

## Arundell Arms, Devon: hotel review

The Arundell Arms in Lifton, Devon, is an old coaching inn and one of the few remaining dedicated angling hotels in the country. Long may it last, says Fiona Duncan.

By Fiona Duncan

Published: 11:33AM BST 26 Oct 2010

[Comments](#)

A devotee of the Arundell Arms, I have never actually done there what you are supposed to do – which is fish – until now. That's because it has much else to offer, not least as a great base (minutes from the A30) for visiting the **West Country**.

It's a good moment to return, this time to fulfil a promise to our son of a couple of days' fishing and expert tuition from the hotel's two superb instructors, David Pilkington and Tim Smith, on the 20 miles of the River Tamar and its tributaries that belong to the Arundell Arms, plus a 90ft-deep lake, ideal for teaching beginners.



The Arundell Arms is one of the few remaining dedicated angling hotels in the country

### Related Articles

[More UK hotel reviews](#)

[Hotel du Vin, Bristol: review](#)

[The Park, Wick, Bristol: hotel review](#)

[Mercure Brigstow, Bristol: hotel review](#)

[The Angel, Sussex: hotel review](#)

[Ann Widdecombe's Bath](#)

One of the few remaining dedicated angling hotels in the country, it has been responsible for teaching thousands of people to fish.

Now, after 50 years in the hands of a great and charming character, Anne Voss-Bark, it has been taken on by her son, Adam Fox-Edwards (a former RAF Tornado pilot), and his wife Tina, who are charged with the testing task of

making a much-loved institution appeal to the younger generation while keeping its spirit and raison d'être alive.

One of the things that drew Anne to the fishing community was its gentleness and innate good manners. That quality of kindness is still palpable today, although the atmosphere changes a bit when the shooting parties come in winter. "Not that we don't love them," Adam says, "they're big spenders."

He understands, too, how a place like this, run properly, can be a great leveller. "One quiet evening there were three solo guests in the bar. One was the grandson of the founder of the RAF, another the editor of *The Shooting Times*, and the third a vegetarian, anti-bloodsports unicyclist, en route from Land's End to John O'Groats. It was surreal, but we all got on."

In the same vein, the Arundell Arms, a plain old coaching inn in a workaday village, includes a down-to-earth local bar, the Courthouse (which it once was) and a splendid hotel dining room where – and this, along with the rare 250-year-old circular cockfighting pit that does service as the tackle shop, is the Arundell Arms' great surprise – the gear shifts dramatically upwards.

Suddenly you are no longer in a modest country inn, but a grand hotel (the room was once the village assembly hall) with high ceilings, panels depicting classical statues and a huge central flower arrangement under a glittering chandelier.

Best of all, the food, courtesy of head chef Steven Pidgeon, is as notable as the setting; the real deal, in fact: the best local produce cooked with care and flair. We ate Cornish scallops and wild black bream, tournedos of Devon beef and local country cheeses, all superb.

Anne had inevitably slowed down in the past few years, and her son has much to tidy and update. The bedrooms are pretty just as they are; bathrooms are being improved. Other plans are afoot, as money allows, all of them sensitive, none alarming.

Like its food, this hotel is also the real deal. Long may it last.

- Lifton (01566 784666; [www.arundellarms.com](http://www.arundellarms.com)). Doubles from £98 per night, including breakfast. Access possible for guests with disabilities.

#### **ROOMS \* \* \* \***

Ungimmicky, pretty and comfortable; bathrooms being upgraded

#### **SERVICE \* \* \* \***

As it should be; three pairs of mothers and daughters among all-local staff

#### **CHARACTER \* \* \* \* \***

A great institution and the perfect place to learn to fish

#### **FOOD & DRINK \* \* \* \* \***

Again, as it should be: local, fresh, delicious; excellent wines, too

#### **VALUE FOR MONEY \* \* \* \* \***

50 years of hospitality aren't included in the bill; ask about packages

## FIONA DUNCAN'S CHOICE

### WHAT TO DO

Fish, obviously: day tickets cost £26, giving you a mile of fishing to yourself. Advice or tuition comes no finer than here, where the gillies are on hand in the cockpit every morning. But there's plenty else to do: Padstow and Polzeath, the Eden Project and the Lost Gardens of Heligan are all 45 minutes away, Cotehele and Lanhydrock Gardens half an hour. How about tree surfing, followed by sea surfing at Padstow, where you can hire boards and wetsuits?

Visit [www.treesurfers.co.uk](http://www.treesurfers.co.uk) for details. In the Tamar Valley you can go canoeing ([www.canoetamar.co.uk](http://www.canoetamar.co.uk))

### BEST FOR LUNCH

Sunday lunch is great at the Arundell Arms, but for a meal elsewhere, try the Harris Arms ([www.theharrisarms.co.uk](http://www.theharrisarms.co.uk)) just down the road at Lewdown. Cosy, good organically sourced food and interesting wines.

### BEST LOCAL WALK

Dartmoor is five minutes' drive away; or you could walk at Lydford Gorge, which has stunning waterfalls – it's great country, particularly in winter, when the River Lyd is full of water ([www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-vh/w-visits/w-findaplace/w-lydfordgorge/](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-vh/w-visits/w-findaplace/w-lydfordgorge/))

---

blog comments powered by [Disqus](#)

---

© Copyright of Telegraph Media Group Limited 2010