

## A List of Rural Pubs in the Ely Branch of CAMRA

The Ely CAMRA Branch has 28 RURAL pubs of which 23 serve real ale and it also has 5 clubs selling real ale under its wing making 28. From The Ship at Brandon Creek in the North to the Three Pickerels, Mepal in the West to The Bell at Kennett in the South-east, 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 our rural pubs officer; Taffy Lloyd. He visits all at least three times per year while for others it's several times a month. 31.01.2024 Version 4.

### **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 Best Bitter. They like to keep their beers at close to £4 a pint.

If we found fault; Sometimes the cellar temperature goes up a bit.

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

#### **The Griffin, Isleham**

Great low-beamed old coaching Inn is now serving four 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 largely lager drinking public. The Wherry has been joined as of late by the very popular Nethergate's Old Growler; a plum porter.

If we found fault; Bar staff need to support the landlord by checking the beers quality.

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

#### **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 They have a serious meat draw on Sunday afternoons. Staff are now able to inform customers about the beers, great service.

If we found fault; needs a beer strategy to avoid three darks followed by three blondes.

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

#### **The Village Inn, Witchford**

The surprise pub, the landlord and manager have built up their real ale sales from scratch in 1.5 year, on a good busy day there's a great 'geezer' vibe about the pub 'early doors'. What was Sharp's Sea Fury and TTL is now usually TT Boltmaker and St Austell's Tribute. We expect the pub to get better and better. Worth a dip.

If we found fault; Only brightly type beers are available at this Punch Taverns Inn. Only one pump on occasionally.

Good Qualities; No gimmicks or music, just a TV screen. Conversation is the entertainment. The landlord loves his portraits and framed photos, it's not the Tate – but it's close.

#### **The Chequers, Sutton**

Third place in the 2024 rural POTY. Landlady leaves at the end of February. 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 – always 'brightly' (national ales) - on and 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**

4<sup>th</sup> 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. Good atmosphere.

#### **Three Kings, Haddenham**

Three real ales in a pub with character and more real ale memorabilia than you can shake a stick at and always busy. Three real ales of which two are likely to be Greene King.

If we found fault; It should be all you could want but alas this foodie is low on atmosphere and a customer could die and not go missing. The exterior can look untidy.

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

## Excellent

### **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 three, Wutt; the Landlord mixes mostly micro beers on rotation.

If we found fault; needs a third pump for sure. No dogs. A little more input from the Landlord.

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

### **Tharp Arms, Chippenham**

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

Bev is the landlady with partner Tom 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. For 2024 two beers on the Sunday. Great meat draw at 3pm.

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

If we found fault; No dogs. We are in appreciation that the landlord Tom is not well at the moment.

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

### **Three Pickerels, Mepal**

One pump always serving one excellent micro 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 good one though. 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.

### **Five Miles from Anywhere, Upware**

As many as four real ales on at the riverside setting (the most in our 'rural' patch), plus great food, cellar used to be too warm but been brought right down in 2024 and subsequently, the beer is always good now. Serves only Greene King – even though it's not tied – so IPA and Speckled Hen, Golden Hen and one more. A big food pub with a great outlook and if eating out, then maybe not all four beers will do but, certainly 2 or 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, the Friday night live music is buzzing.

### **Cherry Tree, Soham**

Two brightly beers from GK, always served well, the pub is big on children plus has a massive outside covered area and 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 to order and if nobody eating in the overspill lounge – which is fair!

If we found fault; Customer's need a bar counter demonstrating that drinkers are valued.

Good Qualities; Two perfect quality beers, quick service.

### **Maids Head, Wicken**

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

If we found fault; One pump is serving misty beer, get back to micro beers and that third pump. Out the Doombar.

Good Qualities; Great pub, beer always tastes lovely.

## Good Standard

### **The Isle of Ely**

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.

