

Lunch at The Schoolrooms is an indulgent treat, writes Stephanie Burns.



From left: Matthew Hurt, Hannah Quarmby, James Grey and Laney Smith  
Photography: Stephanie Burns

# TOP OF THE CLASS

**A**t this time of year, a mere break in the clouds is enough to warrant a dash into the countryside – let alone a full blazing sun. So when a mild lunchtime presented itself, we jumped in the car and headed out to Bradfield to see if one of its well-loved businesses really was as good as we'd heard.

Since The Schoolrooms' original managers took charge again earlier this year, the café/deli/butchery has once again been winning rave reviews for its local menu that is almost entirely made by hand by head chef James Grey and sous Laney Smith. Out front, Matthew Hurt and Hannah Quarmy provide a friendly and welcoming service.

It was the last Friday of half term when we visited and we were lucky to get a seat in the bustling café, which can be found in the eves of the former school. Looking round, our fellow diners were enjoying the weekly special of fish and chips – complete with tartare sauce, pea puree and lemon wedge – for just £5. At almost half the usual price, this is an absolute steal, but we couldn't help being tempted by some of the menu's other offerings.

It was the steak and Bradfield Brewery ale pie that caught my partner's eye. Served with seasonal veg, fat chips and rich gravy, and accompanied by a glass of Argentinian Malbec, he made sure this lunchtime treat was as indulgent as possible. With tender meat, a wonderfully crisp puff pastry lid and seriously good chips, the dish was a real hit.

I chose a lighter option; the daily deli board. The chunky wooden board came laden with homemade ham hock terrine, three artisan cheeses, half a Toppings pork pie, real ale chutney, a tiny Kilner jar of

pickled onion, salad with shards of crisp prosciutto, and two thick slices of fresh brown bloomer – most of which is sourced from the deli and butchery downstairs. Every element was great but the star of the show was that terrine; full of flavour and absolutely delicious.

To complete the experience, my partner ordered the gooey caramel chocolate fondant, served warm with vanilla Peak District ice cream. It was a fantastic end to his hearty meal and he took great pleasure in scraping every last crumb from the bowl.

Meanwhile, I had turned my attentions to the counter's tantalising selection of fresh cakes, tray bakes and biscuits. I can never resist a fruit scone and when it's served with Tiptree raspberry jam and light-as-air whipped cream – all the better.

As we left, we passed a group of walkers who were basking in the autumn sun out on the terrace, taking full advantage of the unseasonably warm weather. Given the standard of the food at The Schoolrooms, I won't be waiting for another burst of sunshine to return. Come rain or shine – it's well worth a visit.



## What we ate

### Mains

Steak and Bradfield Brewery pie, £9  
Daily deli board, £8

### Dessert

Gooey caramel chocolate fondant, £3  
Scone with jam and cream, £1.95

### Drinks

Argentinean Malbec 175ml, £3.80  
Luscombe elderflower bubbly, £2

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