

22.07.2024

The Ely CAMRA Branch has 28 pubs and 4 clubs under its wing. From The Ship at Brandon Creek in the North, to The Bell at Kennett in the South-east, and from there to the Three Pickerels, Mepal in the West; real ale CAN be found. The form guide and list below can only ever be a rough guide – a snapshot but do try them. These pubs are checked by Taffy Lloyd; our rural pubs officer. He visits all at least twice per year while for others it's several times a month.

Outstanding

The White Horse, Witcham

2023 joint winner and 2024 outright winner of Rural Pub of the Year award.

John and Linda run a spick and span village pub with excellent beer; two taps and thinking of three. Mainly micro beers typically always an Elgoods or a Parkway. They like to keep their beers at close to £4 a pint.

If we found fault; hard to but two settees in the quirky 'living room' are all we can think of!

Good Qualities; a warm welcome. Immaculate. Good Atmosphere.

Tharp Arms, Chippenham

2023 joint winner and 2024 runner-up of Rural POTY.

Bev is the landlady with partner John looking after the cellar. It's the right crowd and no crowding!

Immaculate pub, picnic tables out front and a large enclosed beer garden behind. The beer is always cool and excellent.

They start the weekend often with 3 taps, then 2 and down to 1 for Sunday. Mix of brightly (pubco) and micro beer.

If we found fault; No dogs.

Good Qualities; Plenty of space, relaxing, great fireplace, convivial, top beer garden.

The Chequers, Sutton

3rd place 2024 rural POTY. Great little country pub, Immaculate, full of little features, always a copy of Ale magazine somewhere. The Christmas tree has to be seen! Two real ales on and always perfect. Probably the best kept beer of all the pubs.

If we found fault; the hours are limited, it sells just brightly beers.

Good Qualities; The character and detail inside. The beer. The landlady herself; Maija.

The Rising Sun, Isleham

4th place in the 2024 Rural POTY. Pat's pub is full of character and usually with plenty of people coming and going. a feature of the pub are some great fen photos of old characters and the glorious cricket teams of the past.

If we found fault; the hours are limited and it sells mostly just brightly beers.

Good Qualities; Pat will lift anyone with his chat. Low ceiling, good atmosphere.

Carpenters Arms, Soham

Now considered the best rural pub at which to find 3 micro ales. Joppo and Kayla now keep their beer very well and have a high turnover in this working man's pub. Typical beers might be Woodforde's, Moongazer, Wolf and more.

If we found a small fault; tends to have the same beers in long runs of 2-3 weeks. Young staff unsure of real ale.

Good Qualities; Plenty of customers with whom to chat (never empty), sports on TV, darts and pool.

The Plough, Little Downham

Perhaps the pub with the most soul in the area, you'll instantly feel at home here with two real ales in a brilliant setting. Many go for the home-cooked Thai-food which the family specialise in. Usually, two real ales but could easily be 3, Wutt; the Landlord mixes mostly micro beers on rotation.

If we found fault; needs a third pump for sure. No dogs.

Good Qualities; warm, friendly atmosphere, the pub's character.

Three Kings, Haddenham

Three real ales in a pub with character, more real ale memorabilia than you can shake a stick at and always busy. It should be all you could want but alas this foodie is low on atmosphere and a customer there for the beer could die and not go missing.

If we found fault; The exterior can look scruffy.

Good Qualities; The quality and character of the pub is second to none. Huge car park.

Excellent

Three Pickerels, Mepal

One pump always serving one excellent beer! It isn't a local's pub but a lavish, immaculate, riverside foodie with a good turnover of drifting customers. The one ale is always a micro and well thought through. Definitely a great family drop-off and will keep the ale drinker happy!

If we found fault; Only one micro beer which holds it back. The brass on the hand pump needs a huge polish!

Good Qualities; Tremendous walks to get there, riverside location. And always; One. Good. Beer.

