

Ham knuckle, foie gras,
pease pudding, caper jam,
quail egg, garden herbs



Make a date

RESTAURANT REVIEW: 1863, POOLEY BRIDGE

Our reviewers Keith Sutton and Stephanie Thompson visit a newly opened restaurant on the shores of Ullswater and find a talented Kendal College alumni at the helm

PHOTOGRAPHY PHIL RIGBY



There is no limit, it seems, to the enthusiasm, ambition and achievements of the fresh-faced former students sent out into the world of hospitality by the wonderful catering department of Kendal College, one of Cumbria's great success stories and the engine providing a lot of the driving force behind the county's climb up the culinary league tables.

We continually come across old boys – and old girls – in our travels. Old boys like Phil Corrie, now 25, but even at the age of 15 as a pupil of Ullswater Community College hitting local headlines

as winner of the pudding category in his year's Young Chef of the Year competition. Today Corrie is making waves again – close to the shores of Ullswater itself as head chef at Pooley Bridge's bistro newcomer, 1863. Er, that's it: 1863.

The name reflects the date of the original building, then a private house more prosaically called Elm House, attached to a blacksmith's cottage, and in more modern times a B&B nestling in a triangle of land. On one side is the main road over the depressing new bridge through Pooley Bridge village itself with its handful of pubs and cafés; on the other side is the more interesting road up to

Braised beef, braised featherblade, Dauphinoise potatoes, roasted winter vegetables, sauce Bourguignon



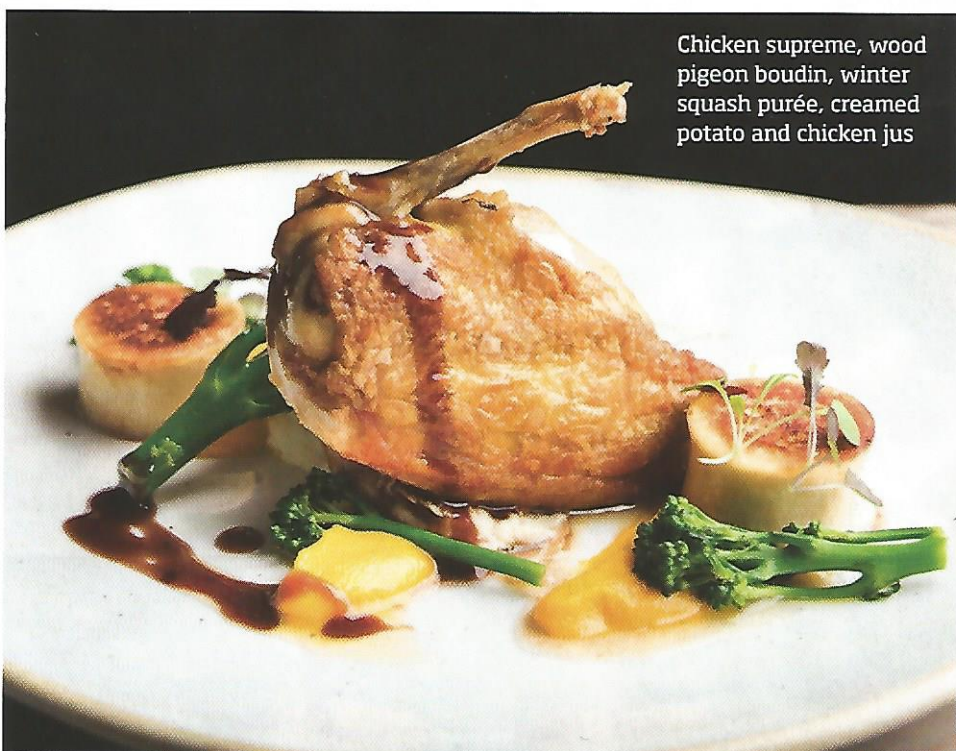
Howtown and Sharrow Bay, the more serious players in the area's foodie stakes. That main road over the bridge also leads past the Rampsbeck Hotel, now in the midst of a major redevelopment and rediscovering its grand ambitions as "Another Place", part of a hotel group, on the dramatic north bank of Ullswater.

It is competition such as the above – ranging from Michelin standard to pub fare – that led the owners of 1863, Mark and Anne Vause, to pounce on what they see as a gap in the eating out market between the two extremes. As Anne puts it: "We wanted somewhere with a special quality feel to eating out but where you don't have to worry about which knife and fork you're supposed to pick up first." It is a frequently encountered refrain as the industry comes to terms with an ever-widening category of restaurantgoers in search of informality at table coupled with ingenuity in the kitchen.

The Vauses have been running the B&B (five bedrooms around £100 a night with two luxury suites due to come on stream this year) for nine years but the bistro is still in its first year of flexing its muscles under head chef Corrie, second chef

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Chicken supreme, wood pigeon boudin, winter squash purée, creamed potato and chicken jus





Michael Wood, 22, and college apprentice Niall Frith, 18 – an engagingly ambitious trio who have already tested out a tasting menu which should be available on specific dates in May, September and October.

Restaurant decor has an underlying theme of travel and shipping. It is sort of all over the place, eclectic with a capital E. Whatever, it carries a bistro feel. Grand it isn't, yet neither is it somebody's front room. We entered via a small bar (that attracted more and more drinkers as the

night wore on) and cosy sink-back chairs and sofa in front of a real roaring fire. We were seated at table nearby with just a scattering of fellow diners. The other end of the restaurant – a more favoured position in summer – offered a view of an interesting small garden, complete with a dazzling array of bird feeders.

Jerusalem artichoke soup was a surefire starting gun to our three-course dinner, a cream delicacy difficult to get wrong and a personal favourite since discovering it at Mark Hix's Browns restaurant in Mayfair

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some 10 years ago. 1863 offered it with white truffle and hazelnut à la Hix. Sublime.

On the other side of the table ham knuckle was a rather heavy introduction with an exhausting list of ingredients – foie gras, pease pudding, caper jam, quail egg and garden herbs. It felt a bit like the foundations of a tasting menu, all rolled onto one plate.

A main of chicken supreme followed... beautifully cooked and adorned with wood pigeon boudin, winter squash purée, chicory, creamed potato and chicken jus. Another classic – and the college would be proud of the cooking team. Our other half chose the braised beef and climbed out of the saddle more than satisfied. Enough is enough, she cried after tackling braised featherblade, dauphinoise potatoes, roasted winter veg and sauce Bourguignon.

An assortment of ice creams and the more alluring ginger pudding oozing out of Pooley gingerbread ice cream topped off an always-cheering bottle of Côtes du Rhône and a bistro bill of £90 to go with our £100 roomful of peace and tranquility for the night.

The bar seemed to be full of life past our bedtime – as fellow guests and a few locals enjoyed the warm, cosy atmosphere created by hosts Mark and Anne, whose energy and enterprise alone deserve support in what is generally reckoned to be a nervous post-Brexit atmosphere for the local hotel and restaurant scene.

KEITH AND STEPH'S SCORE

FOOD	On track	★★★★★
SERVICE	Unobtrusive, fine	★★★★★
VALUE	Reasonable	★★★★★
OVERALL	Going places	★★★★★

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