

# PLATES

EAT + DRINK + TRAVEL



## IN THE CARDS

*Said to be haunted, Churchill's British Restaurant & Pub hosts monthly psychic readings.*

DRINK

## Psychic Night

PINTS AND INSIGHTS AT CHURCHILL'S  
IN DOWNTOWN MCKINNEY

*text by* LAURA SAMUEL MEYN



**PUB GRUB?**

*Highland beef haggis gets an upscale “stacked” remake at Churchill’s—and tastes even more authentic with a pint of Guinness.*

**WHETHER YOU CRAVE A SINGLE-MALT**

Scotch like Cragganmore from Marie Britton’s native Scotland, or a tropical cocktail more in line with Erin Elwood’s South Padre beach-bar background, the co-owners of Churchill’s British Restaurant & Pub in downtown McKinney offer all of the spirits you could want in a bar—and perhaps a few more. Marie and Erin were working at what was

then The Londoner in 2008 when they pooled resources to buy the pub, undeterred by the resident ghosts. They soon renamed it Churchill’s in honor of the British prime minister’s many clever quotes, including one of their favorites: “If you’re going through hell, keep going.”

The century-old, two-story brick building in historic downtown McKinney was for much of its early life a drugstore rumored to have a brothel upstairs. And since ghosts have been detected here, it’s a regular stop on the annual Legends of McKinney Ghost Walks, held this year on October 19 and 26. Indeed, Erin confirms there have been reports of ghostly children playing in the kitchen, a man standing in the middle window upstairs, and lights that flicker on and off.

Whether or not you believe in ghosts, the pub exudes a comfortable familiarity that welcomes newcomers and regulars alike. Tonight, my husband, Till, and I are visiting not only for our love of a pint, but also for Churchill’s monthly Psychic

Night, which offers 20-minute individual sessions on the second Thursday of each month. We’ve signed up for a session with psychic Sandra Larson, one of several on the schedule, and we venture in past the patio seating and head up a wooden staircase to enjoy a drink upstairs while we wait our turn.

The bar boasts a wide selection of beer from across the pond, plus a menu starring the rich pub food that pairs so well with it. We settle in with a couple of black and tans—Guinness floated atop Bass Ale—and opt to share an order of Cheesy Hampton Fries topped with chives and jalapeños (\$7.95) from the appetizer menu. On the hearth by the fireplace is a stack of communal board games. Finding a familiar one, Till brings it to our table, and we alternate winning and losing streaks before heading downstairs for our psychic session.

We’ve chosen to meet with Sandra, an animal communication specialist, hoping to gain insight into what’s going on with our ailing, 16-year-old orange tabby cat, Truman. Sandra flips through the photos I’ve brought and notices Truman’s large, alien-like eyes, yellow-green like Spanish olives. Truman,

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**MCKINNEY’S CHESTNUT SQUARE,** a collection of Collin County homes and structures dating to 1854, hosts monthly ghost walks! To learn more, see [texashighways.com/drink](http://texashighways.com/drink).

once a sturdy, surly 20 pounds, capable of shredding a new slipcover and helping himself to a freshly poured coffee with cream, has suddenly shrunk in size. And then there’s that matter with our six-year-old daughter, who’s unnerved by the way Truman glares at her. (He totally does.)

We hold hands with Sandra, close our eyes, and she quickly establishes a rapport with Truman; he communicates that he knows he has a “visa” for an extra-long stay, and that he’s as comfortable as he can be given his age. Sandra tells us that Truman sees our daughter as the “wisdom keeper.” Those glares? We should think of them more like intense gazes, attempts to connect. Sandra suggests that since Truman’s midnight yowling has gotten him kicked out of our bedroom, we should place a worn article of clothing in his bed so he can feel closer to us at night.

I’m intrigued, if perhaps a bit skeptical. But a few hair-raising moments chip away my doubt. Sandra gets distracted by several flashes of color behind us and notes that we’re being guided. Later, she suddenly asks if I’ve uttered the word “Casey.” (I have not, but strangely, that was the name of my beloved childhood spaniel.)

Our 20 minutes pass all too quickly, leaving many questions unanswered. We return to our table upstairs, where our server has saved both our place and our game. Erin and Marie have been smart to keep all the customer favorites from the pub’s days as The Londoner, including classic British fish-and-chips, shepherd’s pie, and Scottish haggis. Till orders the Bangers and Mash (sausages and mashed potatoes served with onion rings), and I opt for the Voodoo Pasta (\$12.95), a penne dish with zucchini and spinach tossed in a creamy Gouda

sauce. Marie, in her lovely accent, recommends a “Boddy’s” (Boddington Pub Ale on draft), and who could refuse? We continue our game as Led Zeppelin’s “Hey, Hey, What Can I Do” plays in the background. As the night darkens, nearby tables fill with customers, and we relax in the warm buzz of conversation and the occasional clack of a pool game.

Later that night, back at home, I peer past the baby gate into Truman’s bed to say goodnight. “Did you talk to Sandra tonight?” I ask him. Blink go his big Spanish-olive eyes. I see Till’s white undershirt in his bed, and I smile. ★

**PSYCHIC NIGHT**

**Churchill’s British Restaurant & Pub,** at 100 N. Tennessee St. in McKinney, hosts Psychic Night the second Thursday of each month; sign-ups begin at 4:45 p.m.; readings (20 minutes for \$20) are scheduled from 5-9:30 p.m. Call 972/562-2929; [www.churchillsmckinney.com](http://www.churchillsmckinney.com).

For more about **Sandra Larson**, see [www.sandralarson.com](http://www.sandralarson.com).

The annual **Legends of McKinney Ghost Walk** takes place 6-10 p.m. October 19 and 26; call 972/562-8790; [www.chestnutsquare.org](http://www.chestnutsquare.org).

For more about Psychic Night organizer **Kim St. Andre** (below), see [www.kimstandre.com](http://www.kimstandre.com).



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