

Changed days at revamped Balerno Inn

What an amazing experience, lovely lunch, fantastic, socially-distanced meal, a fantastic, family-friendly place. These are some of the descriptions to describe The Balerno Inn. It had to be tested.

Changed days when many locals in the leafy suburb used to side-step what was then known as The Malleny Arms. It was not where they wanted to be seen.

Different now after an extensive refit which proved much tougher than initially expected. The new owners say they found dry rot, wet rot, nail rot, collapsed drains, subsidence, falling beams, burnt-out wiring and a fractured gas supply and much, much more.

That is well behind them. Now, it is hard to get a table. Booking is advised. The building, in the heart of the main street, has been transformed into a go-to bar/restaurant. There are also bedrooms upstairs.

Bosses have also used the former car park to create a safe children's play area with adjoining dining. There are heated pods allowing for some seclusion and ideal for keeping inclement weather at bay.

What is also a boost is their dog-friendly attitude. To crib from their website: "It's a place where you can spend that special occasion, or go when you just want a night off from cooking.

"It's a place where you can go after that muddy walk with the dogs." It certainly is and, as the pub sits only a few steps away from the busy Water of Leith Walkway from the centre of Edinburgh and in the shadow of The Pentland Hills, it

is highly popular in winter and summer with walkers, campers and cyclists.

However, back to the food. We sat in one of the pods which also has a TV. That stayed off, but some switch it on. Their choice, but we wanted to chat.

On the day we visited, there were five starters and nine mains. Camembert, oven baked, with bread crisps, house balsamic onions and wonderful tomato relish was one pick and so was the appealing haggis rolled balls which arrived sitting on a light base of turnip puree and a tasty, spiced tomato chutney.

Our main picks included the Balerno Inn, award-winning proper puff pastry pie, seasonal vegetables and chips and chargrilled pork loin, raw salad of crisp spring greens and fresh chilli and warm potatoes plus teriyaki, soy and sesamae dressing – tad too much dressing for me, but it still had a great taste.

Our third pick was penne arrabbiata, fragrant pesto with chicken, packed with flavour and a sound choice.

Portions were ample, service was slick and the wine? A good selection, not cheap, but our Rioja went down well. Almost forgot, they have a bairns menu, their choice of words.

Open daily from noon at 15, Main Street, Balerno EH14 7EQ or call 0131 202 3220 or email hello@balernoinn.co.uk.