

ROGER LYTOLLIS



CUMBRIA'S FUNNIEST COLUMNIST EVERY SATURDAY

Night shifts not alright for me



Working out: A24-hour gyms are becoming increasingly popular

STEVE PARSONS/PA WIRE

ifestyle Fitness in Carlisle is about to join the growing number of gyms which open 24 hours a day.

Marketing manager Chris McQuillan said: "With ever more pressure on people's time and energy, even 6am to 10pm wasn't catering for everyone's needs. Opening around the clock means it's truly flexible fitness."

Truly flexible fitness: yoga must be on the timetable.

I'm struggling to understand who will use a gym at four o'clock in the morning.

Night shift workers don't usually finish until six.

Maybe it's aimed at those working the early shift, which usually starts at six.

Until now they must have been twiddling their thumbs looking for something to do after leaping out of bed at three.

Or perhaps insomniacs are the target audience.

The advice I've always seen for insomnia is along the lines of "Have a glass of warm milk and listen to some soothing music."

I'm guessing this must have changed: "Bench-press 80 kilos and do a mile on the rowing machine."

Working out in the middle of the night does not appeal to me.

Neither does working in the middle of the night.

In my youth I worked at the Metal Box factory on James Street, close to Carlisle city centre.

After a few weeks I agreed to switch to the night shift.

I can't remember why. Maybe it paid better.

Or maybe I'd been influenced by the lyrics of The Commodores' hit *Night Shift*:

"Gonna be some sweet sounds coming down on the night shift."

It turned out that sweet sounds were few and far between on the Metal Box night shift.

There was the rumble of

machinery. There were yawns and there were grumbles.

There was talk of who was doing what with who, and who would like to do what with who, often accompanied by the kind of mime which would have graced an X-rated version of *Give Us A Clue*.

None of this could reasonably be described as sweet.

"Gonna be a long night, it's gonna be alright, on the night shift."

Long night: yes. Alright: not so much.

The low point came in the early hours of Thursday morning.

I was returning to the factory from the staff canteen across the road.

Down James Street came revellers who had just spilled out of the nearby Twisted Wheel nightclub.

I used to go there every Wednesday night.

Now instead of being with them, drinking and dancing, I was having slightly less fun.

I returned to work and requested a transfer back to the day shift.

Problem solved. Until the following Thursday morning at 6.30.

That's when my alarm went off for work, having had three hours sleep after a night at the Twisted Wheel.

How infuriating when work gets in the way of one's social life.



No secret: Windermere OWEN HUMPHREYS/PA WIRE

Let's keep our secret spots secret

Cathedral Cavern near Windermere has been named one of the UK's top hidden gems. It was voted the 11th best secret location for family days out and short breaks in a survey by builders McCarthy & Stone.

I'm not sure I approve of a survey revealing the best secret locations.

I suppose it's good to make more people aware of them.

But balance this against the fact that next time you go, the roads will be blocked by cars and coaches, with people peeing by the roadside.

The best secret locations are, well, secret.

I know just such a place in Cumbria. This place is heaven on earth.

The trees flower with chocolates - special magical chocolates which have no fat or calories.

It is a place of love and unity. It is represented by a unitary authority for the whole of Cumbria where politicians of all persuasions put party allegiances aside and act for the benefit of the public.

I'd tell you where it is, but it's a secret.

Not looking forward to my midlife MOT



Helping hand: A charity is urging firms to help staff prepare for old age PA WIRE

Firms are being urged by charity the Centre for Ageing Better to give staff a "midlife MOT" to help them plan their career, health and finances.

What a good idea: give the oldies a helping hand as they prepare for their pipe and slippers - bless 'em.

My attitude became a little less patronising when I realised that I'm one of the oldies.

Middle age is a very broad period: easily broad enough to ensnare me.

Even people in their late 60s routinely refer to themselves as middle-aged, which suggests they expect to live to about 140.

I wonder what happens in a midlife MOT? Bodywork: Not as smooth as it used to be.

Mirrors: Walk past them as quickly as possible.

Emissions: At about two o'clock every morning, and again at five o'clock if another cup of tea was taken last thing at night.

Fuel system: Fry-ups, beer and cream cakes: switching to no-added-sugar museli and rice cakes after a visit to the GP.

Lights: Extra-bright bulbs required when trying to read.

Doors: Becoming increasingly heavy.

I believe it is traditional at this time of life to start panicking about death.

One symptom is to try and cram in as much as possible.

Hence the popularity of books like one I saw this week, called *50 Races To Run Before You Die*.

I've always thought the 'before you die' part of these titles is not strictly necessary.

How many races are you likely to run after you die?

But perhaps racehorses still run even at this stage.

Most of those my dad bets on seem to fit this criteria.



