

# EATING OUT

If you like to combine shopping with lunch, MAXINE GORDON finds just the place

## Corner delights

THERE'S a lot going on at The Corner Cupboard, the café-shop in a former school house at Birdforth, near Easingwold.

On entering the warren-like building, you feel a little bit like Alice In Wonderland.

Large ornate mirrors hang from every wall. In an alcove, silk cushions rest on a pretty chair. Go through a door, and sculptures of mini cherubs smile at you from a pretty white-wire display stand.

You might have only popped in for lunch, but you'll need a wrought-iron will power to leave without picking up a trinket from the lovely collection of furniture, home furnishings and knick-knacks on display.

My friend Moira recommended The Corner Cupboard – kindly sharing one of her favourite snack spots in the area with me and therefore thousands of readers of The Press.

The Corner Cupboard is a family-owned business, run by Peter and Gerd Handley (who were once at the helm of the Abbey Inn at Byland). Three years ago, it was a restaurant called The Gables.

When we arrived one Tuesday lunchtime, Moira warned me the temptations in store were not just on the menu. "On my last visit," she began. "I overheard one man complain that he had left the restaurant £350 lighter – his wife had bought a mirror."

We had booked a table for noon – and were glad we did, because by 12.30pm, the restaurant was almost full. Booking is definitely recommended.

Moira was determined to order her favourite dishes from the decent-sized menu, that has something for all tastes, from a three-course meal, to sandwiches and cakes. Open from 9.30am to 5pm, Tuesday to Saturday, The Corner Cupboard is a place you could happily come for coffee and cake, a light bite or a big blow-out.

Sandwiches range in price from sweet-cured ham with apricot, apple and sultana chutney at £4.95 to prawns with Marie Rose sauce at £6.75. Teacakes, scones and home-made cake of the day will set you back between £1.75 to £2.60.

The menu also has a range of lighter snacks, warm salads, and

proper meals such as goujons of plaice (£10.95) and pork and apple stroganoff in a filo pastry basket (£11.65).

To begin, Moira chose the stilton paté (£5.25) and the lamb rogan gosh curry (£11.65) to follow. I picked soup of the day (£3.95) – cream of vegetable – and hot chicken salad (£8.95).

Moira ordered a glass of sauvignon blanc (£3.95), while I picked an elderflower pressé (£2), mindful of the 25-mile drive back to York.

Our table was by a window, overlooking a service road running alongside the A19 – which doesn't sound idyllic, but afforded a pleasant enough view (of a grassy verge) and allowed us to bask in the spring sunshine flooding in through the window.

Service was polite, attentive and pretty swift.

As for the food, it was a bit like the place itself – there was a lot going on.

My soup was full of little bits and bobs, and all the tastier for it. I spotted asparagus, carrots, potato and peas all swimming happily in the sweet, creamy broth.

Moira's paté came with pieces of pear and a salad garnish, as well as warm bread rolls, and was as good as she remembered.

After a short rest, our main courses arrived – and re-inforced the busy theme of The Corner Café. A 'curry tray' was delivered first, with small dishes of sliced banana, desiccated coconut, sultanas and mango chutney as well



The Corner Cupboard, from the A19, left, and the inside shop and café, below



as a poppadom. Next came a large plate filled with the spicy, tomato and lamb curry and a mound of bright yellow rice. It reminded me of home-made curries from the 1970s – before the arrival of the Indian restaurant. But it tasted great – the lamb was fall-away perfect and the sauce had a lovely sharp, sweet tang. Again, Moira was a happy lady.

My salad was a mish-mash of pleasures too, and enough to keep the wolves at bay until supper time. The chicken strips had been marinated in yoghurt with lemon, coriander and garlic then pan fried, leaving them tender and succulent. The salad leaves were a colourful mix and had pieces of strawberry and tomato throughout as well as a scattering of big, juicy sultanas. There was a drizzle of balsamic vinegar, which worked

### FACT file

<b>Food:</b> tasty	★ ★ ★
<b>Service:</b> good	★ ★ ★
<b>Value:</b> fair	★ ★ ★
<b>Ambience:</b> quirky	★ ★ ★ ★
<b>Disabled access:</b>	<b>YES NO</b>

Restaurant reviewers aim to be fair and accurate. Any comments on this review should be addressed to Bill Hearld, The Press, 76-86 Walmgate, York, YO1 9YN or email [features@thepress.co.uk](mailto:features@thepress.co.uk)

well with the fruits in the salad. The only 'off note' was the dollops of pesto on the side.

We struggled to finish our meals, and agreed that to do the menu justice, you had to turn up with a hearty appetite.

As it was, we had no room for cakes or puddings or coffees. We were also running out of time. School pick-up time in York was looming and we couldn't leave without having a browse in the shop.

If you don't make it as far as Birdforth, Gerd and her daughter Melanie will be selling their shop wares at the grand summer sale at Ripley Castle from June 5-8.

But if you want some comforting home-cooked food, in quirky surroundings, get yourself up the A19. But ring ahead first.

**The Corner Cupboard, Birdforth, near Easingwold, YO61 4NW  
Tel: 01845 501 495**

**Maxine visited on Tuesday, April 22, 2008**

