

“A project with integrity”

THE HAMPSTEAD BUTCHER AND PROVIDORE

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WELL, IT OPENED its doors on Wednesday, a day ahead of schedule, and when I looked in it was already quite busy with lots of curious shoppers interested to see what has replaced the Rosslyn Deli.

There are great slabs of meat hanging in the window, and lots more meat on display in brand new refrigerated cabinets. Then there is deli stuff, a patisserie island in the middle of the shop, and shelves and fridges on the left with everything from eggs and milk to dry goods. There is a well-stocked cheese counter at the back and a wine section too.

One of the leading figures behind this new venture is Philip Matthews, who used to run four restaurants, two bars and a nightclub in Covent Garden.

Since he sold that business two and a half years ago, he has been on the lookout for something else. “I was looking for a project with more integrity and close both to my heart and my home,” he told me (he lives in New End, Hampstead).

After an 18-month search he was introduced to the Rosslyn Deli’s Helen Sherman and she sold him the premises six weeks ago. Mrs Sherman will stay on for a while as a consultant, and will be in one day a week.

The builders worked miracles and the shop was ready to open in just four weeks.

“My initial idea was to replace Joe Steele’s butcher shop in Flask Walk. I actually tried to get that shop but just couldn’t agree terms,” he said.

“But when I saw this shop I realised that there was scope for a much more diverse product range, although with the fresh meat at the core of the whole operation.” Thus the ‘Providore’ part of the name (a providore is one who makes provision; a purveyor, according to Websters).

The meat is sourced only in England, he said, and is all free range. “It is all from a community of small farmers in Sussex and Kent, most of which I have inspected myself. Some of them are organic and all of them have exceptional animal husbandry practices.”

Prices? “About the same as Waitrose, despite the fact that we don’t have the same buying power.”

His partner in the operation is Guy Bossom, former executive head chef at the Royal Opera House and head chef for Tom Aikens, Oliver Peyton and Terence Conran. This is a man who knows his food, and he is in charge of all the foods and beverages in the shop.

What most people don’t know is that there is a large downstairs area, currently being kitted out as a kitchen where Guy and his team will produce a wide range of ready meals like boeuf Bourignon and coq au vin, as well as terrines, rillettes, ham hocks, parfais, pates, hams, pies, sausage rolls, chutneys, pickles, outside catering and, of course, hampers for





● Above: Guy Bossom and Philip Matthews at the Cheese counter. Below: The meat counter. Bottom: the patisserie and veg “island” and some of the meat on display.

those picnics on the Heath.

Soups will include beetroot and smoked bacon, butternut with sage and ham, and spiced red lentils.

The cheese comes from all over the show, including France, Italy and Spain, but there is a very good English, Welsh and Irish selection too. Suppliers include The Cheese Seller, and the Spanish company Brindisi – famous for their operation in Borough Market, although Guy claims that the prices in Hampstead will be lower than in Borough Market.

And then there’s the wine, which ranges in price from £6 a bottle to £50 for fine Bordeaux vintages. The wines are all from small producers and are thus “hand made” and only available in very small quantities. Thus they are not available in any high street shops.

On the face of it, everything looked good, although I must say that to me it all looked a little too much like the Rosslyn Deli – except for the fresh meat, of course. The layout is almost identical, with the meat and charcuterie down the right hand side, the bread is where it was before, and the left hand wall not all that different from before. But, if anything, there are fewer lines than before.

Also slightly worrying was the news that most of the Rosslyn Deli staff have stayed on. I only hope they have received sound training on the practice of weighing produce fairly, and some motivational encouragement on how to treat customers properly. ♦

