**North Arms Heritage Report**

The North Arms public house was named in honour of the Lords North that lived in nearby Wroxton Abbey. The North Arms, a grade two listed building since 1955,[[1]](#footnote-1) was built in the 17th Century.[[2]](#footnote-2) A great fire spread through Wroxton in 1666,[[3]](#footnote-3) burning down most of the buildings, so it’s likely that the North Arms was built post 1666. According to Lester, author of *A Short History of Wroxton*, it wasn’t licensed until 1850.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Although Lester states that the North Arms wasn’t licensed until 1850, a newspaper report from the *Banbury Guardian* on the 25th July 1844 says that the North Arms Inn was used as a base for the OddFellows Friendship Society.[[5]](#footnote-5) The newspaper says, “the first anniversary of the Loyal Good Intent Lodge, Wroxton, was held yesterday at the house of Host Pearson, North Arms Inn, Wroxton.”[[6]](#footnote-6) This leads to some conjecture as to when the North Arms first opened. Perhaps it was being run as an unlicensed pub before 1850.

However an advertisement in the Leamington Spa Courier, dated 31st July 1841, seems to suggest that the North Arms may have already been licensed as it was looking for a new landlord. “That well known public house at Wroxton, known by the name, the North Arms, now in the occupation of Mr Charles Pearson, may be entered upon at Michaelmas next.”[[7]](#footnote-7)

The North Arms was again up for sale in 1852. The advertisement in the Banbury Guardian, 14th October 1852 said that the North Arms had a sitting room, parlour, bar, two kitchens, a cellar, a club room, bedrooms, a brewhouse, a large yard, garden stables and piggeries.[[8]](#footnote-8)

The North Arms today consists of two buildings with some early 19th Century refacing.[[9]](#footnote-9) According to *Historic England*, the North Arms was constructed from ironstone ashlar and coursed ironstone rubble and has a steeply pitched thatched roof and renewed brick ridge and end stacks.[[10]](#footnote-10) The main building comprises two floors and an attic. For architectural interest, please see the end note. [[11]](#endnote-1)

Trinity College, Oxford owned a number of buildings in the village including Wroxton Abbey and the North Arms. Tenants of the North Arms held copyhold ownership.[[12]](#footnote-11) Trinity College sold the North Arms in 1958 to Chesham and Brackley Brewers.[[13]](#footnote-12) It has changed hands several times since then.

In 1852, William Kalabergo, a twenty-two year old, from Italy, was detained in the attic of the North Arms for the murder of his uncle, John Kalabergo. It was alleged that he had shot his uncle whilst they had been walking up Williamscot Hill. Kalabergo was being kept in the attic room while the police made further enquiries. Having complained that his handcuffs were too tight, Kalabergo persuaded the guards to unshackle him. He then proceeded to escape through the window. He slid down the thatched roof, then plunged thirty-two feet to the ground. The landlady, a Mrs Harris, saw William hobbling away and informed her husband. Mr Harris soon caught up with him. It was later found that Kalabergo had broken bones in his right leg and left wrist, and he’d dislocated a bone in his foot. He was found guilty of the murder of his uncle. William Kalabergo was the last person to be publically hanged at Oxford.[[14]](#footnote-13)

William Kalabergo wasn’t the only suspect to be detained in the North Arms attic. William Keeley was held in the attic under guard on 16th October 1850.[[15]](#footnote-14) Keeley was accused of stealing a bag of watches.

The North Arms was also used as an auction house. In 1853, the North Arms was used for a horse auction[[16]](#footnote-15) and in 1859, the North Arms was used for the auction of oak, ash and elm tinder.[[17]](#footnote-16) These auctions took place fairly regularly.

