

# **CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE**

# **OPENING**

# **TIMES**

**FREE**  
**ST.NEOTS**  
**&**  
**DISTRICT**



**BRANCH NEWSLETTER**

**Issue No 111**

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**Summer 2001**

## **RATES RELIEF FOR RURAL PUBS**

CAMRA has succeeded in its long running campaign for rates relief for small rural pubs. Thousands of pubs are expected to benefit from the mandatory 50% cut in rates for pubs with rateable values of up to £9000 in villages with less than 3000 inhabitants. CAMRA has putting the case for rates relief for over a year, and the package announced by the government in April included all three of CAMRA's suggestions to improve the original government proposals. These were the inclusion of leased and tenanted pubs as well as privately owned pubs, the inclusion of more pubs by raising the eligibility ceiling from a rateable value of £6000, and the inclusion of all pubs, not just those with specific community facilities.

Rates relief for other small rural businesses had already been introduced some years ago, but the latest success followed quickly once CAMRA had persuaded government officials of the importance of pubs as vital social amenities in rural communities.

Rural pubs have been closing at an ever increasing rate because of increasing running costs and changes in the demand for the services offered by pubs. Larger pubs with the capability for substantial food operations tend to succeed at the expense of smaller pubs. This latest initiative should help some of our rural pubs to continue to provide the vital focus of village life; forty villages in the Huntingdonshire area have only one pub.

**St.Neots Camra Branch**

**Summer**

**Opening Times 111**

# Pub Spotlight

In this section we draw attention to local pubs that have recently undergone significant change. In this edition, we spotlight a pub that could not possible have changed more! Until March, O'Reilly's in Huntingdon was a Irish theme pub, and didn't serve any real ale at all. Read on for a classic transformation story.

## **Samuel Pepys, Huntingdon**

146 High Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TF (at the southern end of the High Street)  
Tel: (01480) 437877, <http://www.TheSamuelPepys.com>  
11-11 (Mon-Sat); 12-10.30 (Sun)

### **Guest Beers (H)**

The pub is laid out as a Georgian Ale House, with stripped wooden floor, panelled walls, and period paintings and maps on the walls. Outside is a large paved beer garden; with a children's play area, which features a large model boat.

The real ales on offer are a constantly changing range of 6-9 different beers; some served on hand pump, and some from gravity from casks behind the bar. The range is from independent breweries, and mostly from local microbreweries; beers offered in recent weeks have included beers from City of Cambridge, Charles Wells, Milton, Nethergate, Payns, and Tolly Cobbold.

The food available at lunchtime is traditional pub grub, with sandwiches, steaks, pies, and includes a children's menu and vegetarian specials.

A "happy hour" operates from 5-7pm Monday to Friday with a pint and a half for the price of a pint on all British draught beers.  
Garden (rear patio), Lunchtime Meals (12-3 pm).

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## **WELCOME TO ELGOODS**

St Ives beer drinkers are celebrating the arrival of Elgoods, the independent family brewers based in Wisbech, who have bought the Floods Tavern on the Broadway in the town. The pub is already trading as an Elgoods tied house, with cask beers Cambridge Bitter and Pageant in excellent form as well as a changing cask beer from Elgoods that has included the award winning Black Dog. Improvements are being made to the frontage of the pub, with new signs and improved entrance from the street. The popular riverside terrace is also being improved, with repairs to paving and new furniture. Elgoods, who now own 44 tied houses, also moved into Cambridge a year or so ago with the purchase of the Waggon and Horses at Milton. This has proved to be a flagship outlet for the company, with four or five Elgoods real cask beers and real draught cider on dispense.

# THE SAMUEL PEPYS

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Tel: 01480 459708

A GENUINE FREE HOUSE

CONSTANTLY CHANGING BEERS  
INCLUDING OFFERINGS FROM:

Tolly Cobbold, Nethergate,  
City of Cambridge, Fenland, Payns,  
Greene King, Charles Wells, Milton,  
Elgoods, Dwan and Others.

