

Something for the Weekend

DON'T MISS Tam's SunSport column tomorrow and his brilliant Scottish Sun on Sunday column the next day

OLD KINGS OF ROCK AT QUEENS



TICKETS have gone one sale for legendary rockers Status Quo's gig at a Scots footie ground. Around 8,500 tickets are available to watch the former chart-toppers play at Queen of the South's Palmerston Park in Dumfries on June 5. And joining Status Quo legends Francis Rossi and Rick Parfitt, left, on the bill are Scots rockers Big Country and Place Your Hands stars Reef. It's the first time a music gig will take place at the club's newly refurbished stadium. Club chairman Billy Hewitson said "We are delighted to have a band of

Status Quo's stature for our first concert, but we hope it's the first of many." Local Councillor Colin Smyth added: "The council is delighted to support Queen of the South in staging this concert. "We are happy to share our knowledge with partners because events such as this are not only fantastic for the local community to enjoy but they can bring significant benefits to the local economy." Tickets priced £45 are available online from Queen of the South's website (www.qosfc.com) or via Ticketmaster.



PERFECT CATCH... fresh fish dish

AT the risk of sounding like trivia buff Cliff Clavin — the know-all postal worker from Cheers — did you know the west coast resort of Oban is the largest town between Helensburgh and Fort William?

It's also widely known as the seafood capital of Scotland and, if you don't believe me, I suggest you try the food at Ee-usk.

But make sure you book. We arrived at 5.30pm — the doors open at 5.45pm — and we spent the next 15 minutes staring at the mothwatering menu through the floor-to-ceiling glass windows. (I started getting flashbacks to a stag party weekend I went to in Amsterdam.)

But it's just as well we were early — by no later than 6.30pm, I reckon the restaurant was full. Impressive stuff for a dreich Tuesday night, eh?

Ee-usk simply means "fish" in Gaelic. If it sounds familiar, you've maybe heard a commentator on BBC Alba's football coverage describing St Mirren as "single ee-usk".

According to the website, the restaurant's aim is "to bring to your table an impeccably fresh product, cooked as simply as we can and with as little fuss as possible".

Sounds just like Wetherspoon's... The west coast of Scotland boasts the finest seafood in the world and the shellfish at Ee-usk is 100 per cent locally caught. The langoustines, mussels and oysters come from the cold, clear waters of Loch Linnhe. And the scallops are direct from the Aldi store just up the road. Nah, I'm kidding — they're from the Isle of Mull.

'Head, tail, fins, the lot'

You can actually see Mull from the restaurant (top tip: ask for a window seat when you make your reservation) and I reckon Ee-usk has a better view than Michelle Keegan's window cleaner.

Our table for two was a bit tight — barely enough room to swing a catfish — but, considering the restaurant's popularity, you can't blame this seafood joint for packing them in like sardines.

Service from the team of young local lassies was very polite and friendly and the cracking menu is a seafood lover's dream.

My favourite celebrity chef — Rick Stein — would love it. Almost as much as one of my mates — my best man Graeme — would hate it.

He's allergic to ALL seafood and the poor soul can't eat anything that comes out of the water. In fact, I think he'd even turn his nose up at a boiled egg.

No such worries for my regular dining companion Billy, who kicked off in fine style with a big heap of grilled langoustines. These fearsome looking crustaceans would probably have given Jaws a square-go (if you watch Jaws backwards, it's about a shark that throws up so many people they have to open a beach), but the wee toolkit kindly provided by our waitress transformed Billy into Edward Scissorhands.

As they say in his native Glasgow: "Tongs, ya bass." A bit tricky to eat, sure, but probably not the toughest opponent he's ever faced in a shellsuit... Watching Billy tucking into a plate of langoustines is not for the

It's Le Mer the merrier in Oban

MAKING WAVES... Ee-Usk has great sea views and food

Name: Ee-usk.
Address: North Pier, Oban, Argyll, PA34 5QD.
Telephone: 01631 565666.
Open seven days for lunch and dinner.
Wheelchair access: Yes.
Bill for two: £65.

faint-hearted (hands up if you remember Albert Steptoe trying to eat pickled onions while sitting in his tin bath?) but he skillfully extracted every last meaty morsel. "Excellent," he declared. "Truly excellent. And if I win the EuroMillions, I'm going to hire a personal shell-picker."