The Griffin, Isleham

Great low-beamed old coaching Inn serving three real ales one of which is likely to be a strong/dark (a rural rarity) ale plus always a Wherry. Unpretentious village local has got its cellar together in recent times. A rare case of landlord pushing lots of good ale on a lager drinking public.

If we found fault; toned to rotate all the beers all the time but it's getting better.

Good Qualities; three ales, the pub itself, a great fire.

The Village Inn, Witchford

The surprise pub, the landlord and manager have built up their real ale sales from scratch in one year, on a good busy day there's a great 'geezer' vibe about the pub. Usually, a TT Landlord and a Sharpe's Sea Fury on tap. We expect the pub to get better and better. Worth a dip.

If we found fault; Only brightly type beers are available to this Punch Taverns Inn.

Good Qualities; No gimmicks or music, just a TV screen. Conversation is the entertainment.

Five Miles from Anywhere, Upware

As many as four real ales on at a riverside setting (the most in our 'rural'), plus great food, cellar used to be too warm but been brought right down in 2024. All seems great but it can have off days with a tap. The beers are mostly Greene King and likely Speckled Hen for one. If eating out, then maybe not all four will be right but certainly 2-3 beers will be to your taste.

If we found fault; It's simple, the beer selection, more micro please. remote location. No dogs.

Good Qualities; Fantastic location outlook, good value food, excellent live music Friday nights.

Good Standard

Cherry Tree, Soham

Two brightly beers from GK, always served well, the pub has a massive covered area and an enclosed garden so the children can let off steam safely. Famous for its square-value meals so beer is an aside. There isn't even a bar to lean on but that beer will still be good. Dogs allowed in while you order your drink.

If we found fault; Needs a bar counter and drinkers to be valued.

The Isle of Ely (Downham Road)

This Greene King owned pub is aimed directly at fast moving people who park, drink and scoot. Probably our busiest "rural" bar you can eat or drink in a frenzy of coming, queueing and going. If you like Greene King beers and bring your own company, it works a treat. No dogs.

If we found fault; Give us the obscure, the rare, a gem...please!

The Bell, Kennett

On your way to Bury St. Edmunds? Try dropping in at The Bell via Fordham and Chippenham, usually one well-kept real ale in a beautiful old featured pub that concentrates more on the food side.

If we found fault; more choice for the ale drinker.

Red Lion, Stretham

The landlord of 30 years keeps his brightly beers well on two pumps. Lately shown signs of enthusiasm and has started to put the occasional micro beer on. Nice little beer garden and a proper old school small bar for a cozy chat. With a little effort, things could take-off; and the landlord knows it. Well worth a beer here.

If we found fault; If attention was paid to the ale list, sales would go back up again to his heyday!

The Anchor, Little Downham

From a zero start, the new manager is trying to claw the pub back with one real ale at a time. Doom Bar is the

household choice but micro beers are being tried. The slightly plain and pure pub lacks but it's showing signs of getting its ducks lined up.

Maids Head, Wicken

This visual beauty with a thatched roof, at the back of the village green. It would be under 'excellent' but for inconsistent and occasional faux pas. Not 'off' beer, just lots of little things.... three pumps to choose from, sometimes all micro, other times all brightly. Great walks surround it and Wicken Fen is nearby.

Club; The Royal British Legion 'The Legion', Fordham

The pub of the village, full of life and always a dozen plus people in. Serves an excellent Greene King IPA or Fullers London Pride. People will soon talk to you at this well-run large club that is the only 'pub' left serving the whole village.

If we found fault; Push out and get some micro beers in.

Club; Ex-Servicemen's Club, Littleport

This ash-panelled beauty is well worth a trip if seeking an ale, if nothing else but to admire the lounge bar decor. Well-served, 2-3 pumps with brighter beers prevailing like Speckled Hen, Batemans beers and GK IPA.

If we found fault; They need to and are pushing to get some micro beers in to create interest. Watch this space!

