

# Lights, Bitters, CAMRA Action.

Newsletter – November 2023

## Welcome to the November Newsletter

As we head towards Armistice Day on November 11<sup>th</sup>, incredibly, we have somehow managed to connect beer, war and 'lewk' all in one, there really are no limits to our inability!

Remarkably, our budget for the beer festival, as of 5<sup>th</sup> November still hasn't been approved and may even be putting us further back than we were this time last year for our 2023 Beer Festival which had on reflection, many time related problems. However, the old boys are back in charge and if anyone can straighten it up it is them.

## Last appeal for the Brew a Beer Festival Brew and the Rural Pub Trip

See details below of both trips but we need to find 4 more people to fill the coach for the rural pub trip and it can't break even until its full because we're doing this fantastic trip at COST PRICE and we'll hopefully delay the next newsletter to take in the Papworth Brewery Trip and the Rural Pub Trip and tell you how it went. To book places look for Til on our FB group page or contact her or myself; details being at the bottom.

**Beer Festivals coming up.** Key: NC (non-CAMRA). M (music). F (food).

[Haddenham Winter Beer Festival](#) F. M. NC. Friday 10<sup>th</sup> – Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> November. Robert Arkenstall Centre, Haddenham. CB6 3XD. Proceeds to the Robert Arkenstall Primary School.

[Portland Arms Winter Beer Festival](#) NC. Monday 6<sup>th</sup> November – Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> November. 129 Chesterton Road, Cambridge. 30+ ales, ciders and craft keg beers.

[Ely Elysian Winter Beer Festival 2024](#) F. Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> – Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> February. The Maltings, Ely.

[Cambridge Beer Festival 2024](#) F. 20<sup>th</sup> May 2024 – 25<sup>th</sup> May 2024. Jesus Green, Cambridge.



Cambridge BF 2023

## Ely Branch CM News

The branch meeting is delayed this month due to a funeral and will be held on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> November at The Royal Standard and the next after that is on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> December (location TBA).

## Lewkel News

As you read this, **The Fountain, Soham** has just a week left open and is running all its stocks down before it closes on or around the 15<sup>th</sup> of November through to the 8<sup>th</sup> of December. It will then be a non-food Craft Union Co Ltd pub. We're confident in saying it won't be a foodie because **The Griffin, Isleham** has bought a great deal of the kitchen hardware. We'll endeavour to find out how many real ales will go on tap from the start and report next month ahead of its opening. **The Five Miles from Anywhere, Upware** is in the process of being sold and new owners are likely to go in around the middle of January 2024. "Everything stays as normal for now in the run to Christmas and we don't know the names of the people buying". Mike Missing the owner of **The Griffin, Isleham** is dragging his once burned-out kitchen back to life as it is seen as adding real value when selling the pub on. In the past few years, the pub rarely had more than one good ale - oh he's had as many as 3 beers on at once but just one good ale! Mike has semi-retired and now concentrates on keeping the beers right himself. He's had managers at different times and after a few beers in the pub a couple of months apart, I can say that the ale served is better than for years. Twice now, two real ales have been good but the third one defaulted both times..... It is our first stop on the rural trip so let's hope that all three cylinders are firing on that day!



How old is this? The Griffin with a proper carriage drive in

**The Chequers, Sutton** has not lowered their GK IPA price probably because it's become clear that GK, along with other big brewers may have lowered the ABV% to 3.4 and yes, they do pay less tax but they also appear to have kept the saving! The whole thing is being played down so much that although The Chequers was the first, I've subsequently found that none of the pubs taking GK IPA have been informed either. Other recent beers at the Chequers have been Old Speckled Hen, Abbott and Ghost Ship with the beer served as usual to perfection. This is pub 6 on the rural run & trip.

A recent walk between Mepal and Witcham with the drains and dykes full to overflowing I managed to leave the mud outside the **Witcham White Horse**, luckily there was still plenty of grass too but that won't last long at this time of year with these wet conditions. Anyway, destination; **The White Horse** which had two real ales on; Elgood's Cambridge Bitter 3.8% and Rudgate's Jorvik Blonde 3.8% and both were excellent, the Cambridge being that good I didn't want to check the Jorvik. John and Linda look forward to our rural trip (it's pub 7 and last) out to meet them and if you're going to leave people smiling well, we couldn't finish at a better pub!

