

Adrian Bannister 28/02/22

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A gastronome 1984

President 2011-13

Adrian was one of the few chef Patrons, along with Herbert Berger and Anton Mosimann to whom gastronomy was a way of life.

For Adrian it probably started with his first job as a kitchen trainee under Maurice Ithurbure at Chez Maurice which for some was considered the best restaurant in England.

Maurice Ithurbure trained under Escoffier becoming 1 of Escoffier's Sous- Chefs

From there, Adrian joined the Management training scheme at the Savoy. At that time and I speak from personal knowledge, hotel management training was heavily kitchen-based working on all corners of the kitchen. Under Chef Silvino Trompetto, Adrian became Chef Poissonnier

After the Savoy Adrian spent a year training in the kitchens of the Plaza Athenee, Paris where he was the only non-Frenchman in the kitchens, so he learnt to speak very good if a bit slangy French. With that experience he became the chef at the British Embassy in Paris, where his love of all things French was kindled and he became knowledgeable on the vagaries of French wines.

To gain management experience Adrian went to the University of Strathclyde, formerly the Scottish Hotel School which with the new Guildford University had degree courses in Hotel & Catering Management. Adrian was one of the first students to obtain a degree in Hotel & Catering from Management.

Adrian went on to manage several South Coast hotels

I first met Adrian in 1983 when he was Manager of the White Hart at Sonning, owned by Gastronome Harry Mogford.

Harry thought very highly of Adrian and put him up for membership of the Gastronomes. Through the of Gastronomes Adrian and I became very good friends. The Gastronomes became a lifelong interest for Adrian he attended regularly and was a brilliant President 2011-13.

Adrian was chef Patron of 3 restaurants. Adrian's knowledge of food and the classical Repertoire de la Cuisine of Escoffier was second to none.

Adrian was not impressed by the direction fine dining was taking, the over-elaboration of many dishes with an enormous list of ingredients. It seemed that the picture on the plate had taken over from the taste of the main ingredient.

But Adrian was passionate about serving quality food. He sourced his food wherever possible direct from the producer. In the case of fish, it came direct from Cornwall and in the game season he used locally shot game.

Having been well trained himself training young chefs was important. He was very critical of the training given in some fine dining restaurants.

Adrian interviewed a young chef who had been at one of Heston Blumenthal's establishments for 6 months. In 6 months, one would have assumed that a trainee chef would have learnt a lot. When Adrian asked what work he had done the young man said he made lollipops and that was all he had done for 6 months.

Adrian's last restaurant before he retired was The Blackboys Inn. The menu was a result of Adrian's years of experience, knowledge and flair, the bar was set high and Adrian achieved Bib Gourmand ratings. The Blackboys was his personal triumph, from restoring a run-down country pub into an exemplary Thames Valley restaurant with rooms.

Adrian had a great sense of fun and mischief. In 2004, our 2 families took a holiday in Sardinia. We rented a large house in Cagliari by the beach.

Close to the house was a restaurant where we had an enjoyable meal and drank wine in bottles. On our next visit we decided to drink the house wine in litres. We poured 4 glasses and 2 small glasses for the girls and the litre was finished. Adrian and I agreed that it was not a litre so we ordered another. Also on the table were litre bottles of water. We poured out the water and poured the litre of wine into the litre water bottle. The wine was barely filled 3 quarters of the bottle. We called the waiter and showed him the wine in the litre bottle. Gushing with apologies and how he did not understand how it could possibly have happened he gave us another litre on the house. We split the bill and paid by card.

But the restaurant was not to be beaten. When the cards arrived for payment, we had been charged twice.

An incredible meal

At the Black boys Adrian had bought a silver-plated duck press. I had only ever seen a duck press used once before.

I jokingly said to Adrian when was he going to cook duck a la presse? Not long after Adrian invited Kate, Helen, myself and 2 other friends to the Blackboys for duck a la presse.

We started with fresh picked crab and avocado, then seared scallops, the pan-fried foie gras, then the duck a la presse prepared by Adrian at the table, then a selection of French Cheeses and finally a bread-and-butter pudding made with panettone accompanied by beautifully selected wines.

In a long dining career, it was one of the best, richest and most memorable meals I have ever eaten.

To Adrian, the Gastronome was very important.

He considered the objects of the Gastronome to be vitally important. Adrian considered that by maintaining these objects help save Gastronomy from a fast, junk food world

Adrian was a great, supremely knowledgeable chef and restaurateur, a kind, generous warm hearted, man, full of good humour always a pleasure to be with and a wonderful friend. A true Gastronome.

Together with his family and friends I will miss him greatly.