

# Good company pity about the food

Every so often I attend the men's group, which is called Men's United, which has various branches in this area and the branch I went to today was in Frome. I drove there in complete darkness under a moonless sky thinking that this was one of the last times I was going to drive my current Volvo car before picking up a new one on Sunday.

We had a jolly crowd of about 45 men who by the way meet about four times a year. This time we had testimony from two people, one held a very senior position in the Navy as part of his career of 38 years. Christianity is evidently encouraged in the Navy (or was 30 years ago) and he told us one or two amusing stories about how people behave in response to this. The captain of a ship has many powers and he told us of a ship where the captain was a Christian and used to lead the services and make sure everybody attended.

He met his wife when he was in his teens, and found to his delight that she was a baptised and confirmed member of the church. I think it was the Congregational Church. They married shortly after and have been together ever since. One particularly touching moment was when he said that when they say the Lord's Prayer during a church service they always hold hands. He felt sympathy for those couples where one had faith and one did not.

The evening had to be conducted in a rather military way. We arrived at 7 PM for 7:30 PM and helped ourselves to drinks. The meal which was a buffet had to last no longer than half an hour to enable the speakers to speak. This took until about nine o'clock. We then had 15 minutes of questions and then for some reason we had to be out of the room at 9:30 PM.

These are called curry nights. The curry served was to put it mildly 'bland'. I'm getting quite good at telling if someone has any feel for the food they are preparing. The fact that someone is dressed like a cook in a fancy hat and white overalls means nothing if he hasn't a clue what he's doing. We were served with white rice, the least nutritious and the cheapest of the varieties of rice, poppadoms, and the Curry.

Because it was so unlike a curry I've had before I examined the contents and found it was basically a vegetable stew with bits of cheapest cut chicken of the supermarket variety plus a few bags of mixed vegetables from the supermarket Iceland. You would have been served this in a school canteen. There may or may not have been some curry powder added but I could not taste it. When you are cooking a meal for 45 you need to put quite a lot of curry powder in. The whole thing was tasteless and in addition I suffered for it later because I'm very sensitive to chemicals, alas, and I couldn't get home fast enough to take a dose of bicarbonate of soda.

The problem about complaining is that we are quite lucky to get a venue. Normal restaurants will not accommodate us and other people do not like irregular bookings so although I could have ranted and raved at the time, and I certainly have done here, I think the best thing to do is to keep my mouth shut and smile. I always enjoy such occasions, but with a little bit of extra effort the eating experience could have been so much better. We were paying the kitchen seven pounds a head and for that I think we could have been entitled to quite a bit more. <rant over>