

The Official Alborough and Ward Pub Stop Rules 1995

(revised & amended 1996, 2000, 17.7.2004, 31.10.2010, 3.2.2014, 24.5.2015 and 1.5.2020)

Introduction

These rules set out the discipline for enjoying real ales at public houses, close or adjacent to, railway stations. Although designed following extensive travel during the mid and late 1980s in East Anglia (the pursuit of which remains the main purpose and mission of the chief participants) these rules apply throughout Great Britain.

Definitions (in alphabetical order)

0. *Allowable pub stop pub* – a pub which can be regarded as local to the nearest railway station. See *reasonable walking distance*.
1. *Bedford Tummy* – a condition that involves the active use of both orifices simultaneously, caused by indigestible *junk food* and *real ale* concoctions consumed on a train day. This is named after one of the grimmest pub stops completed in the history of these rules.
2. *East Anglia* – an original area, based on BR boundaries, limited by Bishops Stortford in the south west, Cambridge in the west, Peterborough in the north west and the North Sea coast in the north and east and Southend Victoria in the south east. The New Millennium Rule, introduced to commemorate the successful progress made in terms of the overriding mission, during the 1990s, has since extended the southerly boundary to include the former BR (E) Region south of Chelmsford in so far as London Liverpool St.
3. *Failed pub stop* – see *pub stop*.
4. *First pub that can be seen when leaving the station* – the first that can be seen from the station. This may or may not be the first pub to be walked past or the nearest one to the station. It is intended that the target pub be the first to be seen on leaving the station as opposed to the first seen arriving at the station. For example, a pub seen from a moving train arriving in the platform may or may not be the first to be seen when exiting the station on foot. The latter always takes precedence. The Black Notley Surprise rule revealed a pub “hiding” in the bend of a road. This is a rare occurrence of permission being granted under the rules of participants deliberately walking past an *allowable pub stop pub* on the way to the *first pub that can be seen when leaving the station*.
5. *Fizz (also known as piss)* - draught beer not served by traditional methods, not regarded as *real ale*.

6. *Free hand* – a rule in its own right, this introduces an element of personal choice into which pub may be visited. This only usually applies in repeat visits to locations where a successful pub stop has been completed, subject to the following rules and sub rules. The exact origins of this name are not recalled but probably originate from an early over indulgence on a train day in the 1980s.
7. *Impossible pub stop* - see *pub stop*.
8. *Junk food* - a rag bag of fast food, sandwiches, pub meals etc eaten on the move. Chips eaten from the bag, in the street, is an enjoyable example of such refreshment.
9. *Justification* – an important principle covered in the rules. (Rule E refers)
10. *Keg*. See also, *real ale* and *fizz*. This includes bottled beers, lagers and nitro keg that could otherwise be served as real ale. Sadly, this also includes Guinness, although a reduced version of these rules can be applied when travelling in the Republic of Ireland in all other respects other than *real ale*.
11. *Nearest pub* – the nearest pub to the station, which may or may not be the *first pub that can be seen when leaving the station*.
12. *Opening times/per Thatcher opening times* – whilst first practised in *pre-Thatcher pub opening times*, all day opening is now a reality. Some stations, however, are restricted to possible visits at the aforementioned *pre-Thatcher pub opening times* only. These are regarded generally, as 11am to 2.30pm and 6pm to 11pm. The White Notley experience, where a pub gratuitously advertises itself as “Open All Day”, yet in fact does not open until the passing of noon, clearly means caution is required in rural areas and in the frequent cases of “they don’t want your money” landlords.
13. *Participants* – John Alborough and Tim Ward. These gentleman have perfected and honed these rules since 1985. Other individuals have and probably will, join in from time to time, driven by a desire to enjoy the beer, relax by travelling by train or to simply to ridicule the official participants simple pleasures
14. *Possible pub stop* – see *pub stop*.
15. *Pub Stop* – a station that has an allowable pub stop pub in the vicinity and one that is served by trains that permit a visit of between 15 and 90 minutes duration. Only in exceptional circumstances are times outside these parameters acceptable and only then by express agreement of the participants. Travel to or from the station may be by allowable rules of transport (Rule C refers) but at least one direction must be completed by train. A pub stop is deemed possible until proved otherwise. A pub stop is regarded to as failed, if the rules have been applied in full without success. A pub stop may be impossible because of train times or the simple but fatal lack of an *allowable pub stop pub, within normal walking distance from the station*.

