

The Sebastopol Inn

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Although Minting, which is a scattered village and historically wholly dependent upon agriculture, has supported numerous inns and taverns over the centuries, such as the 'King's Arms'¹ and 'Axe & Handsaw' and the 'Midge Inn', the only one still open is the Sebastopol Inn.



Photo by Don Keane

The Sebastopol Inn owes its existence to the Duke of Wellington's Beerhouse Act 1830, which permitted a householder or ratepayer, upon the payment of two guineas to a magistrate for a license, to turn his private house into a public house (this is why pubs are so called!).

Farmer George Cartwright was the first landlord in 1836. He was recorded in the 1841 census aged 40, with his wife Ann, 30, and daughter Elizabeth, aged 7. They boarded two lodgers: Isaiah Mayers, 20, and Joseph White, 15, as well as one servant, Ellen Broomfield, 15.

George Cartwright's beerhouse remained unnamed until shortly after the end of the Crimean War (1853-56), when, according to one local legend, a local soldier who was celebrating his safe return with friends, fell into a dyke, and drowned! Horncastle's coroner, during the inquest, referred to "...*this brave infantryman from Sebastopol*". The name stuck, and was later adopted as the sign. Here is another version of the naming of the Sebastopol by Pamela Hawker: "The story was told that once a coroner's inquest was being held there, and the coroner enquired of the publican what the inn was called, there being no sign. "Well," said the publican, 'it *asn't rightly got no name, but we usually calls it the George and Dragon. My name's George and the wife's a bit of a dragon. "That won't do at all,"* said the coroner, "*we'll call it the Sebastopol, where our gallant boys are fighting.*"

By 1851, Ann Cartwright had passed away, and her eldest daughter Mary was looking after the family's huxter's² shop, incorporated with the beerhouse in their small cottage, a common Victorian practice. During the day, George Cartwright farmed 40 acres.

Another Minting farmer, John Winn, was the only competitor; he combined his butcher's shop and brewery with his beerhouse, calling it the Axe & Handsaw, another unusual name. It closed in 1920, though it remained open as a shop.

Victorian licensing hours were long: 18 hours a day, 4.00 a.m. to 10.00 p.m., seven days a week, closed only during Divine Service on Christmas Day and Good Friday.

¹ This is taken from a record made by Rev. R.M. Maxwell in his journal.

² A retailer of small articles, of provisions, and the like; a peddler; a hawker.

As an inn, the Sebastopol was permitted to remain open as long as a bed was empty, offering basic accommodation, simple victuals, homebrewed ale, and stabling to the lawful traveller. The Coachman's loft is still accessible and in use.

Both the Sebastopol and Axe & Handsaw brewed their own ale, the latter developing into a small common brewer (wholesaler). The popular parish drink was a form of malty mild: heavy, dark, sweet and strong, that varied considerably from brew to brew. The average rural Lincolnshire gravity was 1060 - the second strongest in England.

Daughter Elizabeth Cartwright married Thomas Mackinder from Washingborough in 1854. They lived at the Sebastopol Inn where they had four children. In 1862, George Cartwright died and Thomas became the new landlord. Thomas Mackinder held the license and ran the shop until his death in 1871, when his widow Elizabeth replaced him as landlady. She retired in 1880 selling the business to draper, Charles Brown.

Considerably older than the license, the cottages that make up the Sebastopol date from the 16th century. Previously owned by Wainfleet brewers, George Bateman, the old inn is once again a free house - a social and convivial centre - that echoes the vanishing generations.

	LIST OF LICENSEES
1836	George Cartwright
1862	Thomas Mackinder
1871	Elizabeth Mackinder
1880	Charles Albert Brown
1890	David Coot
1896	William Daubrey Gott (married to Louise Hewitt)
1909	Robert William Pinning
1918	Betsy Pinning
1919- 1943	Joseph Hewitt
1952	Mr. G.A. Shawcroft
1964	Adrian de Lacy Marshall
1974	William Jackson
1985	Miranda D. Bainbridge
1987	Stephen John Shucksmith
1988	Ronald Beals and Ann Youens & Pat and Brian Kidley
1993	Gerald and Veronica Atkins
1995	Kay Andrea Munson and Colin Kenneth Rood.

In December 1952, the Shawcroft family moved into the Sebastopol. At that time, there was limited running water and no electricity, so Tilly lamps, small Kelly lamps and candles were used for lighting. There was a well in the middle of the kitchen floor, which has since been blocked off, and a hand pump for drawing water. A chemical toilet was used until a septic tank was later built in the orchard. There was no separate living accommodation. The staircase was in the entrance, which meant passing through the bar to get to the bedrooms until a new staircase was built in 1953 and a new bathroom fitted also.

All the beer was bottled and stored in crates on raised benches in the cellar which was three deep steps lower than the ground floor, fortunately. Whenever Minting Beck reached a certain level, the water backed up into the cellar and it was not unusual to be wading in several inches of water to carry the beer up to the servery in the kitchen before carrying the drinks orders through to the bar on trays, as there was no proper bar. Meals were not served but sandwiches would be provided to passing travellers on request. Mrs. Shawcroft kept a pig and chickens in the outbuildings to supplement their income. The usual pub activities took place: darts, dominoes and billiards and the young people met in the 'Long room' or games room in the evenings.

Sunday lunchtimes were for men only and politics and religion were discouraged for discussion. Bad language was also discouraged. On special occasions and at Christmas time the landlady's daughter, Christine would play the piano for rousing sing-a-longs.

