

Free range freshness at Village House

Gill Etter pops over to Findon to sample some delicious traditional dishes

A charmingly historic hotel and restaurant right in the heart of old Findon Village – that’s the Village House Hotel. And under the new joint ownership of Paul Hills and Oliver Silverthorne, it’s now undergone a well-deserved facelift.

The Tudor building itself dates from 1527 with many additional Georgian features. The Village

House has been a hotel and pub for many years and when Paul and Oliver took over in September last year they decided to give it a boost, but retain the traditional style of the rooms.

“The bar area was very dark and gloomy, chiefly because the bar itself had been built across a beautiful original bay window, and most of the natural light was being obscured,” explains Paul. “Once we’d moved the bar across to the other side of the room, the transformation was amazing. It’s opened up the whole area, making it much more comfortable and welcoming.”

The result is friendly and cosy, with a distinctly historic feel. It’s the ideal place for guests to relax with drinks and study the menu.

If you’re a lover of hearty pub grub you won’t be disappointed – but there’s more to the dishes at Village House than you’d find on a run-of-the-mill pub menu.

“We’re taking extra care to serve

home-cooked food, traditionally made from local and free range ingredients, wherever possible,” says Oliver, the Head Chef. “Our speciality is fish and this comes straight from the beach or from Silverthorne’s in Worthing. When it comes to food, I strongly believe taste is everything, and home cooking from scratch is really hard work – but it’s worth it, if you want to achieve the best results.”

We decided to give it a whirl, and because we wanted to save plenty of room for our main course (with a dessert on the horizon) we chose a starter to share. The potted shrimps served with toasted onion bread were a real treat, with that lovely traditional flavour shrimps used to have in the good old days. We liked the sound of Bradan Roast, too – local hot smoked salmon served with cucumber and dill pickle.



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Moving on to the main course, we chose home-made shepherd's pie from the daily specials menu, and salmon haddock and prawn pie. Both arrived piping hot in their own dishes, topped with meltingly delicious mashed potato and served with a selection of fresh vegetables so comprehensive we could enjoy our five-a-day all in one go. There's nothing quite as satisfying as simple food cooked to perfection, with each fresh flavour bursting

into your mouth. This is comfort eating par excellence.

We had decided to content ourselves with merely reading the dessert menu. Blueberry bread and butter pudding, warm apple and amaretti tart, hot chocolate fondant – it all sounded amazing. Oh, but wait a minute – lemon posset? In my experience this is the top dessert of all time, and the Village House version is perfect – creamy and smooth with a lemon tang

guaranteed to perk up anyone's flagging taste-buds.

The Village House is open for lunch on Monday to Saturday between 12 noon and 3pm and for dinner every evening from 6.30 to 9.30pm. Sunday lunches, from 12 noon to 4.30pm are proving incredibly popular – and Oliver is convinced it has something to do with the gravy.

"It's properly made from stock with the real juices of the meat – and that makes all the difference," he explains.

You'll pay £10.95 for two courses, a traditional roast with dessert – so Sunday lunch for the family won't



break the bank. And if you're bringing the kids, just ask for a smaller portion of any of the regular dishes.

Check out the wine list, too. It features some exciting New World wines, with a special wine of the month to sample and enjoy with your meal.

AND DID YOU KNOW?

Village House has its own fish and chips takeaway service.

"There's no chippie in the village, so we decided to serve fish cooked in home made beer batter with hand cut chips to take away – all in a bio-degradable box," says Oliver. "It's really taking off – and people can come in and have a beer while they're waiting for their takeaway."



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