

# Reasons why... ...you should try The Plough in Clanfield

by Su Allen & Deb Landray

**S**taring in to your empty fridge do you ever think 'wouldn't it be nice to go out and eat, but I don't want to drive all the way to Oxford/Witney/the Countryside because I need to...

- **Unwind and have a drink, therefore if I do drive a cab needs to be affordable.**
- **Absolutely not pay a second mortgage for a babysitter or for dinner.**
- **Go somewhere that can accommodate my dress sense! I don't want to dress up or down.**
- **Splash out a bit and celebrate.**
- **Enjoy myself on a budget.**
- **Have a special evening, I want to go somewhere nice.**
- **Go and just have something to eat on a Thursday night, I want to go somewhere simple.**

If any, or at times, all of the above apply to you then The Plough in Clanfield would be a perfect choice and here's why.

1. The size and layout of the Plough means you can craft the evening you want in terms of atmosphere and mood. Eating in the bar area is buzzy and interesting with a very upbeat mood that is vibrant and dynamic. By contrast, eating in the main restaurant area is quieter and more intimate, so ideal for that special evening with a particular person.
2. Gin...I guess it is widely known that the Plough has an excellent, and ever-expanding selection of Gins, when I went about 6 months ago they had over 80, that has now increased to more than 120. And if you like gin, as I do (in moderation of course) then this is not just a Gin Pantry but a Gin Palace. Martin is incredibly knowledgeable about every gin he has. I don't know if there is word for a gin expert like there is sommelier for Wine, but whatever it is Martin fits the ticket. When we arrived we were asked if we would like a gin and then asked several questions to establish whether we liked sweet or savoury flavours etc. and Martin matched the gin to our requirements. I was presented with a stunning orange liquid – Saffron Gin – really smooth, a hint of saffron flavour and mellow enough to drink without tonic if needed – amazing. And now a little secret, Martin has just purchased his own gin still and by the Autumn the Plough will be making its own bespoke spirit. We are promised a smooth experience as the alcohol will infuse over a series of ingredients the only one of which we know will be juniper berries. There will also be opportunities for members of public to make their own gin and see the still in action.
3. How often have you gone to a restaurant and you're driving so can only have one glass of wine, or you're the only one who likes white and everyone else wants red? At the Plough every wine from a cheery Pinot to a 1er Cru Chablis is available by the glass following the implementation of a whizzy device that keeps wine fresh.
4. One beauty of the Plough is the choice in menu, whatever you fancy is catered for. Good grub in a beautiful style. We both had starters, me a cheese soufflé and Deb a home smoked duck salad which were superb followed by a braised short rib of beef and the vegetarian option of



an arancini of Hereford hop and thyme. The quality of the food was excellent, and the service friendly and unobtrusive. The waitresses were knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the food they were serving. The portions were wonderfully generous, but in the interest of this article we managed to squeeze in a dessert, sharing a dark chocolate brownie with pistachio ice cream that was impressive and perfect. But, we hear you say..."how much?" The Plough is a welcome surprise in that regard. We didn't drink wine when we went, it was a school night and I already felt slightly squiffy after the superb gin. With that caveat in place, we both ate a la carte for less than £30 and we ate to the gunnels.

5. A really clever element to the Plough is its ability to cater for a diverse range of people. With a range of special packages all can be catered for, a romantic weekend, a big birthday bash etc. On Friday you can go for dinner, and stay overnight in an available room having breakfast in the morning – all for £90 (allocated across dinner and breakfast so the room is free). Likewise a similar deal is available on Sundays. One surprise for me was Celebration Sunday (or Bank Holiday Monday) whereby you and your friends can book the ENTIRE hotel, that's 11 rooms on a Sunday or Bank Holiday Monday for that special birthday, anniversary or any other important 'something'. The cost of this is £825, seems a lot, but if you think 11 rooms equals 22 people then that means for £37.50 each person gets dinner and accommodation. The last time I stayed in a hotel that cheap it was advertised by Lenny Henry and food was not included.
6. Location, location, location – and The Plough has this in spades, a truly beautiful venue set in wonderful grounds, you can see why many opt for weddings or wedding receptions here. Its beauty is unpretentious, so I didn't feel awkward in jeans and a shirt but equally it lends itself to full on dressing up too.
7. But don't just take our word for it, even the scourge that is Trip Advisor with its 120 reviews of the Plough shows a score of 4/5 – folk love this hotel restaurant and 82% of folk recommend you go there. They can't be wrong so what stops you?
8. And now a little tip...one of the beautiful things about the Plough is that a cab to Bampton takes approximately 5 minutes and is about £5 (and that's at 11pm), so no more second mortgages just to get home to the sitter.

A bit like Dr Seuss to Sam I am, "Try them, try them! And you may" (like it that is) The Plough is a treasure and worth a first look, and another and another. 🍷