Also

Belgian Fruit Beers for the Ladies

Full Menu from 12.00 to 2.300  
Every Day

Air Conditioning, Beer Garden  
and

Large Play-Boat For The Kids  
Open All Day Every Day

# LOCAL NEWS

ST. NEOTS CRAWL Four pubs within ten minutes walk

**The Lord John Russell in Rusell Street (Bateman's)** has a fine pint of Godiva's Gold (4%ABV) at the moment, from Bateman's Good Honest T'Ales range. A Lager beer, brewed with Lager malt It has the underlying Bateman's bitter taste but with other citrus flavours coming through, very enjoyable and available May/June. From there onto **The Angel, Cambridge Street, (Free)** which has re-opened selling a range of cask beers and needs support from real ale drinkers. Some conversion work has been carried out on the lounge bar, turning it into a pleasant drinking area. Beers on tap when we called in were Grimdsdales Bitter, Grimdsdales Grim Reaper and Bass which will be regular beers, plus a guest which on this occasion was Hancocks HB. Usually there will also be a Bateman's beer. New landlords are Ian and Gill Dinnie, formerly at the Carpenters Arms, Coats, Peterborough. Ian, an experienced publican, is keen to get the pub a good reputation for real ale. A short walk up the road took us to the **The Bulls Head**, also in **Cambridge Street, (Greene King)** was serving up Brakspears special direct from the cask and very nice to. To complete the evening, a walk back to the **Chequers (Free)** in **St.Mary's Street, Eynesbury** where a fine pint of Nethergate Augustinian was to be had.

In **St Ives**, the **Greyhound** has been displaying a notice in the window advising of closure for refurbishment. The **Old Bridge** at **Huntingdon** is now sourcing guest beers via Beer Seller; sadly, local microbrewery beers are now rarely seen there. At **Broughton**, the **Crown** has been very busy, especially with food trade, in its new lease of life after being saved by a consortium of villagers who bought the pub; a recent guest beer from Caledonian Brewery was noted, and enjoyed. The **Fox** at **Catworth** is undergoing refurbishment under the existing tenant of small pub company. In **Brampton**, the **Harrier** has been serving changing guest beers. The **Horseshoes** at **Offord** is undergoing extension. At **Spaldwick** the **George** is reported to be serving real cider. At **Sapley**, both pubs are reported to be serving no cask beer. **The Bell, Southoe** is up for sale at £195,000.

## The Prince of Wales



*'That nice pub at Hilton'*

(01480) 830257



ADNAMS BEST BITTER ELGOOD'S BLACK DOG MILD GUEST BEERS  
GOOD FOOD ACCOMMODATION

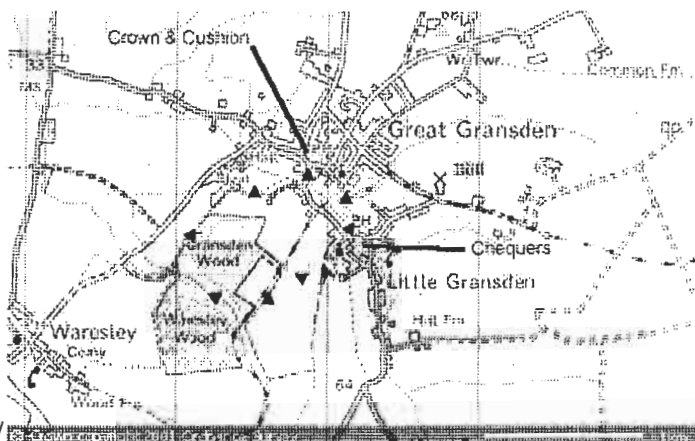
# Shaws Strolls

Here is the second of our series of rural pub crawls. This walk is guaranteed to be free of Foot and Mouth Disease restrictions and was fully checked on May 28th 2001.

## The Gransdens

**Introduction:** The walk starts and ends at the Chequers, Little Gransden and includes a visit to the Crown and Cushion, Great Gransden.

Great and Little Gransden are only a few hundred meters apart. This area was primarily a farming community until the Second World War when the Gransden Lodge airfield was the home of the 405 Squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Force. A stained glass window in Great Gransden



Church pays tribute to the 801 airmen who gave their lives in 1941-45. Great Gransden has a village school, Barnabas Oley Church of England Primary, named after the founder, a Royalist vicar, started in 1670. In addition to the two church towers, a restored 17th century post windmill adds to the scenic skyline.

**Distance:** 4.3 km (2.6 miles).

**How to get there:** Approach the Gransdens via the B1046 from St Neots, or via the B1040 from Eltisley on the A428.

**Parking:** The Chequers has a large car park beside the pub.

**The walk:** From the pub car park, turn left towards Great Gransden, and follow the road past a sharp turn to the left. At the second bend in the road, take the left turn into Church Street, walking past Little Gransden Church on the left and a row of fine thatched cottages on the right. Where the tarmac road ends, continue on a rough track, and after 300m, turn right onto a bridleway. Continue on the right hand side of the field. At the corner of the field, turn right joining Dick and Dolls Lane, along the edge of the field. Continue through a gap in a hedge to the next field, and follow the edge of the field with the wood on the right. After crossing a stream, bear right onto a path entering Waresley Wood Nature Reserve.

