

Review – Coaching inn needs some TLC



The Elphinstone Hotel in Main Street, Biggar, which failed to live up to the hype on their website

The Elphinstone Hotel, 145 High Street, Biggar ML12 6DL about an hour from Edinburgh.

The 'Elph' is described on the website as a traditional and charming coaching inn with a long and illustrious history dating back over 400 years.

So, we expected pub grub and that's what we got. Sadly, this was not, judging from what we received, top end pub food.

Staff welcomed us with a smile and the restaurant, with a roaring, real fire, was busy.

There is an extensive menu which meant a massive choice and there was no music, thankfully, but the atmosphere was flat. A woman at the table next to us complained that her pastry was hard.

People sitting nearer the bar scowled rather than smiled. However, a fellow diner had a steak which he was raving about to the waitress.

I visited the loo and spotted that the staircase desperately needed a Hoover.

The toilet had paper on the floor and was scruffy, basically in need of TLC. My wife reported that the ladies was an improvement on this.

Oh, the meal. I chose prawns. They were described as succulent

cold water prawns bound in our home-made Marie Rose sauce served on a bed of salad leaves. They arrived with a limp salad and a dollop of sauce – not particularly distinct to taste – on the top. Visually off-putting. The taste was average.

Mains now. My wife ordered Black Chicken. It was described as breast of chicken topped with Stornoway black pudding and finished with a pepper sauce. It was tasty.

I picked from the specials menu. This was not special, not even average. My roast lamb was limp, lacked flavour and the vegetables were cubes of turnip and carrots and a sliver of cabbage.

I expected more, much more.

We did not stay for pudding. This is a family-run business. Proprietor Robert Allen his wife Janette and son Michael have been at the helm for over 25 years.

They claim to offer a warm and friendly welcome and pride themselves with continued patronage of a busy local trade with a high level of repeat custom which, they allege, tells its own story.

The hotel's business card, with Robert mentioned by name, says: "Serve with pride, warmth and professionalism and provide unrivalled hospitality within Scotland."

I can only judge this three-star Scottish Tourist Board inn, which is a Lanarkshire Business Excellence Awards winner (2016), and has a Taste our Best, Quality Assured 2016/17 logo from Visit Scotland on the website, from my own experience. It was a disappointment.

Just before leaving – dinner ends at 9pm – a man, carrying a pint (looked like lager) walked out of the kitchen and deposited what appeared to be sawdust footprints on the carpet

– not the best advert for a pub that I would not really be able to recommend to friends and relatives.