



# THE HEReward WAY

a walking route across the Fens

Oakham to Thetford

also

part of European Route E2

Ely to Oakham

The Hereward Way starts in the rolling landscape of Rutland, amid grass fields and stone villages. It passes Rutland Water, a new and large addition to our water resources. It continues to Stamford, and then Peterborough, through an increasingly level landscape - part of the River Nene basin. The route to March, Ely and beyond, is through the flat fen country, to strangers uninteresting, but to those who spend a day walking the paths, it is an area of peaceful beauty and hidden surprises. To the east of Ely, the character of the walk changes again as it enters the Brecklands of Norfolk, now mostly developed as forestry.

The Hereward Way is based around the East Anglian rail/bus network with convenient stations or buses at regular intervals of

*about 16kms.*

This route is dedicated to two indomitable fenmen

John and John

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### Acknowledgements

The development of the **Hereward Way** would not have been possible without a great deal of help from a large number of people, and my grateful thanks are extended as follows.

To those walkers in the surrounding region who have expressed an interest in, and walked, parts of the original route. To Dr & Mrs Moreton, Henry Bridge and John Andrews, for particular encouragement at the conception. To the local Groups of the Ramblers' Association in Thetford, Cambridge, Peterborough, Stamford and Northampton; and the Footpath Officers and other officers of the County and District Councils, who provided additional information and support.

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Finally, to my employer, Eastern Electricity, thanks for the possibility, through their Community Service Scheme, for the time to carry out the basic research of the route, and the impetus to complete the project.

TBN Ramblers Jubilee Year 1985

Over the years since the first publication additional thanks are extended to Cambridgeshire, Leicestershire and Northamptonshire County Councils who have added waymarks to the route in their area. Especial thanks to Cambridgeshire for extensive negotiation of some new routes, marking, maintenance and publication, in simple leaflet form, of the route between the two cathedrals of Peterborough and Ely.

To members of Peterborough Group of the Ramblers' Association and the Ely Walkers, additional thanks for the objective comments on the route and help with waymarking.

And of course to the Ordnance Survey for including the route on their mapping.

TBN 2004

Since the introduction of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, the various Highway Authorities have placed different priorities on the improvements to the route. Only Peterborough City District has actually grasped the nettle and improved a section away from a very busy road. Thanks to those landowners who have made the changes possible. The other local authorities seem to be more intent on their own schemes or words rather than actions. Via the internet more updates are possible and more pressure for action on improvements.

TBN 2007

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### Ordnance Survey maps required

The route is marked on all maps, but because of the delay in publishing, and legal diversions and improvements, the route may not always align with the text. However, the route can be followed easily by using the text or the map, and waymarks on the ground.

Explorer 234	Rutland Water
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## Introduction

The idea of a path across the fens had been around for some time, but it was when, in the early 80's, the long distance paths, Viking Way to the west and Peddar's Way to the east, were created that a final solution was found in a link to join those two. Various comments from walkers on the flatness and the lack of rights of way in the fens, provided the spur to investigate a possible route, and create a long distance footpath, unique in that it is largely below sea level.

Initial investigations suggested a suitable route, having the advantage of regular rail services at convenient distances.

Rights of way in the Fens area were not initially definitive, or plentiful, but there was sufficient evidence to support the use of a number of other known paths, with an aim to establish them as definitive. (Subsequent legislation has led to the majority of these paths being made definitive).

More than 700 km of route were surveyed by walking, over various terrains and ground conditions. The preferred route was written up as the Fens Way Project, together with details of the future plans, benefits to the local community and style of negotiation with landowners to secure improved routes. The Hereward Way follows the Fens Way Project route almost entirely. However, there are still certain sections still to be negotiated with landowners to provide a route with less road walking.

Much of the length of the Hereward Way formed part of a Jubilee Walk, a long distance footpath, 2000 miles around England and Wales, to celebrate 50 years of the Ramblers' Association.

The choice of Hereward Way as the title of this long distance walk, comes from the association of Hereward the Wake with the area. It would appear from some of the documented sources of information that Hereward the Wake spent some time "visiting" the cathedrals and other establishments in the area "obtaining" funds for his various enterprises, mostly it appears providing a mercenary service. Little is recorded of his life, and much written may well be based on legend.

The original concept of the Hereward Way was to act both as a new recreational facility with convenient circular walks based on the route, and more important, a focal point to create more access in the countryside in an area that is sparsely served. Except for a few notable exceptions still to be negotiated, concept has been very successful.

No bed and breakfast details are included as there is already a sophisticated Tourist Information Centre system in operation offering an up to date service - telephone numbers are included below.

<b>Oakham</b>	Flore House, 34 High Street, Oakham, Rutland LE15 6AL tel: 01572 724329
<b>Rutland Water:</b>	Sykes Lane, Empingham, Rutland LE15 8PX tel: 01572 653026
<b>Oundle:</b>	14 West Street, Oundle, Northamptonshire PE8 4EF tel:01832 274333
<b>Stamford:</b>	Stamford Arts Centre, 27 St Mary's Street, Stamford, Lincolnshire PE9 2DL tel: 01780 755611
<b>Peterborough:</b>	3-5 Cathedral Precincts, Peterborough Cambridgeshire PE1 1XS tel: 01733 452336.
<b>Ely:</b>	Oliver Cromwell House, 29 St Mary's Street, Ely, Cambridgeshire. tel: 01353 662062
<b>Bury St Edmunds:</b>	6 Angel Hill, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. IP33 1UZ tel 01284 764667

Pubs may not be open during weekdays or in the morning, except in towns, and some may be closed for good, a disappointing result for the walker.

### Key

## Long Distance footpaths etc throughout text (helps with waymarks)

E2	European Route 2 from Nice (France) to Galway (Ireland)
R	Rutland Round - CPRE
M	Macmillan Way
*	Ramblers' Jubilee Walk 1985
V	Viking Way
J	Jurassic Way
N	Nene Way
W	Black Fen Waterways Trail
F	Fen Rivers Way
S	St Edmunds Way
L	Little Ouse Path
B	Breckland Walk
P	Peddars Way
Pb	Peddars Way bridleway
-V	Joining the Viking Way route
V-	Leaving the Viking Way route
sh	shop, usually post office as well
p	pub - not always open at lunchtime - those which are, are in the text
b&b	sleeping of any kind
tic	tourist information centre
[n]	Cumulative kms from start

## Text

The following markers are inserted, as by law, there should be a fingerpost marking the place where the right of way leaves a road. Many are present, but some succumb to vandalism.

## Rights of Way

- (fp-) footpath start; - (fp -) finish - walkers only.
- (br-) bridleway - walkers, horse riders, and cyclists.
- (rb -) restricted byway (old RUPPs)- bridleway with horse drawn carriages - no motorised vehicles
- (by-) byway - walkers, horse riders, cyclists and motor vehicles.

Others (not marked on OS maps)

- (pp-) permissive path - by permission of the landowner only - sometimes marked.
- (uc-) unclassified road - same as road but unsurfaced.
- Unspecified - road/pavement/footway - public highway and adopted.

The choice of a "Tiger" as a logo for the waymarks, is based on the term commonly used to describe the fenmen - "Fen Tigers". The subsequent additional logo throughout Cambridgeshire was based on that used by the District and County Council for "Hereward Country". The third logo emanates from Peterborough City Council, and may well be the eventual standard waymark. If any of these are missing, reference in the text to any other marked path may help.

The route is now detailed on the OS 25k - Explorer, so no maps are included in this text. The OS maps hold so much more detail and items of interest for a much wider audience than can even be included in this guide - see page 3.

Tips on staging - how much to do and where to break is given at the start of each stage.

## Original route planner

**OAKHAM [O] to STAMFORD [25] <sup>1</sup>****25 km (16m)**

M,V	Oakham	Station, sh, p, b&b, tic	7
M,V,E2	Whitwell - Viking Way [8]	p	8
M,E2	Empingham [11]	sh, p	8
*M,J,E2	Ketton [17]	sh, p	8
*M,J,E2	Easton-on-the-Hill [22]	sh, p	9

**STAMFORD [25] to PETERBOROUGH [51] <sup>1</sup>****26 km (16m)**

*M,J,E2	Stamford [25]	Station, sh, p, b&b, tic	9,10
*E2	Barnack [30]	p	10
*E2	Southorpe [32]		10
*N,E2	Wansford [36]	Nene Valley Railway, café	11
*N,E2	Sutton [37]		11
*N,E2	Ailsworth	p	11
*N,E2	Castor	p	11

**PETERBOROUGH [51] to MARCH [83] <sup>1</sup>****32 km (20m)**

*N,E2	Peterborough [51]	Station, sh, p, b&b, tic	12, 13
*N,E2	Whittlesea [64]	Station, sh, p,	13, 14
*E2	Turves [72]	p	15

**MARCH [83] to ELY [118] <sup>1</sup>****35 km (21m)**

*W,E2	March [83]	Station, sh, p, b&b, tic	15 - 17
*E2	Christchurch [93]	p	17
*E2	Welney [101]	Station (Manea), sh, p	18
*E2	Little Downham	sh, p	19, 20

**ELY [118] to BRANDON [153] <sup>2</sup>****34 km (21m)**

*F,E2	Ely [118]	Station, sh, p, b&b, tic	19, 20
*F	Prickwillow [126]	Station (Shippea Hill)	120, 21
	Hockwold [146]	Station (Lakenheath), p	21

**BRANDON [153] to HARLING ROAD [178] <sup>2</sup>****26 km (16m)**

SL	Brandon [153]	Station, sh, p, b&b, tic	22, 23
S,L,B	Santon Downham [156]	sh	23
S,B	Croxton [163]	Station (Thetford)	23
S,L,B,P	Peddar's Way [171]		24
	Harling Road [178]	Station, p	25

<sup>1</sup>

Route checked at highway junctions and some selected places - 2007, walked 2004.