Waresley Wood is a fine example of the ancient woodland, which once covered much of the boulder clay uplands in this area. For centuries it was managed as coppice with standards, and is mentioned as coppice in Domesday Book. This management created the conditions in which woodland flowers thrive. Many ancient woods were destroyed in the years after the Second World War as agricultural practices changed. Waresley and Gransden survived, although 114 acres of Waresley were grubbed up between 1947 and 1973. A large part of Gransden was felled about 1929 and replanted with plantation species considered more useful than the native trees. Since 1980 some of these areas have been replanted with native species found elsewhere in the woods. Both woods are predominantly of ash and oak standards with an understory of hazel. Oxlip flowers in spring under the field maple and hazel coppice growing on chalky boulder clay, while bluebell, primrose and wood anemone flower under the birch on the drier acidic Greensand exposed in the small valley. The best time to do this walk is in early spring, when the full glory of the bluebells and primroses can be seen. Bob Mitchell, the landlord of the Chequers, recalled to me childhood memories of the village children descending on the wood on Easter Monday, to collect primroses and play hunting games using spears made from hazel twigs.

After 200m, turn right along a path past a wooden shelter. From the shelter, walkers wanting extended exercise will find wandering through the woods a rewarding experience. For those already thinking of slaking their thirst, take the direct route by ignoring the broad rides to the left and straight on, and instead turn right down a narrow path with a wicker fence on the left. Continue on this path, ignoring side paths to the left and right. This path follows the line of a brook on the right, and at two points allows access via footbridges to the North half of the wood. Our route ignores these diversions, and at the second footbridge, takes the left fork in the path at the bench, along a path that meanders and wanders, eventually leading to the main entrance to the woods.

At the entrance, turn right down a narrow path between the woods and the sewage works. After passing the sewage works, continue along the edge of a field following way markers. At the end of the field, pass through a gap in the hedge, and follow the left hand edge of the next field, in the direction of a thatched cottage. Through the hedge on the left are views of Gransden Hall. At the edge of the field, cross the stile and passing the thatched cottage, join a rough track. At the main road, turn left and continue to the Crown and Cushion.

After refreshing yourselves, retrace your steps down the slope and take the left hand turn following the signs for the Industrial Estate. At the roundabout, continue forwards to Great Gransden Church, a mainly 15th century building. To the north-west of the church is the vicarage, a brick house with tiled roof built by Barnabas Oley, vicar, probably during the second period of his ministrations from 1660 to his death in 1685.

To the south is College Farm belonging to Clare College, Cambridge, an 18th century brick house with shaped gables and a tiled roof. Follow the path through the churchyard, over the brook, and across the graveyard. Passing through the kissing gate, cross a meadow in the direction of the Little Gransden Church tower. Pass over a brook, and at the road, turn left and follow the road back to the Chequers

### **The pubs:**

#### **Chequers, Little Gransden,**

71 Main Street, Little Gransden, OS: TL273351; Tel: (01767) 677348;

Open 12-2:30;5-11 (Mon-Fri); 11-11 (Sat); 12-3,7-10.30 (Sun);

Real Ales: Adnams Bitter (H) Guest Beers (H).

This pub has been run by the same family for the last 50 years and has been well documented and researched by the landlord. Evidence of this has been used to adorn the walls and makes interesting reading. Whilst retaining an excellent basic public bar a comfortable lounge has been added to create a warm and welcoming pub.

Adnams Bitter features as the regular house beer, but there is always an

interesting guest beer available. Featured as St Neots CAMRA pub of the year 2001. There is also a large garden and a pub games room (Darts and Pool).



#### **Crown and Cushion, Great Gransden,**

West Street, Great Gransden. (01767) 677214, Open 12-2, 6-11 (Mon-Sat); 12-3, 7-10:30 (Sun). Real Ales: Charles Wells Eagle Bitter (H), Guest Beers (H).

Food: A varied good value menu based on home cooked traditional pub food.

Chris and Barbara Clark run a charming thatched village free house with a split-level interior. The main entrance opens into a main lounge bar with a dining area to the right and below. Live music on Thursdays and Quiz night on Mondays. There is a large garden with an aviary.