	'22	'23	'24		'22	'23	'24
Rural Pubs							
The Tharp Arms, Chippenham	1	2	3	The Three Pickerels, Mepal	1	2	2
The George & Dragon, Snailwell	2	2	2	The White Horse, Witcham	2	2	2
The Maids Head, Wicken	2	3	3	The Village Inn, Witchford	1	0	2
The Griffin, Isleham	2	3	3	The Anchor, Little Downham	2	1	1
The Rising Sun, Isleham	2	2	3	The Plough, Little Downham	2	1	2
The Bell, Kennett	1*	1*	1*	The Isle of Ely, Downham Rd	3*	3*	3*
The Carpenters Arms, Soham	1	3	3	The Crown, Littleport	1	1	1
The Cherry Tree, Soham	1	2	2	The Plough & Harrow, L/port	0	1	1
The Ship, Soham	1	1	1	The Swan on the River, L/port	1	1	0
The Fountain, Soham	2	2	4	The Ship, Brandon Creek	3	3	3
The 5 Miles, Upware	4	4	4	The Chequers, Sutton	2	2	2
The Red Lion, Stretham	2	2	2	The Three Kings, Haddenham	3	3	3
					42	47	53
Clubs							
Ex-Servicemen's, L/port	2*	2*	2*	The RBL, Sutton	1*	1*	1*
The RBL, Fordham	1	1	2	Ely EOSA	0	1	1
					4	5	6
City Pubs							
The High Flyer, Ely	1	2	2	The West End, Ely	4	4	4
The Kings Arms, Ely	1	2	2	The Cutter, Ely	3	4	4
The Lamb Hotel, Ely	1*	1*	1*	The Drayman's Son, Ely	5	5	4
The Minster, Ely	5	4	4	The Yard, Ely	0	0	0
The Hereward, Ely	6	6	6	The 3at3, Ely	0	0	0
The Townhouse, Ely	3	3	1	The Prince Albert, Ely	7	7	7
The Fountain, Ely	1	1	1		37	39	36
*Pumps and numbers added retrospectively				<i>Overall Pumps in Ely CAMRA Branch</i>	83	91	95

The 'Nearly' Club

The Fountain, Soham

Beers on tap are still evolving. But this Craft Union pub usually has just London Pride or TT Landlord on now after a promising start. Has good and bad days, good atmosphere, plenty of TV screens and a very pretty beer garden.

The George & Dragon, Snailwell

Quiet little village pub with everyone around you drinking Guinness; and for good reason. Good meals to be had and your dog can even be groomed while you're there! 1-2 pumps, Wadworth Amber is a regular, Hobgoblin another.

The Ship, Soham

Just one real ale, GK's IPA which is usually very c-c-c-old. Despite this, they have a beer festival every August which isn't perhaps put on through passion. Dogs are now allowed.

The Ship, Brandon Creek

Three real ales that although cask appear to be very chilled. The pub has too much going on to have a love affair with the fickle drink. Usually, all 3 handpumps are brightly beers like Lacon's Encore or TTL. This riverside pub is a nice drop off on the way into West Norfolk.

The Crown, Littleport

The only pub in Littleport that's vibrant and yet still just one real ale on usually and just a few customers like it. They are a tough lot but don't 'expect' real ale to be on when visiting; best to just 'hope' it is.

Not Quite

Royal British Legion, Sutton

Just the one intermittent ale in Doom Bar. Real ale (and any love of) is a low priority here.

Plough & Harrow, Littleport

A tap with a clip on it but no real ale that we can find actually on.

Not at All

Swan on the River, Littleport

The White Pheasant, Fordham (not in table)

The Chequers, Fordham (not in table)

The Crown, Fordham (not in table)

The EOSA, Downham Road, very occasional, very cold Speckled Hen.

Merry Monk, Isleham (not in table)

The Humble Pig, Witcham (not in table)

The Comrades Club, Soham (not in table)

plus many other small social clubs