<sup>2</sup>

Route walked 2004.

**OAKHAM to STAMFORD - 25 km - 16m**

Quintessentially England - shire country, rolling hills, woods and stone buildings.

*Can be walked in two separate days of 11kms and 14kms stopping at Empingham. Regular bus services follow the main road from Oakham to Stamford via Empingham and to Stamford, to and from Ketton and Easton on the Hill. Pubs en route are; The Grainstore (Oakham Brewery); The Railway, Station Road; The Griff Inn; The Wheatsheaf, Northgate; The Old House Tavern, Station Road: **Oakham:** Noel Arms, **Whitwell:** White Horse, **Empingham:** The Railway, Northwick Arms, **Ketton:** The Blue Bell, **Easton on the Hill.** Many pubs are not open weekday lunchtime.*

The start or the end of the **Hereward Way** walk should be at Oakham Station, and the Grainstore Brewery.

To reach Oakham the best service for the walker is by rail, there being regular services to and from Oakham Station. Services are available between Peterborough and Birmingham, with connecting trains to most sections of the Hereward Way.

Oakham, County town of Rutland (used to be in Leicestershire), still retains its market town charm; with stocks, a market cross, and Oakham School as notable features. Visit the Castle remains, especially the Great Hall, the finest of its kind in England. The museum has in particular, a collection of horse shoes, made from centuries old custom of every passing Peer leaving a horseshoe. Rutland Park, a working farm, is stocked with a number of rare breeds of animals.

There are several pubs in Oakham serving good food and beer, especially the Brewery at the station. What better way to start - if licencing hours allow - but that's another story and another part of conservative Britain. There are also other unlicensed eating places in the main town. There are also a number of places to stay overnight, from simple "bed and breakfast", to "starred" hotels.

**Starting from Oakham Station, leave by the main station gate, turn right, walk towards the railway crossing and turn left into Northgate; (R-) follow the road to the church. Go down a small passage (fp-) to the right of the church; turn left and onto the green. Follow the tarmac footpath to the road junction (-fp).**

**Cross the main road to the east side footway and take the B668 (Burley Road) out of town, continuing along the pavement past Vicarage Road, to Woodland View. Turn right into Woodland View and follow the footway through a housing estate onto a (fp-) tarmac footpath through new housing estates and across link roads and bypass to a cottage at the end. Turn right and left and right around barns, and then through fields past a Sewage Works to the main road (-fp). Cross the busy road to the footway to the left (V-)(M-) and follow this path east for 2 km.**

**Just before the main road goes uphill, keep right downhill and through a gate (pp-) in the Rutland Water boundary fence and follow the track.**

All paths and tracks within the Rutland Water boundary are permissive, with only a few definitive links to the adjoining countryside - a great pity, since many miles of right of way were submerged, with no compensation.

To the north of Rutland Water is seen the imposing 17th Century Burley Manor.

The Viking Way is a long distance footpath from Oakham in the south, to the Humber Bridge in the north.

**Follow the pathway past Barnsdale Hall Hotel on the left in the trees, complete with holiday cottages, to the gate (-pp) and the road. Turn left and ascent the hill on the old Hambleton Road; turn right into Barnsdale car park (pp-), walking through the woods to an open area. Go up the hill, and just before the top bear right and go up and over the hill on the grass to the right of a hedge and the car parks, then follow the fences around to the hill top, taking in the magnificent views of the water to the right. (Information centre and toilets on the left.)**

Across the water on the imposing island is Hambleton village; in fact it is connected to the mainland by a small strip of land. Rutland Water is a popular centre for fishing, sailing or just walking and cycling around the edge of the water enjoying the views.

**Descend the hill to the track into the woods, then follow the path to Whitwell, the first section going through woods. Follow this path (beware of bicycles), until a more open section is reached. Keep to the track around the water, through Whitwell car park following the exit route (-V) turning right and then left into the sailing area.**

Good food, the Viking Way and accommodation can be obtained from the Noel Arms in Whitwell. It is reached by following the exit road north leading to the church, then following the small alley to the south of the church to the very busy A606. The pub is on the opposite side of the road. A bus service runs between Oakham and Stamford, stopping at Whitwell.

Go down the hill to the water and turn left on the footpath, down the hill bearing right at the end to the track around the water. The route follows this track around the Whitwell inlet of the reservoir to Sykes Lane car park. Keep to the water side of the car park on the grass, then ahead meeting a path going to the end of the dam top. Go over the dam top, not along, and continue straight on down the bank. Halfway down the grass slope next to a small obelisk like a trig point, go over a stile (-pp)(br-) and make for another stile almost straight ahead.

The village of Normanton was covered by the water and the church, in the water, only remains.

Go into a copse, and through to a footbridge and stile over a stream at the bottom. Cross into a field and keep straight on to a stile on the left in a fence. Cross into the paddock and cross diagonally to the houses. You will see a gate and stile which is the exit (-fp) to the road. Opposite, follow the road to the main road, A606, there cross to a pavement and turn right.

To the north of the village of Empingham is the White Horse Inn, a good stop for food. There is also a shop opposite the church.

Follow the pavement, turning left, to the church and continue along the pavements around the church wall into Crockett Lane.

The 13th century church of St. Peter contains a beautiful double piscina (stone basins), and a triple sedilia, as well as fragments of medieval glass.

Follow the road past keeping old cottages to a (fp-) path into a housing estate (-fp). Turn right and then left into a cul de sac road and footpath at the end, continue down the next cul de sac road to the road at the end. Turn right, down to the bottom of the hill, and then left into another cul de sac road with a stile at the end on the left. Cross the stile (fp-) into the field, then directly across the field to a footbridge hidden in the trees. Cross the bridge, then field to a gate which opens onto a road (uc-) and turn right to some farm buildings. Go round the left hand side of the buildings (-uc)(fp-) and make for a metal footbridge; cross this (-fp)(by-) and follow the field edge, to the main road (-by). Cross the road (br-) and follow the left hand hedges of the fields to the top of the hill, to the minor road and gate(-br). Cross the stile into the field (fp-) on the left and continue across the field, skirting the edge of the farmyard to the wood. Cross the next field to a stile, along the right hand side of a hedge to a stile. Cross and make for a wind pump straight across the next field. N.B. From 2007 - 12 there will be various temporary diversions around the new quarry workings - please follow the waymarks and re-join the route going "down towards the village". At the wind pump follow the track up the hill towards Ketton past the edge of the quarries on the left. Follow the track down towards the Village. Watch out for a finger post on left, and stile for Ketton on the right hand side. Cross the stile and then field diagonally towards the church. You may have to follow the tracks used by dog walkers, but keep the church tower in sight. Go through a kissing gate onto track between two houses, and on to a high wall. Turn right and follow the path by the wall to the end. Follow the road then first left down The Green to the main road (-fp). Turn left and cross the road by the Jubilee memorial. Turn left down Redmiles Lane, then right down a small passage (fp-) to Chapel Lane, and down to the Railway Inn (-fp). Turn left to pass the church.

The stone houses and roofs of Ketton are typical of the local construction. The church in Ketton is worth a visit especially to see if one qualifies for any of the charities listed in the porch !!

Another pub can be found in Ketton on the Stamford Road - the Northwick Arms, as well as a shop, by the pub.

Follow the road down to a stream and then cross the bridge there. Make straight on for a stile (fp-) across the road. Climb the hill, through a garden and cross a housing estate road to a narrow footpath. Cross the railway ahead by a footbridge and continue to a roadway (-fp). Turn right and follow this road, joining another road from the right, and keeping to the left, (J-)(-R) follow the road to Collyweston Bridge across the River Welland. Just across the bridge take the footpath (fp-) on the left diagonally up the hill, cross two hedges and diagonally across fields to the track at the top (-fp)(br-). Turn right and follow this track, (Ketton Drift) to Easton-on-the-Hill (-br). Pass the Blue Bell take the next road on the left, at the

memorial, Church Street, and turn down into the old part of Easton-on-the-Hill, and then up to the church.

Take a long look at the old stone buildings in the village of Easton-on-the-Hill where Collyweston stone roofs are a feature. The roofing stone is once again being mined locally in Collyweston by the old traditional methods. It takes years to obtain the correct stone as it is all split by water and frost.

**Just beyond the church, cross the stile (fp-) on the right and, heading straight on, (admire the views of Stamford from the top of the hill after the church) cross a field to another stile; cross this stile and the next field next to a hedge then to the side of a wood. Follow the track downhill to a cultivated field. Cross this and some wet land to a bridge over the railway, and make for one of the tunnels under the A1. On leaving the tunnel, turn keep straight onto the river (-fp)(br-), bearing right to a metal bridge, cross the River Welland by the bridge and follow the Stamford meadows towards the Town, keeping to the right at path junctions. (Count the churches with their different architecture and guess which one is now not used as a church. There was a roman ford across the river just before the gate into the last meadow.) At the end of the Meadows and nearly in Stamford (-br) turn right, cross the river by a bridge (-fp)(-M) and then follow the road, Gresley Drive, on the right through a housing estate to the Railway Station.**

Tarry awhile in Stamford, - again a quiet but busy old town - built of stone and financed by the proceeds of the 16th century wool trade - Stamford cloth was renowned throughout Europe. Settled by the Romans, it contains many old buildings, churches and numerous hotels and pubs and eating places, enough to suit most tastes.