It was then back to **The Three Pickerels, Mepal** (reserve pub on the list) where I had a fine pint of Hobgoblin from the Wychwood Brewery, Oxon. Carlsberg Marston's Brewing Company (CMBC) are closing the 170-year-old brewery this month and don't expect the taste to travel to a new brewery because as we know, it's the water that makes the beer as much as the hops. I contradict myself slightly when I say I find Hobgoblin too sweet, I wouldn't miss it if it also went.

Anyway, it was served well but the busy staff are somewhat remote and the customers looked a thoroughly miserable lot. No darts, no TV, no music and nothing to read. You really get the feeling the owners must feel it's enough to have a pretty river or is it maybe the pleasure of the marbled tops and walls and I'm just missing it? Good news though is that they intend to go for two ales during the Christmas period. Beer served well must come first I agree but only the one beer lacks something much like the place itself and it is after all the people's local? I made the added sin of taking in 'Franki Four Fingers' (in a high lined rim of mud chiffon matching his eyes) and even the Labradors cocked-a-snoot at him; so well trained these country dogs but he gets all the biscuits off the barmaids, he doesn't care.

I noted a father with his two lads looking 17-19 and all were on Guinness, after a while it became clear, nobody was speaking, the boys wouldn't finish their stouts and the father looked not to leave till they did. The boys won out and left a half pint each and dad has a bit further to go in the 'training and handling offspring my way (1971 pat. pend.)'. Good luck with that dad! The road is strewn with others before you! But I left thinking; surely there's an area at the Three Pickerels that could call a bar? Make it small, tight and cozy it up a bit?

Sad news that former landlady of **The Prince Albert**, ANN HUNT passed away at Addenbrookes Hospital on the 8<sup>th</sup> October 2023 aged 69 years, her funeral is/was on 7<sup>th</sup> November. Quoting the Ely Standard of 1999; Mike and Ann Hunt came to Ely in 1990 after a pub they had bought in March had fallen into disrepair almost overnight and then stayed at the 'Albert' for 19 years. "Luckily we were offered a look at The Prince Albert in Ely and as soon as we walked in, we fell in love with it." said Mike. Over the years, they raised £40,000 for charities and won 9 'pub of the year' awards. On retirement from the Albert, Ann and Mike moved to Little Downham and the Anchor became their local.



*Collecting the 2002 POTY from Wiggy – that's if he'll let go!*



*New Years Eve 1997*

Back in her landlady days, Ann was want of a drop herself when working and would manage long periods of both sometimes in equal measure! The tolerance they showed many customers was above and beyond and Ann would have a 'quiet word' the next time she saw you, she was always interested in her customers lives. Maybe some of you would like to write in with a favourite story? Our condolences to Mike and the family.



## Near do well!



Aureja Jupp

News from Three Blind Mice (3BM) that Apprentice Brewer Aureja Jupp has done the business in the untapped apprentice brewer of the year competition and not only made it to the final three but only went and won the bloody thing!!!

Her brew; Box of Sparks 5.8% Citra, Nelson & Coriander NEPA has been well received at the brewer's tap room; the Drayman's Son. It's great

to see 3BM investing in all areas; factory equipment, bottling, trade days, beer festivals and most of all; their staff. They are often to be seen supporting small events with an outside bar as well as all the beer festivals, a busy, busy team indeed!



**The Plough, Little Downham** has been placed on the market with a leasehold value of £100,000 which seems good value to me. We were told that John would retire and leave it to his son Wutt to run the bar and daughter (sorry on that one) to run the kitchen but it seems a different tack has been taken and the pub is now on the market. We'll miss the whole family and it's difficult to see how it can be the same again.

**The Maid's Head, Wicken.** Calvin Holland has taken back the Maids Head and was due to re-open after a week closed at the beginning of October ... or so we all thought. Even the staff thought so. Calvin holds the tenancy agreement for the pub so it's his responsibility while busy with his catering business (was White Pheasant Catering until recently and now; Pheasant Catering) but the pub has remained firmly shut. Calvin has many years of the contract with local businessman and owner CJ Murfitt left to run but is selling what looks like a full-length tenancy we must presume so that he can step out the way. Annual rent requested is £38K+ and a new 12-year lease agreement. The Maid's Head has been dropped from our rural trip because pubs with fresh landlords aren't eligible to win POTY.

