

SHARON WALTERS was delighted with the quality of food and value for money when visiting a revamped landmark pub

Country inn offers the best of both worlds

RESTAURANT REVIEW

Wenlock Edge Inn
Hilltop, near Much Wenlock
STAR RATING: ★★★★★

When I hear tales of pubs undergoing “extensive investment and restoration” coupled with “award-winning chef” I feel a slight chill.

For that usually means bye bye pub and hello gastro eaterie falsely trading under the name of pub. They should really call themselves restaurant.

Drinkers are no longer welcome but diners are. Say farewell to a bar with a range of real ale and a place to chat and chew the cud.

So it was with some trepidation that I ventured up to the Wenlock Edge Inn following said “extensive investment and restoration.”

Well what a surprise when I walked through the front door. The bar is even more of a bar than before. It is truly aimed at the pub trade, providing a lovely atmosphere to enjoy a pint and a chat.

Go through to the other rooms and there you find the restaurant, just as it should be. In this

case extending into a conservatory with views over a terrace.

The Wenlock Edge Inn is on top of the Wenlock Edge and has superb panoramic views.

It is under new ownership, headed by local couple Paul and Emma Ryder, who previously achieved 2 AA Rosettes at Stretton Hall Hotel.

They are keen to ensure it remains as a traditional Shropshire pub, with country values of the best quality ingredients used simply.

Well I think they have achieved that, on the whole – I have just one reservation on the used simply which I will go into later.

We went quite early at 7pm last Saturday evening and the place was already buzzing. People were enjoying drinks in the bar while several tables were already occupied in the restaurant. By the time we left a little before 9pm there was not a table to be had.

The said restoration has been done very well with a mix of old and contemporary styling.

And so to the menu which changes regularly. There was an excellent choice for all three courses.

Fresh bread arrived on the table and we chose. I went for roasted asparagus spears wrapped in Wenlock Edge Parma ham with a cherry tomato salsa (£4.70) and bloke Neil had whole tiger prawns simply sautéed in wild garlic and lemon butter (£6.50).

Here comes my only criticism. The asparagus

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The Wenlock Edge Inn has a wide choice of food and a great atmosphere

was delicious, not over roasted and with lovely crisp local ham. The salsa was fresh and zingy but . . . it did nothing for the asparagus. In fact it overwhelmed it. There was no need for it.

Neil’s tiger prawns were huge – definitely one of the larger species! They were juicy and the garlic and lemon butter were well balanced.

Next I had braised shoulder of Shropshire lamb served with a mint and apple jus (£9.50). It arrived taken off the bone and neatly arranged in a stack. The meat was so tender and flavour-some.

Shoulder of lamb is one of my favourite cuts of the animal and when cooked like this, and indeed as well as this, cannot be bettered.

Neil had steak and ale pie, rich tender steak and Hobsons ale in a herb shortcrust pastry (£9.50).

As he cut into the pastry the aroma of the meat and gravy hit both of us. This was going to be good – and it was with every bit cleared off the plate.

Another triumph with the steak again slow cooked for that tender, melt-in-the-mouth result. All dishes come with vegetables of the day and a choice of new potatoes or home fries, mash or garlic mash.

We both had the mash which was perfect, not processed to a purée, just good mash with plenty of texture. The vegetables included sweet carrots and beans and while still firm were not as raw as some trendy places believe we ought to eat our five a day.

A short breather and we could not resist the pudding menu.

For me it was a double chocolate and strawberry crème brûlée (£4.50). Most sinful and utterly irresistible. Smooth chocolate and sweet strawberries.

Neil had one of his favourite puds – sticky toffee pudding served with sticky toffee sauce and vanilla ice cream (£4.50). A steal at the price and

it could have fed two. Very rich and in his judgement perhaps the best he has sampled – and believe me he has tried a few over the years.

Service was friendly and efficient led by the charming Emma and for such a busy night could not be faulted.

There are not many places around where you can get three quality courses and drinks for two for under £55. No wonder it was packed so soon after re-opening.

Paul has gained experience across the region in some of the top eateries, as well as spending time with wife Emma in Florida studying marine fish, and how best to cook it.

“I love fish, and being in a land-locked county it is even more precious so I like to treat it with respect, and ensure the flavours are allowed to speak for themselves, he said.

“We also appreciate the locals are meat lovers, so our meet will all be matured, and hung for up to 28 days, to ensure its tenderness and intense flavour.

“The veg will of course be whatever is in season, usually of the day!”

The pub offers walkers, tourists and regulars the opportunity to enjoy the stunning views, from the top of the Edge, and the changing seasons, not only on the plates.

Emma has already tethered her horses on the paddock, and welcomes any other equestrians to ride up to the pub, along the Jack Mytton Way, and take a well earned break, even providing snacks for the horses.

“Great food is not only for regulars,” Emma said.

“We welcome our four-legged friends to enjoy fresh peelings from the kitchen, and the occasional organic carrot, while their owners can enjoy an organic wine, or beer, providing they don’t over do it.”

In the words of Arnie – “I will be back”.

RESTAURANT MINI GUIDE

MENU SAMPLE STARTERS

Field mushrooms stuffed with peppers, cherry tomatoes and garlic topped with Perl Las creamy cheese (£4.50)

Seared Maryland crabcake served with a chilli oil dressed salad (£6.50)

MAIN COURSES

Fillets of red sea bream on a bed of crushed new potatoes with a sweet potato and chilli sauce (£11.95)

Rump steak (8oz) served with roasted onions, sautéed mushrooms and roasted cherry tomatoes (£9.50)

DESSERTS

Strawberry and vanilla light cheesecake with a mango and raspberry coulis and hazelnut biscuit (£4.50)

Citrus fresh fruit salad with fresh strawberries and raspberries (£4.50)

ATMOSPHERE

So welcoming and absolutely buzzing without being too noisy and intrusive

SERVICE

Excellent

DISABLED FACILITIES

No disabled facilities

CONTACT DETAILS

The Wenlock Edge Inn, Hilltop, near Much Wenlock. TF13 6DJ. Tel: 01746 785678



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