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Next issue: Thurs 20th Jan
Deadline: 10am, Weds 19th Jan

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MEETINGS/LECTURES

Weds 19th

ABINGDON GATHERING / Pub gathering open to members and anyone interested in Witchcraft / Children of Artemis / 8.30pm / rain@wytchcraft.net / www.witchcraft.org / King's Head and Bell, East St Helen's St, Abingdon

'SOCIALIST WORKER' MEETING / The Revolutionary Paper - a tool for organising, Talk and discussion / Oxford SWP / 7.30pm - admission free / Asian Cultural Centre, Manzil Way

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CINEMA
Until Thu 20th Jan

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ALEXANDER [15] Daily: 12.45 (not sat or sun), 4.20, 7.45pm
Macedonian mayhem with Colin Farrell
BRIDGET JONES: THE EDGE OF REASON [15] Daily: 12.00 3.00 5.45 8.30 Sat: 5.45 8.30 Sun: 5.45 8.30
More fighting and big knickers from Rene, Hugh and Colin. *
CLOSER [15] Daily: 12.30 15.00 17.45 20.55
intriguing story of passion, drama, love, and abandonment
ELLA ENCHANTED [PG] Sat & Sun: 11.10 1.30 3.45
Fairy tale about a girl who cannot disobey.
HOUSE OF FLYING DAGGERS [15] Fri: 12.00, 3.00, 6.00, 8.35 Sat & Sun: 6.00 8.35
Martial Arts extravaganza Mon - Thu : 12.00, 3.00, 6.00, 8.35
A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVETS [PG] Sat & Sun: 12.30, 3.00
Teas the night before Christmas...
MILLION DOLLAR BABY [12A] Daily: 12.00 15.00 18.00 20.40
clint eastwood's new boxing drama
NATIONAL TREASURE [PG] Daily: 12.15 (not sat or sun), 15.15, 18.00, 20.45
The greatest adventure history has ever revealed.
TEAM AMERICA: WORLD POLICE [15] Daily: 12.30 15.00 17.45 20.55
Marionette superheroes fight to end terrorism and put tired celebrities out of their misery
THE AVIATOR [12A] Daily: 1.00, 4.30, 8.00
Biopic of Howard Hughes with Leonardo Di Caprio
THE INCREDIBLES [U] Sat & Sun: 11.25 2.00
Animated superheroes from the creator of The Simpsons. *
THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA [12A] Daily: 1.00, 4.00, 7.45
Andrew Lyod Webber makes it to the big screen.
THE POLAR EXPRESS [U] Sat & Sun: 11.00 1.10
Arctic animation with Tom Hanks.

Odeon George Street (0871 2244 007)

ALEXANDER [15] Daily: 12.00 3.45 7.30
The short life of the 4thc. BC Macedonian conqueror
CLOSER [15] Daily: 2.45, 6.00, 8.30 Sat & Sun, 11.45, 2.45, 6.00, 8.30
intriguing story of passion, drama, love, and abandonment
HOUSE OF THE FLYING DAGGERS [15] Daily: 8.15
Latest colourful Chinese historical epic
MILLION DOLLAR BABY [12A] Daily: 2.15, 5.15, 8.00 Sat & Sun, 11.15, 2.15, 5.15, 8.00
clint eastwood's new boxing drama
NATIONAL TREASURE [PG] Daily: 8.15
The greatest adventure history has ever revealed.
SENIOR SCREEN: SUPERSIZE ME [12A] Wed: 10.45am wheelchair access
An irreverent look at obesity in America and one of its sources - fast food corporations
THE AVIATOR [12A] Daily: 12.15, 4.00, 7.45
Biopic of Howard Hughes with Leonardo Di Caprio
THE INCREDIBLES [U] Daily: 2.30, 5.00 Sat & Sun, 11.30, 2.30, 5.00
Pixar CGI animated super-hero family adventure *
THE POLAR EXPRESS [U] Sat & Sun: 10.45am
Arctic animation with Tom Hanks. *
WHITE NOISE [15] Daily: 12.45, 3.15, 6.30, 8.45
Scary scary horror...