16. *Public House (aka pub)* - an establishment that is, or appears to be, a public bar, smoke room, lounge bar or drinking area. Hotels are included, subject to the forgoing provisions and the real ale clause as are social clubs and sporting establishments, such as golf club houses, that are in other respects, open to the general public. (Rule A refers).
17. *Real Ale* - cask conditioned beer, served by traditional methods such as hand pump, electric pump, gravity dispense etc. Keg beer served by the use of gas is not included and is against the spirit of the rules. See *fizz*. The ale may be served by the use of swan neck dispensers and sparklers but it is incumbent on the participants to be ever vigilant of the use of such items and to require landlords to remove sparklers before dispense. Quick work is required at the point of service for this to be so monitored. This may involve accusations of being “from the south” or enjoying flat beer if these rules are being applied outside *East Anglia*. The 1999 experience in the North West of England saw a quite remarkable consistency in the use of rather modern incredulity by landlords and locals alike, on this point. Ale should be requested in mugs, not glasses, in establishments where a choice, however irritating to the bar staff concerned, is begrudgingly provided. If such choice is offered up front, it is both unusual but encouraging.
18. *Reasonable walking distance* - a distance at normal walking pace that would not exceed 10 minutes approximately. That is to say a round trip of 20 minutes from the station. This means that pubs up to approximately 1/2 mile away are *allowable pub stop pubs*. It is often reasonable to assume a pub is not “just around the corner”. The 1990s, Brundall Gardens clause, means that all stations are *possible pub stops*. The size of the station is not necessarily a guide to real ale being found in the vicinity.
19. *Trains* – trains and services maintained by former BR companies, or TOCs. Tourist railway attractions or preserved railways do not fall under the influence of these rules, although should such travel be contemplated, the principle of the rules could be adopted on an ad hoc basis. It is anticipated such travel would be on former nationally owned railway lines, not attractions such as Felixstowe sea front stuff.

Mission

To visit all open, former-BR railway stations in East Anglia that are pub stops, as an antidote to the pressures of working life and with the objective of drinking in the nearest pub that serves real ale.

Rules Overview

- **The pub to be visited must be the first seen when leaving the station.**
- **A “Free Hand” (ie: choice of any pub) applies only to a repeat visit.**
- **Other public transport may be used on arrival at or departure from the target pub stop, but one journey at least must be by train.**
- **These rules apply to train days, bus days and part train/part bus days. Pub stops are only deemed satisfactorily completed when both participants have been to the pub stop together.**
- **The only way in which rules can be overridden, on the spot, so to speak, is by the appliance of the rule of “justification”.**
- **Completing the mission requires the fair and reasonable appliance of the rules and does not permit exaggerated planning in advance subject to a few exceptions.**

The Rules in Detail

A) The pub to be visited must be the first seen when leaving the station.

This rule is subject to the exceptions laid out below and the guidelines in Rule F.;

i) if the first pub to be seen when leaving the station turns out to serve fizz, or the only real ale on sale is “off”, it is permissible to leave the establishment without ordering or drinking, if indeed it is necessary in the first instance to enter in order to establish where or not real ale is served. Peering through the window and observing handpumps (if any) and the hand pump clips thereon is recommended, in order to save time.

ii) the Llandudno opt out applies in respect of real ale branded as Tetleys or Websters. The participants reluctantly decided by a majority of 1 (1 for, 1 abstention) that this beer is so unenjoyable as to make consumption a chore. The participants reserves the right to add any other beers to this list although it undertakes only to do so under extreme circumstances. If, however, there are other reasons for wishing to linger in such an establishment, serving *sub rule ii) beers*, e.g. young, attractive barmaids, only pub for miles, gricer landlord, then the Cutting off the Nose (etc.) clause would be invoked and the otherwise unacceptable Tetley tea could be consumed. Following difficulties in finding *allowable pub stop pubs* in the north of England, it could be argued that John Smiths bitter be described as a *sub rule ii) beer*. The participants are recommended to purchase the beer, consume quickly and move on to a better establishment under the *free hand* rule.

