

Jolly Boys trip to Cricklade (near Swindon) 9th April, 2009

Itinerary

Cricklade is a 20 minute bus ride from Swindon Bus Station which is 2 minute walk from Swindon Railway Station. Buses are one an hour and run at 20 minutes past the hour. Catch the No. 51 (final destination Cirencester). For those that have to pay their fare the return trip was £4.00 on the day of our rece. Bus stop in Cricklade is in Calcutt Street. On alighting look to your right (the direction the bus is heading for) and you will see The Vale Hotel, our first stop.

All pubs are on the High Street, Cricklade and are only a couple of minutes walk apart.

No. 1 The Vale Hotel - Nearest the bus stop. This is a Wadworth's pub and although only Wadworth sold there are 5 to choose from. Opening time is 11.00am but we have arranged for early opening for those who arrive on the 10.20 bus from Swindon which should arrive around 10.40.

No. 2 The White Lion – Opening time 11.30. Good selection of ale including Sharp's Doom Bar, Bombardier, 6X and Ansells. Snack bar available.

No. 3 The Red Lion - Opening time 12.00. By far the best of the bunch. Typical English country pub with log fire, lots of stuffed animals and farm implements dotted around but best of all 8 good real ales available. Food available.

No. 4 The Old Bear – Opening time 12.00. This is an option for those who would like to sample local Arkell's ales. Not my favourite tippie and only 3B and Moonlight available. To be fair the Moonlight was quite palatable.

From either The Red Lion or The Old Bear plan is to go back to The Vale Hotel to have a last one before catching the bus back to Swindon

We have not put suggested duration times at each pub as they are all within a few minutes of each other, so no chance of getting lost, and I would guess that some may wish to spend a bit longer in the Red Lion. The web site for the pub has an invitation to see their newly refurbished cellar which might interest some.

The Town



Cricklade is a small town, lying just outside the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and is the only Wiltshire town situated on the banks of the River Thames. Just to the east of the town is Ermine Way, near to the busy A419. The road was built by the Romans to form the causeway across the flood plain linking Silchester to Gloucester. The centre of the town lies within the former walls of the Saxon stronghold built by Alfred the Great to help defend the Kingdom of Wessex from the invading Danes. The ramparts were laid out in a rectangle, with the natural flood plain between the River's Thames and Churn along with minor streams made the fortifications a formidable target to overcome by the Danes. Although none of the Saxon fortifications are visible, remains can be traced, particularly from the North Wall.

Many of the present buildings can be dated between the 11th to 16th centuries and the skyline is dominated by the spire of the parish church of St Sampson's, which was built in the 13th century with additions by the Duke of Northumberland in 1553. The present church is built on the site of an earlier Saxon building of AD890. [St Mary's church](#) is said to be the older of the two remaining churches and is of Saxon origins. The church was later rebuilt by the Normans but in 1981 was made redundant. It has since been given new lease of life and is now a Roman Catholic church.



On the outskirts of the town is the 100 acre North Meadow, a National Nature Reserve which is home to the rare Snakeshead Fritillary which flowers for a short time during April. The River Thames was navigable as far up river as Cricklade and a wharf was built near to Town Bridge at the North Wall end of the town. It was filled in during the early years of the 19th century about 50 years after the arrival of the [Thames and Severn Canal](#) in 1789. The Thames Path National Trail passes through North Meadow and enters the town at the North Wall.



Buildings of interest include the Parish hall close to St Sampson's churchyard built in 1652 by the MP for Cricklade, Robert Jenner. The building has been used as a school and the local workhouse. The present Town Hall is young in comparison, only built in 1933 to replace the old building, which became a glove making factory. The Georgian property was recently refurbished and is now home to the local authority, library and surgery. The 1231 Priory of St John the Baptist just over Town Bridge never survived the dissolution & has been in private ownership since 1550.

The local town museum is housed in a former chapel which was built in 1852. During the second world war it became a canteen for the local servicemen from RAF Blakehill Farm & [RAF Down Ampney](#). The airfields were used for the allied invasion of Normandy on 6th June 1944 with Dakotas and Horsa gliders being launched from the sites. The centrepiece of the town is the clock on the High Street. This was erected in 1898 to commemorate the diamond anniversary of the reign of Queen Victoria. The little corner opposite the clock is dedicated to the French town of Sucé-sur-Erdre which Cricklade is twinned with.

Transport

Cricklade railway station was on the Midland and South Western Junction Railway, which linked Swindon with Cirencester, but this was closed in 1961 and all trace of the station has now gone. Part of the railway route, though, has been opened as a cycle path (national cycle route 45).

South of the town, however, the Swindon and Cricklade Railway is restoring the line as a leisure facility. As of 2007, passenger trains are being run between Blunsdon railway station and Hayes Knoll station, and the line was being actively extended towards Cricklade.