

Simple, straightforward and Superb!

2:42pm Friday 12th July 2013 in [Eating Out By Malcolm Warne](#)

IF you like your Sunday lunch straightforward, as in straight-up-and-down, no-larking-about, backto- basics, just-like-motherused- to-make, straightforward, we have a find for you this week.

A delightful instance of serendipity brought us to The Horseshoe Inn at West Rounton, a couple of miles off the A19 in the Northallerton-Darlington-Yarm triangle. We had intended to go somewhere else but foolishly hadn't booked and a quick phone call an hour before we wanted to eat at 1.30pm indicated that we might get a table after 4pm. Too late, we thought.

So a frantic web search threw up The Horseshoe. It caught my eye because my last recollection of the place was its closure.

Which just goes to prove that time flies in this business.

That was nine years ago. The Horseshoe was shut for six years until Stan Taylor and his wife Ann bravely took it over in 2010, gutted it and reopened.

After initial food offerings were not entirely successful, they are having another go.

When we called, it was only the second Sunday they had done lunch.

And what an excellent 40 out of 40 meal. Absolutely without any reservations, it was a stonkingly good, stupendous lunch. Of course, it is not hard to do the traditional Sunday spread but it is amazing how many places never manage to do the whole roast, veg and all the trimmings production perfectly.

There's nearly always something not quite right.

Now maybe the spirit of serendipity that clearly ruled that day aligned our personal tastes – our idea of the ideal Yorkshire pudding, beef gravy, vegetables selection etc – with what happened to emerge from the kitchen. But I rather like to think that chef Tom McLaughlin knows what he's doing – and that he won't be offended by me saying that given that he has been round the block a few times, it is not surprising.

Previous places of employment have included the Newbus Arms at Hurworth, when it was still a hotel and was highly regarded, and the Dog and Gun at Potto.

Now he lives in the next door village and offered the Taylors his services. It's great how things can just work themselves out, isn't it?

A word about the 2010 refurbishment.

Nothing special on the face of it, but we liked the simplicity of the decor, the solidity of the tables and chairs. It looked like it had been done with care, quality finishes and materials. Like the food, nowt fancy, just honest and in keeping with the pub's heritage as a village pub.

OK, what got us so excited about the food?

We didn't sample the starters – prawn cocktail, soup, pate and potato skins (£2.95-£3.95) – and choose the beef and the loin of pork (turkey was also available) for our main event.

Both roast meats (£8.50) were first class. Sylvia's pork was without a hint of dryness and well flavoured, served with its own gravy.

My beef was silverside, a cut often ignored in the hospitality business for its supposed inferiority to sirloin or rib. But cooked slowly as it was here, the flavour was truly memorable. Our young and sweet waitress thought the meat was sourced from the nearby Roots farm shop, so its excellence had good foundations.

Everything else on our plates kept up the standard, from the light, crisp-exterior- soft-interior Yorkshire puddings, the real gravies, the creamy, buttery mash, the crisp-outside-fluffy-inside roasties, the firm but properly cooked carrots, cauliflower and broccoli.

The piece de resistance for me was the creamed cabbage (and possibly leeks, we weren't quite sure). Such an old fashioned dish, it sounds on paper truly an awful combination, the sort of thing that would have fortified the Empire along with Brown Windsor soup, but here it was sublimely light and fresh.

Tradition being the thing, sure enough there was a crumble on the dessert and we shared a summer fruit version packed with blackberries and raspberries. It had a great topping, slightly crispy and chewy in places where the fruit had peaked through and caramelised, slightly doughy where the base of the crumble mix had dissolved into the fruit and served with lashings (I love that word – in a food context I might add in case any of you get funny ideas) of custard.

Service was great. The bill, with a soft drink and a pint of Edinburgh 80/-, was a measly £24.50. Full marks, a whole-hearted and happily delivered recommendation.

Book now. Blame me if you can't get a table.

Ratings:

Food Quality: 10/10

Service: 10/10

Surroundings: 10/10

Value: 10/10