### **Other publications:**

**CAMRA's Good Beer Guide**, for more details of the pubs above and other pubs in this area serving excellent real ale. The Good Beer Guide can be purchased online at [www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk) or by mail order (call 01727 867201).

Pub Walks in Cambridgeshire (by Jean and Geoff Pratt), published by Countryside Books, and available in most local bookshops. This book was the inspiration for this series of articles, and I can personally recommend it. There is different pub walk which covers this area based on the Duncombe Arms, Waresley in **Pub Walks in Cambridgeshire**.

BY ANDY SHAW

# ***A look back in time....***

**25 YEARS AGO** In July 1976 one of CAMRA major early successes was the launch by Allied Breweries of a new cask ale, Ind Coope Burton Ale. By the autumn, 600 pubs across the south of England would be serving the beer, and for many such pubs it was the first real ale to be stocked for many years.

CAMRA decided not to repeat its first national beer festival following the first one at Covent Garden in 1975 because no suitable site was available in London This was the last year that CAMRA did not run a national beer festival.

CAMRA began a series of investigations of big brewery monopolies of pub trade in various areas of the UK. The first report was on Allied Breweries in Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire. Later reports were to concentrate on Bristol (Courage), Northampton (Watneys) and Norfolk (Watneys).

CAMRA's pub owning subsidiary, CAMRA Investments, opened its fourth pub, the Salisbury Arms in Cambridge, featuring beer from Batemans, never sold in Cambridge before. The pub was bought for £22000 and a further £40000 was spent on its renovation. Later that year the Eagle in Leeds became the company's fifth pub, with Timothy Taylors beers becoming the star attraction, not available on other Leeds pubs despite the closeness of the brewery in nearby Keighley.

Whats Brewing featured Ipswich's Tolly Cobbold brewery in July 1976 in an article entitled 'Some ale is more real than others'. Most of its production was then bottled, and the brewery was criticised for lacking enthusiasm for beer, for using potato starch in its recipes, and for serving its cask beers by top pressure, maintaining that the taste was not affected by the pressurised carbon dioxide. What a contrast with the Tolly Cobbold of 2001, like Camerons saved ten years ago by a management buyout from owners Brent Walker, and run since then by a company with unstinting enthusiasm for cask beer, serving beers of true quality in the Suffolk area.

**10 YEARS AGO** In summer 1991 CAMRA launched campaigns to save three threatened breweries: Camerons of Hartlepool, the Cornish Brewery at Redruth and Bassis Springfield brewery in Wolverhampton. Thankfully two of these are still brewing in 2001 - not a bad record for CAMRA.

Camerons was the subject of a proposed management buyout from owners Brent Walker, (then the owners of the present day Pubmaster pub chain). Later the

***Visit St. Neots CAMRA Branch website:  
[www.stneotscamra.co.uk](http://www.stneotscamra.co.uk)***



Camerons brewery would be saved again by a takeover by Wolverhampton and Dudley breweries.

In July 1991 the Cornish brewery, owned by Inn Leisure, seemed doomed after a failed takeover bid by Boddington's of Manchester. Boddingtons had promised to close the brewery anyway, but following the failure of their bid Whitbread won a deal to supply beers to Inn Leisure. But the brewery was saved in late July by a management buyout and was eventually to survive by providing a contract brewing service.

At the same time the Ushers brewery in Trowbridge was saved from closure at the hands of owners Courage, who sold the brewery and a package of over 400 pubs to a consortium led by Roger North, a former employee of Grand Metropolitan. Grand Met had owned the Ushers brewery before swapping its breweries for Courage's pubs earlier that year.

Robinsons of Stockport announced the closure of their Hartley's brewery in Cumbria, nine years after taking it over. And the famous Shipstones brewery in Nottingham ceased brewing following its takeover by Greenall Whitley.

On the positive side, Youngs, the independent London brewers, recorded a 17 % increase in annual profits, Shepherd Neame of Kent bought 11 pubs from Courage and Mansfield launched a television advertising campaign for its cask beers. CAMRA launched 'Trouble Brewing,' a report blaming pub owners for 'pub blight', the

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wholesale destruction of the UK's historic pubs resulting from bogus 'period' refurbishments.

CAMRA's annual prices survey again revealed pub price increases above the inflation rate. The average price of a pint of bitter had risen by 34p to £1.18 since 1979. But pub company Wetherspoons were praised by CAMRA for good value in its chain of thirty pubs.

