

STATHERN


SK7731 MAP 7

Red Lion

Off A52 W of Grantham via the brown-signed Belvoir road (keep on towards Harby – Stathern signposted on left); or off A606 Nottingham—Melton Mowbray via Long Clawson and Harby; LE14 4HS

Splendid range of drinks and imaginative food in civilised dining pub, open fires, good garden with play area; own shop too

Although there's quite an emphasis on the particularly good food here, its heart remains very much a village pub with plenty of chatty locals and a fine range of drinks: Grainstore Olive Oil, Batemans XB and Fullers London Pride on handpump, alongside draught belgian beer and continental bottled beers, several ciders, a varied wine list with quite a number by the glass, winter mulled wine and summer home-made lemonade. There's a relaxed country pub feel to the yellow room on the right and the lounge bar has sofas, an open fire and a big table with books, newspapers and magazines; it leads off the smaller, more traditional flagstoned bar with terracotta walls, another fireplace with a pile of logs beside it, and lots of beams and hops. Dotted around are various oddities picked up by one of the licensees on visits to Newark Antiques Fair: some unusual lambing chairs for example and a collection of wooden spoons. A little room with tables set for eating leads to the long, narrow main dining room and out to a nicely arranged suntrap with good hardwood furnishings spread over its lawn and terrace; there's an unusually big play area behind the car park with swings, climbing frames and so on. This is under the same ownership as the Olive Branch in Clipsham.

 Using carefully sourced produce, the exceptional dishes might include sandwiches, toasties and ploughman's, soup, eggs benedict, chicken liver and foie gras parfait with chutney, tomato, red onion and blue goats cheese tart, smoked haddock with spring onion mash and grain mustard sauce, sausages with onion gravy, moroccan-style chicken with couscous and saffron dressing, evening extras like local hare wellington with red wine sauce and organic pork loin with sage and onion mash and glazed apples, and puddings such as crème brûlée with rhubarb compote and warm chocolate torte with pistachio ice-cream; plenty of interesting nibbles, good value two- and three-course set lunches and their own home-made preserves, pickles and fully prepared dishes and hampers to buy. *Starters/Snacks: £4.50 to £6.25. Main Courses: £10.50 to £17.50. Puddings: £5.75 to £6.50*

Free house ~ Licensees Sean Hope and Ben Jones ~ Real ale ~ Bar food (12-2(3 Sun; 5 some summer Sats), 7-9.30; not Sun evening or Mon) ~ Restaurant ~ (01949) 860868 ~ Children welcome ~ Dogs allowed in bar ~ Open 12-3, 6-11; 12-11 Fri and Sat; 12-6.30 Sun; closed Sun evening, all day Mon

Recommended by Philip and Susan Philcox, Chris Evans, David Glynne-Jones, MP, Richard, Phil and Jane Hodson, Bill and Marian de Bass, Peter and Jean Hoare, P Dawn, Andy and Jill Kassube, Derek and Sylvia Stephenson