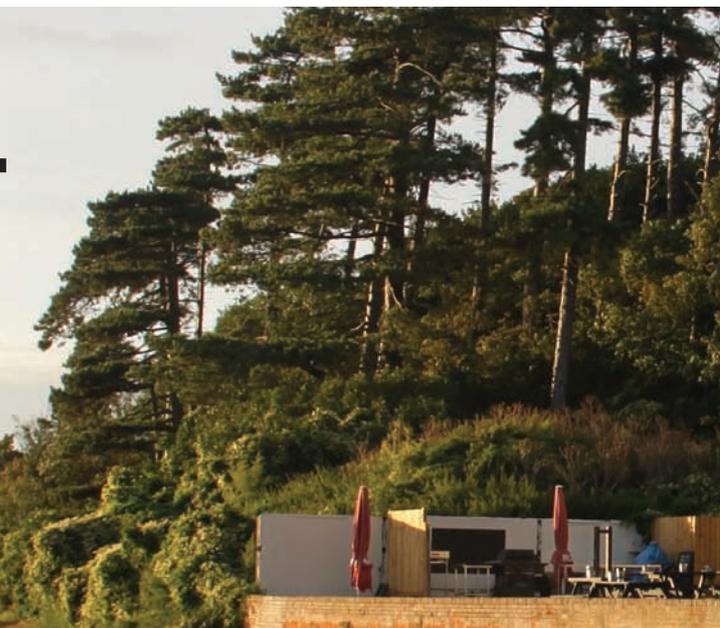


# RAMSHOLT REVISITED



Ramsholt is a tiny village beyond Sutton Hoo on the road towards Bawdsey where the pub, enviably positioned right on the banks of the Deben, beckons for some riverside relaxation.

**Lesley Rawlinson** explores



**W**e all tend to be creatures of habit. Living and working where we do my husband and I often make time to enjoy the Deben estuary but almost always from its southern/western bank. Whether we're down at Felixstowe Ferry, walking the dog and enjoying a pub shaped pit-stop at Waldringfield or taking a mooch round the boatyard and quay at Woodbridge, we have a tendency to stick to 'our side' of the river. It wasn't until very recently, when a friend asked if we'd been to the Ramsholt Arms lately, that we even considered giving it a look. But why? After all it's a pub you want to love. It's in a stunning location that beckons for walking, cycling or just a drive out into the beautiful Suffolk countryside. However the answer is very simple and possibly one of the single most powerful reasons not to make the effort – in it's a previous incarnation we'd just got fed up of it not living up to expectations. Admittedly it was some years ago but with all the very lovely options closer to

home we'd made a subconscious choice not to give it another chance. But of course things change and I'm very glad to have been redirected to this incredibly pretty spot on the north eastern side of the river because in my ignorance I was certainly missing out.

In the summer of 2013 the successful team behind The Crown at Ufford – Polly and Max Durrant and head chef Will Hardiman - took on the Ramsholt Arms. They had a clear vision for re-establishing the venue as a 'must visit' for locals and holiday makers alike and despite the setback of a kitchen fire in January this year – that meant they couldn't serve hot food until the middle of March – the couple have achieved exactly that. We called in for an evening meal back in late August. There was still enough warmth to enjoy a drink outside on arrival and there were a number of families doing the same; making the most of the last few days of the school holidays.

But you don't need good weather to enjoy Ramsholt. Inside the pub the huge picture windows mean that from most seats the view westwards across the river can be enjoyed and of course, a rare phenomenon in our east coast county – a waterside sunset. We were lucky enough to bag a corner table tucked between dual aspect windows and the changing light over the evening water was just incredible to watch. The interior of the pub has had a considerable 'refresh'; clean, bright and simple with a riverside twist there's an airy outdoor feel but I can also imagine cosying in by the wood-burner after a good dog walk.

I was pleased to see too that the menu is relatively uncomplicated and includes a good smattering of what I would consider to be traditional pub style food choices. That's not to say though that the food isn't interesting – far from it! I decided to start with goat's cheese and red pepper pate on toast and my husband took an unusual stance for him



ordering a half pint of shell-on prawns. He can't usually be bothered with the 'faff' of shelling the wee beasties but said there was something about sitting overlooking the river that made him happy to while away some time with this quite therapeutic task. I was quite simply stunned with my starter – beautifully presented and full of well thought out flavour combinations, even the side salad (so often a poor relation and given little thought) had me reaching for the superlatives.

I was tempted to order sweet and smoky chilli con carne to follow but swayed at the last moment, wooed by pan roasted English lamb rump served on crushed new potatoes with a chickpea and chorizo stew. All that juicy, pink lamb infusing the potatoes from above while the chorizo worked its magic from below it was a temptation I was glad to have given in to. Adrian stuck to his fishy theme choosing the open fish pie. Cod, salmon, smoked haddock and



crayfish all topped with creamy dill mash – absolutely delicious. We always like to have a good 'nose' at the food ordered on tables around us and from what we could see (and the comments we could politely over-hear) we weren't alone in our praise of both the quantity and quality on the plates before us.

Of course it's always dangerous to spy on desserts arriving at another table, especially if the will to resist is anything less than iron-clad. Across the way from us a family had ordered a variety of sundae style desserts, delightfully presented in retro styled 'knickerbocker glory' glasses. It had to be done. One banoffee mess – a delightful toffee and banana twist on the classic Eton mess – and one chocolate brownie sundae later it was doubtful we could ever consume another calorie. Rich, creamy extravagance, the former packed with home-made meringue and honeycomb and the latter bursting with chocolate by the bucketful.



They're the kind of treat desserts that will keep customers of all ages coming back for more, I sure.

The menu can change from day to day, depending on the availability of good local and seasonal ingredients so it's going to be a real treat to return because return we shall. I can envisage an autumn visit for a good long riverside dog walk followed by a hearty, warming meal relaxing and enjoying the views. What more could we wish for?

#### INFORMATION

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