



Hancock

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A SIDEWAYS LOOK AT LIFE, AS THE LAD 'IMSELF MIGHT HAVE SEEN IT

MG Rover keepsake is a corker

THE most celebrated – and quite possibly the saddest – cork in West Midland industrial history has finally been traced, almost a decade after it was popped.

On May 9 2000, John Towers rode into Longbridge as a knight in shining armour as head of the Phoenix consortium after buying the car factory (and millions of pounds of debts) for £10 from BMW. In suitably celebratory style, he cracked open a bottle of champagne to the resounding cheers of workers.

Sadly, as everybody knows, it all went terribly flat at Longbridge, leaving 6,500 workers out of a job and creditors owed £1.3 billion.

But, Hancock can reveal, the famous cork survives to this day.

Vin Hammersley, stalwart former Longbridge press officer and now top communications guru at Warwick Business School, has it proudly on display at home. Vin, Mr Towers' minder on takeover day, says: "I've kept the cork ever since. It's on a shelf in my kitchen."

Mr Towers was unavailable for comment.

How a good curry gave fiery Freddie the Edge

HE'S one of the most fearsome opponents in world cricket and now the secret of Freddie Flintoff's fiery play can be revealed: Brummie curry.

Flintoff startled restaurant customers when he bowled into Thai Edge in Brindleyplace for an unannounced dinner.

The Ashes hero treated his wife Rachel and children to a feast after visiting a cinema.

Flintoff couldn't resist the eatery's £21.50-a-head Royal Orchid menu and cut a swathe through the top order of chicken satay, spring rolls, prawn rolls and chicken in pandanus leaves.

Following the mixed starters, the England all-rounder swiftly polished off one of the restaurant's highly recommended green curries with chicken.

As he was on international duty, battling

it out against the Aussies in the Third Test at Edgbaston, Flintoff sensibly kept to soft drinks, shunning the temptation of Mekong, a Thai whiskey, a Chang, a potent beer from South-east Asia.

By all accounts, Flintoff's sweet-toothed missus was smitten with the mango cheescake.

The green curry must have given the star the edge when he went to the crease, scoring an impressive 74 – including ten fours.

Nancy Nathwani, owner of Thai Edge, said Flintoff was impeccably polite and approachable. She told Hancock: "He and his

family were absolutely lovely and they were delighted with their meal.

"But he was not the only cricketer to turn up that evening. Suddenly all the customers started getting excited because Ravi Bopara walked in. It was a smashing night."

Typical. You go for dinner at a Thai restaurant, wait for one cricketer to come along, and two turn up at once.



White hot: Hancock can't confirm Flintoff turned up at Thai Edge with bat in hand, but this is how he would have looked... probably.

City gives sick Matt the Willis

WHEN former Busted star Matt Willis accompanies wife Emma to Style In The City next week, he'll be hoping for a better time than on a recent trip.

"He had swine flu the other week when we were in Birmingham," Sutton Coldfield-born Emma, who comperes the catwalk shows at the four-day fashion extravaganza, told Hancock. "He ended up staying there for a week and we locked him in my bedroom at my mum's house; he's fine now, but it was a bit like 'Come to Birmingham, get swine flu!'"

While Emma hosts the fashion shows, Matt will be left holding the baby – looking after their three month old daughter Isabelle.

"Matt's at home as well at the moment so I'm quite fortunate in that respect," says Emma. "I can't imagine how much harder it would be if you were doing it on your own – I have got so much respect for those women that do it alone. It's the hardest thing in the world but it's amazing."

Calvin's in a real jam

SINGER/producer Calvin Harris is a big Jam fan – but we're talking the music, not the sweet stuff.

But that's the mistake that the powers that be in charge of fulfilling guest stars' riders made when Calvin requested the Jam in his dressing room at the V Festival at Weston Park, Staffordshire, last month.

Instead of his favourite tunes from Paul Weller, he was greeted with raspberry

and marmalade. But we're sure Calvin would have seen the funny side – in more ways than one. As this summer he set up JAM TV on YouTube which features celebs opening jars of jam.

He was inspired to create it after comedienne Holly Walsh, a guest presenter on Pocket TV, upset him by filming him trying to open a jar of jam which she had glued shut. He described it as a terrible feature.

STEAKS AND SEAFOOD

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