MOT: Time for a midlife test? PA

A post-hike visit to a north Lakes bistro cures MARK GREEN'S loathing for an overlooked root veg Kohlrabi recipe's a turn-ip for the books

REVIEW

I had been a perfect early autumn day out in Cumbria. We set out for a walk wearing T-shirts and rainjackets. Half-an-hour later, the wind picked up, it clouded over and it got very cold. An hour later and it was pouring down. Then, for the last hour, it was brilliant sunshine and sweltering conditions.

I was ready for a pint and a reviving meal when we reached 1863 Bistro Rooms, Pooley Bridge.

The pint was grand, but the meal included the dreaded kohlrabi.

We'd booked in for the six-course tasting menu costing £60 a head, which looked fantastic - apart from the two words: Yorkshire kohlrabi.

Years ago in Leicester I used to get an organic veg box delivered. Subscribers got a box of fresh, seasonal organic stuff from local producers.

In our box, the dull, turnip-like veg was never out of season. Sometimes we'd get three or four in a box. Two or three weeks running.

And now I was faced with a meal of kohlrabi. Not a side order or a garnish, but an actual dish made up of the dull sputnik-shaped root vegetable.

In my experience, licking a sputnik tasted more fun and exciting (there's one in the National Space Centre in Leicester).

But my experience and attitude was about to change.

We started with bread rolls, homemade with stout and treacle; steaming when pulled open soft and pudding sweet.

We were then served with a pre-starter of potato salad - cubes of purple heritage potatoes with a smoky aioli, vivid green olive oil and a crisp.

The actual menu began with a beetroot dish that presented yellow, pink and red versions of the vegetable roasted, pickled, in a jelly and a jam.

All that sweet, earthy warmth contrasted with a salty and sharp quenelle of ragstone goats cheese and a linseed cracker.

The next serving was even better: a wee mound of pickled white crab meat from Ravenglass, the brown meat turned into a featherlight beignet pillow, with a lovage emulsion and wafer of apple for sharpness, matchstick crisps and ethical Yorkshire caviar to pop saltiness on the tongue. Ethical because the fish aren't slaughtered for their eggs,



Revelation: The kohlrabi dish



Creative: Chef Phil Corrie at work in the 1863 Bistro Rooms, Pooley Bridge

which makes it even more expensive. I'm a sucker for crab and this dish was a near-perfect combination and contrast of flavours.

So far, so excellent, but next up was the kohlrabi...

This was salt-baked, pickled, with smoked little pearls and a kohlrabi and apple spring roll, a burnt apple 'bomb' and with yuzu for extra sharpness.

It was, in short, a revelation. So much work had been done to transform this humble, frankly horrid beast of the soil into a star.

I was still raving about it as we mmmmm-ed and ohhhh-ed through the perfectly pinked lamb loin; crisped lamb breast crushed peas and broad beans and lamb fat potatoes.

This was followed by a palate-cleansing bowl of summer berries with blueberry mousse, recurrant jelly, an ice-cream infused with spruce and slivers of blueberry meringue, then a dreamy salt vanilla cheesecake with woodruff cream and sorrel granita with a strawberry gel.

The dainty dishes are beautifully presented. Picture-perfect for all those strange people who like taking photos of their food before eating.

There are two flights of wine to accompany the tasting dishes - the classic at £30 per person and the signature at £45.

We were treated to the signature flight which included a fantastic, petrolly Riesling, a lovely premier crus Chablis and a very good Mercurey.

The service was warm and friendly.

1863 is a grand-looking Victorian villa at the top end of Pooley Bridge near the shores of Ullswater, that has been making waves for the past two years.

Mark and Anne Vause converted the house into a

successful B&B, then decided they wanted to spend less time working and decided to turn it into a bar and bistro with spectacularly decorated and appointed rooms.

They spent a small fortune on the conversion and took their time on making sure they got the right chef. They found Phil Corrie, a young local lad who offers a kaleidoscope of tastes and flavours.

They have been trialling a limited number of tasting menus on certain nights alongside their regular menu and the six courses are now available every evening for up to eight people.

Originally, Mark and Anne Vause wanted to pitch their food somewhere better than the pub, but where you don't have to worry about wearing a tie or which fork goes with what plate.

They've achieved that and more. This is food that is beyond bistro. Each dish has layers of flavour and texture.

It's true that at 1863 you don't have to wear a suit and tie, there are no cutlery conundrums and you're not sat in reverential silence.

The 'L'-shaped dining area it tasteful without being fussy. There's wooden flooring and no-nonsense tables without nappery and drapery.

It already has an AA rosette, but chef Corrie and his team are turning out stunning flavours and imaginative dishes that can only be a hair's breadth away from Michelin recognition.

Anyone who can make a kohlrabi exciting deserves all the awards they get.

1863 FACTFILE
1863 Bar Bistro Rooms, Pooley Bridge. Tasting menus must be booked at least 24 hours in advance either by calling 017684 86334 or at www.1863ullswater.co.uk.



Ambitious: 1863 Bistro owners Mark and Anne Vause



Dainty: The summer berries

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