

The Old Bridge Inn claims credit as Yorkshire's oldest hostelry, its first recorded date being 1307.

It also has some notability as the home of the Pork Pie Appreciation Society and its annual tasting competition.



There's a hardcore of just nine men in the society, yet their group is recognised as one of the foremost authorities on pork pies. Guess what?

There was no pork pie on the menu when we visited to eat during one recent lunchtime. But there was a wonderful cheese and onion pie, with a delightful crispy pastry and tasty filling.

It was absolutely gorgeous. If they had a competition for these, this would have been a winner.

On a chilly day as the year turns into autumn, we were pleased to see an open fire in this old inn. It set a welcome tone for our first visit here.

It's a cute little place, with old beams and good old Timothy Taylor's on tap, plus a range of guest real ales. A bit of heaven for a beer buff.

The appearance is of an old-fashioned pub-restaurant, rather than a ponced-up modern interpretation. And three cheers to that.

Walking in to the Old Bridge on a Wednesday, we were surprised to learn that they might have difficulty squeezing us in. Luckily they could, although we might well be inclined to book ahead for a future meal here. Now, being a bit of a glutton and a scoffer, I've always been one who doesn't see salad as real food. What is there to chomp into, I always think.



So I inwardly sighed and had a bit of a heavy heart when I saw that the weekday lunchtime menu at the Old Bridge is either "super sandwiches" or salad buffet. Was I just going to have lettuce and tomato?

Ah well, at least I wasn't going to suffer from menu overload like you do at the sort of place where they have an unsettling number of starters and mains on offer.

As we sat at our table with our drinks (a pint of ale for me from the Hawkshead brewery in Ambleside and a glass of decent chardonnay for my wife), I eyed the salad bar suspiciously. With the benefit of that wonderful thing, hindsight, I wondered later why I had worried. A bit like a born-again convert to religion, I am now an evangelist for salad after this lunch.

Done properly, with the right components and caring home cooking, it's a wonderful thing. For £10.50 each we could walk up and fill our plates as often and as much as we wanted and also have a soup or dessert.

As we are pudding people, we decided to pass on straight to the mains after first declining the offer of bread for our table.

The aforementioned cheese and onion pie was about the first to be put on the plate, looking as tempting as it did.

Other things we could have had all right, we did were beef, ham, scotch eggs, quiche, potato salad, celery salad, nice looking lettuce and tomatoes and other salad bite I've no idea where they sourced the beef and barn but the meat had been exceedingly well prepared by the kitchen, whose busy woman we could spy through the open door. Likewise, the scotch eggs had been taken seriously and given love by their maker. Somehow, we had to find room for dessert after our feast.

And we're glad we did as our homemade apple and blackberry crumble and sticky toffee pudding maintained the high standards. We chose to have them with a nice custard. We were strangers to this pub, but made to feel more than welcome by a lady who does the place proud. We didn't have to rush with the meal.

You can eat at the Old Bridge very well. And we did.

In the evenings and at weekends the meals revert to blackboard specials and we'll be there again to try these in the not too distant future, no doubt.

Before you ask, there is a vegetarian option to the salad buffet.