

A new dawn at the George

Eating Out

by Gareth Dant

NOW I am not a regular visitor to Wath, a pretty little village just off the A1, north of Ripon.

So I don't know whether it is a regular sight in autumn: a group of polite men in plus fours outside the village pub, one of whom doing push-ups on the ground.

It certainly made for a visual diversion as we approached that rare beast among endangered species – the reopened village pub.

Just a couple of months ago, Richard Bennington and Amanda Richards (both have backgrounds in IT, he still has a day job therein and they've run a B&B in Thirsk for a while) let the daylight and the punters in once more at the George. Formerly an Enterprise Inn, it had been closed for seven months.

An extensive, top-notch quality re-fit later, it is lovely.

Tastefully decorated and roomy, the main bar actually felt a little stark to me. But then again, with work still going on through the day to complete a function room and five bedrooms, they should be given a chance to get stuff on the walls.

It was also a reasonably quiet Tuesday night: on a busy, noisy evening, the large bar room with its wooden floors and scrubbed tables would absorb plenty of atmosphere. A little tabletop chalkboard tantalises with an offer of a feted pork pie from Appleton's of Ripon as a bar snack (£1.95), complete with home-made onion marmalade.

There is also a traditional pub pool room with a giant goggle box and a series of hatches giving access to the central bar area from almost every angle. All the better to help slake a thirst from one of our four cask ales – two of them guest Yorkshire options: the night we visited, a lovely pint of



REFURBISHED: The George has been comprehensively refitted – Picture: Stuart Boulton/D&S

The George

Main Street, Wath, near Ripon

Tel: 01765-641324 Open: 5pm-midnight, Monday-Friday (lunchtime opening is planned in the near future). Noon onwards, Saturday and Sunday.

Golden Pippin from Skipton's Copper Dragon was superb.

After we'd chosen from the succinct menu (three starters, four mains; vegetarians are best to give a little warning) we were soon seamlessly moved to an altogether more comfortably furnished dining area towards the rear of the pub.

Anna's warm salad of North Sea smoked Mackerel, sundried tomatoes, fennel seeds and beetroot dressing (£6.95) was perfect. Beautifully fresh fillets and a tangy novel taste from the rich red dressing.

My mini tarts of roast butter-nut and spiced carrot (£5.50) were subtly flavoured, the pastry satisfyingly short.

Portions were perfect. Even with a basket of wait-for-it! bread, our appetites were sharpened rather than subdued by the arrival of Anna's slow-roasted Waterford House lamb shank from nearby Kirkby Malzeard (£11.95) and my pan-fried medallions of English rosé veal (£13.95).

The lamb had a rich taste and fell tenderly off the bone, with creamy mash and savory

cabbage drenched in a tasty "mint scented port jus" – good old gravy.

I retain an instinctive dubiousness of veal because of successful campaigns to demonise the practise of cramping calves in crates for their miserable short lives.

But recent efforts by TV chefs and food writers to promote humanely-reared British veal make a convincing case for getting realistic about the primary by-product of our dairy industry.

Ethics aside, it was delicious. Very much like a very tender steak, it came with a potato and spinach galette in a finely-flavoured sauce of wild mushrooms, shallots and brandy. Perfect.

Two of the three puddings (there was also a selection of Yorkshire cheeses, £5.50) appeared standard pub fare –

Bakewell tart and Bailey's cheesecake – but this is no standard pub.

So Anna's Bakewell and custard (£4.95) was, well, baked well. The kitchen cousin of my savoury tartlets, it was dainty and sumptuous.

I opted for spiced apple pancakes with Calvados saboyon (defined as a light, foamy custard-like dessert, £4.95). Seasonal, subtly scented and scrummy.

Add in two pints of Pippin and a fizzy water and you have a bill for £55.25 – which seems increasingly to be the going rate for a well thought out and well cooked special

meal for two hereabouts.

We subsequently learned that the chef – Amanda Richards' cousin – is Carl Sherwin, imported north from The Crown Inn at Bray, a village practically illuminated by Michelin stars. The menu changes every other Thursday.

But the value-ometer needle shoots up when you add in a warm welcome on arrival (doorstep athletes in curbed trousers notwithstanding), friendly impeccable service from our hostess and the warm glow you get from the knowledge that there's life in some village pubs yet.

Your view

What's your view on this restaurant or any other eating place we have visited? You can post your comments at:

dst.co.uk/leisure/weekend-times/eating-out

Ratings (out of four): Food quality ✓✓✓✓ Service ✓✓✓✓ Surroundings ✓✓✓✓ Value ✓✓✓✓

Spiced chicken and salad burrito

Jamie Oliver's Fifteen protege, Aaron Craze, goes solo with his new show, *Rude Boy Food*, starting Monday.

As an unemployed 25-year-old carpet fitter with a girlfriend and one-year-old daughter to support, Aaron Craze didn't feel he had much in common with Jamie Oliver. Six years later, he counts the multi-millionaire chef among his friends.

One of Oliver's Fifteen proteges, 31-year-old Craze is to become a star. His new cooking show, *Rude Boy Food*, is on the Good Food channel.

Spiced chicken and salad burrito

(Serves four – each serving is two wraps per person, with about three slices of chicken per wrap)
For the spiced chicken:
1 tsp coriander seeds

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with Aaron Craze

1 tsp fennel seeds
1 tsp cumin seeds
1 tsp chilli flakes
1 tsp paprika
1 tsp cayenne pepper
½ tsp ground black pepper
1 clove garlic
4 tbsp olive oil, plus extra for frying
2 skinless chicken breasts
salt and pepper
To serve:
1 raw beetroot
1 tbsp red wine vinegar
8 large soft tortillas
4 lettuce leaves
150g cheddar cheese, grated
About 80g creme fraiche

3-4 sprigs coriander, leaves picked
1 lemon, cut into wedges

In a small, dry frying pan, lightly toast the coriander seeds for a minute, just until fragrant. Transfer to a mortar and add the fennel, cumin, chilli flakes, paprika, cayenne, black pepper and garlic and grind together with the pestle. Add the olive oil and mix well. Transfer to a medium bowl.

Score each chicken breast three times with a sharp knife and add to the marinade. Stir to make sure the chicken is well coated. Pop the chicken in a freezer bag and leave to marinate in the fridge for at least two hours.

Meanwhile, grate the beetroot into a bowl and add the red wine vinegar and a little salt and pepper. Leave to pickle for ten minutes or so.

Take the chicken from the fridge, cut it into strips and fry in a little olive oil until cooked through. Season to taste.

Place a tortilla on a board and line with a lettuce leaf. Top with a few strips of chicken, followed by a little of the pickled beetroot. Sprinkle with grated cheese, then add a dollop of creme fraiche and a few fresh coriander leaves.

Fold the bottom of the tortilla up a little, fold in each side, then continue rolling up the tortilla into a big cigar shape. Repeat with remaining ingredients.

Toast the burritos in a panini maker, or place in a hot, dry frying pan (remembering to put the join in the wrap down on the heat first). Cook for two-three minutes on each side or until golden and crisp and serve hot with a squeeze of lemon.