iii) the Ely rule applies when, even if the drink has been ordered but is unacceptable to the taste, consideration can be given to leaving without further consumption, yet not threatening the satisfactory completion of the attempted pub stop. Other quality of service issues also apply in that, where decent, swift and polite customer service is not forthcoming, the establishment is not patronised further and the pub stop is not fulfilled at that pub but can be subsequently completed at another, more customer friendly location, even if the second establishment is not the first pub seen when leaving the station. Delicate choices have to be made extremely quickly, such as outlined in the Cromer experience.

iv) if the first pub to be seen is closed then the next visible establishment becomes the target pub. Exceptions laid out in rule A, sub section i) still apply.

v) if the appearance of the pub management or their clientele, appear threatening so as to render any drinking therein unpleasant, the next visible pub may be visited, providing one exists. This is captured under the title of the Kings Lynn First Impressions rule.

vi) the Crewe rule applies if the pub appears to be a hotel or establishment that otherwise meets the criteria for a pub but in other ways seems inappropriate (eg dress standards, smelly, only for limited patrons such as gays). In these cases, the next pub may be visited and a satisfactory pub stop completed, under the provisions of this “not on your life” sub rule.

vii) in exceptional circumstances, if the participants see two or more pubs simultaneously that, on the face of things, meet the relevant criteria, the pub deemed to be the nearest must be visited. In the event that the two or more pubs appear to be of similar distance from the station, the free hand rule applies, in as much as either of the two or more pubs seen simultaneously, can be visited, purely on the grounds of personal choice. The free hand rule only applies to the two or more pubs seen simultaneously and is the only time this rule can be applied when attempting a pub stop for the first time.

B) The “Free Hand” applies only to a repeat visit.

Upon revisiting a pub stop that has already been successfully visited by both participants together, a “free hand” exists. Any pub may be visited, whether or not it is within reasonable walking distance or is the nearest or first seen. On any revisit, it is not necessary to visit the first pub seen even if on a previous visit, this pub was otherwise covered by Rule A, sub sections i) to vii).

C) Other public transport may be used on arrival at or departure from the target pub stop, but one journey at least must be by train.

If train times have been disrupted by unforeseen circumstances, or if it is desired to journey between two stations whilst pub stopping, the use of other means of transport is permitted. The Harwich experience also means that incapacity on the part of one or more of the participants may also render use of other assistance in situations not normally encountered. This rule lays out the acceptable forms of transport and require defining as follows.

i) bus, coach or mini bus operated on a fare paying route as approved by the relevant Traffic Commissioner or County Council. It is appropriate to record under this rule that pub stop rules also apply to bus days, or a combination of bus and train days. Rule D refers.

ii) taxi or hackney carriage vehicle. Taxi cabs are covered by this definition. The Bishop Auckland sub-rule states that arrival by taxi because of a cancelled rail service and the subsequent arrival at what turned out to be the closest pub to the station serving real ale, albeit walking from a different direction (ie: not directly from the station because of the aforementioned disruption to travel plans), allows the pub stop to have been completed, but only if the participants can satisfy themselves that arrival at the station by train in the normal manner, would have naturally resulted in the discovery of the said pub.

iii) walking. This applies in locations where two stations are close together and therefore two pub stops can be completed without returning to the train first. This is known as the Oulton Broad sub rule.

iv) underground train. This naturally only applies in the relevant cities where such transport is available. In all other respects, underground train travel is fully acceptable as a means of transport. Indeed, it must be noted that the principle of a full days travel on the underground in London constitutes a train day and pub stop rules fully apply.

v) official car. Where, due to unforeseen circumstances, travel is offered by way of compensation, assistance or recompense, by an official of a travel company or member of the public, with or without additional use of other public transport as described within this rule, this is acceptable. This Sanders sub rule, can create a situation where a pub stop can be made at a location without a former BR station, yet fully in accordance with these procedures.

The above alternatives apply in all situations subject to the overriding cause for concern being stops for appropriate calls of nature. Some participants have been noted for using fire buckets when formal conveniences do not exist. Whilst this is acceptable in emergencies, it is recommended that journeys on buses, underground trains and the like, are of limited time, following completed pub stops. Calls of nature that involve sitting down are not part of the spirit of the day, as such bowel movements should be completed before leaving home. In extreme circumstances, participants have been known to suffer from Bedford Tummy, which can, if not quickly defeated, lead to an early termination of the days travelling and pub stop activity.

