



Restaurant Profile

**The Mill Restaurant at Hornsbury Mill,
Eleighwater, Chard, TA20 3AQ**

☎01460 63317, www.hornsburymill.co.uk

Food served:

12 noon-2pm daily

6.30pm-9pm Mon-Sat

Prices:

Starters from £4.95

Mains from £9.95

Desserts from £4.50

Sunday lunch from £9.95

Wines from £12.95 a bottle

Hornsbury Mill

Diane Scully enjoys a traditional Sunday lunch with a secret twist

The peace and tranquillity of Hornsbury Mill envelops you as soon as you turn into the drive and find yourself transported into the Zen-like calm of five acres of beautifully landscaped water gardens. The lakes, waterfall and mature woodland are the perfect backdrop to the converted 19th-century mill, which still has the impressive 18ft wheel in situ. The new owners, Jane and Vicki Nagle, have restored the wheel to working order, thus linking the building's history with today's hotel and restaurant. The Mill Restaurant features a large viewing window so you can see the wheel turn whilst you enjoy your meal – which is precisely what we did.

We were there for Sunday lunch and soon after our arrival found a frisson of excitement in the air, which was explained by an imminent wedding. Hornsbury Mill holds a licence for civil ceremonies and, not surprisingly, it's a popular choice, and from our seats in the restaurant we were treated to a parade of wedding finery as guests passed by.

With its facilities for weddings, conferences and other events, Hornsbury Mill is more than a restaurant and hotel. There are events planned throughout the year, and to round off 2008 they will be playing host to themed evenings, Christmas lunches and dinners.

With the wedding in full swing there was no lack of attention to the restaurant diners, and our hosts made sure we were well looked after, with warm and friendly service. We chose wines from an excellent list, with vintages from around the globe, a number of which are available by the glass, before being shown to our table.

We began the meal with a robustly flavoured French onion soup and a pretty tian of prawns. Both were a great start to proceedings. The traditional Sunday lunch

menu offers choices of meats, vegetarian and fish dishes, which are served with roast potatoes and seasonal vegetables. Intriguingly there's something called 'Hornsbury's traditional gravy', which seems to have become a talking point. We quizzed the waiter but he was reluctant to reveal any of the chef's secrets.

Our main courses of lamb and pork were generously proportioned, and gave us the chance to sample the infamous Hornsbury gravy. This is a delicious concoction of deep colour and flavour, so in the absence of any clues from the waiter we tried to guess what it was made from. We were confident we could detect redcurrant jelly in the sweetness of the flavour but beyond that the recipe may remain a secret after all.

The Sunday lunch menu offers five choices of dessert. The chocolate fondant with berry compôte and the orange and Cointreau tart and blackcurrant sorbet won out, and were excellent.

The chef, Chris Rainey, is also new to Hornsbury Mill and, after just six months, he's brought energy and enthusiasm to the kitchen. With a team of only four, he's introduced new menus and enhanced the cooking. He insists on using only fresh, local ingredients and makes everything for the restaurant in-house. With the addition of a new pastry kitchen planned for 2009, he will be able to ensure pastries for all events are also made on site. This month sees the launch of a new à la carte menu, which will concentrate on British classics – fish and chips, faggots and pea purée, liver and bacon – all cooked with the best ingredients.

Getting back to that Hornsbury gravy, the chef confirmed there was indeed redcurrant jelly in it. We would have punched the air in triumph if only we could move! □