

Review – Garvock House Hotel

“Were off to Dunfermline for the night.” I told my friend. Baffled, he was: “Dunfermline? Seriously?” He’d recently been on a trip to Monterey, Santa Barbara and L.A. and returned mildly snobbish about the restaurants of his homeland.

Yet on driving into Garvock House Hotel, he declared: “Wow, this is insane! Like we’re in the middle of the countryside! Gorgeous!” We both agreed we couldn’t have found a cosier, more comfortable and friendly place and we immediately relaxed. Owned and run by husband and wife duo Rui and Pamela Fernandes, we immediately felt this place was special, a hidden gem almost on our doorstep.

After admiring the well tended but organically designed gardens we immediately felt super cosy the moment we entered. Previously a family then old folks home, the owners had a mammoth task bringing out the beauty within but there were many original feature surprises to be discovered over the years. Although there’s a soft carpet cushioning weary feet on entry I was told that underneath lies a beautiful monochrome tiling. Yet comfort trumps Instagram chic here and it’s all the more inviting for it.



The rooms are incredibly welcoming with modern bathrooms and luxurious toiletries. Enjoying a great view of the garden I did wonder how I was in the middle of a town. Happily for a nosey Parker like me there was a wedding on at the hotel and I had great admiration for the bride, standing with a pint of lager in-between getting her photos taken. Start married life the way you mean to go on, doll!



After a quick freshen up it's time to dress up for dinner: it's the sort of place one does. The menu was a welcome surprise as there was plenty on it that sounded good. Here they do evening service as an exceptionally traditional and civilised affair. You enjoy a drink at the bar while you peruse the menu. They then take your order there and escort you to your table when your food is ready.

I don't think I've experienced that in years so it was like going back in time in a most pleasant way. Cocktails seem to be a thing here, so much so that the drinks menu charmingly has a picture of every one they serve. I'm often dubious about such things but my whisky sour was an exact replica and was made with great skill.

The kitchen definitely know how to please any palate and we enjoyed expertly cooked rich and tender pigeon and top of the range smoked salmon. The triumph of the evening was a perfectly presented venison fillet. Desserts, so often an afterthought, were exceptional. A trio of home made ice creams was delightful but the raspberry creme brulée was, without a

doubt the best I've ever tasted. Utterly spot on in texture with the sharp berries cutting through a deceptively rich and silky custard.

One of the best aspects of dinner was the service. Some of the staff have been with the owners for over 15 years and they tend to you with a whiff of formality to make your dinner feel special but also a good serving of charm and friendliness. Having asked the waitress to tell the dessert chef my passionate feelings for her skills she returned to say the chef said how pleased she was to be told. How sweet is that? It was a relaxed and thoroughly enjoyable evening.

The Garvock is blessed with three gorgeous dining rooms that can also be hired for private parties and after a great sleep in a comfy and luxuriously dressed bed, it was time for breakfast. Once again we were seated at a lovely table, overlooking the gardens. A generous buffet was set out and we made enough of it to leave room for a fabulous Eggs Benedict to end our stay.



Having a chat with Pamela after breakfast it's obvious Garvock is a love story. She and Rui met on a holiday romance where he owned a restaurant in the Algarve, and they soon realised that

with both of them having a passion for their jobs in the hospitality industry, the only way to be together was to work together.

Establishing the Garvock as a restaurant they soon developed the existing rooms then adding on another twenty and a vast function room that's tucked behind the main building. They cater for weddings and functions both grand and intimate and are a popular place for locals to have their special occasions. Throughout our stay it was absolutely obvious the owners were hands on in their business and such was the homely ambience, they must very much invest in their excellent staff.

A hop skip and drive over the Forth Crossing and we're back in Edinburgh and although we hadn't travelled far it felt a pleasurable long way from home. It's lovely to know an escape to the middle of nowhere is so close by.

Garvock House Hotel

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