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A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS [PG] Daily: 10.45 sat & sun, 1.00, 3.15, 5.45pm
Twas the night before Christmas...
RAY [15] Thu: 8.15
The extraordinary life story of Ray Charles
TEAM AMERICA: WORLD POLICE [15] Daily: 11.00am sat & sun, 1.30, 4.00, 6.30, 8.45pm
Marionette superheroes fight to end terrorism

Phoenix Picture House (512526)

2046 [12A] Fri: 1.10, 3.50, 6.30, 9.10 pm Sat: 3.50, 6.30, 9.10 pm Sun: 3.50, 6.30, 9.10 pm
Chinese sci-fi. Mon - Thu: 1.10, 3.50, 6.30, 9.10 pm
BILLABONG ODYSSEY [PG] Fri & Sat: 11.30pm Sun: 1.45pm
The search for the world's biggest wave
FRENCH CINEMA: A THOUSAND MONTHS [12A] Mon: 6.20
French Drama
I HEART HUCKABEES [15] Fri & Sat: 11.30pm
an existential comedy
KIDS' CLUB: HOME ON THE RANGE [U] Sat: 1.30, activities at 12.45
No unaccompanied adults.
SAW [18] Thu: 11.30pm
disturbing thriller
SIDEWAYS [15] Sun: 6.15pm
comedy drama set in southern california
THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE [15] Thu: 11.30pm
Gulf War soldiers are kidnapped and brainwashed for sinister purposes
VERA DRAKE [12A] Fri & Sat: 1.00, 3.40, 6.20, 9.00 Sun & Mon: 1.00, 3.40, 9.00 Tue - Thu: 1.00, 3.40, 6.20, 9.00
Mike Leigh's dark portrait of 50s working class life.

Ultimate Picture Palace(245288)

ALFIE [15] Daily: 7.00pm
Jude Law reprises Michael Cain's legendary womanaiser.
THE GRUDGE [15] Daily: 9.00pm
Remake of Classic Japanese Horror Film "Ju On"

*** = review on www.dailyinfo.co.uk**

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Old Fire Station Theatre (297170)

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TOM GREY QUINTET / Jazz Club / Backroom @ The Bully. 162 Cowley Road; Tel: 244516
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CHIARINA / Acoustic Jazz, Pop and Folk / 7.30-10pm / FREE / Cafe' Rouge, Little Clarendon St

Wed 19th

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RESTAURANT REVIEW

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THE BIG BANG

124 Walton Street. Tel. 511441

The Big Bang exists as a conscious reaction against pseudo-gourmet frippery. Having said that, anyone who actually cares about good food should be delighted by this recent addition to Walton Street. Nearly all the ingredients are sourced locally, and the individual dishes are designed with a great sensitivity to complementary tastes and textures.

The menu consists of a diverse range of bangers-and-mashes and pies, priced between £4.99 and £8.99. For your money you get two fat sausages on a mound of mashed potato, with fried onion, red cabbage, green peas and gravy. Chances are, if you are an Oxford-based sausage-lover, you will already be familiar with the kind of high-quality sausage available in the Covered Market. It is the careful combination of well-cooked components (I was particularly impressed by the unanointed peas, balancing the richness of the other flavours with their green freshness) that makes this better than anything most of us are likely to get at home.

My venison bangers came with a gorgeous, garlicky, rosemary-scented mash – just enough garlic to accentuate everything else, but not reek-level. One of my companions went for Lincolnshire pork and tomato sausages, which were accompanied by a mustard mash and an excellent stilton gravy. The third of us opted for the steak and ale pie. The filling was delightfully tender and rich, but we thought the pastry topping was less satisfactory – it had a disappointingly doughy texture. It was, on the other hand, accompanied by some of the best chips I have ever eaten. These aren't actually offered on the menu as a side dish, but if no one in your party is having one of the pies with which they are served, it's worth asking.

The beer-drinking member of my party was pleased by the range of Hook Norton beers (£2.85 - £3.35), and would particularly recommend the Twelve Days ale (while stocks last!). The wine list is small but thoughtfully-chosen, and the wine-drinker and I fell in love with the house red (£2.30/175ml or £6.70/ 500ml). It's good value, incredibly easy to drink, rich, soft, cuddly and fractionally sweet.

Only one strictly vegetarian dish was currently on offer: Basil & Vine Tomato Sausages with the house speciality: rose mash. We had the opportunity to sample this mash, which is pretty special and rather strange: mashed potato of a deep and intense pink. The colour comes from beetroot and red cabbage, and the overall effect is peppery, vinegary, moist, hot and extremely moreish. The mixture is apparently stirred twice overnight at 3am and again at 6am by a long-suffering chef.

The apple crumble with which we finished was, like so much here, unusual but sensitively designed for its context, i.e. after large portions of filling, savoury food. A strangely light and munchable version, with tender apples and a low-key topping; not too sweet either.

Although – or perhaps because – this is a small operation and a first-time venture for the owner, it is very professionally run – the premises are spotless, everything arrives at the right temperature (this matters for mashed potato) and the service is rapid and friendly. It even offers a takeaway option. There is further reason to visit this January if you are in a sausage mood – until the end of the month, the company is dedicating 10% of the takings and all tips to the tsunami appeal.

Miranda Rose, January 2005

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