

# Review – The Sheep Heid Inn

I admit to having form when it comes to the Sheep Heid Inn. Many a night, I've thought, just one more round in the cosiness of it's bar and several times I've managed to demonstrate my lack of hand to eye coordination in its charming skittle ally.

This popular Duddingston Village haunt has had something of a dramatic makeover since my day. The floors are polished and the seating on the fancy side of gastro pub. But such is the way of the world: there's no place for the old fashioned boozier anymore.



The downstairs bar area is smart and my parents and I have dressed up for the occasion. Hair brushed and parted, we get comfy to enjoy a round of gins and some tasty little bruschetta with goats cheese and duck liver pate. We all have our foibles and for Daddy it's an uneasiness with canapés.

First world problems, eh? However father pronounced these dainty delights easy to munch without them dribbling down your shirt. It's a relief to all concerned.

The atmosphere is enhanced by a singer/ guitar chap giving us a few latest hits and non naff old goodies. Usually when a bar has 'live music every Thursday' advertised, I think, 'Well Thursday's gonna be the night you don't see me, pal.'" The music is very enjoyable and the musician talented. A few glasses of wine in I'll no doubt suggest he should go on Britain's Got Talent.



Upstairs the decor is as sumptuous as the waitress is cheery – and her boyfriend is the musician downstairs! She presents us with an extensive menu and asks us if we have any questions. Well I do indeed have a question: "Where's the special lavatory The Queen uses, because mother may have to pay a visit soon and she deserves the best?" Our charming attendant gives a nervous giggle and assures us Her Majesty deigns to wee-wee on the same seats as her subjects. I don't believe a word of it and wonder where the hidden door might be. The Queen is something of a regular here and indeed there is a little plaque down stairs commemorating where last the royal backside took the weight off her patented court shoes.

We're offered the option of a vegan menu, which I find surprising, and I'm not alone. I spot a couple of vegan bloggers I know and one remarks that they "didn't think they'd have anything for us here." Indeed it's a sad thought that vegans might be wandering the villages of Edinburgh, knocking on the doors of ye olde inns only to be told they have nothing for them. It's a sort of millennial, woke version of the nativity.

There's certainly a lot on this menu, all the usual suspects with sharing platters and pizzas. Various healthy options are available with a calorie count on the menu, but thankfully the hip expanding choices allow you to live in ignorant bliss. Our waitress, when she approves of your choices, has a lovely habit of breathing in an 'ooh!' whilst rolling her eyes in a 'goodness me! Aren't you in for a treat' kind of way, which makes me wonder about her domestic arrangements with downstairs musician. I imagine them to be a happy couple.



I opt for a Lobster and King Prawn Pot with Devon Crab Crème Fraiche and it's exactly the sort of creamy loveliness to spread on crisp ciabatta with a glass of dry white. Father chose Thyme Roasted Portobello Mushrooms in a Cropwell Bishop Sauce, which sounds a bit Carry On 'ooh, missus' of a starter. The mushrooms are cooked to perfection and the rich sauce just

the right balance with the cheese cutting through nicely. Mother orders a Sweet Chilli Prawn Roll with Julienne Veg and Dipping Sauce. Fresh though the ingredients are, the roll itself looks harder to negotiate than Brexit. Maybe a few little versions would be easier to manage. The sweet chilli and soy dipping sauce is super tasty and all at only 152 calories! A couple of adjustments and even the Reese-Mogg nanny would love it.

For main courses we're pleased to welcome a Roasted Rack of Lamb with Aubergine, Sweet Peppers, Dauphinoise Potatoes and Red Wine Jus. Dad pronounces it all perfect but if there's one truth in the world it's that my father will never enjoy an aubergine. But he did try, bless him.

Mum's Chicken, Leek and Crème Fraîche Pie topped with Ham Hock Crumb is one step away from being a triumph, if only the pastry was atop the filling and not under it. My perfect blue Fillet Steak Comes with an Ale Glazed Shallot Tart Topped with Cropwell Bishop Custard (ooh, matron!) Stilton and Walnut Crumb, and Twice Cooked Chunky Chips. With a Béarnaise Sauce featuring just the right amount of herbs and vinegar I'm very happy. You can even have half a lobster chunked in with your steak if you so wish. The Queen probably gets half a swan though, which no doubt they keep in her secret cupboard beside her hidden lav.

The pudding menu looks great, in that it has lots of delicious sounding dishes with no mention of a 'lavender infusion', because nobody wants to eat something that tastes of Jenners. I'm stuffed, in more ways than one, so I go for a mini pud with a coffee. My Vanilla Cheesecake is lovely but not so mini. Sod it, I eat the lot anyway. '340 Kcals or less', the menu states. 'Fewer', I'm thinking. And this is why I'm still single.

My old man has the Crème Brûlée, very much to his pleasing, but mother as always, finishes first on the last leg. Goodness



knows, the woman can choose a great dessert. Her Apple and BlackBerry Crumble with Custard (that has no mention of any kinky clergy) is beyond delicious. It was well made, with no perversion, and utterly perfect.

So why should you venture out to the wilds of Duddingston to sample the new sparkly Sheep Heid Inn? Well, you could make a night of it: drinks, skittles, drinks, food and in the summer some smoking in the lovely courtyard.

It feels like a little bit of the country in the City, perfect for a Sunday lunch after an Arthur's Seat hike, long, relaxed evenings, or a sharing Boxed Baked Camembert just, well, because...

Friends told me they were booked in the other day and impulsively I did a breathe in 'ooh', excited eye roll, and elevated the reaction with a subtle but alluring boob shimmy. And if I ever find the regal toilet, I'll also recommend this place with a twerk.

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