

## The Old Schoolhouse      Mothecombe

Summer is on the horizon and we're taking a look at The Old Schoolhouse in Mothecombe, a restaurant where alfresco can be your choice in the walled school yard, or inside in the refurbished schoolroom.

We arrive in time to escape a heavy shower and note Coconut, Curry and Red Lentil Soup for £9.50 at the top of a chalked blackboard which is their menu 'card'. There's a warm invitation in the sound of that dish and, as we pass on to find a seat, we feel at home.

The schoolroom is crowded and buzzing with the chatter of people. Some had sought protection from the rain, but we find room enough to shuffle passed a couple on a bench to reach seats by the wall. The couple slide along their bench a little to make room for us. The authentic school bench and table with fold-away steel legs trigger memories of school days.

We had hoped to walk the magnificent beach at Mothecombe where low tide exposes an unusual expanse of beach. You will occasionally find smooth pebbles, shells and odd strands of seaweed on its rippled sand. Around its verges, fallen tree trunks and abandoned timbers decompose in saline water. But today, weather, of the wettest and greyest kind, butted in to make the tea house a popular alternative to the beach walk.

With our tea, we were lucky to have the last slice of Coffee and Walnut cake – that slice of dreamy creamy-looking cake was moist and, mm... the Sticky Gingerbread was just that – sticky!

At a neighbouring table, children of two families ate fish and chips while mum and dad had sandwiches and local Salcombe beers. The choice of sandwich fillings includes Crab as well as Bacon. And there are Chilli prawns with garlic bread. All are very good.

The children test their quiz ability with random topics from the Trivial Pursuit cards provided while their parents enjoy their own friendship. As they leave, the table is littered with the debris of a family lunch and so, part of the treat for them all is that 'walk away' moment. Centre to the table is an enamelled water jug with sandcastle buckets for cutlery. Like theirs, our table has a bunch of trivial pursuit cards along with the cruet and serviettes.

For dining in the evenings (on Fridays and Saturdays) the Old Schoolhouse takes on a different mood. The owners benefit from their South Milton Beach house experience with its shabby-chic look. Like there, seafood is the main item, but good steaks are served too. Portions are generous and a few items on the menu are: Mussels at £9.50 as a starter or, as a main course, £16; Fresh Bream and Vegetables is a main at £18.50. Deserts are £6.50. A favourite side order is, Artichokes with Almond Butter and Fine Beans and, like all their side orders, are designed for sharing so you can try more of them. Check the blackboard for the day's specials as the chef changes them frequently and may offer different dishes each time you visit.

As we leave, we see the school bell hanging on a spring by the door. This was, after all, a school house. Blackboards, as well as murals of encyclopaedia nature-study pages on the walls, are now part of the decor. For more information, call 01752 830552