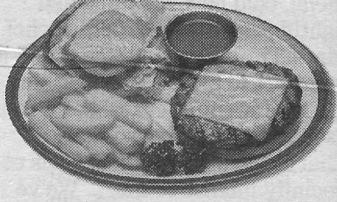


DINING

LUNCH

COUNTER



Gaelic Groove

BY HOLLY HERRICK

Of The Post and Courier Staff

Madra Rua

1034 E. Montague Ave., North
Charleston

PHONE: 554-2522

HOURS: Daily, 11 a.m.-1 a.m.

Whether you're Irish or just in the mood for a Gaelic good time, you need to visit Madra Rua. This 4-month-old pub in the Old Village in North Charleston is owned by Dublin native Stephen T. O'Connor. Spotlessly clean, the little nook of a pub oozes that special lure for which the Irish are known.

Dark wood booths with padded banquettes and a bar with plenty of Guinness on tap make for a soothing environ that's perfect for a cultural getaway. Irish music plays at just the right volume and the largely-male, remarkably attractive staff kept me very comfortable.

My excellent waiter was a young man with the most endearing Dublin accent and plenty of self-effacing charm. Food here is sturdy, upscale bar food that's predominantly Irish, but includes some American mainstays such as (Angus beef) burgers (\$6.50) and chicken wings (\$4.95.)

The day I visited, a series of substantial-sounding sandwiches were offered as specials, but I couldn't resist the promise of a crispy basket of fish 'n' chips. Served with a bottle of malt vinegar, the "chips" were hand-cut, skin-on, fabulous homemade indulgences. The cod was a towering chunk of moist flesh coated with a dense, crispy batter that was just as good as what you might find in the old country.

A visit here is almost as much fun as being "over there." So much so, I gleefully tapped out a few steps of the jig under the table while I was there.