

# CLOG & BILLYCOCK

The third pub from Craig Bancroft and Nigel Haworth's Ribble Valley Inns is a very Lancastrian affair. *Tom Vaughan* checks out a menu of meticulous provenance

## ALSO ON THE MENU

- Ascroft's deep-fried cauliflower fritters, curried mayonnaise, £3.50
- Treacle-baked free-range Middle White Garstang ribs, devilled black peas, £6.50
- Buttered crumpet, Bob Kitchen's organic day-old Lancashire curd, Ascroft's cress and beetroot salad, £5
- Clog & Billy fish pie, Fleetwood fish and seawater prawns, baked with local mashed potato, sprinkled with Butler's creamy Lancashire cheese, £9.95
- Potato pancakes, forest mushrooms, tomatoes and spinach baked with Sandham's creamy Lancashire cheese, £9.50
- Local seafood platter – Port of Lancaster beech and juniper-smoked salmon, Lancaster smoked kipper, hot smoked trout, potted Morecambe Bay shrimps, pickled mussels, pickled cucumber, beetroot relish, horseradish cream, home-made bread, £8.75 small, £15 large
- Burnt English custard, stewed rhubarb, £5
- Lancashire curd tart, organic lemon cream, £5
- Double chocolate mousse, milk foam, hot dark chocolate sauce, £5.50

Usually, on interviewing the chef, Menuwatch will lob in a few standard, pre-prepped questions. Who are your suppliers? What's made in-house? How would you describe your mission statement?

However, after a perusal of the menu at Nigel Haworth and Craig Bancroft's third Ribble Valley Inns site, the Clog and Billycock, in the aptly named Pleasington, there's hardly a question left to ask. Curious where your steak comes from, or your butter? There's a map showing 35 suppliers on the flipside of your menu. Want to know who kneaded your roll, made your ice-cream, cured your ox tongue? The menu unashamedly lets you know: the kitchen did. Even a mission statement is clear at the top of the menu: "Lancashire is the envy of Britain for its rich supply of fresh food and fabulous flavours. We hope that we have captured some of them for you to enjoy." So there you have it.

The Clog & Billycock is a no-nonsense, well constructed and lengthy menu, weighted for broad appeal. Nine starters, three platters, eight mains, eight grills, three salads, seven sandwiches, 10 desserts and ice-creams and two exquisite cheese platters are regulars on the menu, flanked by seasonal promotions like game, mutton, lobster, asparagus and damsons.

### CLASSIC BRITISH

The food is, as you'd expect, classic British pub fare, cooked with all the hallmarks of Haworth's experience and care. Battered deep-fried haddock, marrowfat peas, chips cooked in dripping and tartare sauce (£11.95), Lancashire hotpot, Burholme Farm heather-fed Lonk lamb, pickled red cabbage (£10.50), Farmer Sharp's slow-cooked shoulder of mutton, butter mashed carrots, swede and parsnips, barley dumplings and roast gravy (£12.75) aren't reinventing the wheel, but there's a guarantee of excellence and a transparency in provenance underlining every dish.

Starters follow the same uncomplicated, well constructed brief: warm Morecambe Bay shrimps, blade mace butter (a mix of butter, shallots, chives, tarragon,



lemon juice and ground blade mace) and toasted muffin (£7.50) or Chadwick's of Bury horseshoe black pudding, English mustard and onion relish (£4.75).

Despite the size of the menu, there's still broad variation between the three Ribble Valley Inns sites. "We try and keep them a bit different," says Haworth. "There are, of course, some generic dishes – hotpots, fish pies and fish and chips – but individuality is very important in the business. We work hard with the various chefs to develop a style within a style."

But it is the seasonal promotions that really steal the limelight. Most pubs either change daily as produce dictates, offering small menus of seasonal treats, or are large, set and inflexible. It's remarkable that a menu of such breadth as the Clog & Billycock's can also find the kitchen resources to include planning and preparing seasonal dishes of lobster, mutton, veal, cauliflower and asparagus – for example, Herdwick mutton broth, black peas, pearl barley, vegetables and homemade bread (£5) or Farmer Sharp's 10oz veal T-bone, rosemary butter, gravy, chunky chips (£18.95).

Desserts are thoroughly British:

jam roly poly and custard, Bramley apple crumble, vanilla custard, Gornall's dairy rice pudding, mead-soaked yellow raisins (all £5). Special mention should also go to the cheeseboards, one of cheeses from around the British Isles (£7.50 for two people), one from only Lancashire, featuring 10 cheeses from individual farms, all different ages (£13.50 for two people).

The size of the menu is made possible by the large cover numbers the site is achieving: roughly 2,000 a week in the 130-seat site, with 10 chefs beaver away behind the scenes.

### MENU BALANCE

The strength of the Clog & Billycock menu is the balance between its classic pub-goer mains – grills, hotpots, fish pie, fish and chips, offered just as the big breweries do, albeit to an infinitely better standard – and the attitude, diligence and care of a bijou gastropub: home-made breads, ice-creams and meticulously local produce and seasonal treats.

→ **The Clog & Billycock, Billinge End Road, Pleasington, Blackburn, Lancashire BB2 6QB.**

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[www.theclogandbillycock.com](http://www.theclogandbillycock.com)