

# The View review

Annie Bullen's meal at *The Fish Inn goes swimmingly*



**The Fish Inn • The Bridges • Ringwood • Hampshire • BH24 2AA**  
**01425 473185 • www.thefishinn.net**

Lindsey, my friend, celebrated her birthday the day we went to taste the goodies at The Fish Inn at Ringwood, so the evening was a special one in many ways. The Fish, just outside Ringwood on the banks of the River Avon, has been there a long time. Longer than the A31 which bears a constant stream of traffic past the old building.

Manager Mike Nash reckons that parts of the pub are around 500 years old. Over the 19 years that he and his family – wife Julia and daughter Becky – have been in charge, the building has been gently restored. Fine old beamed ceilings, which were hidden away, have been revealed and rooms opened out to form a spacious and comfortable pub.

The Fish doesn't pretend to be anything it isn't and it's that real pubbiness which makes it so welcoming. Mike manages it for owners John and Vicky Salmon, who run it in tandem with the popular Bear and Ragged Staff at Michelmersh near Romsey. It's one of those pubs that you remember and want to visit



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again and I've been trying to pinpoint why. The staff, wearing their green Fish polo shirts, are friendly, helpful and obviously like working there. The walls are painted in soft greens and bricky reds, with slate-tiled floors. Paintings and prints of the old place as it was before the advent of the main road hang between the fine beams on the walls. And I'm told that the beer, from nearby Ringwood Brewery, St Austell brewery and the quaintly named Piddle from the Dorset brewery of the same name (after the local river) is good.

Once inside, you can't hear the whine of the traffic and I imagine travellers stopping on their way to Bournemouth and the south coast must be glad to find The Fish. Mike clearly loves it dearly. He said that he left for a year not so long ago, taking on a job with less responsibility. But he couldn't bear to be away from the pub that had become his home as well as his workplace and returned gladly when it was clear that the arrangements put in place while he was away were not working.

Large chalkboards on the walls tell you what's for lunch and dinner. There's a printed menu for sandwiches, sharing plates and lighter food. A cool gin and tonic went down nicely while we decided. Tempura prawns with a sweet chilli dipping sauce for me and mushroom and Stilton filo parcels for Lindsey, followed by salmon and dill fishcakes (Lindsey) and stuffed pork loin on creamed leeks for me.

It was still light enough to see the river outside as Kelly, our waitress, escorted us to a table by the window and we tucked into our starters, swapping a prawn here for a filo parcel there in the interests of research. And very good it was, too. Lindsey's fishcakes, crisp and tasty, arrived with a good fresh salad. My pork, with a sage and onion stuffing, was wrapped in bacon. The leeks in creamy sauce were just the right accompaniment, the



**Pork, with a sage and onion stuffing, wrapped in bacon**

vegetables cooked properly and the new potatoes excellent. Two women at the next table told us they looked forward to evenings here and, looking around at couples, families, friends, everyone seemed to be enjoying their night out.

I was glad I'd found room for pudding. The rhubarb and raspberry pie, with cream, was delicious. Lindsey, having said she couldn't manage another bite, made good use of the extra spoon, and tucked in, too.

Still, it was her birthday. 

**The bill for our food with one coffee and one peppermint tea came to a very reasonable £35.75**

### **What we could have had**

Starters included: garlic mushrooms, prawn cocktail, whitebait, potato wedges, pâté, smoked mackerel, and fried brie and cranberry sauce.

Mains were: steak, gammon and egg; braised lamb shank; beef and Stilton pie; chilli con carne; lasagne; braised liver and bacon; venison sausage and mash with onion gravy; stir-fry sweet chilli vegetables; broccoli and pine-nut pasta; battered cod; sea bream with ginger coconut sauce; trout and salmon.