

CROWN HOTEL Camden

When I recently posted on our Facebook page about our plans to print this edition, I included pictures of some favourites of the local hospitality industry. Amongst them were Sue Ann and Charlie, now based at The Crown Hotel Camden. The response the photo evoked was heartwarming but unsurprising. The sibling team developed a strong following at their 59 Grill, Mount Annan and when the management of The Crown cleverly employed them to run their grand dining room, they were exposed to a whole new audience. Of course their loyal fans followed them.

Let's just say they are extremely popular. Sue Ann runs the restaurant with personality, professionalism and real care. You don't have to watch Sue Ann move around The Crown's huge dining room for long to realise why she is so respected and loved. As I sat and did just that, Sue Ann served food, took orders and interacted effortlessly with her customers. Sue Ann is a natural for hospitality - she genuinely enjoys people.

I dined alone at The Crown recently and embarrassingly inhabited a table designed for four, because Sue Ann insisted I sit in a nice position. I had my laptop to hide behind. I love writing in cafes and restaurants - where appropriate. I find it very productive and somehow still sociable.

To better guide you on the food available at The Crown, I didn't go with the midweek lunch menu. Burgers, schnitties, steak and

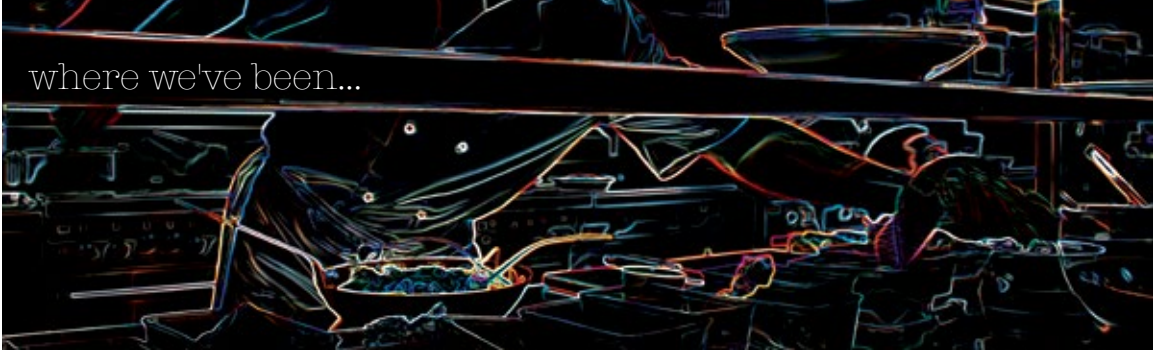
fish dishes - every item is \$13.50. It's incredible value but it doesn't really give you a strong overview of the regular menu.

But first a beer. Craft beer fans might bemoan the purchases of Balter and Stone and Wood by the mega corporate breweries, but if the outcome is that more of my kind of beers are available at a typical pub front bar, I am more than happy. Balter XPA is a cracking beer, regardless of who owns it.

I went for the Seafood Board, mostly because all the delicious seafood is grilled but also because this type of menu item is more of a signature for Charlie's kitchen. Tiger Prawns, Barramundi, mussels, scallops and squid cover a large serving plate, with a base of beer battered chips and salad at the centre. As my lunch arrived I overheard from a nearby table, "the chips here are the best." Yes, I immediately picked up the crispiest looking chip on the plate and sampled it - then maybe six more - OK seven. Hard to argue with that gentleman's review.

But on to more important things. The board looked amazing and my tastebuds were doing a happy dance as I worked my way around the assortment of grilled seafood. Prawns first, because they are much better freshly cooked. The scallops were superb, so too the mussels and the expertly cooked rings of squid. I am the guy that eats the salad too - it was fresh and tasty. The great thing about a grilled seafood board is that the chips are more attractive. I left a lot of chips, but I did allow myself to indulge these "the best" chips, eventually

where we've been...



pushing the plate out of arms reach so I didn't keep going.

To me a fried seafood platter is a waste of seafood - most fried stuff tastes similar. Also, that much fried anything makes you feel a bit worse for wear afterwards. I left feeling content but unencumbered by the large lunch.

Sue Ann's personality and work ethic, combined with Charlie's consistent and diverse cooking makes The Crown an excellent choice for lunch or dinner, seven days.

By the way, The Crown is popular for lunch - probably because of the \$13.50 bargain lunch menu. Get there early or book ahead.