

# WELLS PUB WALK

## Introduction

Wells-next-the-Sea is a small seaside town on the north Norfolk coast midway between Cromer and Hunstanton and about thirty miles north west of Norwich. Despite its name the town is not by the sea but situated about a mile inland and connected by a channel. Although it has the title of a town, many regard Wells as a large village for its resident population is under 3000.



The earliest record of Wells dates back to the Domesday book but by Tudor times it developed into an important port. Wells continued to prosper and by the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century it boasted three shipyards and some 60 ships were built. Such was its importance that over 150 ships were registered there. However, the port declined after a railway line from Dereham linked the town with the rest of the country in 1857, when much of the ports trade of coal 'in' and grain 'out' went to the railway companies.

Nowadays, Wells is a quiet tourist resort with attractions particularly for yachtsmen, walkers, and bird watchers while for family visitors there is a superb sandy beach about a mile from the town centre. Something of the grand past remains although the commercial side of the port is all but a memory except for a

few whelk and shrimp boats. The most prominent reminder of Wells once being a prosperous commercial port is the granary built in 1903 with its large gantry, situated on the quay. This is now converted into luxury flats. A further walk along the quay however will reveal the old Wells where many other buildings date back centuries as evidence of the town's industrial maritime past.

## Getting There

Unfortunately Wells is not well served by public transport. The railway link to the town built in 1857 was closed in 1964, and now the only way to reach it by public transport is by bus. There is a "Coast Hopper" service running along the North Norfolk coast between Hunstanton and Sheringham at two hourly intervals between September to end of May and at hourly intervals in the high season, June to August calling in Wells. Sheringham links the National Rail Network via the "Bitten Line" to Norwich. There is also a less frequent bus service between Wells and Fakenham. If coming by car there are a number of car parks the largest being by The Ark Royal Public House on Freeman Street.



## The Walk

The old centre of Wells is small and compact and as the pubs on the walk are

within a short distance of one another, it is likely you may wish to make some detours so as to take in the full flavour of this delightful small town.

Our walk starts at the bus stop on Freeman Street, which is close by the **Ark Royal** Public House,



*The Ark Royal*

*A good place to call in before commencing your walk. This modern pub offers a wide range of about six real ales from both national and local brewers and if you are hungry, there is also good value for money food.*

On leaving the Ark Royal turn right along Freeman Street in the direction of the Quayside. Those who are energetic may turn left and walk the mile length of the causeway that will bring you to the beach and open sea; a bit of a walk but the views are worth it! Otherwise carry along The Quay where you will find many burger, fish & chip and other fast food outlets as well as amusement arcades. The quay split old Wells into two well-defined areas. The East end of the village was where the landlubbers worked, and their chief industry was building ships and loading and unloading the large number of vessels that docked at the quay. The West End was where the sailors lodged. East and west seldom mixed.

Shortly you will arrive at **The Golden Fleece**,

*A one-room establishment split into two clearly defined areas, a bar with*

*floorboards and wooden chairs and a lounge area carpeted and with comfortable chairs.*

*The Golden Fleece*



Before you enter the pub pause and admire the splendid views across the harbour estuary where numerous boats are moored while further out are the salt marshes, which are home to many wildlife.

Although the next pub is up the narrow Staithe Street, it is worthwhile to continue a walk along the quay passing under the impressive gantry of the old granary, which will lead you to picturesque old houses of antiquity and narrow alleys leading to yards. You will pass the Chandlers, once a pub called The Royal Standard, and then on to the Old Customs House; and further to The Shipwrights Arms, now a private house but once a pub until 1994, and finally to other ex pubs that once served the thriving community The Norfolk Freeholders and The Jolly Sailor both of which closed about 1904.

After concluding this short detour, retrace your steps to The Golden Fleece and turn left up the slight incline of the narrow Staithe Street. This narrow street, which is without pavements, consists mainly of old terraced buildings and small shops, an 'olde world' of traditional grocers, green grocers and butchers along with book and antique shops. At the end of

Staithe Street is a T-junction. On the left is **The Corner House**

[The Corner House](#)



*This establishment is now a wine bar and restaurant. It was once a pub called the Tewksbury Arms until 1888 and afterwards The Prince of Wales until 1964. It is worth a stop here because although the Corner House is essentially a restaurant three real ales are on tap and you may drink with no obligation to order food, (although the food menu is very good!).*

Cross the street and opposite is **The Edinburgh Hotel**,



[The Edinburgh Hotel](#)

*This pub is considered as one of the oldest pubs in town, and which unusually, has the names of the landlords recorded as far back as 1789. The pub is much older than that for its earliest name was The Fighting Cocks until the 1840's when cock fighting was banned. It was renamed the Leicester Arms; until it assumed its present name.*

After leaving The Edinburgh, turn sharp left inland into a broad street that leads to a square and a substantial tree-lined open green. This is The Buttlands and the posh end of Wells. Butt means a target and The Buttlands takes its name from the time of Henry VIII, when the green was used, (as was law at the time) for men to practise archery. Today many fine Georgian houses and some later Victorian houses surround the open green. There is a choice of two hostleries on the Buttlands. The first is **The Globe**,

[The Globe](#)



*Situated at the north end of Buttlands this pub is a large multi roomed Greene King establishment.*

The second at the far end of the green is **The Crown Hotel**,

*This hotel has a bar and restaurant facilities on the ground floor plus a small beer garden at the rear. Here you can enjoy beers from Adnams or from Fox of Heacham, a new local brewery opened in 2002.*

Finally there is a choice. If you have travelled by bus you can get the return bus at a stop just outside The Buttlands on the corner of Mill Road, or alternatively you may return back down to the harbour to the bus stop outside the Ark Royal. However, if you are still fresh and wish to carry on there is one more pub on the southern outskirts of town on Church Street, **The Bowling Green**

The Crown Hotel



The Buttlands