**Kings Arms, Ely.** Karl has done what he said he'd do and that is a second pump in good time for the winter! Quite honestly, it doesn't have to stop there either and currently it's a mix of Doom Bar, Timothy's; Landlord and Boltmaker. I hope he tries out all the beers to see what the public's favourite is and then maybe that Doom Bar will get the red card. I see a very rosy future for the Kings Arms and Karl has good form.

## Papworth Brewery

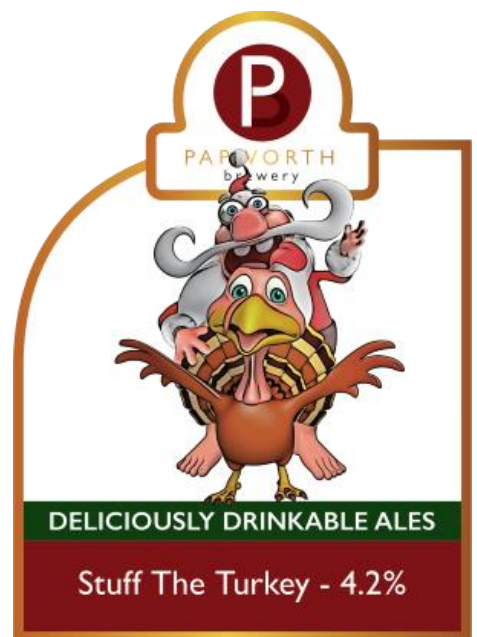
### Creating a Beer Festival Beer! – Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> December

We'd love to see you there so you can watch the whole process of beer being brewed throughout and finishing sometime mid-afternoon. We meet at 8.50am and bring a packed lunch and drink with you and dress in roughs. There is a brewery tap room 50m away named the Crystal Ship which opens at 5pm and there's no charge for this event but do please put your name down on the Ely Branch Facebook page which is open.

It's been a 'given' that we'd be pleased to see it at our BF in February but as we keep having to say; until the budget is approved; NOTHING'S CERTAIN. If you've been on many a brewery trip then perhaps, you'd like this time to 'see it made'. If you are driving and can offer a lift then please put your name forwards on the Ely Branch Facebook page. I can take 3 more.

## Rural POTY for 2024

Bar The Griffin, it just so happens that the pubs I'm nominating for Rural POTY are the ones in the below rural trip list. It would be unfair on any of the pubs to add anything further at this time but I don't believe any of them will serve less than a great pint. Voting for best pub, whether city or rural can be done by any CAMRA member having visited any pub and not just on our trip. If you have a great pint; just say it. Simply write in with your vote to the e-mail address at the bottom of the newsletter and we'll add it to our decision-making process come the time.



## Ely Branch Rural Pub Run and Trip – Saturday 9th December

At the time of writing, there are just 4 places left on our Rural trip which is open to both CAMRA and non-members alike, we'll be travelling by mini-coach 16-seater with Lords Travel. This should be another excellent social event organised by Til Utting-Brown with the Rural Pub of The Year (RPOTY; see above) side sorted by myself. The price is set at a break-even £27 per head and includes a buffet lunch at the Tharp Arms at around 13:00.

The buffet will have homemade scotch eggs, homemade sausage rolls, gammon joint, selection of cheeses, crackers, chutney and pizzas. Vegetarians catered for.



*The Griffin, Isleham last weekend*

Due to the closure of the Maids Head, Wicken we start the trip by parking in between the two pubs in Isleham that are just 100 metres apart. The time is also extended by 10-minutes so be quick if visiting both these Freehouses.

Trains from Cambridge 11:00 for 11:14 at Ely and 11:05 for 11:25 and 11:20 for 11:36 arrival at Ely.

Meet at 11:20am; Ely Railway Station Car Park 11:30 to 11:40 leave.

Here is our itinerary;

The Griffin and/or The Rising Sun, Isleham arrive at 12:00, 12:50 leave.