Accommodation is also available to suit most pockets, and can be arranged usually at short notice.

If time is available, visit Burghley House, one of England's greatest Elizabethan buildings.

There are regular services to and from Stamford Station, on the line connecting Peterborough and Birmingham. Regular bus services run locally, as well as a good express service to and from London and Scotland.

## STAMFORD to PETERBOROUGH - 26 km - 16m

### Rivers, railways and roads, roman and recent

*Can be walked in two separate days of 11kms and 15kms stopping at Wansford. Irregular bus services connect Barnack and Wansford to Stamford and Peterborough, and Castor, Ailsworth and Alwalton with Peterborough, and times must be checked beforehand. No pubs are on the route but there are ones at Barnack, Castor and Alwalton, mentioned in the text, but check opening hours.*

From the station, take the narrow passage to the east of the station entrance, to as far as the railway bridge; turn right there and follow the road south to the main road (A43). Across the road is an old kissing gate; go through this (fp-) into a field. Cross diagonally to another kissing gate; go through it and turn left up the right hand side of the field, uphill over a bridge and two stiles and onto a road (-fp). Turn left (admire the views of Stamford) (br-) and then cross the main road (-br), then turn right alongside the wall of Burghley Estate, to the Golf Club entrance. Turn left (fp-) and follow the roadway beside the course. (The raised track to the left is the old Roman Road, Ermine Street). At the end of the road, by a large stone gate on the left, turn left and immediately right over a stile into a field and keep in the field with the sunken wall and deer ditches (keeping deer in the park) on the right. Follow the old roman road (pp-) through the horse trials jumps, around to the left and eventually only a ditch surrounded by trees. Go over a stile, over a small bridge, through a new copse (-pp) and stile into open fields. Follow the waymarked footpath across the cultivated fields making for a notch ("V") in the tree line in the distance, slightly to the right. Cross a track and then big field to the woodland. As you reach the wood, find and follow a track straight through the wood across a track in the trees, to open fields.

Keeping to Ermine Street, with the old hedge on the left, follow the field edge all the way, then across the last field to the road junction (-fp). Take the road straight ahead, past a road on the left, and keep straight on to the white gates ahead.

(To get to Barnack, follow the wall on the left (fp-) just before the white gates, keeping it on the right to the end, where it joins the village road (-fp); turn left there and follow the roads bearing right to the Millstone pub - no shop now.)

To the east is Barnack with many old buildings of stone, quarried from the surrounding sites. This stone was also used for the cathedrals at Ely and Peterborough, and some of the Cambridge colleges. You pass by the Hills and Holes, now a nature reserve and home to many orchids and other rare plants. Previously the pits were the site of the Barnack stone quarries. The remains of an old windmill can be seen on your left, most villages in the surrounding area had one, to prepare the abundant grain for bread flour.

Go through the white gates (br-) and follow a raised track (the remains of Ermine Street), to the end of the high wall.

You follow one of the best sections of the Roman Road to the west of Walcot Hall, raised above the surrounding fields, you can capture the feel of the roman soldier or centurion marching to his camp at Dvrobrivae - the other side of the river Nene from Castor further on.

Follow the hard track and continue beside a field with a wall on the left. Cross another field on the same line as the Roman road, then alongside a wall to a gate. Through the gate and then through another, then following alongside a wall on the right to a gate on the road (-br). (To the left is the village of Southorpe). Turn right and follow this minor road for about 50m, to a kissing gate next to a gate on the right. Go through (fp-) and follow the track up to the house keeping to the left, and around the back of the house to a gate. Through this gate, over a track and along the left hand side of a hedge to an open field. Cross the field to the wood and follow the woodland path to a bridge. Cross the bridge and then diagonally across the field to a gap in the hedge next to a tall tree. Through the gap, turn right and then left around the field edge. Turn right onto the track and then left and continue to the buildings. Go around the buildings leaving them on your left and along a (-fp)(pp-) track towards the camp site and Farm Park. Follow the farm entrance road to the busy A47 (-pp). Carefully cross over to the entrance of a lorry and car park. (To go to Wansford turn right (N-) into the car park and along the Nene Way to the end, bear left (pp-) next to the toilets, to reach the bridge under the A1. Go under the bridge and turn right to follow a track up to the road at the top (-pp). Turn left here and follow the footway to the church, turning left (-N) to cross the old bridge into Wansford).

The 16th century bridge in Wansford was once the crossing for the A1 road. It now offers a quiet aspect of peaceful grandeur. Queen Victoria slept at the 17th century Haycock Inn. Petanque used to be played in the grounds of the Haycock on summer weekends.

There is a shop in Wansford as well as two pubs and an hotel; The Crown and The Paper Mills and The Haycock Hotel.

To continue on the route, turn left at the entrance to the lorry and car park, (N-) (pp-) and follow the path above the pumping station, cross two stiles and make for the river's edge (-pp). Cross a bridge and follow fairly close to the river on a path, going through gates, for some way. Keep watch for some old earthworks and here bear left towards the old railway fence. Bear right onto a track and follow this until you find a kissing gate on your right next to gate across the track. Go through the field beside the hedge, through a kissing gate, down a track and onto the road (-fp) by the church. Turn left and then right down the length of Lover's Lane. At the end turn right (fp-) into a field; down the field to the end of a spinney on the right and then bear left to a stile in line with the railway bridge in the distance. Cross the stile and field (bridge also if the field is waterlogged), to the railway bridge. Go under the bridge and turn left to follow the Nene Way (-fp).

The Nene Way is 16 miles long, starts at..... and ends at the light houses on the Wash near Sutton Bridge. It makes an ideal challenge walk and training ground for long distance walking. The Hereward Way follows part of the full length.

Here you can cross the railway bridge across the river and catch a steam train of the Nene Valley Railway, when running, to Peterborough.

Follow the Nene Way, (pp-) first by the lines and then around fields until you reach the weir and river on the right (-pp)(fp-). Continue alongside the river to a metal bridge and two gates and where the track goes up to the railway, turn right (-fp)(pp-) across a wooden bridge next to the river and into a field beside the mill stream and eventually the River Nene again.

Castor and Ailsworth villages, where a Roman pottery industry (now excavated) was sited, can be approached by a number of footpaths.

Castor is a charming little village, now bypassed, containing many attractive old stone houses with thatch and stone roofs. The church is unique, as is the remains of a Roman Villa complex that once covered almost the whole of the eastern part of Castor.

To the south across the river is Dvrobrivae an important roman camp and junction of many Roman Roads.

There are shops and pubs in Castor and Ailsworth, all easily accessible by footpaths that are marked. The pubs are; The Royal Oak; The Fitzwilliam Arms (Italian Restaurant) and The Prince of Wales Feathers.

Follow the Nene Way, and the river edge, with Castor and Ailsworth to the left. Be careful just before an old ox bow lake, past where the railway leaves the river, as the route follows the side of this ox bow, to the left towards the high ground. Find the wooden bridge and cross, up the hill and then right across a stile (-pp)(fp-).

Follow the Nene Way to Castor Mill (-fp), turn right down the road and then left to a gate alongside the Mill (fp-). Follow the Nene Way past the picturesque mill, over a bridge on the right (-fp)(pp-).

Alwalton, a pub and hotels are over the lock on the right, and about a mile on well marked and used paths and roads.

Continue along the mill stream almost to the River Nene. Cross the bridge on the left hidden in the trees. Follow the river path, under the railway bridge (-pp)(fp-) to Milton Ferry Bridge (-fp).

In the field above the Ferry Bridge are two stones named "Robin Hood" and "Little John", believed to have been erected in the bronze age.

Keep to the Nene Way (pp-) by the river bank to Bluebell Wood. There are two options to take at the high

clump of yew trees on the river bank, the more informal route follows the river bank, the other, drier, half way up the bank. They both end up at the large bridge across the river at the end of the wood. Do not cross the bridge, but continue through a small gate (-pp)(fp-) on the left down the side of the golf course alongside the river.

To the right is Ferry Meadows Park, a pleasure ground provided as part of the Peterborough Development Corporation's recreational policy. The Nene Way was created also by the Corporation, following a mixture of definitive rights of way and long sections of permissive paths under management agreements.

**Keep to the river bank past the lock gates at Orton Stauch; pass under the new Parkway bridge. Keep to the river path all the way, pass the rowing course on the left and the new housing on the right across the River Nene. Cross a bridge over a cut to the rowing course, and continue to Peterborough, going under the main line railway bridges (-fp) (pp-) and a new footbridge. Immediately under the new footbridge turn left to the rear of the flats, and turn right around the back of the flats and right again down the first yard (Hills Yard) and into Bridge Street opposite the Magistrates Court (-pp) and turn right towards the town bridge to continue.**

The main interest in Peterborough is the 12/13th century Cathedral, found behind the arch in Cathedral Square. The town, now trebled in size by the New Town Development, retains a small number of ancient buildings dotted around, mostly near the Cathedral. The Museum contains a number of interesting items from the surrounding area.

