



Contents

Real Heritage Pubs Online Guide

Using this guide - The Rankings

All entries stand out as being of particular national heritage interest but there are inevitably notable variations in terms of intactness and quality, hence the ranking system we have adopted.

★★★ Three Star pubs have stayed wholly or largely intact for the last fifty years, or retain particular rooms or features that are truly rare or exceptional, or display a combination of the two.

★★ Two Star pubs have interiors where the intactness and quality levels will be somewhat lower than for Three Star

★ The interiors of One Star pubs will have either readily identifiable historic layouts or retain rooms or features of special interest but more significant changes are allowable.

These online guides provide you with up-to-date descriptions, on a region by region basis, of pubs listed on our National Inventory of Historic Pub Interiors. Please note that the content will differ from that in the hard-copy guides where the pub information dates to when that guide was published. The hard-copy guides also contain more editorial material.

Introduction
Bedfordshire
Cambridgeshire
Essex
Hertfordshire
Norfolk
Suffolk
Closed Pubs
More to Try

Introduction

East of England as defined in this guide – Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk – has some 5700 pubs. This guide covers the 63 pubs with interiors of national or regional historic or architectural importance plus a further 55 whose interiors are of some regional interest. These 118 pubs make up just 2% of the total.

Why is this figure so small? One reason, of course, is that pub interiors have always been subject to change. The only pubs which look now exactly as they did the day they opened are those which came into being very recently. However, the pace of change has certainly quickened. Most of our few remaining historic interiors evolved slowly over time and clung on to their most endearing features. Recent times have seen a mania for opening out, theming, image change and general trashing. As a result, many pubs suffer regular radical makeovers during which most, if not all, vestiges of original or old features disappear.

The irony is that interest in historic buildings has never been greater. Many of us are fascinated by our built heritage and spend many an hour visiting old properties from stately homes through to the most vernacular of structures. All the sadder, then, that genuine pub interiors seem so under-valued by mainstream conservationists and that owners are often eager to tear them apart.

The National Inventory

Defending our traditional pubs has always been a key aim of CAMRA. Work to compile a National Inventory of Historic Pub Interiors (NI) began in 1991 and the first actual list appeared in 1997, totalling 179 entries. It has since been continually refined and updated as, on the one hand, new candidates were discovered and, on the other, existing entries were closed or ruined. The total currently stands at over 250, of which just 12 are in East Anglia. There are two key criteria for inclusion. Firstly, the interior is largely unaltered since before 1945, though intact early post war pubs are also included (but are very rare). Secondly, the NI covers pubs with specific features or rooms of national significance. Our publication, Britain's Best Real Heritage Pubs, describes the entries in some detail, as do the 'long descriptions' on the [Pub Heritage website](#).

The Regional Inventories

These were the next logical step. As would be expected, the bar for inclusion is set lower than for the NI though the same principles apply, with the emphasis on the internal fabric of the pub and what is authentically old within it. 43 pubs of this standard can be found in East Anglia.

A further category is pub interiors of Some Regional Interest. Although much altered, they will contain some historic features which may be of interest to visitors. 63 such pubs are briefly described in the guide.

Pubs in East of England

Many of our NI pubs are in the bigger cities and urban conurbations – London alone has 38 and Greater Manchester 25. Many of these are ornate Victorian treasures which, for obvious reasons, hardly ever existed in the smaller towns and cities of East Anglia. The region does, though, have more than a few old country pubs which will take you back to a quieter age whilst some town pubs have also resisted the unwanted attentions of the modernisers.

Traditionally, the rural pub was small, if not tiny, and run as a part-time enterprise. Across the country, the number of such simple businesses has declined dramatically because they just aren't any longer an economic proposition. Increasingly, rural pubs depend on attracting a car-borne trade which demands food and this in turn has implications for the pub interiors.

However, some pubs have successfully met this challenge by extending their building in ways which don't impact adversely on their historic core. Good examples are the Cock, Broom, Bedfordshire (where the additions at the back have been sensitively handled) and the Red Lion, Kenninghall, Norfolk, now quite a sizeable establishment, but with the old part still clearly recognisable.

Diminutive pubs where food offerings extend no further than crisps and where fittings are restricted to a few tables and chairs are, sadly, now all but extinct. The only true surviving example in the region is the wonderful Rose & Crown, Trowley Bottom, Hertfordshire – which is happily still going strong.

East of England had many coaching inns, many of which survive, albeit in vastly altered form. The Crown, Downham Market, Norfolk is probably the most intact example with the White Hart, St Ives, Cambridgeshire also giving a flavour of how these inns used to operate. Although too much altered inside to merit inclusion here, the Scole Inn, Norfolk also conveys something of the scale and importance of such places.

Moving into the towns and cities, we have little left from the Victorian and Edwardian eras. The Painters Arms, Luton, Bedfordshire is the best survivor from

these times and was recently sympathetically refurbished (with real ale available for the first time in many years). A few others, like the Rose & Crown, Bury St Edmunds and the Woolpack, Ipswich, still have most of their original floorplan though fittings are generally later.

Arguably the most valuable interiors are those from the inter-war period. Top of the bill has to be the remarkable Margaret Catchpole, Ipswich, a wonderful example of the 'improved public house.' On a smaller scale, the Hand & Heart Peterborough is an untouched back street local of 1938 while Art Deco fans will find much to enjoy at the Nags Head, Bishops Stortford despite recent knockings around.

Finally, the region has its fair share of 'picture book' pubs which at first glance look like the genuine article but on examination prove to be partly or largely recent confections. For instance, most of what you see at the Fighting Cocks, St Albans, one of many claimants to be the oldest pub in the country, is of no real age. Similarly, a legendary pub like the Bell at Stilton can't be included here because of the amount of internal mauling it has suffered. There are also some 'impressive fakes' such as the Compasses, Littley Green, Essex which looks like an unspoilt country pub but whose interior dates almost entirely from the early 1980s. For the genuine article, the Cock, Brent Eleigh, Suffolk cannot be beaten.

Do you know of other pubs to include?

Having said all that, if you come across a pub which isn't included in this guide but whose interior you feel deserves a mention, then please do get in touch (info@pubheritage.camra.org.uk).

Statutory Listing - A Short Guide

All parts of the United Kingdom have systems for protecting buildings of special architectural or historic interest. The process is devised not to prevent change but to manage it effectively, working with the grain of the building, not against it. Many of the pubs in this guide are statutorily listed and several have benefited from exemplary refurbishments or extensions where their listed status has ensured careful control. In turn, this has protected their futures as businesses, as without the changes, their viability might have been questionable.

In England, listings are made by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, on the advice of English Heritage.

Grade 1. This highest of gradings covers just 2.5% of all listed buildings: these are those that have 'exceptional', even international interest.

Grade 11* (spoken of as 'Two Star'). Covers a further 5.5% of listed buildings. They have 'outstanding' interest.

Grade 11. 92% of all English listed buildings are at this grade. They have what is described as 'special' architectural or historic interest.

Most listed pubs are designated at Grade 11. The only 'Two Star' pubs in this guide are the marvellous Margaret Catchpole in Ipswich and the Green Dragon, Wymondham, Norfolk.

Closed Pubs

There are currently no closed pubs in this area.