

Peggy Gordon's taps niche market in NP

Big, friendly welcome for city's Celtic pub

A Daily News Advertising Feature

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AND WELCOME TO THE CELTIC BAR

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Bar opens with a real party

Revelling patrons dance on seats, drink the pub dry

By CATHERINE GROENESTEN

THE supply of Guinness was drunk dry at the opening of Peggy Gordon's Celtic Bar in New Plymouth on Friday.

In a night of revelry during which the crowds danced on the seats to the music of New Zealand's top Celtic band, Phinix Brady, the city's latest watering hole was christened.

Owner Bertie Burleigh said he couldn't have wished for a better reception for the new bar. "It's been a long-time ambition, which comes from the heart, it doesn't come from a commercially planned enterprise. What we're doing here is in true Celtic style. The music is authentic, we're trying to create a warm and friendly atmosphere so our customers, no matter who they are, feel welcome," he said.

"The band said they have not seen a night like that since Molly Malone's opened in Wellington, or St Pat's night."

"In all, we drank 12 kegs of Guinness on Friday, and we'd budgeted on eight for the weekend! We could have done the same on Saturday if it had been available."

The new bar has been enthusiastically received by the region's Scottish and Irish community, with the Celtic Society lending its support in setting it up.

On display in the bar is a set of bagpipes and a Scottish war shield and several genuine swords, which were well used in battle against the Sassenachs (English), said Bertie.

The bar carpet is based on the MacGregor tartan, with the seats upholstered in a version of the Blackwatch tartan.

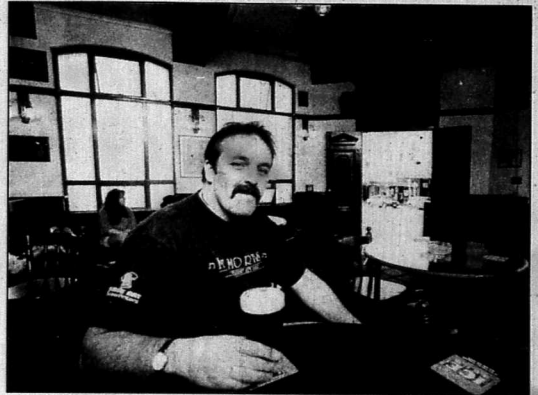
Bertie said the seating design was similar to that used in Kitty O'Brien's Bar in Auckland, and had been built good and strong.

"I said to the builder make sure the seats are strong. He asked why, and I told him to wait and see. He was in on Saturday night, and could see then why the seats had to be strong."

"The music gets people up and singing along with the band."

"The music is not the only authentic Celtic offering at the bar — adventurous customers can also try a range of genuine Celtic food, including haggis, black pudding, white pudding, oat cakes, Guinness Stew and Irish bread."

"The name Peggy Gordon's originates from a



A QUIET ONE: Bar owner Bertie Burleigh relaxes with a Guinness. He's lucky to have one; patrons drank the pub dry of the stuff on opening night. Photo: ADRIAN MALLICH

Celtic fable. Peggy was the beautiful wife of a somewhat wimpy land owner. Across the valley from their castle there lived a very strong, rugged rogue.

On this particular day, all the servants and menfolk of the castle were away at market. The rogue decided to do a bit of raping and pillaging, so he headed for the castle where only Peggy Gordon, her husband and one servant were at home.

"Peggy Gordon urged the two men out to fight the attackers, despite her husband's misgivings, as there were 13 against the two of them. She said if he was any sort of man he'd do it. Half an hour later, the rogue was in control and he and Peggy Gordon lived happily ever after. Their marriage was consummated that same afternoon," said Bertie.

The tale is told in a song which has a special significance for Bertie.

In Scotland the New Year is traditionally celebrated with first footing — with visits to the homes of all your friends and acquaintances.

"It's traditional to take along a drink to offer the

householder, and you should also take along a lump of coal and a piece of cake. There's a Celtic myth in that — so your house will never run dry, you'll always be warm and you'll never go hungry."

On this particular night, he went out with a good friend, Jackie Higgins, who started out singing the tale of Peggy Gordon at each home they visited.

"As the night wore on, it became a duet. We disappeared off the earth for four days going from house to house. My wife didn't know where to find me," he said.

"When we were wondering what to call the bar, that song has always been with me, it reminds me of very memorable times in Scotland and that true Celtic tradition."

He wants the bar to be a friendly watering hole, rather than a trendy place to be seen.

"We want to see regulars, to see people walk through the door at regular times through the week, so we know what to pour them before they ask, what their favourite tippie is," he said.

Anyone would be welcome, apart from drunks and underage drinkers.

The hard work's over, now for some sleep

BERTIE BURLEIGH snatched only six hours sleep in the 72 hours leading up to the opening of Peggy Gordon's bar.

He said his staff and the contractors who refurbished the old building had also all worked extremely hard to get the project finished.

The old building has been refurbished in its original style, including repairing the old plaster ceiling, a job which 10 plasterers looked at and walked away from.

Capacity crowds on both Friday and

Saturday nights welcomed the new bar to town, and the \$8 Sunday lunch — a traditional roast dinner — was sold out by 2pm.

But those who missed out can go back next week, as it will be on each week. Bertie said Peggy Gordon's was complementary to his Memories restaurant downstairs. But it was advisable to pre-book a table at Memories as it was very busy at the weekend.

The bar will be open seven days a week. The licence hours are from 7am to 2am,

but very early opening would be kept for special functions and events, said Mr Burleigh.

Notable days would be St Patrick's Day, Burns Night and Hogmanay — New Year's Eve, a celebration which would be unprecedented, he said.

As well as having Guinness on tap, he also stocks a good selection of other imported beers. These include Younger's Tartan Special, a Scottish beer, and North England's most popular beer, Newcastle Brown Ale.

Peggy Gordon's CELTIC BAR

Lead Mike Birke

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Peggy Gordon's

All welcome to new bar.
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OPEN DOOR: The doors will be open to everyone, says bar owner Bertie Burleigh. Photo: ADRIAN MALLOCH

Pub mourns Scots' loss

THE black sheet draped on one wall at Peggy Gordon's Bar is a sign of mourning for the Scottish team demolished 51-15 by the All Blacks on Sunday.

Rugby is a subject dear to the heart of owner Bertie Burleigh.

"We're always willing to discuss any important topic relating to rugby, and the bar staff will be wearing black armbands in a mark of respect to the Scottish team," he said. "But in the

words of the Scottish national anthem: "We can still rise and be that nation again!"

He still remembers vividly watching the All Blacks play Wales 15 years ago, the night he and his late wife, Lynne, arrived in New Zealand. Bertie was born in Wales.

"There was a reception committee waiting for us in New Plymouth, but the weather was so bad we had to bypass New Plymouth and were flown to Wellington," he said.

Because his body clock was still confused by the travel, he was awake and switched on the hotel television at 2.30am, just in time for the kick-off.

"That's a night I'll never let New Zealanders forget. The famous Andy Haden stepped out of the lineup and Brian McKechnie slotted a penalty goal to win the game (13-12). New Zealanders always claim that that penalty was for another offence, but some of us know better!"

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Good Luck 'Peggy Gordons'

Congratulations Bertie on the opening of your new bar. We wish you all the best for the future and are proud to supply all the wine and spirits for the new Celtic Bar and Memories Restaurant.



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