

## **Midsomer Norton Audio Trail - Number 20 High Street**

*[Ambient sound: historic pub, people chatting, glasses clanking, background music, car revving, fire, wintry storm, cheering]*

There were many public houses in Midsomer Norton. Miners gathered in them, especially on pay-day when they met their foreman to split the earnings. Whether they cut the coal at the workface, shovelled it, pushed, pulled or dragged tubs, each one wanted his fair share. The foreman would have a drink to break up the money and then hand it out to the others...

*William: Evening, David.*

*David: Hello William, can I get a pint of lager?*

*William: Certainly, that's 4 pence. How was your day?*

*David: It was a hard day in the mines, same as always. What about you?*

*William: Busy – I bought a new car! It was 450 pounds – it's really posh.*

*[Door swings]*

*Elizabeth: DAVID!!! I knew you'd be here!*

*David: Well, I had a tough day, so I'm allowed to have a pint.*

*Elizabeth: And what about me!? I look after 5 kids – I work every day.*

*David: We've saved loads though, and I've only gone out once this week.*

*Elizabeth: But we have another kid on the way – we need the money. Come home – your dinner is ready.*

*David: I'll be back later.*

*William: Stop arguing and go home with your wife, David.*

*David: No, I will not.*

Opposite you now is Mallard's pub. Originally called the Commercial Hotel, it was built in the 1800s. In 1913, the owner was a man called William Higgins. He must have been doing well, because his fancy new car cost £450, the equivalent of almost £67,000 in today's money! However, three months later, he was driving nearby when he stopped to light the lamps with a match. The car caught fire and it burnt so brightly that the blaze could be seen four miles away. It was a total wreck.

Before it was called Mallard's, the pub was named the Jack O'Lent. Fifty years ago, two chunks of wood were discovered in fertilizer bags in St John's Church. They turned out to be very old bits of the figure of a medieval knight, and for a few decades they were kept in a museum in Bristol, before being returned to the church in 2011. It's thought that the knight might have been used as a "Jack O'Lent" as part of a curious medieval tradition...

*Voice 1: Finally, it feels like winter is leaving.*

*Voice 2: And that means we get to celebrate Jack O'Lent again!*

*Voice 1: What have you brought this year?*

*Voice 2: My family's farm had some rotten potatoes left over from last year.*

*Voice 1: I've been collecting rocks all week.*

*Voice 2: Serves him right!!*

*Voice 1: Who?*

*Voice 2: Judas Iscariot, you idiot, that's who we're pelting.*

*Voice 1: I thought we were pelting a knight?*

*Voice 2: The knight is just an effigy – it represents Judas, who betrayed Jesus. That's why we throw things at it every year.*

*Voice 1: And once we've done this, spring will be upon us again!*

*Voice 2: The street looks packed!*

*Voice 1: It always is for Lent – this ritual brings the whole town out.*