Longthorpe Tower is a fine example of a fortified house, and can be found to the north of the Rowing Course.

There are plenty of hotels, pubs and other eating, and resting places of all types in and around Peterborough.

Peterborough has one of the best railway services, with excellent links to London and Scotland. Services also link with Birmingham to the west, Norwich and Cambridge to the east.

Excellent inter-city coach services exist especially to and from London.

Peterborough is probably the best base for the Hereward Way walk.

(To get to the Station, either follow the pedestrian walkways through the town and into Queensgate, taking the western exit from the shopping centre (first floor past John Lewis) to the station; or turn off the riverside path before the railway bridges, and follow a track (River Lane) to the A47 bridge, thence north to the station).

## PETERBOROUGH to MARCH - 33 km - 21m

### Wide open sky, old rivers, drains

*Can be walked in two separate days of 14kms and 19kms stopping at Whittlesea. Irregular bus services connect Coates and Turves with March and Peterborough. Pubs en-route are: The Moreton Fork; New Crown Inn; The George; The Falcon; The Hero of Aliwal, (near the start of the Bower); The Railway - Whittlesea: The Three Horseshoes, Turves, but check opening hours.*

**The Hereward Way continues on the north side of the river (pp-) by crossing the inner link road close to the police station, and pass in front of the old Custom House. Pass the Key Theatre on your left, and follow the river embankment under the new parkway bridge.**

The course of the Old River Nene can be seen under the first black bridge to the south as it flows on to March and Denver. The river is navigable through the fen waterways to the Ouse at Ely.

The meadows between the river banks, which are flooded in winter with the excess water from the River Nene, provide stock with good grazing in the summer. They are also a valuable site for nesting and migrating birds that require the special flooding treatment to provide their insect food.

The fens have been subject to various drainage schemes since Roman times. Their Car (Karr) (Cnuts) Dyke passes to the east of Peterborough, and still exists in sections today. The narrow channel to the west of Fitzwilliam Bridge is one of these sections. 13th century drains such as Moreton's Leam were the forerunners on an increasing activity in land drainage culminating in the present system, finished in the 17th century, and organised by the Ashley family who were at the time the Earls of Bedford. The title of Duke of Bedford was not conferred until later. Hence the Bedford Levels - we will cross these later.

**From under the parkway bridge, follow the River Nene to the concrete Fitzwilliam Bridge.**

**Ascend the river bank by way a bridge (-pp)(fp-) and follow the bank top track, Nene Way, past the Rugby Club, sewage farm and Flag Fen, in the distance, until a tarmac road is reached.**

Recent excavations at Flag Fen, on the left before the tarmac road have revealed an extensive Iron Age settlement complete with semi preserved dwellings. These have been reconstructed to show what the conditions were like in the area at that time. There is also an exposed section of the Fen Causeway - of the same age, used by the Romans, showing the construction. This causeway can be followed in many places on the Hereward Way.

**Just before the road is a very new modern curving bridge (Jubilee Bridge) on the right, go over this (pp-) and join the cycleway to Whittlesea. At the cross tracks on the raised section, track turn left (-pp)(fp-) and continue along the footpath/cycleway to Whittlesea. At the metal fence turn left (-fp) into Stonald Road (Fen Causeway, an old Roman Road), and follow this road for some while to a cross roads at The Moreton Fork (pub now closed - but look at the window !!) and the Delph.**

The river becomes tidal at the Dog in a Doublet, over in the distance to the left, with the outfall at Sutton Bridge 25 km to the north in the Wash.

Fenland drainage required a large number of pumping stations to lift water from the lower levels "uphill" into the main channels and rivers. Windmills were used at first, but these were eventually replaced by steam engines. Many good examples still exist, but not now in full working order (e.g. Stretham near Ely). Diesel engines, and now electric pumps continue to provide power to keep the fields drained, so that the fens have become a vast "grow bag" for the provision of most of the root vegetables we eat.

The many brickyard chimneys seen in the distance, are part of a vital industry of the area. The name "Fletton", a type of brick, is derived from one of the brickyards near Peterborough. Many old yards have now been closed, and been replaced by modern yards built in the bottom of the old clay pits, like those at Whittlesea.

Another large new industry, seen among the brickyard chimneys, is potato chip manufacture.

The fields to the north of the footpath are flooded in Winter, providing free skating facilities for all those who can keep on their feet !!

**At the Moreton Fork, go straight over and follow the road for 200m to Arnold's Lane (near No 42, Prospect House) where you turn right (fp-), and continue into High Causeway (-fp), pass the thatched New Crown Inn, to the new inner bypass road. Cross the bypass and go down High Causeway to the Market Square and the Buttercross, the centre of Whittlesea.**

Whittlesea was at one time a larger town than Peterborough and, because of its position on the edge of the flooded fen, was a thriving market centre for the area. The railways came to Peterborough - Lord Burghley would not allow them in Stamford - and therefore Peterborough grew at the expense of Whittlesea, and Stamford, thank goodness.

The ending of town names in "ey" or "ea" derives from the original old English name for an "island".

A number of houses and a pub, still retain thatched roofs - the reeds once a common product of the fens. More modern buildings passed en route are now becoming rarer, the wartime "pill boxes".

Sir Harry Smith, victor at battle of Aliwal in East Punjab during the Sikh wars in 1846, and Governor of the Cape of Good Hope from 1847 - 52, was born in a house near the Falcon Hotel. He lends his name to a school, and pub the Hero of Aliwal.

There is a town trail for those who wish to discover more of Whittlesea.

Food is available in Whittlesea, at pubs, hotels and cafes. There are a number of places to stay overnight, but it is advisable to check first.

Fairly regular British Rail train services stop at Whittlesea Station, connecting with Peterborough and Ely. Regular bus services connect Whittlesea with Peterborough.

**Leave the Market Square by the south west corner next to the thatched shop, (fp-) go into the churchyard and go through the right hand exit into St Mary's Street (-fp). Turn left and follow the road past the Falcon Hotel to the health centre. Go past the centre, through the white gates (fp-) and turn right at the end into a gravelled footpath - The Walk - in front of a large house. Cross the small bridge across the Briggate River, (a locked canal for boats between the fen drains. The Hero of Ailwal is straight on.) Turn left and follow the towpath - the "Bower" to the Ashline Lock and then left (-fp) across a road bridge. Turn left and follow Aliwal Road, to Station Road. At the end turn right and follow the road, pass The Railway Inn to Whittlesea Station.**

**Go over the railway crossing and follow the roadside footways past factories. Where the main road forks left, keep straight ahead - to Ramsey, as far as Turningtree Bridge. Just before the bridge, turn left and cross a stile (fp-) into a field. Follow the north bank of the river through fields and across stiles, past a farm on the left, to the tarmac road (-fp).**

Waterways were usually classified by their width in feet, and therefore are known as ".... Foot". Today their original width has changed as a result of the needs of the drainage of the area.

At Angle Bridge, Whittlesea Dyke crosses the junction of the Twenty Foot River and Bevills Leam.

The word Drove is often used in the fens, and it usually denotes a wide grass track. These droves were used as highways for the movement of cattle between towns.

The names in the area conjure up the mystic nature of the fens. Names such as Wype Doles, The Turves, Birds Hundred, Adventurer's Fen, Oldeamere and Botany Bay to name but a few. All have their derivations - and many are found in books on the locality especially those by Edward Storey. He captures the mood of the once flooded area inhabited by a strange and reserved people, many of whose idiosyncrasies still exist.

Note also on the old 1:25000 OS maps, the "BH" symbol. These "beer houses" existed, it seems, every couple of miles, supplying the workers with their daily needs.

**Follow the raised bank on the right of the tarmac road, to Angle Corner Bridge. Cross Angle Corner Bridge**

to Angle Bridge, but just before Angle Bridge, turn left down a grass drove (br-) to the river bank and turn right.

Follow the river bank along the track to Poplartree Bridge. Pass under this bridge and continue along the drove to Begger's Bridge (railway). Continue under this bridge (-br), onto the road, to the next bridge then turn right on the road to Turves and on to the Three Horseshoes. After the pub, continue straight on over the railway and out of the village to Quaker's Drove. Turn left into Quaker's Drove and continue in a straight line past Bottom Hake's Farm (fp-), to Hake's Drove.

Along the way notice the changes in the topography of the fields. Raised and light areas of soil will be seen standing out from the dark fen soil. These areas were once river beds containing silt. These twisting routes of old waterways, known locally as "roddons" or "rodham" did not shrink as much as the peat, and therefore appear today and can be traced across many fields. It can be seen that before the drainage of the fens, waterways were random and widespread. The whole area was a maze of dank creeks amongst reeds and willows.

Throughout the fens houses were built on these "roddons" as the foundations were reliable and more solid than the peat. However some builders did not estimate the width of the roddon correctly, and today many buildings lean backwards at alarming angles.

Most of Hake's Drove is below mean sea level, so the Earl of Bedford and his Adventurers should be thanked for their fen drainage schemes.

**Follow Hake's Drove, grass in the middle section, to the Old River Nene at Top Hake's Farm.**

You cross the Greenwich Meridian half way along.