D) These rules apply to train days, bus days and part train/part bus days. Pub stops are only deemed satisfactorily completed when both participants have been to the pub stop together.

Train days are the principle nucleus around which pub stop rules have evolved. With the demise of more interesting train travel (101s, 309s, slam door stock generally, hauled trains etc) the anticipated growth of part train/part bus days, or even bus days, has meant the full adoption of pub stop rules for these journeys. This is subject to the following rules;

i) the quantities of beer consumed must be limited in order to avoid the Isle of Wight experience. This refers to embarrassing situations on buses without toilets at which point floor level air vents begin to look attractive.

ii) visits to pubs with families, friends, acquaintances and people with names other than Alborough and Ward, do not qualify as official pub stops, even if other rules/sub rules may have been followed. This is to have the effect of ruling out a visit with one's friends or family to, coincidentally, a town with both an uncompleted pub stop pub and a railway station, where the trip itself is not a designated train day.

iii) the effect of sub rule ii) above, does not however, rule out days with families and friends etc where both the participants are present and where, subject to the foregoing provisions and applying all rules within the spirit of things, a journey by train is somehow manufactured and, by absolute chance, so to is a trip to what may otherwise be described as a pub stop pub. This is referred to as the "will we get away with this" sub rule.

E) The only way in which rules can be overridden, on the spot, so to speak, is by the appliance of the rule of “justification”

The principle of justification is an important concept within the overall scheme of things, although at first sight it may be a difficult theory to comprehend.

Where one course of action is at first deemed desirable, and may be even be attempted, yet subsequent and/or intermediate events to conspire to render such action impossible, undesirable or impracticable, and an alternative course of action, previously declined, is then undertaken with some success, then this chosen alternative event will be deemed to have justified the impossibility, undesirability or impracticability of the original intention(s). Participants confirm this by stating the word “justification” with, if desired, thinly disguised glee.

F) Completing the mission requires on the fair and reasonable appliance of the rules and does not permit exaggerated planning in advance subject to a few exceptions.

To complete the mission, participants must have due regard to their personal time and budget. It is therefore sensible to undertake reasonable investigations to ensure that a pub stop is possible in an area that may otherwise be foreboding, overly remote or rural or otherwise unlikely to present an allowable pub stop pub.

i) prior visits by car, business trip or deliberate investigation are only allowed in rural areas.

ii) the use of all available means in the internet age is permitted but participants are warned against unreliable information contained therein

iii) prior telephone calls are permitted where only one pub in the vicinity is detected by use of sub rules i) and ii) and where failure to telephone may mean hours wasted outside of pre-Thatcher pub opening times. It is not, after all, in the spirit of these rules to spend hours kicking heels on remote stations without beer or trains.

iv) being observant as the train arrives in the station is permissible. It can be quite possible to view a possible pub stop pub from the train, which can in certain conditions, raise excitement amongst the participants. However, such a visible pub ranks subordinately to the first pub that can be seen when leaving the station, if upon subsequent arrival, another pub is seen “first”. If no such pub exists, referral to the previously spotted pub’s location may be made.

v) where one participant has prior knowledge, not specifically garnered by use of the foregoing sub rules of this main rule, then it is permissible to stay silent and allow the other participant to decide which way to leave the station to find a possible pub stop pub, should such a decision be rendered necessary by the absence of an obvious allowable pub stop pub within sight. This should be done largely for fun and should in no way threaten the failure of the pub stop.

vi) the Battlesbridge exception permits relying on the advice of railway employees in directing participants to possible pub stop pubs on the assumption that the aforementioned member of staff appears to fully understand the nature and context of the attempted pub stop

Category A: Successful Pub Stops

All not listed below in Categories B and C

Category B: attempted but Failed Pub Stops

*Althorne
Audley End
Gidea Park
Goodmayes
Marks Tey
Manor Park
North Fambridge
Wrabness*

Category C: Yet to be attempted and/or known not to be possible Pub Stops

*Bishops Stortford
Braintree Freeport
Brampton
Buckenham
Eccles Road
Elsenham
Harling Road
Hockley
Lakenheath
Manae
Newport
Prittlewell
Rayleigh
Rochford
Shippea Hill
Southend Airport
Aouthend Victoria
Stansted Airport
Stansted Mountfitchet
Whittlesea*