

ken livingstone, **I presume**

I recently paid a return visit to the Lobster Pot (3 Kennington Lane, SE11), a tiny fish restaurant not far from the hideous pink monstrosity of the Elephant and Castle shopping centre. It was one of those Friday lunchtimes when you just want to get out of the office, and the Lobster Pot is ideal for an excessive meal to take your mind off things. It pretends to rely on a seashore gimmick not far removed from Captain Pugwash, and as I opened the door I was greeted with a tape of seagulls squawking in the distance. The restaurant itself has a cabin-like dining area with a row of portholes along one side behind which is a fish tank. The waiters join in with the pretence by wearing stripy Breton jumpers, but the kitsch seaside ambience actually achieves its objective of making everyone very relaxed and focused on the main business, which is the excellent food. The menu is extensive, with set meals, à la

carte and a selection of specials. I tried the wonderful crab salad with samphire and mango, which was sufficiently interesting for my friends to insist on trying it. This was something of an extravagance at £10.50 for a starter, and, with the two bottles of Pouilly-Fumé – £21.50 each – we managed to knock back, this was by no means a budget lunch! Of the other starters, I would recommend the mussels with garlic, tomato and cream, but it is also worth trying the wonderful fish soup. The Lobster Pot has built its reputation on its commitment to the basic ingredients – seafood. Nowhere is that clearer than with the lobster itself. On this visit, two kinds were available, Scottish and Canadian, and we opted for the Scottish at £19.50 a pound. I last visited the Lobster Pot several years ago, but it's very easy to forget just how big a lobster is. Chef-proprietor Hervé Regent had prepared a dish of Scottish lobster in a

warming and very filling vegetable stock, and when it arrived it was difficult to see the lobster at all. As soon as I lifted it up, I realised that I should have gone for one pound instead of a pound and a half, but in the interests of an accurate review I forced myself to eat the lot. The tail was impeccable and my friends looked on jealously as I moaned with pleasure. They were less jealous of the bib I had to wear to protect my suit and tie from the sauce. Before we departed to finish the working week, one of my friends tried the cheese, and I would like to put in a word for a particularly tasty chunk which was flavoured with cognac. The waiters at the Lobster Pot are very helpful and informative about the main courses, but they were not so expert on cheese. If anyone has any theories as to what this cheese may have been, I know several people who are desperate to find out.