

## OIF 17: Model Dray Lorry - Wethered Brewery



One of the principal industries in Marlow for almost 200 years was the Wethered Brewery based just off the High Street. So it's no surprise that the museum holds at least twenty items connected to the brewery, including beer and soft drinks bottles (sadly all empty), trays, jars, maps, signs and photos. Perhaps our quirkiest item is a Corgi Classics Thorneycroft A2 model dray lorry in the Wethered livery, probably made in the 1980s but still commonly available on eBay etc.

The photo shows our model in mint condition and contrasts with the second photo of an actual Wethered lorry. This photo dates from about the mid-1930s when horses were phased out and the dray shed (superbly preserved and still there today) fell out of use. Petrol lorries had in fact been introduced as early as 1911 to replace steam lorries but, with deliveries required to over 200 tied or owned pubs, horses, lorries and the railway continued to be used. All the dray horses had distinctive names such as Progress, Perseverance and Firefly, and this tradition was continued with the lorries.

The final photo from the 1960s shows just how crowded the brewery yard could become on a busy delivery day.

In spite of successive take overs by Strongs of Romsey and then by Whitbread, brewing continued under the Wethered name until closure in 1988, when there was still a fleet of 44 delivery vehicles in use.

The brewery had been one of the major employers in the town since Victorian times and it inspired a strong loyalty amongst its customers. Feeling amongst the general townsfolk was more mixed because of the strong smell of malt all over the area on brewing days, and because of the large lorries negotiating the High Street and Spittal Street etc. The last Wethered associated with the brewery resigned in 1949 and the last Wethered to live in Marlow was Diana who moved away in 2013. Fortunately for



us, the local brewing tradition is alive and well at the premises of our excellent Rebellion micro-brewery in Marlow Bottom.

For those who wish to delve further, I recommend the splendid 2011 book by Ray Evans titled: **A Pictorial View of the Last Century at Wethered's Brewery**. The book is available from Marlow Library and we have a reference copy at the museum.

There is also a very interesting **Brewing in Marlow** video talk by Janet Smith in the [Marlow History section of the Marlow Society website](#).

*Geoff Wood*