

Travel

A taste of India



CHANGE OF PACE: Above, Bobby and Sunita Katoch and, inset, Jaya where you get an authentic taste of India.



Llandudno. It's been described as the Queen of Welsh resorts and the jewel in the crown of North Wales. But for me this place was more than that – it was home.

I grew up just a stone's throw from the town's West Shore and have fond memories of hammering up and down the deserted prom on my BMX in the winter, going to the cinema (now Wetherspoon's) to watch *The Goonies*, buying Duran Duran singles at Kavern records and going to the circus (on wasteland now Mostyn Champneys).

The sad truth is though that except for a few drunken nights out in my late teens, I have no memories of Llandudno post-15 when my family vacated the town for sunnier climes (well, Abergele actually).

These days I sometimes pop to the town to buy my children's shoes. But that's it. I look with sadness at Mostyn Street – a once thriving shopping centre badly hit by out-of-town developments.

But a few weeks back I was told of an interesting new addition to "the Queen's" offerings... a boutique bed and breakfast (Space) and Indian restaurant (Jaya). Being a lover of Indian cuisine, this had to be worth a look.

Space occupies a detached Victorian residence on Church Walks, a quiet area of the town perched at the foot of the Great Orme.

It opened in June after an absolute labour of love by owners Bobby and Sunita Katoch. By profession, Sunita was a teacher and Bobby worked for a merchant banker – but two years ago Bobby was made redundant. They lived in Chigwell with daughter Jaya and decided to "get off the hamster wheel".

They thought of opening an Indian tapas restaurant in London, but property was expensive and they wanted somewhere where the whole family could also live.

They next looked at South Wales but it too was expensive. Then they found the Quinton Hotel in Llandudno, which they bought in 2007.

Originally, the plan was only to run a bed and breakfast, not a restaurant.

But as they learned more about Llandudno they decided a restaurant also

By James Shepherd

made sense.

They saw a gap in the market for high quality, home-made Indian cuisine, distinct from the "regular" dishes offered by many Indian restaurants.

Bobby, a trained industrial engineer, designed many of the furnishings himself. They were mostly hand-made in Malaysia and Bobby and Sunita made several trips out to India and the Far East to complete the project.

After two years of work and several setbacks, they opened the restaurant and B&B in June.

Space has been inspired by the spiritual with Indian influences, following the owners' visits to boutique hotels around the world.

The 11 en suite rooms have Hindu names, mostly based on elements and nature such as Andaz (style and elegance), Aakash (the upper sky), and Shanti (peace).

All rooms feature hand-made, bespoke-designed furniture, including spectacular upholstered headboards and individual bed linen designs.

Flat screen TVs and modern bathrooms add a contemporary feel.

We were placed in Aakash and it certainly had the feeling of opulence you expect with an establishment described as "boutique".

Jaya serves fine, home cooked Indian cuisine in a contemporary yet intimate setting.

Specifically, the dishes originate from North India but Jaya adds a creative touch.

There is a separate bar area and the res-

taurant has 22 covers, with views towards the beach across West Shore (I could see the roof of my old house from the table). Again, furniture is bespoke designed and hand-made, mostly from Malaysia.

Style is a fusion of contemporary with Eastern/spiritual influences – Buddhism, space, tranquillity, candles and low-lighting, and authentic Indian music.

The food – all prepared lovingly by Sunita – is mostly North Indian. No curries such as Korma, Madras or Vindaloo – typical of many Indian restaurants – are served.

The aim is to offer a taste of different dishes served thali-style – that is, a selection of dishes in small bowls on a round tray or plate.

Lamb and chicken with many variations of lentil dishes and breads such as naan and roti are typical of North Indian food.

To start I had Indian cheese (paneer) wok-fried with chilli – a really punchy yet light dish balancing the hot and sour flavours perfectly.

This I followed with Masala chicken. The meat was incredibly tender with the textures and flavours sitting perfectly with the dahl and vegetable side dishes and the rice, cooked perfectly.

Then for dessert. To my knowledge I've never bothered having an Indian dessert before – they're usually tremendously uninspiring.

But then this isn't your average curry house and I was intrigued by two of the puds in particular – vermicelli or carrots!

Bobby assured me the carrot dish, called Gazor Ka Halwa (a traditional caramelised sweet carrot dish served hot with vanilla ice cream) was the one to go for.

It was worth the bill alone... light, sweet and utterly moreish.

Travel facts

- ◆ Space Boutique B&B, 36 Church Walks, Llandudno
- ◆ Website: www.spacebandb.co.uk
- ◆ Email: stay@spaceboutique.co.uk

- ◆ Phone: 01492 818198
- ◆ Space is currently awaiting grading from Wales' official tourism body, Visit-Wales
- ◆ Prices range from £85 to £115 (room rate) which includes full breakfast

Deaf School back on form

THERE are some bands whose story is easy to tell. They are the men and women for whom it all just falls into place: their sound is easy to describe, their look is stylised and just so, their philosophy drops into a classic, easily defined slot.

Deaf School are not one of those bands. They're much, much more interesting.

Emerging from the musical wilderness via the Liverpool College of Art in 1975, they won the *Melody Maker* Rock Contest, made three LPs between 1976 and 1978, and were one of the most popular live acts of their time.

Ricocheting between pub rock, punk, glam rock and art rock, they worked as musical innovators, packing the stage with people and never fearing to try something new.

The fact that they were invited to record three sessions

By Jade Wright

with John Peel at the BBC is testimony to their quality.

On stage, they appeared a mesmerising collection of disparate characters – the names say it all – Enrico Cadillac Jnr, the Rev Max Ripple and Bette Bright.

And now, at last, they're back to celebrate 35 years since it all began.

"We're doing three gigs at our spiritual home – The Everyman, on Hope Street," laughs singer Enrico Cadillac Jnr, also known as Steve Allen, grabbing a quick coffee in between rehearsals.

"We used to hang out in the Everyman all the time. We'd go and see shows, eat in the bistro, everyone did. It was a creative hub, you'd always meet actors and bands in

there. Bill Nighy was a mate, everyone knew each other in that scene. There was no division between art and music and theatre."

"It's like coming home," says fellow singer Bette Bright – again not her real name. This was, after all, a band whose birth was in an art school.

"It was our regular haunt, so every time I walk back through the doors, I can feel all the memories come flooding back.

"It kind of doesn't seem possible that it was 35 years since it all began. Time does funny things to you, and when Deaf School play I feel like I could be in 1975 or 1988 or 2009. It all blurs into one."

Deaf School reformed for a legendary series of gigs in 1988, and played two series of concerts in 2006 – an over-subscribed concert at

the Picket for its grand re-opening – and again in 2007.

"We didn't do anything last year – there seemed to be enough going on in 2008," says Enrico.

"But this year seemed to be the right time."

Their Liverpool gigs – preceded by two in London – coincide with the release of their back catalogue.

"It's all been remastered – we're really pleased with it," says Enrico.

And well they might be – their albums, *2nd Honey-moon*, *Don't Stop the World*, *English Boys/Working Girls* and *2nd Coming: Liverpool '88* remain a creative force to be reckoned with. Packed with intense, visionary songs, their output shone as a beacon of artistry.

And for the Liverpool gigs next week, there's a further



CULT STARS: Enrico Cadillac Jnr, Bette Bright and Frank Average of Deaf School play Liverpool Academy in 2007.

twist. For the first time, the band will be performing live with a string section.

The band will also be joined by Ian Broudie for

their Thursday and Friday performances.

◆ Deaf School play the Everyman on Thursday, Friday and Saturday.