

# The View review

**Annie Bullen**  
*finds Restaurant 54*  
*way above par*

**T**here was a fine view of the 18th hole from our table. In fact there was a fine view of well-tended greens, mature trees and the odd bunker. But no golfers, which might have been something to do with the weather, which was a bit worse than average in a year when average has been pretty poor.

And that was a shame; there's a sadistic streak in me that would have liked watching golfers battling the lashing rain and howling wind while we sat in comfort, enjoying a bit of a treat.

Restaurant 54 is at Ampfield Golf Course, the name reflecting the fact that the course is a par 54, something golfers will understand.

The good news is that you don't have to know one end of a golf club from a divot to eat here, where the food came as a revelation. Not knowing a lot about golf clubs, I'd assumed them to be chicken and chips and scampi with sachets of tomato sauce sorts of places. Maybe I've got that all wrong – please don't write – but Restaurant 54, with young chef Mark Riordan in the kitchen, serves modern English food made with fresh local ingredients put together with a sure hand.

Roy, who came out to lunch with me, did start to explain about pars and I think he mentioned birdies and eagles but I was too occupied with the nice chewy herb bread to take any notice, which was just as well as he was obviously floundering. We were saved by scallops (for me) and his ham hock terrine with its bright mustard piccalilli. Three good juicy scallops, seared and served on thinly



**King prawns and a tasty tower of aubergine salsa**



**A restaurant with a view, whatever the weather**

**Restaurant 54 • Ampfield Golf Club • Winchester Road  
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sliced cold tomatoes with a balsamic dressing disappeared fairly quickly. The substantial slice of terrine packed with chunky ham in a herby jelly served with crisp toast was appreciated too, as was the piccalilli which always seems to me to be a peculiarly male relish.

The cosy bar behind the restaurant was buzzing. The restaurant itself, with large windows overlooking the leafy course, is comfortable, with interesting paintings and the obligatory trophy cabinet. I wonder if Mark in the kitchen knew he was facing the liver test. Calves liver, on a sweet potato mash, smoked bacon and a red onion jus, was Roy's main course and I knew he'd be grumpy if the liver wasn't crisp on the outside, sliced to just the right thickness and soft but not sludgy in the middle. It looked and smelt pretty good and scored on all counts. A bowl of nicely cooked, probably steamed, green beans, broccoli and courgettes came with it.

I enjoyed five fat king prawns, pan cooked with garlic and herbs, but I enjoyed even more the little tower of aubergine salsa that came with them. I tasted finely chopped aubergine, tomato and onion, contrasting nicely with the richness of the prawns. We could have chosen rump steak with sage butter, chicken breast on black pudding with a wine and tarragon sauce or hake with a black olive tapenade.

Now, this was lunchtime and we were

both pretty full, but as I hadn't eaten quite as much as Roy, I felt it was my duty to try a pudding. I was dithering between the fresh plum turnover or apple, lemon and ginger crumble but, on recommendation from Robyn, our waitress, chose a passion fruit crème brûlée which was the nicest pudding I've eaten all year, with a thin but crisp burnt-sugar coat, topping cream flavoured with fresh fruit purée.

Ladies who lunch and others who choose to meet here for a good meal will know that the restaurant opens for lunch from Tuesday to Sunday. You can also get breakfast and teas with home-baked cakes on those days. And now Restaurant 54 is opening on two nights a week for dinner from 1 November: you won't be able to enjoy the view but you'll relish the food served on Friday and Saturday nights. **V**

**Our meal, without drinks, came to around £38**



**Calves liver, bacon and sweet potato mash scored highly**