

# Bingo

(July 2008 by Jackie)

Eyes down. Two and one. 21. All the fours. 44. On its own. Number one. I wasn't sure if it was more mind-numbing or meditative but it was definitely just a little exciting as our table of six racked up £100 in winnings between us, a couple of us winning on a full house, and having, as the compère remarked, a good bottom (good bottom line).

Descending into the dark netherworld that is the Cambridge 'Gala' bingo hall, bathing in the atmosphere of the £2 Friday special (Vicky and I had the fish and chips), dobber pens, OAPS alone and in pairs, has a kind of osmotic effect. During play social chitchat goes out the window – a feature non-existent in this underground world of plastic chairs, cheap beer (Carlsberg – probably *not* the world's...) and greasy chips.

But there was also something very friendly – Ally's friend giving us instructions – “'Lucky 5's' is next, then 'Main Event'” – as we dobed off the numbers on the different coloured bingo cards. A few giggles but no time to talk in between fast number calling, except for an occasional: ‘... two lines now?’ and an audible sigh as someone shouted ‘here’. After the last ticket, it was sobering to go back up and out into the light of what was left of a sunny evening.

Thanks to Ally for organising this event. But will this be inspiration for more dobbing nights out? My last venture to the parallel universe that is Gala Bingo was ironically in July 1999 (almost exactly 9 years to the day): ‘... about time you came here again’, said the woman at reception. And despite it being a fun and different social event – followed by a more regular drink afterwards at the Radegund pub – it may yet be another decade before I go again, despite receiving a free Wednesday bingo card with my ‘good bottom’ and full house.