**At the farm and river bank turn left and follow the track past a bungalow near the river bank to the old bridge across the Old River Nene, hidden in the trees to the right. Turn right around the field and onto and across the old approach road to the old bridge, to the next field, make for the river bank and then along the field edge to a group of houses, cross three gates through gardens, and continue to an old farm. Keep to the river bank until you reach a small pumping station before the potato processing complex, turn left (-fp)(pp-) onto a track and follow this to a stile and road (-pp). Turn right and follow the road past the factory to another road on the left. Opposite this road, Middle Road, turn right (fp-) down a narrow path beside a bungalow. Continue past old sheds to the river bank again.**

(Note: The towpath originally crossed the river near the complex and continued to March on the other side of the river. However the crossing was made by using the barge as the bridge for the horse, and therefore there is no bridge for walkers.)

**Turn left and follow the river bank to the Marina, and turn left away from the bank then all the way around edge of the marina, join a cycleway and then go under the bypass underpass (-fp) keep left and turn right at the tarmac path, into a road, West End.**

All along West End are a number of nice old houses, of various styles, some Dutch, and some constructed with narrow "Queen Anne" bricks.

**There is another option marked by a sign, along the south side of the river, but this route is all in a park, and misses out some interesting old buildings.**

**Continue along this lane to the north of the river all the way to the centre of March by the war memorial and by the bridge across the old River Nene.**

(To get to the Station turn left and go along Broad Street to the end; turn right and keep on the main road as it turns left, and then follow this road to the Station).

March was an "island" settlement dating from the iron age, but little is left of the past, mostly due to the convenience of modern buildings.

March, like Peterborough, was a large railway centre; the Whitemoor Marshalling Yards were at one time the largest in Europe. Sadly the Yards are now closed and have become in part home to a new prison.

To the south of the town is the 15th century church of St Wendreda, containing a magnificent double hammer beam roof. The roof is adorned with almost 200 wooden angels, carved in oak and having open wings; an unusual form as other examples of roof angels have folded wings.

There are a number of eating places in March, offering a varied selection of menus. There are also hotels and shops and pubs, the ones en-route are; The Acre (south bank of river at the back of the shops); The Ship (Nene Parade).

There is a regular British Rail train service from the Station, connection with Peterborough and Ely. Regular bus services connect with Peterborough.

## MARCH to ELY - 35 km - 21m

### Rivers and horizons old and new, and endless peat fields

*Can be walked in two separate days of 18kms and 17kms stopping at Welney, (or taxi to the train at Manea.) Irregular bus services connect Christchurch, with March and Welney and Little Downham with Ely. Pubs en route are: The Dun Cow, Christchurch; Lamb and Flag (open all day '07), Welney; The Plough, The Anchor Little Downham; some may not be open lunchtime*

To continue on the Hereward Way, follow the north side of the river, Nene Parade, eastward, pass The Ship, to the iron bridge across the old River Nene on the right. Cross this bridge (fp-), turn left and follow the south bank of the river, either on the fisherman's path on the edge, or on top in an area of green, under a railway bridge and, keeping on the river bank, cross a grass field and stiles, then alongside cultivated fields, to a hard track beside the river. Follow this track alongside the river.

Follow the river bank past a road leading to Andrew's Farm on the right and past the old Reed Farm to the new pumping station on the right at the river end of a broad drain.

What a place to celebrate the half distance - the openness and endless horizons are a fitting backdrop to consider that reasons for doing the walk in the first place. However, a new sight and sound had encroached into the open vista - wind turbines - a cash crop for landowners, but not so appealing as far as solitude is concerned.

Continue alongside the river for another 1km and turn south at the second shallow dyke just past but nearly opposite another pumping station on the opposite river bank. Follow this dyke southwards for 1500m, around slight right bends in the field edge; follow the grass track to the north edge of Well Fen Farm.

The raised section of the Fen Causeway, is thought to be roman or earlier and part of a route across the fens from Peterborough to near Hockwold. Large sections were built on brushwood bundles, and traces of the roadway are still clearly marked in the flat fen country. One section can be seen to be clearly higher than the surrounding fields between Rodham and Well Fen Farm. Part of the old Causeway surface can be seen at the Flag Fen excavations near Peterborough.

The name Rodham Farm is derived from the word roddon, and indicates that it was built on one of the many river beds in the area - the Fen Causeway likewise.

Turn left before the farm and follow the side of a dyke then cross a bridge. Continue, and at an old field boundary turn right for 25m, then left onto a grass track (Fen Causeway). Follow this track past the old farm buildings to a bridge (-fp). Cross the wide drain and the main road into Crown Drove (by-) and follow this drove, tarmac and then grass, and then tarmac again (-by-), to Christchurch.

Continue into Christchurch main street. Pass The Dun Cow, if you can, and continue straight on into another grass drove (by-).

Continue on this drove to where it turns right, follow the drove and turn left and then right to the B1100 road (-by). Turn left and follow the roadway for some distance to Tipp's End.

The water courses are subject to a number of local descriptions, drain, dyke and cut.

The drove leaving Christchurch is the Norfolk and Cambridgeshire boundary.

Go through Tipp's End, and out into the country, and just before a small bungalow on the left on the outskirts of Welney, turn left into a grass drove (public path) (rb-) and follow the drove in a wide right hand arc to an old cottage on the right (-rb). Turn left (fp-) and follow the ditch edge to a tall hedge on the left of a barn. Go through the neat gap between the barn and hedge and out onto the main road A1101 (-fp). Cross the road, turn right and follow the main road pavement to Welney village.

Nearest railway station is at Manea, 5 km to the south. There is no convenient public transport between Welney and Manea, the hire of a taxi or offer of transport, may be the best solution. (To reach Manea station from Welney by road, follow the fen roads on the 1:50000 or 1:25000 OS maps. It is not one of the best journeys on foot). A shop and post office is down the Christchurch

Road on the right.

A stop must be made at the Lamb and Flag in Welney (open all day, every day in 2007) to celebrate the 100 km distance. There used to be two more pubs in '83, one, The Old Three Tuns, practically still a beer house on the Level bankside, but now sadly closed.

During the winter, the washes are often flooded and therefore boots may have to be taken off for 2 km !!, or a lift arranged from a tractor or other high vehicle.

**Continue through the village, cross two bridges (Old Bedford & Delph) across the fresh water Rivers of the same names, and follow the road across the washes to the next bridge across the tidal level.**

The first bridge you cross next to Welney is the drain for the surrounding fields, the next is the drain for the washes in the centre of the Levels, the third is tidal - up to Earith, a necessary engineering feature to prevent the flooding of the area around the Wash by the sea. All this work was carried out in the mid 1600s, a marvel to the engineering skills at the time.

To the north of the tidal bridge lies the Wildfowl Trust Washes - in winter a haven for migratory wildfowl, especially Berwick and Whooper swans.

In the spring and summer the same washes ring to the sounds of nesting waders, eagerly awaiting the abundant insects provided by the annual flooding of the washes in winter.

**Over the third bridge, turn right and follow the southern bank (100 foot) (br-) (-br) (fp-) of the New Bedford River for some way. In summer the grass on top is often high, and so it may be easier to follow the road at the bottom, but be careful as the road is busy.**

The Bedford Levels run for 25 miles between Denver Sluice in the north and Earith in the south. Straight as an arrow they hold vast quantities of flood water from the Ouse, preventing the flooding of the upper reaches of the river.

There are distant views of Ely Cathedral, floating on the skyline, from the top of the Level banks. Hence the name commonly used for the cathedral in the past - The Ship of The Fens.

**Follow the bank for some distance, to the Hundred Foot Pumping Station, on the left. Just before the pumping station (-fp), cross the road and go through a gap to the right of a bungalow, into a field (fp-) and to the edge of the dyke feeding the pumping station. Follow the edge of this field across small bridges to Headfen Farm (-fp). Turn right and follow the access road to the cross roads and continue straight across down a drove "A Furlong Drove" (by-).**

Many of the old drove roads are now public rights of way. Prior to 1972 they were not included on the Definitive Map of the old Isle of Ely, but under a review of the Map in 1983 they have all become definitive. Most are very wide - 50 feet or more. In summer they are a haven for wildlife; in winter heavy tractors turn them into quagmires.

The fields around Head Fen Farm, in the fens towards Ely, are typical of those to be found in the black peat areas of the fens. Flat fields of peat are divided by deep dykes keeping the water table at the correct levels. Intensive agriculture is the norm with practically all the growing being carried out in an applied soup of chemicals. It is not advisable to fall into the drains, their colour shows that the water is not particularly safe.

In a number of fields, "bog oak" is still being removed. These remains of old trees, not always oak, are remnants of an ancient forest, which was eventually choked and covered by vegetation - now the peat of today. Just before the railway crossing the fields either side of the drove are some of the last fields still with deep peat. Many of the others have now only inches of peat left, exposing the clay sub-soil. Many farmers are now deep ploughing to mix what is left of the peat with the clay to try and reduce the loss of good farmland.

**Cross the railway and continue on a wide grass drove to a road at the end (-by). At the road turn right, and cross over a small road bridge and immediately turn left (fp-) and follow a dyke edge to a narrow footbridge; cross this footbridge and follow the field edge keeping the dyke on the left. At the bottom of**

the hill there is an overgrown lane ahead, (Ram's Horn Lane); cross into the lane, cleared in the centre, and continue up the hill towards Little Downham church in the distance. Turn left into the playing fields and follow the right hand side fence towards the village. At the playing field entrance turn right onto a path, follow this onto a lane at the back of houses, turning left at the end, into an estate road; follow this road to Little Downham High Street.

