

Out About

# Country charm and classic cuisine

By Karen Neville

IF good food and warm friendly hospitality are key ingredients for your choice for a meal out then the refurbished Bear & Ragged Staff needs to go on your list.

Located in Cumnor, the 16th century pub, has new owners – The Peach Pub Company – who have given it a new look inside and out.

The main part of the pub retains many Tudor features which are complimented by stylish modern country touches and furnishings.

Having not been there for many years we were pleasantly surprised by its new look and even more so to be greeted warmly by the manager Rob and deputy Bronte – we later found out she remembered serving us at sister pub The Fishes in Hinksey last summer, a nice touch.

So with the warm friendly hospitality box ticked it was time to try out the food. The regular menu was accompanied by a daily specials board and we were drawn to several of the choices on there.

I decided to order the twice-baked cheese soufflé with soused apples and balsamic pearls from the main menu. The soufflé was soft, fluffy and rich and the apples and pearls on top provided a subtle sharp contrast to the smoothness.

My husband chose the asparagus, topped with a poached egg and

Hollandaise and added a scattering of morels – the egg oozed perfectly over the bright green spears which he declared were cooked exactly as he liked them with a slight crunch.

The pub has a wine of the month and the bottle positioned on our table encouraged us to try the white Rioja which was much lighter bodied than others I have tried so made a good accompaniment to the starters.

We were tempted by the specials of duck breast with potato rosti, carrot and orange puree with a red wine and shallot jus and the mustard glazed pig cheeks with apple puree and chargrilled chicory with sides of creamy mash and spring greens.

The pig cheeks were a revelation, not something I'd tried before I wasn't really sure what to expect, and I can best describe them as being like pulled pork and packed full of flavour.

The duck breast was cooked as requested, just slightly more than pink and the jus added a delicious sweetness complimented by the puree.

Both dishes looked great as well as tasting great.

Much of the restaurant was full by mid evening and many others were eating with smiles on their faces too.

We decided to share dessert, a wise choice as the strawberry parfait was a very generous slice so it was just as well it was light and refreshing. It came with basil syrup



and mini black pepper meringues which provided a tastebud-pleasing contrast to the freshness of the parfait.

The whole meal had proved to be pleasing to the tastebuds and well worth a return visit, who knows to perhaps even enjoy the terrace and



The succulent pig's cheeks and cheese soufflé were both a real treat as was the refurbished pub itself with the look in keeping with the history

garden, weather permitting.

Oh and if you should want to try more, the pub boasts nine individual decorated bedrooms all with as much character as the food and The Bear & Ragged Staff itself.