

Pub of the month

Golden Rule, Smithy Brow, Ambleside



LIBERALS and the overtly politically correct avert your eyes now. "Every family needs a stern father," is how owner John Lockley describes his approach to running the Golden Rule in Ambleside. "You've got to put your stamp on a place, put your mark down. There's only one boss in a pub, too many pubs fall down because they let the customers run the pub. Not here."

He may be a self-declared stern patriarch, but this doesn't seem to stop people coming back to the Golden Rule. "It's basically the same as it was when I got the tenancy," says John. "We just upgrade it really, by keeping it a little bit up to date. People love it, the fact that they can come in and it's the same as it was 30 years ago. If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

Perhaps more than any other Ambleside pub, the Golden Rule has an identification with the outdoors. Despite being nestled away in a discreet corner of town, it's a popular destination for walkers descending into Ambleside from the surrounding hills, its reputation spread through years of word of mouth. The Golden Rule is a true 'in the know' establishment.

The pub has also served as a hub for climbers and paragliders, John himself being a keen practitioner of both sports in his younger days. "When I first came up here I climbed regularly and so it became a climbing destination in the eighties when there was a renaissance in climbing in the Lake District. Then paragliding took over and it became a headquarters for that. People used to come in with their wings still on their backs after flying off the hills," he recalls.

"I've got lots of memories from climbing. I used to go out with Tony Greenbank; we did all the classic routes but Hangover on Dove Crag stands out. Doug Scott and Bonners [Chris Bonington] still come in every now and again."

John is now helped out by manager Johnnie Wrennall – who does much of the everyday running of the pub – and his wife Margaret. "She likes to look after the window boxes and things like that," says John.

Theories abound as to what the name of the pub refers to. The biblical commandment to do unto others as you would have them do unto you is one possible explanation, although it's more likely to date back to the Victorian prohibition against drinking on the sabbath, which forbade pubs to open their doors on Sundays.

But another origin could be the law of simplicity. There is nothing fussy about this low-key Ambleside institution. There are no machines, no pool, no jukebox, and no bar meals. "People can come here and have a chat and a beer and there's no-one on the next table stuffing food in their face or anything like that," says John.

The Golden Rule is a Robinson's house and keeps six cask ales: Dizzy Blonde, Hartley's XB, Cumbria Way, Hatter's Mild, Double Hop and Unicorn Bitter. The hungry may be left wanting but the thirsty walker has their pick.

Golden Rule: 015394 32257
www.goldenrule-ambleside.co.uk



To recommend a pub
or tell us about your
walking club,
e-mail: editorial@tgomagazine.co.uk

