

Special Feature

Dinner With The BBC

By now the whole of the Wychwoods will know of the 'goings on' at the Shaven Crown, back in May. As reported in our last issue the restaurant was 'taken over' by two contestants, Tom and Nicola Nickerson, for a new programme, *The Restaurant*, to be shown on BBC2 in the autumn. The 'prize' for the winners will be the chance to set-up in business with Raymond Blanc. The mother and son contestants were challenged to provide a dinner for local residents and entertainment with a local theme. They were given a list of people who would be able to help them and had 24 hours to get everything organised.



Tell Us a Story

So it was that about forty 'locals' gathered in the courtyard on the beautiful sunny evening of May 23rd, all happy to be filmed for inclusion in the programme. We had been told that, for £10 per head we would enjoy a three-course dinner, with some wine and entertainment of a historical nature, hence the inclusion of members of the Wychwoods Local History Society. Tom organised the 'front of house', with the assistance of a young lady, both dressed in suitable medieval costume. After taking our seats at table we were treated to the story of the Mitford family and their connection with the Shaven Crown, with a little 'audience participation' to add to the interest. The entertainment continued between courses with the story of the Redesdale murder

and the Cospatrick tragedy. Nicola, an accountant by profession, was in charge of the kitchen - a fairly daunting task for the untrained! The meal had a touch of the Cotswolds, with asparagus, smoked mackerel, lamb and local vegetables all on the menu.

The local connection in the desserts was a little more tenuous, with bread and butter pudding or meringue baskets and strawberries. The wine flowed and everyone seemed to be enjoying the evening, although not everyone enjoyed the meal. Had we been paying full restaurant prices we would certainly have been disappointed but at £10 a head - well, should we be churlish?

Five Minutes of Fame

It was certainly a new experience for most of us - dinner with TV cameras and microphones hovering to catch any unwary comments! I didn't realise just how many people are involved in producing one programme.

We completed questionnaires giving our verdict on the evening. Obviously our comments were taken into account when Raymond Blanc passed judgement, as by lunch time the next day the Shaven Crown was rapidly returning to normal, our contestants had been voted out! So look out for the showing of *The Restaurant* on BBC2 in September and October - you may spot someone you know. It will be interesting to see how and why our hosts failed so early in the series and who eventually succeeded.

Gordon and Christine Halliday