



PHIL CARPENTER THE GAZETTE

Police Constable Éric Charbonneau and Hurley's manager Rod Applebee help Hester Kerr, 95, as she leaves the pub. She and seven other women from the Fulford Residence retirement home were out on a semi-annual pub outing Tuesday afternoon.

PUB CRAWL – WITH POLICE ESCORT

The police officer put his arm around the 95-year-old woman and helped her down a ramp into the paddy wagon. Then off they went – north on Guy St. to Ste. Catherine, right turn, another right onto Crescent, and full stop in front of Hurley's Irish Pub. It was another police-chaperoned pub crawl for the ladies of Fulford Residence. **David Johnston** rides along, **Page A3**

SEMI-ANNUAL POLICE ESCORT gets elderly women out on the town, walkers in hand, for a drink

Raise a glass to this pub crawl

DAVID JOHNSTON THE GAZETTE

Before lunch was brought out to the 38 elderly women seated in the dining room of Fulford Residence on downtown Guy St., employee Sandra Glover rang a little bell in her hand to get everyone's attention.

"Good afternoon, ladies," she said. "I will just remind you that the pub crawl today begins at 2 p.m."

Montreal is a city with a rich, colourful history when it comes to clubbing. But nothing quite matches the semi-annual pub crawl of the women of Fulford nursing home, under the careful chaperone of the Montreal police force.

Sure enough, just as Glover had said, a Montreal police paddy wagon pulled up in front of Fulford shortly before 2 o'clock on Tuesday afternoon. The weather outside was terrible. A late spring snow shower was falling.

But that didn't deter some of the women of Fulford – like 95-year-old Hester Kerr.

"Mrs. Kerr says she wants to go," nurse Celi Glover whispered into managing director Donna Girard's ear.

"But she's in a wheelchair," Girard said.

"Well, she says she's going to walk today," nurse Glover said.

Out of the paddy wagon came Constable Eric Charbonneau and his partner, Constable Bruno Delli Colli. Handsome men, they looked like they had come out of *GQ* magazine, too.

Charbonneau put his arm around Kerr and helped her down a ramp into the paddy wagon. The two officers worked with Fulford employee Marie-Anne James and four Fulford volunteers to escort another seven women into the paddy wagon.

And then off they went. Delli Colli drove north on Guy to Ste. Catherine St., turned right, went to Crescent St. and turned right again, then pulled to a stop in front of Hurley's Irish Pub.

Charbonneau jumped out and stopped the traffic while the eight women, age 88 to 95, got out in single file. Some could only walk with walkers.

The motorists who had come to a stop behind the paddy wagon couldn't believe what they were seeing.



Cop chaperone: Retired Montreal constable John Parker speaks to 87-year-old Ruth Windsor (left) and Phyllis Eperson, 91, at Hurley's Irish Pub.

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Delli Colli said: "People just freak out when they see it. They say, 'What are the police doing with these old ladies in a paddy wagon?'"

It's been like that since the very first police-escorted Fulford pub crawl in 1999.

It all began when two female police officers, Constables Lily Fortin and Carole Racette, took the women of Fulford out to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts to mark Quebec's Seniors Week. Constable John Parker went with them.

Until he retired three years ago, Parker worked downtown Montreal on foot patrol. On that first visit to the museum, the Fulford party travelled in a number of different cars. Parker was in one car. Along the way, he looked out his car window and saw a pub. He remarked, just as a joke, "Hey, we should go bar-

hopping instead."

And that was the end of it until Parker visited Fulford two weeks after that, and a woman said to him, "So when are you going to take the ladies out bar-hopping?"

The pub outing that Parker subsequently organized became the first in what has since become a semi-annual tradition.

After the eight women got out of the paddy wagon in front of Hurley's on Tuesday, they walked inside the pub and took seats in the room on the ground floor where the live band plays.

Kerr ordered white wine. She didn't like it. "Too sour," she said. She asked for hot chocolate instead. She didn't like that, either. "Too sweet."

Hazel Bryan, 88, ordered red wine. It came in a bigger wine glass than the ones she

remembered drinking from when she was a younger woman. "I'll tell you something: it's quite surprising to wake up one day and find you're 88," she said.

Although he is retired, officer Parker was there to say hello. His former foot-patrol partner, Constable André Leclerc, now works in police public relations. Delli Colli and Charbonneau have replaced Parker and Leclerc on the downtown foot patrol.

The two young officers have polished personalities and an effortless manner in both of Canada's official languages – they are the very personification of some of the things that Canadians see in Montreal.

Hurley's was the only stop on Tuesday's pub crawl, in keeping with the tradition of keeping it short and simple – a

trip out to one destination for two hours, then back home.

The sight of the eight women coming out of Hurley's with their walkers under police escort and being helped into a paddy wagon at 4 p.m. – before Happy Hour had even begun – created a buzz along Crescent.

Soon, a crowd gathered. A young guy in a ball cap applauded. He raised his fist, as if to say: Yeah! Rock on!

Safely back home at Fulford, the pub crawlers walked slowly up a wheelchair ramp back into the mansion that has been a nursing home for women in Montreal since 1855. Although still affiliated with the Anglican Church, there are Roman Catholic and Jewish women in Fulford today, and all sorts of languages are spoken inside its four walls.

Charbonneau and Delli Colli smiled and waved goodbye. And as afternoon turned to evening and the women of Fulford gathered once again in the dining room to eat, the pub crawl ladies gave their dining companions an enthusiastic capsulation of the day's event.

"They love it," nurse Glover said. "The ones who go, they always come back talking – talking about the men. You'd think it would be about the drinking, but it's about the men. See, we don't have any men here at Fulford. And so the women say, 'Oh, all those young men!'"

djohnston@
thegazette.canwest.com

IN HIGH SPIRITS
Watch our video of the Fulford women out on the town, at montrealgazette.com