Talks between the Czech Budvar Budweiser brewery and the US brewers Anheuser-Busch, owners of the rival Budweiser brand were halted. CAMRA's open letter to Czech President Vaclav Havel on the threat to Budvar appeared to have sparked a change in the privatisation plans for the state owned producers of the revered Czech product. In July 1991 What's Brewing featured a scathing tasting report on the new so-called 'draught beer in cans', with pressurised nitrogen and the famous widgets. Whatever happened to them? In 1991 the Advertising Standards Authority had rejected CAMRA complaints about misleading promotion of these products as real draught beer. In the same issue King & Barnes brewery of Horsham paid for a full-page advertisement in What's Brewing criticising CAMRA for its campaigns against brewery closures. King & Barnes wanted CAMRA to address the causes of brewery closures and to campaign for progressively reduced beer duty for smaller brewers, and for a ban on beer advertising. Sadly, King & Barnes were themselves to close just over nine years later.

## BRANCH DIARY

All are welcome to attend our socials and meetings, which are held at different pubs throughout our branch area.

Tuesday 26th June - BRANCH AGM - Chequers, Little Gransden  
8.30pm. Please contact Kathy Hadfield (see below) for further details

Friday 13th July- Eaton Socon Pub Crawl - The Bell 8.30pm, White Horse  
9.00pm, Wheatsheaf 9.30pm, Millers Arms 10.00pm, Rivermill 10.30pm

Tuesday 24th July - Open Meeting: Chequers, Eynesbury 8.30pm

Friday 10th August - St.Ives Pub Crawl: Floods Tavern 8.30pm, Nelsons Head  
9.00pm, Oliver Cromwell 9.30pm White Hart 10.00pm, Royal Oak 10.30pm

Tuesday 4th September - Open Meeting: Windmill, Somersham - 8.30pm

Sun 9th September - Meet Pig and Abbott, Abington Pigotts (11.00) walk to  
Waggon & Horses, Steeple Morden (3Miles) for liquid refreshment then to Pig  
& Abbot (by a different route) for lunch. Phone to confirm details.

For further details contact: Kathy Hadfield, Branch Social Secretary on 01480  
496247, E-mail [kathyh@waitrose.com](mailto:kathyh@waitrose.com)

## Real Ale in a Can

Those of you old enough to remember the in famous Party Severn Cans of Watney's will remember with horror of drinking this so called beer (mainly at parties, I seem to recall). Well no such horror stories here - Charles Wells have surpassed themselves this a brilliant breakthrough that allows beer lovers to drink 8.8 pints of genuine cask conditioned beer at home. The new can is very simple, no bottles, widgets or plastic gizmos just an attractive cask-shaped light metal container. All is needed is the ability to turn a tap and occasionally vent the beer, after the beer has been left to stand in a cool place for four hours to allow the yeast to settle.

The beer is being test marketed by ASDA at in selected stores at Chatham, Clapham (No not the Bedford one), Lower Earley near Reading, Tamworth and Oadby near Leicester.

We are told, if the trial is successful there will be a national roll-out. The mini cask costs £11-99, which works out at

£1.36 per pint. Excellent value.

I can certainly confirm that it tastes just as good as in a pub, so lets hope the trial is a success. This could be the start of a mini cask boom.

Roy Endersby Charles Wells BLO

## Cask Marque Successes

Pamela and David Greenfield of Greene King's Windmill at Somersham are the latest local recipients of the Cask Marque award. St Ives pubs the Nelsons Head and Royal Oak are existing holders of this accreditation for the quality of real ale in pubs, now viewed by CAMRA as more significant since the organisers of the scheme accepted that cask beer should not be served too cold. Pubs serving their beer too cold will be penalised under the judging scheme, and the pubs receiving the latest round of awards can be expected to be serving their real ales at the correct temperature. And the Cask Marque organisers welcome feedback from customers on the quality of the beer on offer. Feedback forms should be available in pubs displaying the award.

### JOIN CAMRA NOW

Just fill in the form below and send your remittance (Payable to CAMRA) to  
The Membership Secretary, CAMRA, 230, Hatfield Road, St. Albans, Herts, AL1 4LW

Rates are Single £14, Joint £17 (at same address)

Student/OAP/Unemployed/Disabled £8 Joint OAP £11 (at same address)

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I/We wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale, and agree to abide by the Rules.

I enclose a cheque for .....

Signed.....

Date.....

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**Phone Iain or Gill And We Will Accommodate Your Requirements**

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