My starter — monkfish in batter — was like the poshest fish pakora I've ever tasted. Fresh chunks of meaty white fish in a crispy coating with a little pot of Thai chili dipping sauce on the side. To be honest, combining the two felt like squirting a dollop of ketchup on caviar, but I love it when my food kicks like a donkey with PMT.

Next up for Billy, whole seabass (yep, the head, tail, fins, the lot) stuffed with lemon and thyme. The aroma was like Viagra for the nostrils and, having warmed up with the langoustines, he set about it like German anatomist Gunther von Hagens performing a live autopsy on Channel 4.

He finally came up for air to conclude: "That wasn't just great — it was outstanding." And, lo and behold, all the remained

of the seabass was the sort of fishy skeleton you'd associate with a Tom & Jerry cartoon. Billy also wants a mention for the carrot and celeriac puree on the side (I bet your mammy never dished that up alongside the Findus crispy pancakes) and he reckons Ee-usk should sell it in pint tumblers.

My local, oven-baked halibut — the fillet steak of the seafood world — was superb. OK, perhaps not the biggest portion for £21.95, but it was perfectly cooked, absolutely delicious, and I reckon it's always worth paying a couple of quid extra for this standard of food. I also loved the creamed leeks on

the side — particularly after a good crunch of black pepper — and they worked a treat with the halibut. Oh, and don't miss the Ee-usk chips. They're actually more like little cubes of crunchy roast potatoes and, with nothing more than a salt cellar for company, I could happily eat them by the sackload.

Overall verdict? I'll leave that to Billy who, after his 10th Scoff The Ball trip with yours truly, reckons this was the best. He said: "My knowledge of fish is limited to what you get from the chippy, but I'd drive every day from Glasgow to Oban just for that seabass." Incidentally, Ee-usk was so satisfying we couldn't even manage a single haddock from one of the town's excellent chip shops before heading back down the road.

And we reckon that's a MUST in the seafood capital of Scotland. Particularly for a pair of fat, greedy b*****s like us... PS. Can any readers help with a quick query about my choice of soft drink at Ee-usk? I know all about Opal Fruits/Starburst and Marathon/Snickers. But when did Appletise become Appletiser? And why?

FOOD: 10/10 — superb local seafood, simply cooked.
SERVICE: 4/5 — well worth a tip.
DECOR: 5/5 — lovely interior with breath-taking views.
TOILETS: 5/5 — fresh and spotlessly clean.
VALUE: 4/5 — a fair price for fab food.
TOTAL: 28/30.

- 1=> GLOAGBURN FARM & COFFEE SHOP, Tibermore, Perth, PH1 1QL. Tel: 01738 840864. 30/30
- 1=> THE LOCH FYNE OYSTER BAR, Clachan, Argyll, PA26 8BL. Tel: 01499 600482. 28/30
- 3) SOUTER'S INN, Kirkoswald, Ayrshire, KA19 8HY. Tel: 01655 760653. 29/30
- 4=> CASTLEHILL RESTAURANT, Exchange Street, Dundee, DD1 3DL. Tel: 01382 220008. 28/30
- 4=> THE LOCH LOMOND ARMS HOTEL, Main Road, Luss, Argyll, G83 8NY. Tel: 01436 860420. 28/30
- 4=> GARVIE & CO, 1 Station Road, Milngavie, G62 8PG. Tel: 0141 956 4111. 28/30
- 4=> THE GRUMPY GOAT, 90 Old Dumbarton Road, Glasgow, G3 8PZ. Tel: 0141 237 4730. 28/30
- 4=> THE FENWICK HOTEL, Junction 8, M77, KA3 6AU. Tel: 01560 600478. 28/30
- 4=> CECCHINI'S, 74 Main Street, Prestwick, Ayrshire, KA9 1PA. Tel: 01292 474146. 28/30
- 4=> ANNAPURNA GURKHA'S, 212 High Street, Kirkcaldy, KY11 1LB. Tel: 01592 269460. 28/30
- 4=> THE JOCKEY CLUB RESTAURANT, The Western House Hotel, Craigie Road, Ayr, KA8 0HA. Tel: 01292 294990. 28/30
- 4=> EE-USK, Oban, Argyll, PA34 5QD. Tel: 01631 565666. 28/30

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