There are magnificent views again of Ely Cathedral on a clear day from the top of Chapel Lane in Little Downham. After crossing the flat fenland all day the undulating ground around Little Downham comes as a surprise.

Tower Farm, to the west, was the summer palace of the bishops of Ely.

**Cross the High Street and nearly opposite go down Chapel Lane, to the bottom of the hill, continuing straight on into a lane called Hurst Lane (Drove)(by-) leading southwards towards Ely.**

**Continue along this wide lane to a green drove. Follow this drove, to the Coveney Road (-by). At this point, turn left, cross the bypass and continue along the pavements alongside West Fen Road uphill into Ely. At the old A10 turn right and then left to the green in front of the Cathedral; past an old cannon and across the green to the west door.**

(To walk to the station, turn down the road to the south of the west door of the Cathedral and follow the roads south eastward to the bottom of the hill. The Station is on the right before reaching the railway and bridge across the River Ouse).

Ely is dominated by it's Cathedral which must be visited, even if you now have to pay. The money is well spent, it will ensure that this magnificent building is preserved for all to see as a beacon for miles around. The name Ely may well have come from the number of eels caught in the rivers and drains. For years tithes were actually paid in eels. The city also contains many other interesting buildings, mainly associated with the ecclesiastical dominance.

Although a City by virtue of the magnificent cathedral, the real atmosphere is one of a busy market town. Serving the agricultural villages around it contains all the appropriate services without the modern addition of chain stores and the like in the centre. Down at the bottom of the hill next to the river are a number of fine buildings, especially the old maltings, now a meeting place and hall.

Tarry awhile alongside the River Ouse, now busy with pleasure boats, but still able to retain that peaceful calm no doubt influenced by the cathedral high above on the hill.

There are many places eat, drink and stay in Ely, to suit most tastes.

There are regular railway services from the Station to Cambridge, Peterborough and Norwich. There is also a regular bus service to most surrounding towns and villages.

## ELY to BRANDON - 34 km - 21m

### Deep peat, sandy brecks and solitude

*It may be possible to do this section in stages relying on Lakenheath for a train, or taxis or B & B en route, as bus services are poor. Shippea Hill station service is infrequent. There is only one pub The New Inn at Hockwold near the route.*

To continue the walk follow the path (fp-) north of the Cathedral, taking one of the small archways into the High Street (-fp). Turn right and follow the High Street to the old market square. In the Square take the north eastern exit, Market Place, later called the Vineyards, and follow this road down the hill between houses.

At the end of Vineyards Road turn right and then left, down a narrow passage (fp-) to a green area on the right (-fp)(pp-). Turn right and down this green to the road. Cross the road onto a track opposite, continue, then turn left (-pp)(fp-) and follow the track keeping straight on, to the railway crossing. Cross the railway and follow the road past all the buildings. Go through gates to the end of the compounds and into a narrow path leading to a footbridge, cross this and follow the narrow path in trees, around a fence to a very large footbridge across the River Ouse. Cross the bridge and turn right (-fp) on to the road and then left along the first drove on the left, just before the bend.

The old British Sugar factory on the left by the large bridge, has been closed for some years and is now re-developed. Sugar beet is an important and typical crop of the fens, and the higher surrounding lands. Lorries transporting beet for processing are a scourge of the countryside during winter as they cover the roads and spray pedestrians with mud. Their weight also causes most of the damage to the fen roads, built on peat and little else. They now travel to Kings Lynn.

The River Ouse also has its outfall in the Wash, at Kings Lynn. It is fully tidal to Denver Sluice, 16 kms north of Ely. Notice the Breckland hills in the distance.

Follow the drove (fp-) past old settlement ponds on the left, farms and under electricity grid lines. Join the tarmac road and continue past a bungalow on the left. Follow the track on the north of the dyke, do not cross the bridge, until a track is joined near Prickwillow (-fp).

You pass one of the few beer houses high up on the bank on the left, that still retain their outward appearance, little changed for 100 years. The Old Plough, now thankfully restored, on Middle Fen Bank still looks the part. The bungalow on the left at the time of the first edition of this book had no electricity - ironic with the pylons surrounding it.

Follow the track into Prickwillow village, and turn right into the main street towards the bridge.

The village of Prickwillow is built on one of the "roddons" of the Cam/Ouse that wound around the area before it was drained. Notice the silt on the left and peat on the right of the route.

Call at the Drainage Engine Museum, the tea shop may also be open, where there are many fine examples of early diesel engines used to drain the fens in the area. Diesel replaced steam in the 1920's and many engines exist, running as sweetly as they did when pumping water from the low drain into the main levels.

Diesels are now being replaced by electric pumps, and so enthusiasts such as those at the Museum are intent on capturing the glory of the original engines before they are scrapped.

The village is surrounded by fields of celery and other high value vegetable crops destined for supermarkets throughout the land. The black peat allows most crops to be grown with minimum effort, and maximum profit.

Infrequent bus services are available at Prickwillow to Ely.

Cross over the River Lark bridge and go along the top of the bank (fp-) beside the B1382, to where the road leaves the river (-fp).

(An alternative is being negotiated for this long section of road).

**Follow the B1382 across the railway, to the road junction with the A1101.**

The fen hereabouts is in the three Counties of Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. The land is intensively cultivated.

To the east the Norfolk Brecklands loom low on the horizon. The colour of the earth changes suddenly past Shippea Hill Station, from black to light sand, denoting the change from the fens to the breckland.

**At the junction of the B1382 and A1101, turn right onto A1101 and follow it to Shippea Hill Station. Just over the crossing, turn left over an old bridge (pp-) and continue along a trackway to the south of the railway towards a farm complex.**

**Continue past the farm complex, onto a road, past houses and small holdings and out into the fields still on a track. Pass two isolated houses and one field and turn right and follow the track to the road (-pp). Turn left and continue along the road past a farm and eventually to a flood bank where the road turns right. Turn left, follow the track on the bank (fp-) and continue along this track to the railway.**

On the right are a few poplar trees, grown for the wood to make matchsticks, and vegetable boxes. They were also the home to that secretive summer migrant, the golden oriole. These once common birds, nest in the high branches of the trees. Sadly most of the stands that were growing in 1985 when the first edition of the book was published, have now been removed and few replanted.

Much of the peat is used for high value crops, and with much of the peat being lost, every inch of the black earth is now used.

**Cross the railway and continue along the bank top to a dwelling on the right. Still following the bank top continue to the right along the flood bank of the River Little Ouse eastward.**

You are now in a place where peace and solitude are complete. Resting by the flood banks of the Little Ouse, you could be in another world. However, beware - screaming up behind you will be a low flying jet, shattering the peace. Ironically the wildlife doesn't seem to mind.

**Follow the bank top past old, new and more old, poplar plantations; pass meres, ponds and scrapes for wildlife, through three kissing gates to the main road B1112 (-fp).**

(To walk to Hockwold turn north and follow the B1112 to the village, the pub is the first building on the left).

**Turn right along the B1112 to Lakenheath Station, continue across the level crossing and along the road to just south of farm buildings on the left, then turn left to join a track (by-). Follow this track, cross a new drainage channel and continue on the track gradually uphill.**

The land changes from peat in places to silt to sand, so do the plants and wildlife change. For the first time since Whittlesea rabbits are seen, digging in the sandy soils.

You now slowly climb out of the fens onto the Breckland, another unique part of the British Isles.

Trains stop at Lakenheath Station on a more regular basis, as the station serves the USAF base at Lakenheath. An infrequent bus service is available at Hockwold.

**Follow the track, green and muddy in the middle section, bearing right at Pit Cottage and then follow the main track passing more houses on the right. Continue downhill, to an large house entrance on the left. Turn left (-by)(br-) through a bridle gate and, continue to more open countryside. Keep a watch for unique waymarks made out of tank tracks. At the end of the grassland, before the river and railway turn right (-br)(fp-) towards a pine coppice. Cross through a gate and follow a path in the trees on the right to a narrow track going right (-fp)(br-). Follow this track until a gap in the hedge on the left, where field fences converge and a fenced footpath is left in the centre of the fields (-br)(fp-). Follow the footpath to a fence, turn left around the fence and continue to the fence corner. The footpath follows the fence around but is**

obstructed by tall trees (-fp). Cross the ditch and into an open field (pp-). Cross the field towards the houses in the far distance keeping to the right of some trees ahead. Through a kissing gate and make for another gate in the right hand corner next to a wall. Through the kissing gate (-fp) and turn left onto a road to a passage (fp-) at the end of the road.

Many fine examples of old walls from fine very old herringbone, many types of brick, flint walling and modern concrete is seen along this road.

**Turn right down a passage and into Brandon High Street (-fp). To continue, go almost straight across down White Hart Lane.**

(For Brandon Railway Station turn left and follow the High Street over the river bridge to the level crossing; the station is on the right).

Brandon was the centre of England's oldest industry, flint knapping. The manufacture of neolithic flint tools, arrowheads and more recently gun flints for the British Army, was carried out locally. Demand for replacement flints for old muzzle loader guns, enables the industry to survive. Flints are still mined at Grimes Graves to the north of Brandon, and worked on site for the antique trade.

The local buildings show the use of a wide range of materials; from the local flint, chalk, plaster and brick; to the use of stone, especially for the river bridges.

There are a number of good eating places in Brandon, as the town acts as a pleasure centre for the Army and forestry workers. A variety of places to stay can be found.

