

Restaurant of the week: Tredwell's

Hold the front page! A good review

Joseph Connolly ventures yet again off patch into Covent Garden and finds an expensive but quality meal

The St Martin's Lane area of Covent Garden is becoming really very foodie: all the usual chains, of course, as well as the inexplicably cultish burger joint Five Guys (always a queue) – but also quite a few interesting and different places such as Bill's, which I reviewed last week ... if not the absolutely dire Scoff & Banter, whose tombstone I erected not too long ago, and across whose memory we draw not so much a veil as an iron curtain, while we mutter our final farewell. The glittering stars, of course, are J. Sheekey and the newly revamped Ivy. And now look who's here: no less than Marcus Wareing. Well – not literally; he's still cooking (daily, and fantastically well) at his eponymous restaurant in the Berkeley Hotel ... but Tredwell's is the second of his largely English diffusion lines, the first being the rather jolly Gilbert Scott in the St Pancras Hotel. Tredwell's isn't in a hotel, and so has the great advantage of a street frontage – and on the forecourt there stands a brightly painted tuk tuk. You know – those Asian motorised rickshaws which delight in merrily mowing down unsuspecting tourists, while two more of them cling on anxiously in the back, grinning their counterfeit enjoyment at the sheer authenticity of it all, while idly wondering whether they are soon to be (a) fleeced or (b) killed. Why is there a tuk tuk here? Is this an Asian place, then? It is not. We are in the wackiness of trendy restaurant-land: the thing

“We are in the wackiness of trendy restaurantland; the brightly painted tuk-tuk is there, because it is there

is there because it is there.

The space is large and three-tiered, but at lunchtime only the dinky little ground floor seems to be in operation. We have here a slightly laboured poem in black and white, with the occasional glint of brass – a decent enough blend of old-school leather upholstered booths along with street-edgy detail such as panels of black wire mesh – the sort of thing that separates the fox from the chickens.

My guest was Christopher Silvester, a respected journalist, author and anthologist who, post Cambridge, cut his Fleet Street

lunches in the Coach & Horses – he did them all. But long before that he remembers with fondness many childhood Sunday roast lunches at Jack Straw's Castle and dinners at the Cosmo in Swiss Cottage – all in the company of his grandfather, the legendary orchestra leader Victor Silvester, who lived in St John's Wood. Christopher, in between writing, continues to fly the flag by singing all the jazz standards with a band at various clubs around London. Please do note that the surname is Silvester, and not the frequent misspelling Sylvester – who is, of course, the lispng puddly-tat who never gets the better of Tweety-Pie: it is as well to bear in mind the distinction.

In keeping with our common bookishness, Christopher thought he would kick off with a cocktail called Page Turner – which comprised, as you might have guessed, sage, pineapple, Cahaca (distilled sugar cane), lime and rhubarb syrup. I have never before heard of rhubarb syrup.

He pronounced it 'refreshing': seems an awful lot of trouble and ingredients for merely 'refreshing', but there it is. Water is served in a metal flask that looks like an ammo shell case, and the house red – a Grenache/cabernet – arrives in a naked bottle, so Christ knows what it is, really: good, though. To start, we are sharing the 'Taste of Tredwell's' – a wooden board (match) bearing a pair of 'famous' pork sliders (mini burgers, if you're not cool and don't know), sticky glazed

chicken wings, chorizo jam and charred bread. You could

immediately tell that the pork sliders were indeed famous because they came with a PR and bodyguard and were continually papped.

They were good – pulled pork, little brioche buns. The chicken wings were quite spicy, and nicely jammy. Expensive at £18, though ... and talking of expensive: Christopher wanted the rib-eye ("very, very rare – nearly blue") and I have never before seen this cut priced at £33. Okay, it was 35 days dry-aged, but didn't even come with chips! Well blimey. But it was "cooked just right," said Christopher, "and very tender". Wasn't cooked at all, to my eye – but let it lie. He enjoyed sweet potato chunks with that ... whereas I had proper triple-cooked chips to accompany the corn fed chicken with a leg croquette, broad beans and girolle mushrooms.

All of this was surprisingly wonderful: the leg meat had been shredded and formed into a rectangle, crunchily covered with dark brown crumbs. The breast was creamy and extremely flavourful ... and crunchily covered with golden crumbs: beautiful. The very good chips came with a most unusual hollandaise mousse – delightfully frothy, and pretty damned good. Christopher was reflecting on his 12 years at Private Eye. "You do make enemies," he said. He has written for most papers and magazines you can think of, often as a diarist, and once carried the distinction of being the only right wing writer on The Guardian – something of an achievement. Currently he is working on the first volume of a trilogy on the social history of Hollywood, and

FACTFILE

- Tredwell's, 4a Upper St Martin's Lane, WC2. Tel 020 3764 0840
- Open Mon-Wed 12 – 3pm, 5 – 11pm. Thur-Sat 12 – 11pm. Sun 12 – 9pm
- FOOD ★★★★★★☆☆
- SERVICE ★★★★★★☆☆
- THE FEELING ★★★★★★☆☆
- COST Not cheap, but it is quality. About £125 for three course meal for two, with modest wine.
- Joseph Connolly's latest novel *STYLE* is published by Quercus in hardback and ebook. All previous restaurant reviews may be viewed on the website josephconnolly.co.uk

is also ghosting the memoirs of a very eminent politician (he told me who, but I'm not allowed to say – how very galling for you) to be published next year.

Then he was intrigued by two items on the pudding menu: cornflake soft serve and salt caramel soft serve: what, he asked the waiter, is 'soft serve' ...? "Ice cream," came the answer. "Like Mr Whippy". Which recalled to me a cartoon of said jingling ice cream van, a lady of a certain age saying to the chap inside serving cones: "And is there a MRS Whippy ...?" We ordered one of each ... and they were okay, but tasted mostly of cold. We had had a very good time chatting about old Fleet Street – and if this review you are now reading is not on the Ham & High's front page ... well then they didn't hold it, as I told them to.



teeth on Private Eye: Grovel, Street of Shame, the notorious