



GILES COREN



Eating out
Giles Coren
EXPERT VIEW
“the food
was excellent”

Giles Coren reviews Bricklayers Arms

The Times restaurant critic joins a reader at a pub in Hertfordshire



From the Times 9th January 2010

You could go to the Bricklayers Arms in Hogpits Bottom, if you wanted to go somewhere with a funny address but serious food. The thing is, it's in darkest Hertfordshire and I know that most of you live in London, and I'm fed up with all the grief I get for reviewing out of town so much. It is now almost at 50-50 with the grief I get for not reviewing out of town enough. Which is interesting.

But the problem with my reviewing the place properly is that I wasn't paying all that much attention when I ate there.

I was having too nice a time with Michelle Strachan, a reader who seemed to want to have lunch with me so much that I resurrected the ancient practice of hunkering down at table with *tone pollone* (which someone once told me is the ablative of *hoi polloi*) and headed out there to meet her.

It is a lovely old place, right in the middle of the first field you come to driving north out of London, and claims on its website to have won The Good Pub Guide's award for "Hertfordshire Dining Pub of the Year" for both 2008 and 2009. Whether it can hold on to the title for another year is a question that will grip all Herts going into 2010.

Still, the food was excellent. The menu was a bit longer than I like to see in pubs (12 mains plus specials) but they do their own smoking of meat and fish, have a wonderful way with pan-fried foie gras entier served alongside shavings of foie gras terrine draped over crisp toast and salad, made a decent job of livening up a guinea fowl, and plated aged serrano ham with a poached egg in parsnip crumbs quite beautifully. For all I know it may indeed be the best dining pub in all Hertfordshire, and that is accolade enough.

Hogpits Bottom, Flaunden, Hertfordshire (01442 833322)