

# Under-Floor Eating

Or a series of reports on eating places  
in the crypts of central London churches and other venues

Neil and Marion Richardson , together with Jill Marsh visit the Crypt Cafe at the International Headquarters of the Salvation Army . We were there to savour the Crypt Cafe and what it had to offer to the busy person seeking a lunch in an unusual place. This is our 7th report on 12 such venues during 2011

## 1. Ambience



We arrived at 12 noon and the Cafe 101 as it is called was very busy indeed throughout our stay. We found a friendly atmosphere, a very modern ambience, light, airy, clean and bright. In some ways it was reminiscent of a good quality works canteen. Part of the reason we liked it was that although under-ground, the open plan and the glass walls mean that daylight streams into the space and there isn't hint of the cavernous. It almost feels like an outdoor venue with white light giving a happy feel to everything. And it also felt impressively international with lots of men and women in Salvation Army uniforms, but wearing smiles as well.

## 2. Welcome

As with other venues, the staff were so busy that welcome isn't really on the menu, but friendly it certainly is. Fabienna quickly agreed to pose for my photograph as Neil vehemently denied her self-deprecation that she wasn't pretty enough! (What an old smoothie!) She has worked at the cafe for 2 years and hails from Brazil.



## 3. Service

It was a bit hectic. There was a Danish family with 4 daughters (!) in front of us and they were having trouble getting information about what the girls wanted to eat. As we waited in quite a long queue, one of the staff was loudly inviting people to come forward if they could pay, but they need a better queuing system

## 4. Price

Good prices! Marion and I had brie, ham, pickle and tomato in a baguette at £3.70. Sparkling water was £1.10, crisps £1. Jill had soup with rolls at £2.10. Coffee came in at £1.45.

## 5. Comfort

There was a choice of seating. We sat on huge wooden block seating with similar style tables. But there were also little cafe tables and chairs as well as an area with more comfortable seats and coffee tables.

## 6. Menu

The menus is limited, but satisfactory. Marion suggested that the quality of our food may have been helped by the lack of variety. They do a small menu but do it very well. As well as soup, they have a burger and salad with potato wedges at £5.30. Then there was Fusilli Arrabiata (spicy pasta) but you could also find jacket potatoes with a variety of 4 fillings. They also serve a range of sandwiches and toasted sandwiches. Very acceptable.

## 7. Opening hours

Open Monday to Friday only, from 8am to 4.30pm. Quite limited hours, but this is the City of London and the week-ends are a bit dead.

### 8. Food quality

We all found the quality to be excellent and would recommend the food here. It is unpretentious and served naturally, but the taste was really top quality and very fresh. However, my so-called filter coffee tasted like powdered coffee to me.

### 9. Can we bring our own?

No, sorry

### 10. Accessible?

Completely with a lift right at the front door.

### 11. Value added?

You are sitting very close to Tate Modern, St. Paul's Cathedral, Millennium Bridge, Globe Theatre and exhibition, the City of London and the attractions of the river Thames.

### 12. Toilet quality

Ah, here we hit issues! There are cubicles, but only 2 for men and 2 for women. Considering that there must have been about 80-100 people at times, not enough? In the men's one cubicle was locked and the other was blocked with water all over the floor. I told Fabienna and she went to check it out. Later, on my return, both cubicles were locked. I had to hang on till I got home! In the ladies, one of the washing basins was full of the water with which someone had washed their hands. In order to empty the bowl, one need to put one's hand into the water to release the plug mechanism. Not a good idea- a design failure I am afraid. Otherwise the facilities are bright, basically clean modern and spacious.

### 13. How to get there?

Cafe 101 is situated at 101 Queen Victoria Street at the junction with Peter's Hill and if you look south you see the Tate Modern and if you look north, you see St. Paul's Cathedral. Central Line to St. Paul's and follow the signs to the Millennium Bridge.

