

FOOD REVIEW

The Shoulder of Mutton
Helmshore Road
Holcombe Village
Ramsbottom

The magic of the Mutton



LOOKING outside at the dark frosty night it would have been far easier to stay in the warm than venture out for tea - but then we wouldn't have made a great discovery right on our doorstep.

The Shoulder of Mutton nestles in the shadow of Peel Tower and looked a welcome haven on such a bitter evening.

Contented chatter spilled out as we opened the door, with the rich smell of a log fire and a friendly atmosphere from couples at the bar, families with young children and walkers.

Looking over the menu we spotted that much of chef Chris Yates' food comes from local suppliers, including steak from Riley's Butchers, in Crawshawbooth, and eggs from neighbours

in Holcombe Village.

My starter of Butlers Lancashire goats cheese fritter with sun blushed tomato and chives was a real work of art, served on a long rectangular plate on top of a salad of fennel and rocket.

The cheese, wrapped in a light filo pastry, was creamy with a saltiness which went well with the sweet dressing on the fennel.

My companion had been unable to resist his home town's signature dish of Bury black pudding. It came sitting on a pikelet with a poached egg and shallot rings and, needless to say, was soon polished off.

Our toddler's meal of chicken goujons with chunky homemade chips was brought with our starters and showed

the children's menu was not just an afterthought, looking like a smaller version of the adult dishes, with tender slices of chicken breast and a portion of carrots, cabbage and peas.

If the starters were impressive our mains really had the wow factor. I'd hovered over the homemade pork, apricot and spring onion sausage and mash but was soon sure I'd made the right choice. The meat was about the tastiest I'd had, with smooth mash and an almost sticky sweet port and red onion sauce.

Opposite me was breast of Goosnargh duck with bon bon potato and a good helping of blackberry and orange juniper sauce. Our waitress had warned it was served pink and it was

simply declared 'fantastic'

Both came with ramekins of vegetables.

Sitting in the restaurant section, we noticed each dish coming out of the kitchen really was picture perfect - clearly not just a case of getting food out to diners but someone who loves food, putting it together with care.

With full stomachs we stepped back into the cold night, knowing we had found something special - a friendly rural pub with top restaurant standard food.

Jenny Brookfield