

handheld POS system

with positive results

By H. Rae Gibbons

Ray Morrison, malt scotch enthusiast, and his wife, Joie, decided to open a Scottish-themed pub in the Washington D.C. area in 1981. What started as a hobby has since blossomed into the Royal Mile Pub, a thriving area restaurant that boasts the largest selection of single malt scotches in Montgomery County, Md. — 83 to be exact. The Royal Mile Pub offers scotch tastings every Thursday, live music three to four times a month — and a calendar of events that draws a crowd before and after every meal.

Guests dining at the Royal Mile Pub will find a menu featuring traditional Celtic fare such as shepard's pie and lamb stew to complement the Tartan hangings and pictures of Scottish bagpipers on the walls. However, the diverse menu extends beyond traditional fare to include a New York strip steak, a Maryland crab cake platter and a basil tomato pasta, appealing to a variety of taste buds.

History meets technology

The décor at the Royal Mile Pub may hark back to an earlier era, but the point-of-sale (POS) system they use puts them on the

cutting edge of technology. As a beta test site for ASI, a neighboring technology company, the Royal Mile Pub has started using a system known as the ASI Handheld POS System. This patent pending new POS inter-

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face relies on handwriting recognition software and pocket PCs to allow servers to take orders right at tableside.

The ASI Handheld works like an electronic pencil and pad. As soon as a server writes an abbreviation like "SP" for shepard's pie (or the full name of the item) the ASI Handheld automatically asks the server to select one of the side dishes that accompany this main course. The ASI Handheld can also prompt for seat number, or a membership number if the guest is enrolled in a loyalty program.

The ASI Handheld was created to use handwriting recognition to enhance the service relationship between server and customer by enabling the server to quickly enter orders into the POS and send them to the appropriate station while still at the table.

Waiters at the Royal Mile Pub say they're now more comfortable using the ASI Handheld than they were using pencil and pad. Waitress Anne Marie Diogo explains, "The ASI Handhelds make everything so much faster and easier. For instance, I used to hate it when customers asked me what brands of scotch we carry. I'd always forget some of them. But now, with the ASI Handheld I can scroll through the whole list whenever I want."

For the past two years, Royal Mile Pub has been using ASI's fixed touchscreen POS terminals in the restaurant. Morrison agreed to test the handhelds because he enjoys keeping up with current technology. In addition, many of the clientele at the Royal Mile Pub are higher-level government employees and, therefore, accustomed to cutting edge technology, which made Morrison confident that the handhelds

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would be a good fit. But he has been surprised at how quickly the ASI Handheld has improved his bottom line. “We are consistently selling more drinks and more desserts now,” he says. “And because my waiters are so much more efficient, they can handle more tables than before. My staffing needs and labor costs are way down.”

Royal Mile Pub is using three of the ASI Handhelds for the 88-seat dining room, but plans to begin using one more in the future and remove one of two fixed POS terminals currently in place.

Training on the handhelds went smoothly and quickly — consisting of three half-hour training sessions. A representative from ASI went to the restaurant to train Morrison and two other employees. The three of them were then responsible for training the wait staff, which, according to Morrison, went very well. “The training is simple because all you’re doing is writing lower case letters onto a pad. It took the servers only three or four shifts to really get into it. And our new staff members take to it right away.”

Benefits and future use

According to Morrison, the ASI Handheld provides the following benefits to the restaurant:

- **Faster table turns** — The handhelds save time because servers no longer need to record each order twice — once at the table and a second time at a POS terminal. The order goes to the kitchen much sooner while the server



Courtesy of ASI

- can immediately move on to the next table;
- **Reduced errors** — Servers are reminded to ask for details like cooking temperatures or salad dressings. And they don’t have to try deciphering their own scribbles. Also, Morrison says that because the handheld system prompts the user to en-

ter orders into the system starting with seat number one, and then moving around the table, it makes it easy to track specific items to the corresponding guest, which is especially helpful when a food expeditor is needed on a busy night. This function also makes it less complicated to provide split checks — even after the order has been totaled; and

- **Increased up-sells** — The handheld POS makes it easier for servers to up-sell drinks, appetizers, desserts and add-ons because the restaurant’s entire menu is in the palm of their hands.

Morrison would like to eventually implement the handheld system at the bar, so that bartenders wouldn’t forget to enter drinks into the POS on busy nights. ASI is working on that concept right now. Morrison says, “The most complicated aspect is that we have 83 single malt scotches with some very unusual names. Once that list is written into the system, the rest should be easy.”

In addition, Morrison says he is looking into building a deck on top of the Royal Mile Pub, and the ASI Handheld offers the flexibility for outside order taking. **ACS**