### **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.

### Red Lion, Stretham

The landlord of 30 years keeps his brightly beers well on two pumps. Lately it has shown signs of enthusiasm and started to put the occasional micro beer on. Nice little beer garden to the rear 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.

### The Anchor, Little Downham

The new manager is trying to claw the pub back from zero. Doom Bar is the household choice but micro beers have been tried. With the enthusiasm of the new manager shining through, we hope for better days here soon. Try it. The slightly plain and pure pub lacks but it's showing signs of getting its ducks lined up.

### The Fountain, Soham

Phil and Sylvia's beers on tap are still evolving. Having been at the pump since December 2023, this Craft Union pub usually has Hobgoblin Gold on and London Pride. After a shaky start to 2024 the beer is now back on track. There's a good earthy atmosphere but it's given its soul to the TV box and karaoke and even the old relaxing lounge has them.

Table of the pubs, bars and clubs selling real ale				Up to end of 2024 and revised quarterly			
	'22	'23	'24		'22	'23	'24
<b>Rural Pubs</b>							
The Tharp Arms, Chippenham	1	2	2	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	4	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 Three Kings, Haddenham	3	3	3
The Ship, Soham	1	1	1	The Barn, Haddenham	-	-	2
The Fountain, Soham	2	2	2	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				
					41	45	52
<b>Clubs</b>							
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
Soham Town Rangers	1	1	2				
					5	6	8
<b>City Pubs</b>							
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 Fountain, Ely	1	1	1
The Hereward, Ely	6	6	6	The Prince Albert, Ely	7	7	7
The Townhouse, Ely	3	3	1				
					37	39	36
					<i>Overall Pumps in Ely CAMRA Branch</i>		
					83	90	96

### The Ship, Brandon Creek

Three real ales that have now been lowered in temperature.... good news. Glued tightly to Greene King despite being a Freehouse, the 3 handpumps have brightly beers like Lacon's Encore or Greene King IPA plus a further GK beer. This riverside pub is a nice drop off on the way into West Norfolk.

### The Barn, Haddenham

This new venture opened in November 2023. Local man Stuart is after a 'pub I'd like to drink in too'. A rare single room pub having two GRAVITY served real ales. Usually Adnams, sometimes Papworth. The fittings immediately hit the right note for a relaxing drink. A real fire helps too. We'll get a long-term report and review it.

### **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 village.

### **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 joinery and decor. Well-served, the 2-3 pumps and with brightly beers prevailing like Speckled Hen or a GK IPA. Despite Batemans being their supplier, the beer is rarely on.

### **The 'Nearly' Club**

#### **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 Gold 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 any passion. Good news! Dogs are now allowed in. The brass on the hand pump needs a huge polish!

#### **The Crown, Littleport**

The only pub in Littleport is signed up to Batemans. Vibrant atmosphere, yet still just one real ale on and has just a few customers that appreciate it. Somehow the Batemans is rarely for sale and then said not to be liked. New landlady started in October 2024. We wait to see.

#### **The EOSA, Downham Road**

Has a voluntary tie with GK for a good line to its one good beer in IPA on Rugby match days.

### **Not Quite**

#### **Royal British Legion, Sutton**

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

**Not at All** (not in the above table) The 5 dry pubs.

1. **Swan on the River, Littleport** No interest from the management in understanding real ale. A foodie and hotel.
2. **Plough & Harrow, Littleport** Landlord after landlord and customers known for liking other forms of relaxation.
3. **The White Pheasant, Fordham** A foodie.
4. **The Chequers, Fordham** A foodie.
5. **Merry Monk, Isleham** A foodie.

**The Humble Pig, Witcham** A campsite with a bar

**The Crown, Fordham** A foodie being rebuilt. Opens again in March 2025 as an Admiral Taverns pub.

**Wilburton Flame** The old Kings Head is re-opening in around February or March 2025.

### **The Dry Club**

**The Comrades Club, Soham** Tried real ale during Covid-19 and got stuck with it during the lock-in plus many other small social clubs.