

THE SUNDAY TIMES

On Sunday 4th October 2009, in its Travel Section, the Sunday Times announced that;-

‘Tomorrow the Good Hotel Guide Announces its top 10 hotels. Our secret inspector has visited all of them to see if they deserve it...

I’ve just finished a 10-night tour across Britain and Island, checking out the hotels and guesthouses that have won Cesar awards in this years good Hotel Guide. The GHG is a champion of independent, and often idiosyncratic places, and each year it honours 10 properties that it feels are outstanding in their own class. Before they let the rest of the world know, though, they slip me the list, I put on dark glasses and an alias, and visit all 10 to see if they’re up to scratch...

WELSH COUNTRY HOUSE OF THE YEAR

Neuadd Lwyd, Penmynydd.

I had my doubts about Neuadd Lwyd. It only opens four nights a week (Wednesday-Saturday) and you can only get dinner on just three. In my book, top-notch hotelkeeping on those terms should be a piece of cake. After all, the real skill lies in keeping standards high every day of the week. When I set off for Anglesey, I’d decided anything short of perfection should be counted as a failure. But it was perfect. In their handsome Victorian rectory, the owners, Susannah and Peter Woods, run a kind of academy of their craft. It helps that Susannah trained at the Ballymaloe cookery school, in Ireland, but this kind of attention to detail and relentless pursuit of high standards isn’t something you can teach. The Woods are quite a double act.

The room: called Owain, it was well proportioned and exquisitely furnished, with solid, unshowy antiques and a vast French bed (complete with handmade mattress). The bathroom had a roll-top in front of the window. **10/10**

The food: I was an hour late for dinner, but they kept my table until 9pm and Susannah produced a delicious, balanced meal of crab and slow-roasted Anglesey duck. **9/10**

Service: charming. **9/10**

Value: **10/10**, given that dinner is included in the price.

Does it deserve its Cesar? Yes.