

VILLAGE PUBS

THE RED AND THE WHITE

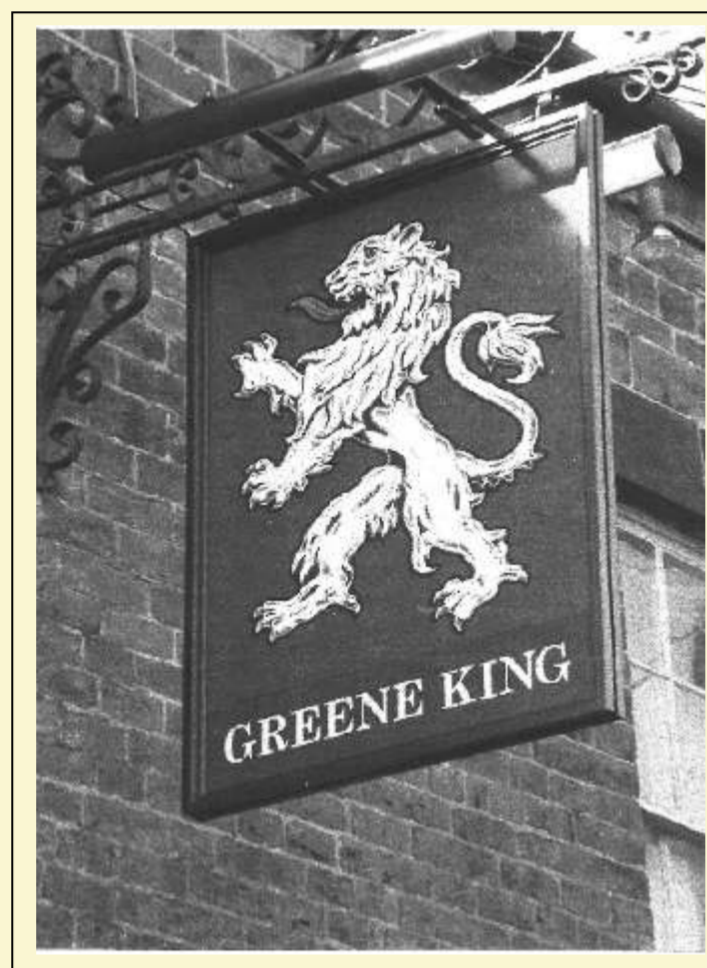
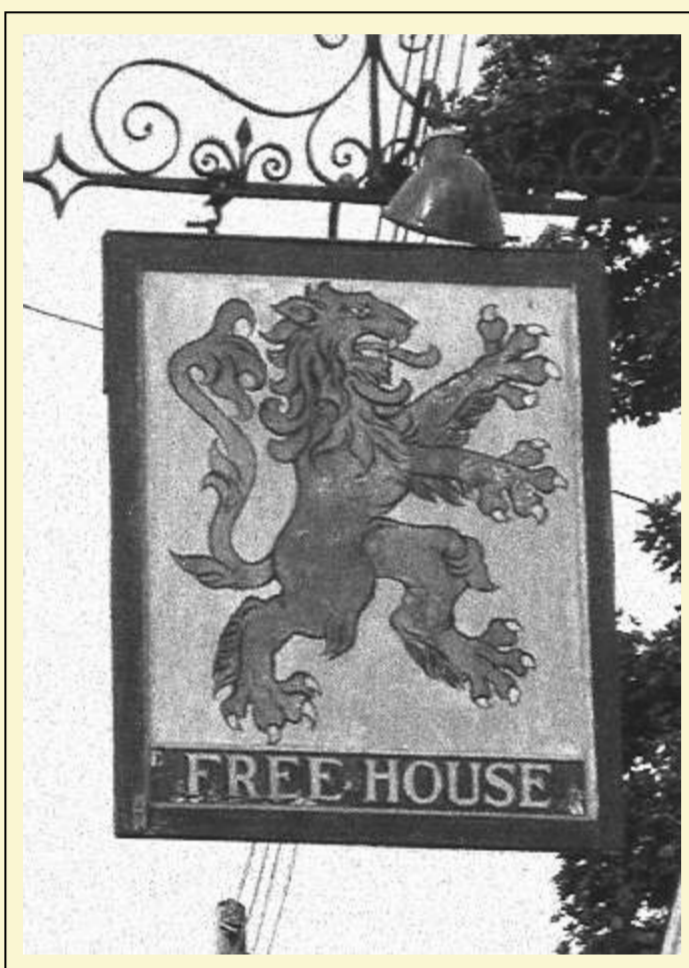
Friendly competition?



Red.....



