

The Fair Ros remembered...

"Thanks for the piece in the October Sprout on the Fair Rosamund, but, yes, it could do with a few corrections and additions..." says **Dave Fogden**.

"The pub was indeed built in the 1950s and was originally an Ind Coope house. In fact three pubs were built in Oxford at the time to roughly the same design – the other two being the Cavalier in Marston and the Scholar Gipsy in Kennington. Originally it had three bars and an off-licence in the centre. The main bar was on the right as you approach the pub, the lounge was in the front of the building and the games room was at the rear on the left.

"My first encounters with the pub were in the early eighties when it was a Halls pub, (still Ind Coope really as all the national brewer did was revive some old local brewery names). At the time it was a bustling friendly local, run by the firm but fair Tony Green. The games room had a pool table and pinball machine and was the haunt of the younger pub goers. The lounge was very plush and it cost more to drink in there. The bar was then a real mix of Botley folk with fruit machines and a bar billiards table.



The pub was a good place for wedding receptions, as can be seen from this photo of Daphne and Denis Turnham's special day in the late 50s, with the author's parents to the bridegroom's right..

"Whilst it was still a Halls house in the late eighties I believe, the lounge was done away with along with the off licence, and the games room and lounge were knocked into one. The old bar then became the lounge.

The next major change was in January 1993 when the Wychwood brewery from Witney took over. I remember "Murphy" who ran it at the time who was a bit of a character shall we say, but, to be honest this short spell as a Wychwood pub was probably the Fair Rosamund's finest hour. Unfortunately their tenure only lasted a few months and later in 1993 the pub was put up for sale. The late Chris Moss, co-founder of Wychwood brewery, said at the time that they had made a good offer for it, but they were outbid by Marstons and the Fair Rosamund entered the final stages of its life.

"The pub actually enjoyed some good spells as a Marston's house, becoming a regular entrant in CAMRA's good beer guide. They only served the one real ale – Marston's Bitter – but it was always well kept and was very well priced. The writing was on the wall for the poor old Fair Ros though. Trade wasn't what it used to be although it was apparently still turning a small profit even up to its final days. The locals, CAMRA and various other parties fought tooth and nail to save it, but an independent planning inspector decided that the locals, even in their seventies, were more than capable of walking up the hill from the Seacourt – bet he did it in his car! In the end the fact was that the pub was just sitting on too valuable a piece of land and early in 2000 it closed its doors for the last time.

"Personally I think Elms Rise lost a bit of its soul at the same time. The Fair Rosamund was and could have been again at the heart of the community, but Marston's were more interested in making a quick buck and another decent local pub was lost forever."
Dave Fogden

The Fair Ros at the heart of the community – the author's father at his 25th wedding anniversary party in the games room in 1983.



(Thanks to Doreen Barker for the press cutting from a 1984 Oxford Mail with photos of the Fair Ros's two football teams, and to Mark Hancox, the proud owner of the original pub sign, which he bought at auction when the pub was sold off. If there are five people who request this, we'll print a photo. (AgM)

