

Riverside News

Summer 2009



The Riverside Team 2009
Back Row: Neil (Chilly), Jan & Arthur Watson, Sue Turner.
Front Row: Nick Larcombe, Daniel Chilcott, Tony Shaw, George Marsh, Amy Moss, Helen Taylor. Missing from picture Joe Taylor

As Spring approached we were very fearful that the worldwide economic gloom could have severe consequences on the Riverside and its customers. However, in the four months that we have been open, these fears have been largely unfounded and the reduction in trade has been small. That is not to say that the recession has just disappeared because sooner or later we will have to pay for the unprecedented 'bailout' of the banking and financial sector in the form of increased taxes and 'contributions'. But, in our typical 'backs to the wall' resilience, we seem to have refused to be beaten by all the gloomy forecasts and will still go out to those places that are trusted to offer good value for money and a warm welcome. The support that we have received from local and regular customers is outstanding and makes all the hard work worthwhile.

WEST DORSET 2009 - A FOODIE DESTINATION

West Dorset seems to have become a magnet for the Celebrity luminaries of the catering world and they are beginning to try to create a reputation for the area as a 'foodie' destination along the lines of Ludlow. This can do nothing but good for the area and get an even greater awareness for the most beautiful county in England. The latest arrival is Mat Follas, the 2009 winner of Master Chef who has just opened a restaurant in Beaminster and is joining the other media favourites like Hugh Fearnley Whittingstall, Mark Hix and Lesley Waters in a varied selection of catering enterprises. We wish them all well and we are sure that many of the existing established businesses will benefit from their presence.

THE WAY IT WAS - Memories from Arthur

It is hard to remember how different it was in 1960 when we first arrived at the Riverside. Bridport and the surrounding villages had numerous pubs but the nearest you could get to food was a packet of crisps and perhaps a pickled egg! The Bull Hotel and The Greyhound in Bridport were the venues for all traditional meals and there were a few Cafes like the Golden Rod in East Street and the Cafe Royal at the Coach Station, as well as several fish and chip shops. The first real breakthrough in Bridport was the Monmouth Room in the Bull Hotel run by the Forbes Family and the George Hotel in South Street where John and Liz Mander, newly arrived from London, had the unheard of audacity to have an open kitchen and cook great food in front of the customers!

Meanwhile in West Bay, the Bridport Arms was the home of proper food and grand dining. Hamish Maxwell was the Chef and in his residency there, and later at the Moorings, he produced in his classic style some of the finest cuisine ever experienced by many customers. Elsewhere, the Chalet Restaurant on the Esplanade did Lobster Teas, The Bay House catered for coach parties, The Old Watch House did snacks and beach trays and the Riverside did fisherman's breakfasts, spit roasted chicken, cream teas, crab salads and anything with chips and peas. The first mention in the National Press was the Old Codgers in the Daily Mirror who commented on the excellence and quantity of the English breakfast. No mention of cholesterol, fatty acids or balanced diet!

Nearly 50 years later it is very hard to realise the earth shattering changes that have taken place. We were a largely forgotten introverted community that relied upon the net and rope making industry as well as agriculture, fishing, brewing and summer holiday trade. Second home ownership was 20 years away and foreign travel was still a dream even at £25 all in for two weeks on the Costa Brava. Life in Bridport in 1960 was closer to how it had been in 1920 and light years away from 2010. We all knew that life was not going to be easy and that there were no handouts. You just had to get on with it. But there were magical moments as there still are when you look out over Lyme Bay from the Esplanade on a warm June evening and see the giant sweep of the coast and the waters dotted with small boats and swimmers.



Neil Chilcott, Manager (Chilly)

About Chilly

Neil is more known to all as 'Chilly', and has been at the Riverside for about 20 years since he returned to Bridport after several years in the construction industry. His mother and sister had worked here during the early 70's and it was natural that Chilly would want a part time job during school holidays. It soon became obvious that the school was going to be the part time activity and Chilly found it difficult to go along with the restrictions of regular attendance. Chilly was 13 when he started his part time work and showed every sign of a unique character and a talent for organisation. He would observe the skills of other staff and could fill in for almost any job when required. His robust sense of humour was well developed and a quick wit allowed him to escape from most tricky situations.

In the early 80's Chilly decided that the town of Bridport was too small and so he took to the road and worked on many construction projects throughout the South of England. This brought him into contact with a much wider

About Chilly- continued

audience and his repartee expanded. But this life was very hard and destructive of good health, so Chilly returned to Bridport but not empty handed. In Sussex he had met and fallen in love with Sarah, his wife to be. He had decided that his future was going to be in his home town and he began to expand his interests. He had a house in Bradpole and he began to fill it with his son Daniel and his daughter Stacey. The house was, and is, never empty because all friends and family feel that they can drop in at any time for a chat or a story. The Chilcott families suffered a tremendous blow when their beloved mother Sylvia was killed in a car accident near Beaminster and Chilly became even more, a centre for the family. But he does not do things by halves and took on extra responsibilities. He became a very good football referee, joined the committee of the Bridport Leisure Centre, became secretary and a star performer of the Table Skittles League and was elected to Bradpole Parish Council and was soon voted in as Chairman.

