

The View review

Annie Bullen takes a tasty trip down memory lane



Chocolate fondant with pistachio ice cream and a cheese plate

The Legacy Rose and Crown Hotel • Harnham Road • Salisbury • SP2 8JQ
01722 399955 • www.legacy-hotels.co.uk/legacy-roseandcrown

Many years ago, when summers were always sunny, I spent many pleasant June evenings with a bunch of friends sitting on the riverside terrace at the Rose and Crown at Harnham, drink in hand, idly watching the water and the ripples from splashing ducks, moorhen and the odd human who decided to cool off in the gentle flow that seemed full of water weed.

Always there, as it has been for centuries, the great spire of Salisbury Cathedral stood sentinel over this contented picture.

And so it was with some nostalgia that I recently drove over to Salisbury for dinner in the Pavilion Restaurant at the newly refurbished Rose and Crown, a three-star Legacy hotel (at the time of writing in line for

a fourth star). Open for lunch and dinner, this ancient timbered inn, parts of it dating from medieval times, stands on the banks of the Salisbury Avon, near the 13th-century Harnham Bridge which provided inspiration for painters and writers including Constable, Turner, Anthony Trollope and William Golding.

It's had its ups and downs, the Rose and Crown, but, with the arrival of new owners, new management and a complete refurbishment, the old building is on a definite up. What hasn't changed is the firm hand of chef John Tobin in the kitchen. He's been at the Rose and Crown for 34 years and, judging by our dinner, is cooking in a style and using ingredients well suited to today's tastes.


Manager Peter Roche has overseen the refurbishment and works with food and beverages manager Shaun Tudhope on the food front. It was still light enough, as we settled at our table by the window, to see the river flowing gently by and that tall cathedral spire towering above the landscape. A good look round and a gin and tonic had sharpened appetites and we both enjoyed our starters. I'm a sucker for goat's cheese in any form, and when it comes meltingly soft on a sweet pillow of onion marmalade tucked into a crisp tart, little bits of salad and balsamic dressing scattered tastefully around, it doesn't stay on the plate very long.

Roy ordered leek and potato soup. I was surprised, as we make a lot of it at home and I thought he might like something different. But it was a good choice, creamy and the right consistency and very tasty with a sprinkling of small golden croutons on top.

Chicken can be the most delicious of meats – and the most awful. Its quality depends on the supplier and the chef. The supreme of chicken was lovely. I chose it

because it was filled with Cashel Blue cheese, which I've eaten in Ireland and always thoroughly enjoyed. So, tender chunks of chicken with the savoury cheese, good-flavoured crushed potato, tomato chutney and lots of juicy leeks. It was so good to have plenty of well-cooked vegetables.

And there was a fanfare of broccoli on Roy's plate to go with his braised lamb shank, cooked long and slow until the meat was falling in tender pieces off the bone. A root-vegetable, red-wine sauce made a rich accompaniment and there was garlic mash as well. In the line of duty I stole a forkful and, if my chicken hadn't been so good, might have wished I'd had the lamb.

Chocolate fondant, a soft warm sponge with pistachio ice cream for me and a plate of cheese (brie, Cheddar, Stilton and Cashel Blue) for Roy, and we were pretty full. So I took up the offer of a gentle walk to see the new bedrooms – good-sized and nicely furnished, overlooking the garden and river – by way of gentle exercise. I almost decided to stay the night. 

Our meal, without drinks, came to a very reasonable £43

The menu has new items daily. When we visited, other starters included oak-smoked salmon with artichoke, spicy warm chicken and bacon salad, seared white pudding on caramelised apple or sliced duck breast with onion relish and raspberry dressing. Mains included roasted salmon fillet, sirloin steak with a peppercorn sauce and tomato and mushroom duxelle, lemon and herb baked mackerel and baked goat's cheese and pepper ravioli with spinach and a spicy tomato sauce.



Service with a smile