.....and White

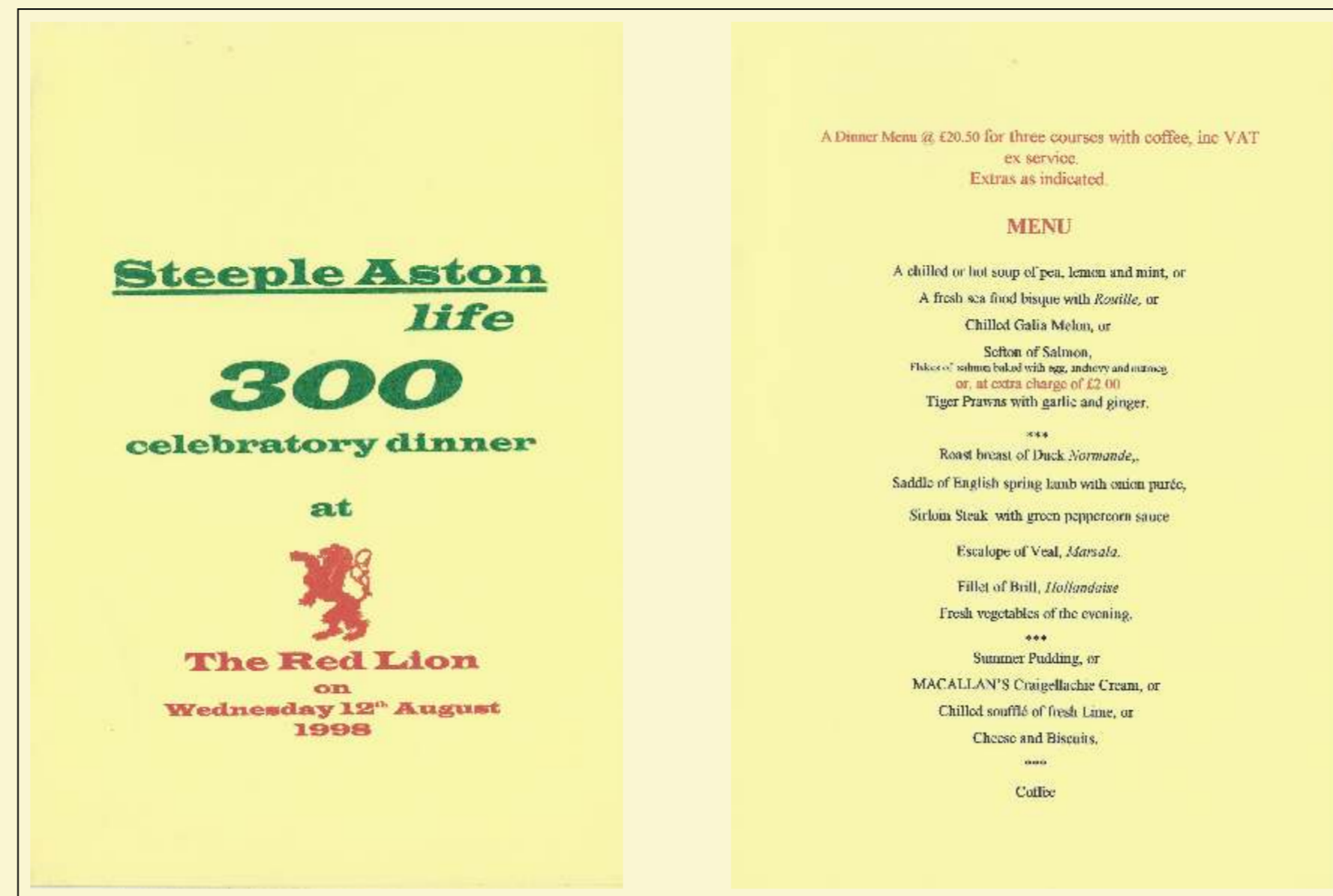


The closure of the White Lion in 2012 marked the end of a longstanding rivalry between two pubs at opposite ends of Southside.

The Red Lion is by far the older of the two - founded in the mid-18th century as the Chequers, it reopened in 1830 as the Red Lion after a year or two of uncertainty. The White Lion opened its doors around 1870, two years after the Wheatsheaf opposite it lost its licence following a fight in the bar.



When SAL came on the scene in 1973, Colin and Margaret Mead had been running the Red Lion for just over a year, turning it into a select inn-restaurant that in 1997 earned Margaret much praise for her fine dishes, and Colin the same for his wine list. He earned the accolade Landlord of the Year from the Good Pub Guide for 1997.



The following year, the Red Lion was a suitable venue for a dinner celebrating a milestone in the career of Steeple Aston Life magazine (above).

Before the Meads retired in Autumn 2002 after 30 years at the helm, Colin and Margaret demonstrated their skills by hosting a sumptuous private dinner for Eileen Protheroe (see menu below).

Their successors, Derek Dowsett and Neil Protheroe, announced in the *Life* plans to build a new garden dining-room over the winter. Derek left in 2002 and Neil in 2005.



The Red Lion was then taken over by Hook Norton Breweries, with Mel and Sarah Phipps on hand to offer a friendly environment and good food, which continues to the present.



The White Lion meanwhile entered the SAL era as a Bass house, became a Morrell's pub in 1980, and was taken over by Greene King in 2002. It was always a more "public" house than the Red Lion, befitting its position in the heart of the village. The end of the war in 1945 was celebrated by a team of regulars (top photo). It was also the venue of choice for public events, ranging from street parties to Whit races (photo above).

Joe & Daphne Cockcroft, 1983



Roger, Dorothy, Tom & Dan Willatt, 2006

The White Lion had a bewildering number of different landlords over the years. SAL welcomed many of them, and all too soon bade them farewell, including the Cockcrofts in 1983, and the Willatt family in 2006. The last to serve here, after two further changes of ownership, were Lorraine and Mark Foster, after which the White Lion sadly closed its doors and became again what it had originally been back in the 1850s, a desirable private residence.

Of course, no account of Steeple Aston's pubs would be complete without a mention of the Hopcroft's Holt Inn (see also Development: 2).