The North Arms was also regularly used for coroner’s inquests. On 5th December 1853 it was used for the inquest of a five year old boy who burned to death.[[18]](#footnote-17) Another inquest is recorded as taking place on 30th December 1865.[[19]](#footnote-18)

In 1882, a room was hired in the North Arms by Father Bowen of Banbury for £5 a year. The room was fitted up as a chapel. Mass was said for the first time in this room on Friday, November 22nd 1882. However, by the next year the room was found too small for the congregation, so it was given up.[[20]](#footnote-19)

An article from the Banbury Advertiser makes mention of a North Arms Friendly Society which existed in 1893. The society did not exist solely for the sake of quenching one’s palette. “In the morning, the members attended divine service in the Church, after which they went in procession round the village, to the strains of the band.”[[21]](#footnote-20) The North Arms Friendly Society, like the Oddfellows or the Lions, were a club helping their members and the local community. They also organized various events. The North Arms was the base of their activities. A further article taken from the Banbury Advertiser[[22]](#footnote-21) in 1921 mentions that the North Arms Friendly Society was celebrating its sixty-second anniversary, so it was in existence for a long while. Lord North was the Society’s president.[[23]](#footnote-22) The North Arms Friendly Society dissolved in 1950.[[24]](#footnote-23)

The landlord in 1939, a Mr Fred Arris ran the North Arms as a boarding house as well as a pub.[[25]](#footnote-24)

In 1973, there was a fire in one of the bedrooms. A guest was able to put the fire out before the firemen arrived. Damage was confined to the one room.[[26]](#footnote-25)

Planning applications for the North Arms from 1995 to the present can be viewed on Cherwell District Council’s website. There have been no significant planning applications since 1995.

The following sources have been consulted in the preparation of this report

* The Wroxton College Archives
* Trinity College Oxford Archives
* Banbury Museum
* Wroxton Village History Group
* The Weston Library, Oxford
* Cherwell District Council
* Greene King Brewery
* Historic England
* The British Newspaper Archive
1. Historic England (2018) *The North Arms Public House*. Available at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1185033> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *A History of the County of Oxford: Volume 9, Bloxham Hundred* (Oxford: Victoria County History, 1969) p.171 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Woolacott, M (2018), *The Great Fire of Wroxton* available at <http://www.wroxton.org.uk/village%20history.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Lester, E, *A Short History of Wroxton* p.3 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Banbury Guardian, Thursday 25th July 1844 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Leamington Spa Courier, Saturday 31st July 1841 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Banbury Guardian, Thursday 14th October 1852 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Historic England (2018) *The North Arms Public House*. Available at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1185033> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. *Historic England* claim that the North Arms has renewed plank doors with stone flat arches or wood lintels. There are two imitation wood mullioned and transomed windows on the ground floor and two, originally three-light wood mullioned and transomed windows on the first floor, with renewed wood casements. *Historic England* state that two roof dormers have three-light wood casements, there’s a stone coped gable on the left with moulded kneeler and an arris on the left chamfered up to the first floor. There is a sundial above the doorway and the right part of the main building has renewed casements and an imitation stone mullioned and transomed window with chamfered wood lintels. The interior has a fireplace with bressumer and chamfered beams.

Historic England (2018) *The North Arms Public House*. Available at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1185033> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
12. Hopkins, Clare. “The North Arms.” Message to Andrew Rose. 3rd August 2018. E-mail. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
13. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
14. Nicola Sly, *Oxfordshire Murders* (Stroud: The History Press, 2010) p.37-42 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
15. Oxford Chronicle and Reading Gazette, Saturday 19th October, 1850 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
16. Banbury Guardian, Thursday 15th September 1853 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
17. Oxford Chronicle and Reading Gazette, Saturday 22nd January, 1859 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
18. Banbury Advertiser, Thursday 6th December 1855 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
19. Bicester Advertiser, Friday 5th January, 1866 [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
20. Oxfordshire Catholic Magazine, May 1933, Volume 1, No 5 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
21. Banbury Advertiser, Thursday 1st June, 1893 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
22. Banbury Advertiser, Thursday 2nd June, 1921 [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
23. Banbury Guardian, Thursday 7th June 1928 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
24. Banbury Guardian, Thursday 16th November 1950 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
25. Ancestry.com (2013) UK City & Counties Directories, 1776-1946. Available at <https://bit.ly/2MrrWd9> [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
26. Coventry Evening Telegraph, Saturday 14th April 1973 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)