

See page 3




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MAY-JUNE 2009

# Focus

Covering St. Albans, Harpenden, Radlett, Borehamwood and surrounding areas



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See page 7

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# The Albany - a hidden gem

AS a young adult I must have stumbled my way around just about every one of the numerous pubs, bars and nightclubs St. Albans has to offer. Over time, I became very familiar with some of the best and the worst. However, as I grew older, my social life took a more relaxed turn.



Fine food in a calm atmosphere became preferred. Fortunately, St. Albans has its fair share of great restaurants, allowing me to indulge with another equally rewarding, yet substantially less hazardous pastime!

Sadly (but in the best possible way), having become a parent twice over the last five years, keeping 'in' with the restaurant scene has been a challenge, so it was a most welcome surprise when I was invited to join the editor of Focus and sample the menu of the Albany Restaurant, George Street, St. Albans, owned and run by Faisal Maniar.

## History

My second surprise came when I realised the Albany was located in place of one of my all time favourite pubs - The Old Kings Arms. Initially, I felt a pang of remorse for the loss of the source of many great memories forged during countless weekend pub crawls. However, after venturing inside I soon discovered that the interior had not been tastelessly replaced with an over the top modern refit. In fact, it still resembled the 'old great' I had

frequented so many times in the past, with the Tudor style wooden back beams still a feature.

With my mind silently reminiscing, we were politely seated, drinks ordered and menus supplied. We began to peruse a deliciously descriptive collection of modern European/French dishes and, following much mouth-watering deliberation, I finally settled on the 'Albany charcuterie board' to start, followed by 'Gressingham duck breast with vanilla mash, sugar snaps and baby carrots' (pictured). My Editor chose 'Risotto of mediterranean vegetables and smoked cheese' followed by 'Roasted free range chicken supreme with garlic, leek and potato gratin'.

Following our order we were treated to a wonderfully appetising amuse-bouche which left us eager for our starters whilst picking keenly on a freshly baked warm roll.

Now, at this point, I would be tempted to describe every detail of each dish, however, as hard as I try, I am still struggling to find a way to adequately articulate such an appreciable dining experience. So, I shall say only this; My final and best surprise of the day came halfway through the main course when I finally realised that this 15th century



grade II listed building, which I had previously regarded only as a great drinking establishment from my past, had gloriously evolved to become an outstanding location for some fantastic food at very reasonable prices.

Indeed, I was so impressed with the homemade Raspberry and Cinnamon ice cream I chose for dessert that I refuse to mention any other on offer!

Yes, I have grown up a lot since my 'going out on the town days' but now I am approaching the 'Big 40' it would seem life really does get better - you just have to know where to go.

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