Tharp Arms, Chippenham. Buffet lunch here. Arrive at 13:00, 14:00 leave. No dogs indoors.

The Carpenter's Arms, Soham arrive at 14:20, 15:00 leave.

Five Miles from Anywhere - No Hurry Inn, Upware. Arrive at 15:20, 16:00 leave.

The Three Kings, Haddenham, arrive at 16:20, leave at 17:00.

The Chequers, Sutton arrive at 17:10 and leave at 17:50.

(Three Pickerels, Mepal – our reserve pub in case one doesn't happen).

The White Horse, Witcham arrive at 18:00 and leave at 18:40.

Ely Railway Station Car Park 19:11 arrive.

Trains for Cambridge leave at 19:18, 19:27 and 19:50.

Again, we'll ask you to put your names down for this on the Ely CAMRA Branch Facebook page or contact Taffy or Til (details at the foot).

## Norwich Beer Festival 2023

My year is complete when I have visited the Norwich Beer Festival which is now in its 45<sup>th</sup> year. It's been one of the best around and was rammed this year with Norwich and Norfolk being at the forefront of brewing, pubs and the many smaller festivals making Norfolk the centre of all things ale here in East Anglia.

With 300 real ales on, an international bar, cider bar, bottled beers bar, food and entertainment there's a lot to take in. Something though has gone drastically wrong this year. Until now the horse has been in front of the cart but no more; fresh barrels were being put on in any bay and shelf space and then the beer and bay were recorded on the online app. This just about worked if you had the app but you still had to open the 'real' hardcopy programme to read the beer notes before you went off to order. A beer 'A' could be adjacent to a 'Z' so the programme notes were flying left and right not helped by a broken-up programme! Even the app readers were flagging but as for the old schoolers like myself who read the programme notes then visit the bar it was a "disaster". The easiest way was to go to the counter and have a look at what was around you but the brewer's notes on the barrel cards were in tiny type and that therefore meant no information at all! I bought a few beers based on name, didn't always watch the ABV and got 'disheartened'. Merde!!!! My advice, unless tough enough, avoid Friday and Saturday; it's tight out there and you'll get jostled anywhere near the St. Andrews Hall bar. All in all, a "disaster".

Postscript; It's been pointed out to me that it can't be a "disaster"; the term **must** be saved for when running out of beer! Quite right Wrecker! I drank many but First Chop – ODE Dark Mild 4/5 and Phipps – Red Star 4/5 were the best I tried. Come 3 o'clock we were ready for a visit to the East Anglian CAMRA pub of the year for 2023; The Kings Head.







### Kings Head, Norwich City Centre. CAMRA POTY East Anglia

The lovely old pub is just 7-minutes from the hall and was rammed. I started with a photo of the landlady behind the pumps which angered her somewhat so I asked a barmaid if she'd mind and all was good. 8 real ales regale the bar and when you looked around ale was all that was being drunk. The Humpty Dumpty Sterling Sharpie 4.7% was excellent.

### Huh? A Bar Billiards table!



*Queueing to play*



A crowd of people learning to play for the first time or trying to remember how it used to be played gathered around the table and it was going down well - just like the beer; so, we put money down but had to leave for the train before our time came. I did this trip not 5 years ago in 2018 and had just won the East Anglian Open Bar Billiards Championship in the March beating 3 England players in doing it, I was stoked, but upon arrival at the Kings Head, a little merry perhaps and definitely over confident, I took on the local hot shot who completely destroyed me, a very sobering experience! If interested, our nearest table is at The Dyke's End, Reach, CAMRA most improved rural POTY for Cambs.