He has had a lifelong obsession with Manchester United and frequently travels to see them play. There is an overwhelming feeling of sadness by fellow members of staff about his particular choice of team!

Chilly resumed his work at the Riverside after his return to Bridport and has had experience in all departments including a short period as a chef. He is a rapid learner and soon moved in to the role as assistant manager to the partners. His keen sense of humour and capacity for organisation and hard work coincided with the even greater popularity of the Riverside and he was soon appointed to fill the role of Manager.

His story is remarkable in that he now runs a major Restaurant with some 30 staff and over 20,000 customers, in a world that has become obsessed with rules and regulations. He has had no formal training or qualification but has an instinct to do the right thing for customers and staff as well as conforming to the myriad of rules that have to be in place. His unflinching sense of humour coupled with a desire to give customers the highest quality of food and service available has been deeply appreciated. He has formed a great Riverside team where food and service come first and the extravagances of the current obsession with celebrity do not register at all.

A selection of customer's comments taken from this year's guest book:

"Quite the best fruits de mer I have had ..thank you"

"Puddings to die for!"

"As ever enjoyed every mouthful"

"Brilliant fish and lovely setting"

"Fantastic and great service .. we loved it"

"Excellent - lives up to its reputation"

"There is no point eating fish soup anywhere else. The soup here is the benchmark for fish soup and we have tried soups all around the world. We haven't been here for 13 years and are not disappointed ... the soup is just the same as it was last time and is still the best!!"

Said Steve & Rebecca Graham who popped in just to have fish soup on their way back home to Switzerland.

FISH SOUP COMPETITION

We are pleased to announce that we are sponsoring a new competition at this year's Melplash Show, taking place on Thursday 27th August, to find the best Fish Soup. The competition is taking place in the new By-the-Sea Marquee.

It will be judged by us and the winner will receive a £100 voucher to dine here at the Riverside and we will also look at putting the soup on to our menu. If you would like to take up the challenge please visit www.melplashshow.co.uk or ring 01308 423337 for an application form.

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RECIPES

John Dory Fillets With Samphire Grass And Crayfish Butter Sauce (Serves 4) *Tony Shaw, Assistant Chef*

Ingredients

3 John Dory, filleted (giving 11/4 fillets approx 200g per person)
150g cray fish tails
300g samphire grass
15g butter
2 lemons

Method

Blanch samphire in boiling water for approx 1-2 mins or until tender, then refresh and put to the side. Pan fry the John Dory fillets in a hot non stick frying pan - 3 mins each side. Melt butter in a sauce pan, add samphire and crayfish. Warm through season and add lemon juice to taste. Divide Samphire equally and place in the centre of the plate, place John Dory fillets on top, drizzle over the crayfish sauce and garnish with lemon wedges.



Tony Shaw, Assistant Chef

Summer Pudding (Serves 8) *Amy Moss, Pastry Chef*

Ingredients

½ white loaf
1 bag mixed summer berries (frozen or fresh)
2 x punnets English strawberries
2 x punnets English Raspberries
1 x punnet blueberries
Sugar to taste
Clotted cream to serve (or ice cream)

Method

Line 6 moulds with cling film (leaving enough film to cover the top when finished). Reserve a selection of fruit for serving, put the rest with the sugar into a pan and heat gently until the juice runs, the fruit is cooked and you have a compote. Taste, if it is too tart add more sugar. Chill. Line the moulds with bread (crusts removed). You will need a small circle of bread for the base, strips for the sides, and a larger circle for the lid. To assemble dip the bread into the compote and line each mould (overlapping strips). Fill each one with the cooled compote and finish with the bread lid. Wrap the excess cling film over each pudding and place in fridge. Blitz the leftover compote in a food processor and strain through muslin to make fruit coulis. When ready to serve, turn onto a plate, drizzle over the fruit coulis and garnish with some fresh mixed summer berries and serve with the clotted cream.



Amy Moss, Pastry Chef

A special thank you to our local suppliers who recently supported our article in the Dorset Life Magazine ...

- B Reyland Potato Specialists, Seavington • Charles Steevenson Wines, Tavistock • Davy's Locker (Fish & Shellfish), Bridport
- Longman Cheese Sales, Yeovil • R & C Poole (Builders), Bridport • Samwons Fish Merchants, Bridport • Simon Scott Electrical Contractors, Bridport
- S J Normans & Sons (Meat), Bridport • Wessex Wines, Bridport