The 'HORNCastle NEWS' of Jan 16th, 1954 reported that, "*The village of Minting now has a Sick and Dividing Club*³. At a

³ The sick and dividing club was a club for men only, who for a payment of about 7d a week were entitled to have delivered at their home by a sick visitor, 10/- a week for 13 weeks, and then 5/- a week for the next 13 weeks. As well as delivering the money, the sick visitor also ensured the claimant was actually sick. If a man's wife died, he received £40, and if the man died the family got the £40. At the end of the

meeting at the Sebastopol Inn, a club was formed and officers elected. Mr. T. Smithson was elected Chairman, Mr. G. Shawcroft Treasurer and Mr. F. Brown, Secretary. Headquarters are at the Sebastopol Inn and the opening meeting was held on Saturday."



Photo from Christine Shawcroft Bowler taken early 1960's

In the early 1960's, following 'the flood', the road between the pub and the church was raised considerably and a new bridge and entrance made into the Sebastopol premises. Mrs. Shawcroft planted a small Christmas tree about that time which grew for the next forty years reaching to a great height, but has recently been cut down, as its roots were affecting the culvert.



In 1964, Adrian and Pixie de Lacy Marshall took over the village pub and changed it considerably but still in keeping with its original character. Locals recall that Pixie used to drink a half bottle of gin, to prepare for the chiropodist's visit. The living accommodation was greatly improved and a bar was built. From the outside, the inn looked not unlike a slightly enlarged country cottage of mellowed brick. The garden was converted from rough meadowland to a real lawn with rustic tables and chairs under large umbrellas and rose bushes were planted along the boundary fence. However, on entering the Sebastopol the changes were immediately obvious. A false chimney had been made in the entrance, which had once been the original staircase, and is now a display cabinet. Turning right you entered the 'Tankard room', so-called because of its collection of 150 tankards collected from all over the world. Other interesting features included hunting and post horns with lampshades in blending copper. The curved bar was fronted with pine and the bar room contained circular wooden 'cricket' tables with green seat covers matching the green cord carpet.

On turning left, one entered the Armoury, which was like a museum; the walls had been stripped bare of wallpaper; then painted to display about fifty swords and ancient firearms. The newly constructed cocktail bar comprised two wine butts with a centre hinge, all spanned by gleaming copper bands. A third room, a small snug, was named 'The Horse Box', with its decorations of brasses and horseshoes. One other room in the private quarters had also been opened up, reached by an open step ladder it had once been the Coachman's room and had the

year, if there was any money left it was divided by the members

original handrail.

In 1974, Bill and Eileen Jackson became the new host and hostess of the Sebastopol. The display cabinet in the front porch now became the site of two aquaria with interesting occupants and the dining area was extended. It was about this time when bar snacks and basket meals were introduced. The pub was an active centre of the local community supporting two darts teams who were champions in the Southwold League on six occasions. In 1984, the Sebastopol took first prize in the Bateman's Pub Garden competition, due largely to a fine display of hanging baskets, tubs and a rockery; it was a very pleasant place to visit on a summer's evening.



In 1985, Miranda and Granville Bainbridge took over this George Bateman public house. The collection of swords and armoury had been taken by a previous landlord, being his own private collection, but the collection of tankards still remained. During this time, Bateman's Brewery leased a piece of land for a Children's Playground. With the help of grants from East Lindsey and the Community Council, the children had their swings, see-saw and climbing frame, greatly appreciated by the local community.

In October 1988, Brian and Pat Kidley were asked by Ronald Beals

and Pat's sister Ann to come up and help decorate the new pub which they had just purchased. Brian recalled, *"When we started peeling back the years of wallpaper, it was clear that it was holding the plaster to the lathes, and a decorating job quickly became more involved."* During the two months it took to redecorate, the couples decided to go into business together and became partners in the pub. It was January 1989 before Brian was living permanently in Minting, having sold the family home. Initially, all four lived in the rather cramped conditions upstairs, together with Ann's son, Vince. Then, for a year, Pat and Brian lived on site in a caravan. Eventually they bought a bungalow on Church Lane. During their time at the Sebastopol, Brian knocked the stables and chicken coop together to form the dining room, which they fitted out to seat 40. Through the mud and stud wall, they also opened up the archway from the bar into the restaurant. Pat and Brian were there for 5 years, three of which were very good years; customers would come from miles around, and, at the weekends, the pub was heaving with people. It was one of the most well known pubs in Lincolnshire. Slowly, two events conspired to change their fortunes; the effect of Drink-Driving laws meant fewer people driving to pubs, and the recession finally arrived in Lincolnshire. Pat and Brian could no longer pay the bills and they lost not only the pub but also all the money they had put into it. They were devastated. Pat recalled, *"On the day we moved out, Minting village centre flooded. I tried to stop water coming through the doors, but it rose up through the floors and it was 3' deep in the snug bar!"* Pat went to work as a care assistant and Brian went back to the building trade. Brian died suddenly just a couple of days after telling us their story.

In 1993, Gerald and Veronica Atkins arrived at the Sebastopol bringing with them a lot of antique furniture from their own home and altogether created a very comfortable and attractive venue, far removed from the days of the military displays and now much more traditional. A much more adventurous and imaginative menu was introduced by Veronica who did all the cooking herself.

In 1995, Kay Munson and Colin Rood moved into the Sebastopol with their family but sadly were unable to make a living and, in 1998, they applied for planning permission to convert the Sebastopol into a private house. Unfortunately, this caused rather a rumpus in the village, making the local newspaper headlines. However, in 2000 Kay and Colin opened a stylish Millennium bar at the Sebastopol maintaining the traditional atmosphere with modern facilities.⁴

In May 2006, it was bought by Mark Welsh and Tony Lumb; there is still a cosy bar area and a snug (with open fires in the winter) and the restaurant side of the business has been developed.

⁴ Taken from research done by John Richards