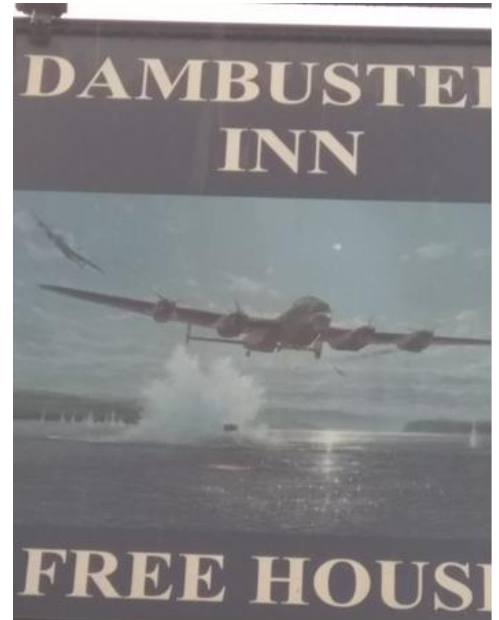
### Fil bounces into The Dambusters Inn

Welcome to Scampton. To my shame, I'd never heard of the place but anyone with a passing interest in aviation will recognise it as the site from where the legendary 617 'Dambusters' Squadron launched 'Operation Chastise' on 17<sup>th</sup> May 1943 on their mission to destroy, with the first deployment of the Barnes-Wallis 'Bouncing Bomb', the German held dams of the Ruhr Valley. Nineteen of the heavy 'Lancaster' bombers with a total crew of one hundred and thirty-three set out. Just eleven of the aircraft returned. Scampton lies a mere six miles from Lincoln – a city with a proud war history of its own, laying claim to being the inventor of the Tank – and an old friend, a youngster, celebrating his sixty-sixth birthday, invited me up to look at something he thought I might find interesting.





The 'Dambusters Inn' was the first pub in the village and is believed to have been formerly a post office until 1999 when Mike and Amanda Knight first took it on. Following their retirement in 2009 Greg Algar became the new licensee and began turning it into not so much a museum: more of a shrine to the memory of those brave airmen. Extensively built on and then renovated during Covid, (my own lockdown project was Netflix! Other streaming services are available) the four rooms are crammed with 617 memorabilia and tributes to



their raids during and after the Second World War.

But first and foremost, the Dambusters Inn is a pub. And a very fine pub. Greg's own beers (Greg's Brewery) were sadly unavailable on our visit as the microbrewery at the back of the pub is being temporarily used for storage but, we were greeted with an impressive array of eight handpumps so, breathe in:

Aither's Artemis at 4.1%,  
 Horncastle Pale Rider 4.1%,  
 Hollow Stone Skylight 3.3%,  
 Beermat's Teammates 3.9%,  
 Pheasantry Dancing Dragonfly 5.0%,  
 Small World Long Moor Pale at 3.9%,  
 Magpie Hoppily Ever After 3.8%,  
 Welbeck Abbey Limelight at 3.8%,

Backed up with a range of fine wines and ciders (Slack Alice 4.6%, Thundering Molly 5.2% and Abrahalls AM 6.0%) the 'Dambusters' is the ideal rural watering hole. The kitchen sets a high bar too with starters priced between three and eight pounds and a wide variety of mains from fourteen to twenty pounds. This really is a gem of a pub and well worth a flying visit [ouch!].

Chocks away!!

Fil

### The Tale End

This month I delve back to one of Ely's characters and a man who saw war service. With November 11<sup>th</sup> coming up, the timing seemed right to have a look at George Daters. Today, we know The Minster to be the central pub of Ely and on a mid-week evening when all other pubs are down to 3-4 customers, the Minster will still have 10 or 11!

Back in the late 70s and early 80s though, it was just another pub around Ely and we had many to choose from. The landlord at the time was one George Daters and The Minster was a true Freehouse which George ran his way! Back then, as you walked in, there was an off-licence hatch in front of you, the snug on the left and the bar to the right.

A heart of gold to his many customers one story from a customer of the time Shep Pearson told was that "George slipped into a customer's hand enough money to buy a huge round when they were to get to France". George though, had one dislike; the Japanese. I'm told his attitude came from collecting old pals as (ex)prisoners in Burma at the end who'd spent the war under the cruel heel of the Japanese and so when George much later took The Minster, he wouldn't serve people of 'Asian appearance'.

Things though, came to a head in the early 80s when George refused to serve a small group of what turned out to be Koreans and no protesting their nationality could help the situation, George would have none of it.



A lady whose identity I want to protect has been in touch;

"(The) day that you are referring to wasn't a one off refusal and happened on a regular basis, and was pretty awful for us bar staff who were instructed to refuse to serve any Japanese or anyone who looked to be Japanese...a ridiculous request which obviously we ignored when he were not in the building, if he returned and said customers had been served, often a few during summer months with tourists visiting the Cathedral, he would berate (us) at the end of our shift.