There is an irregular train service from Brandon Station, to Norwich and Ely.

## BRANDON to HARLING ROAD - 25 km - 15m

### Forests and enclosed sandy fields

*It may be difficult to do this section in stages without recourse to a taxis or B & B en route, as bus services are poor. However a diversion into Thetford may be possible, but extends the journey. There are no pubs on the route.*

To continue, go down White Hart Lane (by-). Follow a tarmac lane at first, then a track, and then a path beside a flint wall. At the end of the definite path and last house, continue alongside the forest (-rb)(fp-) to a forest ride. At the ride turn left and follow the footpath past stables and onto a path defined by posts on the left on an approximate dividing line between the conifers and the natural woodland. Follow the track past scout camp sites and numbered posts, slowly bearing right at the end. Do not take any of the right turns onto tracks. Cross a wide forest ride and power lines, and follow the path bearing left at junctions to Santon Downham (-fp). Follow the road eastward to the village green. Cross the large green to the flint church, hidden behind trees on the left.

To the west of the Brecklands, chalk or "clunch" is often used in buildings, while in the north, carr stone, a local red brown stone occurs and is used. Bricks that came from the Thetford area were called Thetford Greys, also used locally.

The Thetford Forests are entirely man made. Planting began in 1992 to develop a strategic timber reserve. The main species are Scots and Corsican Pine and Douglas Fir. These provide 200,000 tonnes of timber a year. Corsican pine is used for replanting and 1.5 million seedlings are produced each year at Santon Downham nursery.

Call in at the Forestry Information centre to the north of the church in Santon Downham. There is plenty of information on the surrounding area, to make the walking through the sometimes monotonous stands of conifer off the route more interesting.

Forestry walks are published and cover a number of different areas and distances.

There is only a shop in Santon Downham.

**Follow the road to the right of the church, up a slight hill, to a track on the left just before the top. Follow the track (fp-) to the bottom of the hill, and then along a sandy track. Look for a track going left between fences of two fields, turn left and follow the track to cross a bridge over the River Little Ouse. Follow the path along the north bank of the river, bear left through copse of pines, and turn right along the track in front of the church at Santon.**

The term "staunch" was used to denote the place where there was a temporary dam in the river. These staunches were removed to allow the boats to pass, thus creating the first primitive locks. they occur frequently as ruins on the bank on most east Anglian rivers, notably the Nene.

**Continue to the church (-fp)(br-) bear left along a track and under the narrow and low railway bridge onto a track and turn to the right (-br)(rb-). Follow this flint and tarmac track through the conifer forest to the main road (-rb). Cross the road, turn right and follow your own way among the trees with the road in sight to the factory entrance on the right. (Cross to the other side of the main road to the factory entrance for easier walking, when the trees on the left run out or get too dense).**

(To walk to Thetford, follow the river bank all the way. Go past the factory entrance, down a track to the north of the railway to a crossing. Cross the line and follow the track keeping in sight of the river. Keep alongside the new forest all the way to a weir and then keep on the riverside path all the way to Thetford.)

**Opposite the factory entrance turn left down a sandy track (fp-), through more forest, past the rugby club, and house on the left, to open fields. Continue on this track to a road near Croxton (-fp). Cross the road and follow another road opposite up a hill.**

To the south is Thetford, a quiet old market town. In the past it was the capital town of Uffa, the first king of the East Angles. The Roman river crossing of the Icknield Way, the oldest trade route in

Britain, at Nun's Bridge is also near the mound of an old Iron Age fort, further fortified by the Normans. The area is now a park. It was the centre of a number of religious foundations, the most evident being the remains of Thetford Priory.

Later the town was an important industrial centre with iron, copper and pottery workings.

There are a number of good places to eat, and sleep in Thetford.

The forests abound with wildlife, depending on the varied stages of development. Open ground is utilised by woodcock and nightjar. Rides encourage butterflies such as ringlet, speckled wood, peacocks and skippers.

The lakes or meres of Breckland include Ring, Long, Fowl Mere and devils Punchbowl. Some of the meres are undersealed, and their depth remains fairly constant. Others, and the Devils' Punchbowl, is one of this kind, vary a great deal in depth according to the season, because of the links with the underground water resources in the chalk. A strange ring of mist known as the Devil's Nightcap often settles around the meres or damp places on autumn evenings.

**Follow the road to the top of the hill, and onto the level to where another tarmac road joins from the left. Take the forest track on the right, going eastward (Harling Drove) (uc-).**

(Do not stray from the track, as the Army have a gunnery range to the north and around to the west. Don't be surprised to see a tank barrel pointing out of the range or troops in the area).

**Follow the track (ur-) through the mixed forest. It is muddy in parts, but a diversion to firmer ground can be made into the trees. Keep on the track, narrow in places, but keep straight on through a belt of deciduous trees, until you reach the open ground of East Wretham Heath fenced on both sides. The heath is a nature reserve, so keep strictly to the track, and follow it to the main road. Leave the nature reserve, cross over the road and follow another track going eastward.**

East Wretham Heath contains all the aspects of the true "breck" landscape. The "meres" are empty during some summers, but full of water during others.

The Nature Reserve is a haven for a number of rare species of plant and animal life. Ironically the Army ranges to the north are also a valuable area for wildlife. This spills over into the adjacent woodland for the benefit of all.

In 1010 the last major battle between the Saxons and the Danes was probably fought on East Wretham Heath.

**Keep on the track through the forest and past an old railway. Continue on to a wide forest ride which runs north and south and across the railway, with a house adjacent to the railway (-uc) This is the Peddar's Way and North Norfolk Coastal Path (P-).**

The Peddar's Way long distance footpath is one of the Countryside Commission's last fully funded long distance footpaths. It runs from Knettishall Heath in the south to Wells-next-to-the-Sea in the north. The route continues as the North Norfolk Coastal Path all the way to Yarmouth. Another footpath - The Angles Way - completes the link of a circular walk around Norfolk.

The Peddar's Way is thought to have been used as both an Iron Age and Roman trackway. The cross country continuation and probably the longest single footpath in England, is now provided by the Icknield Way, a path following the chalk ridge to the Devon coast.

Having reached civilization you could continue along Peddar's Way and ample b&bs, but that depends on your future plans.

**Turn to the left along Peddar's Way (another Roman Road). Look for a narrow forest track at the end of the trees on the right just before the Gas Station (-P). Turn right (north east) along this narrow track (pp-) to the edge of the forest (-pp), turn right (br-)(Pb-) and continue along a track to an open field ahead. Turn left onto a track and continue alongside the field and then through the forest (-br)(-Pb)(pp-) to open fields (-pp). Turn right down a track on the field side of the forest (rb-) to the main road (A11) underpass. Follow**

**the tarmac road under the A11, then the track ahead to the railway; cross the railway and continue to Roudham hamlet. Join the lane (-rb) and turn east along the lane past a ruined church on the left and Roudham Hall.**

(A legal bridleway in fact passes through Roudham Hall grounds, but at Harling Road the Ministry of Defence built a store across the route, extinguishing the bridleway at that end.)

**Continue along the lane to the road junction at the end, turn left, and continue northward to Harling Road Station.**

This is the end, or the start, of the Hereward Way.

## European Route E2 details

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*E2	Welney [17]	Station (Manea), sh, p	27
*E2	Christchurch [25]	p	27
*W,E2	March [35]	Station, sh, p, b&b, tic	29, 30
 <b>MARCH [35] to PETERBOROUGH [67] <sup>1</sup></b>		 <b>32 km (20m)</b>	 <b>30 - 33</b>
*E2	Turves [46]	p	30
*NE2	Whittlesea [58]	Station, sh, p,	31
*NE2	Peterborough [67]	Station, sh, p, b&b, tic	32 - 34
 <b>PETERBOROUGH [67] to STAMFORD [93] <sup>1</sup></b>		 <b>26 km (16m)</b>	 <b>34 - 36</b>
*NE2	Castor	p	34
*NE2	Ailsworth	p	34
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 <b>STAMFORD [93] to OAKHAM [118] <sup>1</sup></b>		 <b>25 km (16m)</b>	 <b>37 - 39</b>
*MJE2	Easton-on-the-Hill [96]	sh, p	37
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MV	Oakham [118]	Station, sh, p, b&b, tic	38, 39

<sup>1</sup>

Route checked at highway junctions and some other selected places - 2007, walked 2004.

## ELY to MARCH - 35 km - 21m

### Rivers and horizons old and new, and endless peat fields

*Can be walked in two separate days of 17kms and 18kms stopping at Welney, (or train at Manea.) Irregular bus services connect Christchurch, with March and Welney and Little Downham with Ely. Pubs en route are: The Dun Cow, Christchurch; Lamb and Flag (open all day 'O3), Welney; The Plough, The Anchor, Little Downham, some may not be open lunchtime*

(To walk from the station, turn right out station and then left at the main road. Follow the roads north westwards to the top of the hill, bearing right to the cathedral.

Ely is dominated by its Cathedral which must be visited, even if you now have to pay. The money is well spent, it will ensure that this magnificent building is preserved for all to see as a beacon for miles around. The name Ely may well have come from the number of eels caught in the rivers and drains. For years tithes were actually paid in eels. The city also contains many other interesting buildings, mainly associated with the ecclesiastical dominance.

