



## THE WYKHAM ARMS

SIBFORD GOWER

### PRESS

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Birds cheeping, cockerels crowing, horses whinnying in the distance - that's the sum total of sounds when you're sitting out on the terrace of the Wykham Arms.

Whereas most pubs have a roaring A or B road within earshot, the most audible vehicle here is the odd, gurgling tractor.

Perfect preparation for a drink is to take the public footpath across from the other side of the valley (Sibford Ferris), down the hill and up to Sibford Gower. No need for a signpost, either; centuries of village feet have worn a deep groove in the grass.

Since the closure of the nearby Bishop Blaize pub, the Wykham Arms has been the only watering hole in the village that draws customers from all over the county, but draws its resident ale, Hooky Bitter (3.6% ABV), from the Hook Norton Brewery, just a couple of miles down the road.

The recommended route is to start out with a glass or two of this, served in the characteristic Hook Norton glass, before reaching journey's end with a pint of Adnams Explorer (4.3% ABV), a powerful, blossomy brew that is the drinker's way of smelling the flowers.

Not that this is a booze-and-brawl type of establishment, by any means. Beneath a roof of militarily-trimmed thatch stands an immaculately reclaimed interior: rugged stone walls offset by virtuous, Quaker-like chairs and tables, set just far enough apart to stop gossip reaching the next-door diners' ears.

There's no fixed rule, but those ordering from the bar menu (sandwiches £4.25) tend to sit outside on the terrace, or in the shady, pine-fronded garden, while those paying £15 for main courses (such as pan-fried sea bass with spring onions, ginger and coriander-crushed potatoes) tend to eat at the formal, indoor tables. Somehow, dishes costing more than £10 just don't taste as nice if eaten off the lap.

Mind you, there is one advantage of sitting outdoors here, even if you are just having a bag of crisps, and that's the sounds of the countryside. They cost nothing to listen to, but they're beyond price.

\* The Wykham Arms, Sibford Gower, near Banbury, Oxfordshire

Ref: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/foodanddrink/pubs/3339585/Oxfordshire-Pub-Guide-The-Wykham-Arms-Sibford-Gower.html>