# Patriotic landlord in flag row

**PATRIOTIC** landlord George Daters is furious because the Cross of St George was not flying over Ely Cathedral on St George's Day.

Mr Daters, licensee of the Minster Tavern, only a stone's throw from the cathedral,

claimed that it was "an insult to the English nation."

But the Dean and Chapter were not trying to fly in the face of tradition.

It was simply too windy to hoist the flag on the west tower 300ft above the ground.

Mr Daters' wife, Brenda, first noticed the flag was not flying and told her husband.

"It's a matter of national pride," he said. "Other Saints days are celebrated in this country, so why not St George's?"

Mr Daters and some of his customers were so annoyed that they tried to contact the office of the Bishop, the Rt Rev Peter Walker, but no-one was available, so he rang the police.

"I don't know whether they took me seriously, but we were annoyed," he said.

His complaint was, however, taken seriously by the Vice Dean, Canon Tony Morcom.

"We had made arrangements to put up the flag on Saturday morning but it was too windy," he explained.

"If we had put it up, it is such a big flag that, in that wind, it would have got torn to shreds."



George Daters  
furious

Canon Morcom added that a replacement flag would have cost about £150.

But Mr Daters was unimpressed with the Vice Dean's explanation.

"I just can't believe it," he said. "It was a lovely day."

When the council implemented 'no parking' directly outside The Minster where George parked his Rover, he took on the council as he said he paid the rates on the building and therefore he could park there...then what followed. A customer and good friend of mine now sadly deceased was a great wit and always up for a prank had a poster printed with George's face saying 'Vote Daters Conservative ..Ban all Yellow Lines and Ban all Yellow People'...He also marked 2 yellow lines in adhesive tape in front of the men's urinals and put said posters on the wall above. I would say this went viral..before viral was invented - no social media then, but word spread, the local news picked it up and believe that it just escalated from there. I remember the freezing winter of 81/82 and Charrington's area manager visited, The Minster stocked some of their beers, and (he) returned 5 mins after leaving as his car wouldn't start and he needed a push...we all trooped out and George on seeing the car was a Nissan ordered us back inside and told the AM there was a phone box on market place with a directory where he could find a local breakdown garage, he wouldn't allow him in to use the phone. He could be the kindest of men and the worst of men, he was a product of his time and a character..... I have many funnier less contentious memories of him too...it was so long ago now, but he is one of those people you come across in life that you never forget."

The usual way for lewkel veterans was not to talk of the war but to internalise it and I recall two Fordham veterans, Bill Turner and Ted Bullman, I knew both, who were 'different', that's all I can call it; just 'different'. I recall asking mum about them and the answer came; 'they were in the war; they saw too much'.

George would complain about unpatriotic behaviour to authorities whether it was the church or the council with his main moan being flags, they were either not out or they were at the wrong height. Another person commented that when he got a new Phillips camcorder, George stripped it, found Japanese parts (inside) and sent it back! Eventually, upon retirement, I believe George sold the pub to Bass Charrington's who made The Minster pretty much into what you see today.

What happened over our unlucky Korean tourists? Well, it got big - out of hand even - and George was taken to court but after giving evidence in the dock the case was dismissed and our veteran soldier who'd seen so much was let off without a fine and I believe he never did serve customers of Asian appearance to the day he stopped.

The photo credits this month go to; Three Blind Mice, Papworth Brewery, The Endless Pub Crawl, Dave Gent for the Ely Standard article on George Daters (25<sup>th</sup> April 1983). Please help us tell others; if you know something then tell us about it and we'll pass it on. If you have something to discuss and debate, a taxi, a train you want to organise; why not join the [Ely CAMRA Branch Facebook](#) page and belt it out there? If you have any news for this newsletter then drop me a line via email at [david@taffmeisters.co.uk](mailto:david@taffmeisters.co.uk) or text me on 07951010542. If booking a place, here's Til's email address; [til.uttingbrown@googlemail.com](mailto:til.uttingbrown@googlemail.com). The views expressed here are those of myself and don't necessarily represent those of the CAMRA committee.

David 'Taffy' Lloyd