm
sunday 12.00 noon – 10.30pm



the house of lords

Situated half way up the stairs to the restaurant 'one' is the House of Lords. The small oak panelled room houses a large fireplace which is formed by a fine old oak beam.

The adjacent small bread oven with a secure iron gate guards the mummified hand. The beer cellar is directly beneath the floor which in consequence restricts the head height and lends a certain quaintness to the room.

The House of Lords comfortably seats 10 and is available as a private room.

the horse box

In addition to the House of Lords, the Bar has a small intimate "Horsebox". This small bar was originally for ladies to use and reputedly was used by Churchill and Eisenhower during the planning of the D-Day landings.

the history and the ghost

Many references over the past two hundred years can be found concerning the haunting of the Haunch of Venison. Visitors often comment on feeling strangely cold in certain parts of the building and staff regularly are frustrated when items are moved or hidden, only to reappear a few weeks later.

It is thought that there are two wandering spirits: the Grey Lady, who is searching for her child; and the Demented Whist Player who is tormented by the loss of his hand, severed in a card game due to cheating. In the House of Lords is a mummified hand discovered in the 19th Century, which may have belonged to the ghost. In March 2004 it was stolen feared never to be returned but reappeared in mysterious circumstances 6 weeks later.

Antony and Victoria Leroy have been licensees at the Haunch of Venison since 1981 and are probably the longest serving licensees in Salisbury.

contact us

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