

= The Checkers (restaurant) =

The Checkers , is a restaurant with rooms in Montgomery , Powys , Wales . Historically , the building was used as a coaching inn dating from the 17th century . Until the 2000s , it was used as a pub / hotel . It was converted into a French restaurant in 2012 and under chef Stephane Borie , it was awarded a Michelin star later that year . There are two main rooms in the restaurant , and three hotel rooms . It has received a mixed reception from critics , who have praised particular dishes but criticised the atmosphere . It serves both modern and classic French dishes , and in 2016 , switched to only using set menus .

= = Description = =

The restaurant is located on Broad Street in the town of Montgomery , Powys , a short distance from Montgomery Castle . There is a separate dining room and bar / lounge area in the restaurant . The dining room has low @-@ slung beams , and an open brick fireplace , around which are placed Laura Ashley sofas . The chestnut wood flooring of the restaurant was created from a fallen tree on the Francis family farm . There is room to serve up to 40 diners , with 12 members of staff working there . There are three en @-@ suite rooms available to hire on a hotel basis .

= = = Menu = = =

The menu uses locally grown produce from Powys and Shropshire , and is a combination of classic and modern French cuisine with seasonal changes . Dishes include a pork belly main from the nearby Neuadd Fach baconry , which is served with an apple mousseline , pear and au jus . A monkfish main course comes served with a langoustine consommé and a brussel sprout purée . Other French courses include a French onion soup and a cheese soufflé . Desserts served include a nougat tube filled with white chocolate and passion fruit mousse , and a trio of lemon pots .

In early 2016 , the a la carte menu was stopped and the restaurant moved to serving only set menus . This was attributed to a desire to reduce the food waste produced by the restaurant , which staff hoped that could drop by half as a result of the change . The children 's menu consists of smaller portions of the main menu .

= = History = =

The building dates from the 17th century , and was originally used as a coaching inn . References to the Checkers Inn in Montgomery within the British Newspaper Archives appear as far back as 1855 , when Rebecca Davies ' annual ball was due to take place in the large room there . In 1870 , the inn was run by Charles Williams . During the early 2000s , the building was operated as a hotel and pub , . with Eric Whittingham as landlord .

Head chef Stephane Borie trained with Michel Roux at the three Michelin star restaurant The Waterside Inn in Bray , Berkshire for seven years , where he met pastry chef Sarah Francis . Borie and Francis went on to run the Herbert Arms near Montgomery in 2008 with Sarah 's sister Kathryn running the front of house service . The trio took over The Checkers in March 2011 , refurbishing the former pub as a restaurant . They praised the customer base following them from the Herbert Arms to the new venture .

The restaurant was awarded a Michelin star for 2012 . The list was announced in October 2011 , only seven months after the restaurant opened . Borie said " I am very surprised , but it is teamwork obviously , we didn 't really expect anything because we have been in business for such a small amount of time . " Following the star , Borie increased the number of kitchen staff from three to six .

= = Reception = =

Neil Thomas visited the restaurant shortly after it was awarded a Michelin star . He gave it a rating

of five out of five in his review for the Shropshire Star . He praised the Cerwyn cheese soufflé and the pheasant pithiviers starters , as well as three of the mains ; a roast duck dish , the pork belly dish , and a venison dish . Around the same time , Sally Williams reviewed the restaurant for the Western Mail , who also praised the soufflé . She called the atmosphere " comfortable " and stated that it had a home @-@ like quality to it . In 2013 , the restaurant was ranked as the second best in Wales , behind The Walnut Tree in Abergavenny , in the Sunday Times list of the 100 best restaurants in the UK .

Matthew Norman gave the restaurant three and a half stars out of five , following a visit in early 2014 for The Daily Telegraph . He praised the soufflé and the French onion soup , but called the monkfish " bland " . The pork belly dish was described by his colleague as " superb , just the right side of too intimately piggy " . Norman concluded that the restaurant was a " slick operation " , but the " character , vibrancy and fun had been slaughtered on the altar of satisfying the inspectorate " .