

ESCAPE TO THE HAND!



Located in a spot you would be unlikely to inadvertently pass, this is a location you have to make a point of visiting. And for those who make the trip, a rather special destination awaits.

The latter part of the journey to this ancient hostelry really does feel like an escape, once you leave the busy A5 and travel up the Ceiriog Valley, with the river often running close by. The scenic steep-sided valley, enclosed by bare upland ridges, promotes a sense of tranquillity with its mosaic of pasture, woods, farms and small villages.

As you drop into the village of Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog you can hardly help but spot your destination: The Hand is directly ahead, and if you need confirmation, the large sculpture of a hand is bound to draw your attention!

The village grew up at the intersection of drovers' roads which forded the River Ceiriog here. Those who enjoy all things 'country' should feel at home, with the hearty breakfast menu; the surrounding landscape beckoning you outdoors; the roaring fire in the bar to welcome you back; or a glass of good port to finish dinner.

The Hand has two AA Rosettes and the evening menu demonstrated Head Chef Grant Mulholland's flair. We tried the Pork and Black Pudding croquette with langoustine sauce, followed by Roast Rump of Welsh Lamb, chilli, coriander & garlic crumb, broccoli & cheddar purée with red wine reduction. Both were excellent.

The 'Classics' menu provided traditional pub fayre, and we tried the enjoyable and filling 'McArdles of Chirk' Steak & Ale pie.

The hosts here are Jonathan and Jackie Greatorex. Jonathan has local roots and his grandfather ran a village shop, which still bears the family name, a few miles away in Llanrhaedrym-Mochnant.

The Hand goes back much further: it began life as a farm centuries ago and the dining room was once the cowshed. As well as country pursuits, local interest includes Pistyll Rhaeadr (a waterfall that falls 240 feet in three stages), Chirk Castle (National Trust), and the Llangollen Railway.

The Hand has 13 bedrooms starting from £95 per room per night B&B.

www.thehandhotel.co.uk 01691 600666.

The Hand, Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog, Llangollen, LL20 7LD.

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