Although a City by virtue of the magnificent cathedral, the real atmosphere is one of a busy market town. Serving the agricultural villages around it contains all the appropriate services without the modern addition of chain stores and the like in the centre. Down at the bottom of the hill next to the river are a number of fine buildings, especially the old maltings, now a meeting place and hall.

Tarry awhile alongside the River Ouse, now busy with pleasure boats, but still able to retain that peaceful calm no doubt influenced by the cathedral high above on the hill.

There are many places eat, drink and stay in Ely, to suit most tastes.

There are regular railway services from the Station to Cambridge, Peterborough and Norwich. There is also a regular bus service to most surrounding towns and villages.

**The Hereward Way starts from the west door of the cathedral. With your back to the door start by crossing the road and length of the green in front, past the cannon and turn right onto the old A15. Almost immediately, turn left into Downham then West Fen Road and follow the pavement to the bypass. Cross carefully and follow the first drove on the right Hurst Lane (by-). Continue along this drove, in various states of surface and repair to the tarmac section (-by). Go up the hill into Chapel Lane to the main street of Little Downham.**

There are magnificent views of Ely Cathedral on a clear day from the top of Chapel Lane. These views will disappear for some while until you reach the Bedford Levels.

Tower Farm, to the west, was the summer palace of the bishops of Ely.

**Cross over the main street into the road opposite and continue through the housing estate to the end of the road. Turn right along a track between the back gardens (fp-) and a field, to the playing field. Turn left into the field and cross to the far left hand corner. Cross the fence to the left and follow the field edge to the path going downhill on the right hand side of a hedge. Follow this footpath to a wooded lane with the footpath in the centre. Keep straight on, and then into open fields and a path along side a dyke to a bridge. Cross the narrow bridge, and continue to the road (-fp). Turn right, cross a bridge and pass houses and barns. Turn left into the next wide drove(by-). Follow this drove across the railway, past a farm and to a road junction (Furlong Drove)(-by).**

Many of the old drove roads are now public rights of way. Prior to 1972 they were not included on the Definitive Map of the old Isle of Ely, but under a review of the Map in 1983 they have all become definitive. Most are very wide - 50 feet or more. In summer they are a haven for wildlife; in winter heavy tractors turn them into quagmires.

In a number of fields, "bog oak" is still being removed. These remains of old trees, not always oak, are remnants of an ancient forest, which was eventually choked and covered by vegetation - now the peat of today. Just past the railway crossing the fields either side of the drove are some of the last fields still with deep peat. Many of the others have now only inches of peat left, exposing the clay

sub-soil. Many farmers are now deep ploughing to mix what is left of the peat with the clay to try and reduce the loss of good farmland.

**Continue along the road opposite, Head Fen to Head Fen Farm. Cross the bridge, and immediately turn left (fp-) across a footbridge, and follow the dyke edge to the old pumping station at the end (-fp).**

The fields around Head Fen Farm, in the fens around Ely, are typical of those to be found in the black peat areas of the fens. Flat fields of peat are divided by deep dykes keeping the water table at the correct levels. Intensive agriculture is the norm with practically all the growing being carried out in an applied soup of chemicals. It is not advisable to fall into the drains, their colour shows that the water is not particularly safe.

**Cross the road and ascend the bank, (fp-) next to the Bedford Levels tidal section, turn right and follow the bank top for about 5km. The grass may be long in places, if so follow the road, but be careful as it is busy especially at the northern end (-fp)(br-)(-br).**

The Bedford Levels run for 25 miles between Denver Sluice in the north and Earith in the south. Straight as an arrow they hold vast quantities of flood water from the Ouse, preventing the flooding of the upper reaches of the river.

There are distant views of Ely Cathedral, floating on the skyline, from the top of the Level banks. Hence the name commonly used for the cathedral in the past - The Ship of The Fens.

In the spring and summer the same washes ring to the sounds of nesting waders, eagerly awaiting the abundant insects provided by the annual flooding of the washes in winter.

To the north of the road bridge lies the Wildfowl Trust Washes - in winter a haven for migratory wildfowl, especially Berwick and Whooper swans.

**At the road bridge turn left and cross the tidal Bedford Level towards Welney and carefully follow the road verge across two more bridges to the village itself, and the Lamb and Flag.**

During the winter, the washes are often flooded and therefore boots may have to be taken off for 2 km !!, or a lift arranged from a tractor or other high vehicle.

The first bridge you cross is tidal - up to Earith, a necessary engineering feature to prevent the flooding of the area around the Wash by the sea, the second is the drain for the washes in the centre of the Levels, the third, the drain for the surrounding fields. All this work was carried out in the mid 1600s, a marvel to the planning and engineering skills at the time.

Nearest railway station is at Manea, 5 km to the south. There is no convenient public transport between Welney and Manea, the hire of a taxi or offer of transport, may be the best solution. (To reach Manea station from Welney by road, follow the fen roads on the 1:50000 or 1:25000 OS maps. It is not one of the best journeys on foot). A shop and post office is down the Christchurch Road, B1100, to the west.

A stop may be made at the Lamb and Flag in Welney (open all day, every day in 2007). There used to be two more pubs in '83, one, The Old Three Tuns, practically still a beer house was on the Level bankside, but both are now closed.

**Pass the Lamb and Flag and continue on the eastern pavement alongside the main road to the right hand bend. Just around the bend look for the footpath that goes into the drive of a bungalow on the left across the road. Follow the footpath (fp-) to the right of a barn and through a narrow passage between the barn and trees. Continue alongside a ditch to the drove at the end, turn right (-fp)(rb-) and follow this drove, that turns to the left all the way to the road (-rb). Turn right and carefully follow the road for the next 3km. Pass through Tips End and pass the turning on the left to Manea. Pass Hole in the Wall Farm and take the next grass drove on the right (by-). Continue along this drove zig zagging towards Christchurch, pass the Dun Cow pub (-by) and onto the road.**

The water courses are subject to a number of local descriptions, by size, drain, dyke, leam and cut.

The drove entering Christchurch is the Norfolk and Cambridgeshire boundary.

**Cross directly over the main road, and follow the left hand pavement of the road ahead. At the fork keep left onto the minor road, Crown Road, which eventually turns into grass, then tarmac to the main road. Cross over and cross the 16ft drain bridge (fp-) onto a farm track. Continue along this track past farm buildings and onto a track in the fields. At the end of the raised section turn right and almost immediately left beside a dyke. Follow the dyke to the bridge next to the Well Fen Farm, with Rodham Farm in the distance.**

The raised section of the Fen Causeway ahead, is thought to be roman or earlier and part of a route across the fens from Peterborough to near Hockwold. Large sections were built on brushwood bundles, and traces of the roadway are still clearly marked in the flat fen country. One section can be seen to be clearly higher than the surrounding fields between Rodham and Well Fen Farm. Part of the old Causeway surface can be seen at the Flag Fen excavations near Peterborough.

The name Rodham Farm is derived from the word roddon, and indicates that it was built on one of the many river beds in the area - the Fen Causeway likewise.

**Cross the bridge, turn right and follow a track first made up then grass, eventually just a field edge path alongside a dyke, all the way to the River Nene.**

What a place to muse on the endless horizons which are a fitting backdrop to the reasons for doing the walk in the first place. However, a new sight and sound had encroached into the open vista - wind turbines - a cash crop for landowners, but not so appealing as far as solitude is concerned.

**Turn left and follow the river bank past a farm and pumping station, all the way towards March. At the end of the track and a bank of trees look for a kissing gate, go through this and keep to the river bank and then under the railway bridge. Follow a path on high ground but keeping the river in sight to the bridge on the right. Cross the bridge (-fp) and immediately turn left into Nene Parade, pass The Ship and into March near the Nene Bridge and war memorial.**

(To get to the Station turn right and go along Broad Street to the end; turn right and keep on the main road as it turns left, and then follow this road to the Station).

March was an "island" settlement dating from the iron age, but little is left of the past, mostly due to the convenience of modern buildings.

March, like Peterborough, was a large railway centre; the Whitemoor Marshalling Yards were at one time the largest in Europe. Sadly the Yards are now closed and have become in part home to a new prison.

To the south of the town is the 15th century church of St Wendreda, containing a magnificent double hammer beam roof. The roof is adorned with almost 200 wooden angels, carved in oak and having open wings; an unusual form as other examples of roof angels have folded wings.

There are a number of eating places in March, offering a varied selection of menus. There are also hotels and shops and pubs, the ones en-route are; The Acre (south bank of river at the back of the shops); The Ship (Nene Parade).

There is a regular British Rail train service from the Station, connection with Peterborough and Ely. Regular bus services connect with Peterborough.

## **MARCH to PETERBOROUGH - 33 km - 21m**

### **Wide open sky, old rivers, drains**

*Can be walked in two separate days of 19kms and 14kms stopping at Whittlesea. Irregular bus services connect Coates and Turves with March and Peterborough. Pubs en-route are: The Three Horseshoes, Turves: New Crown Inn; The George; The Falcon; The Hero of Aliwal, (near the start of the Bower);The Railway - Whittlesea,*

*but check opening hours.*

You can leave March by two routes, one through the park and one past old buildings. For the park route, cross the river bridge and immediately turn right (fp-) between a shop and river. Follow this path to the bypass, where you join other route at the underpass. For the more interesting route leave March by the narrow road, West End, on the north side of the river going west.

All along West End are a number of nice old houses, of various styles, some Dutch, and some constructed with narrow "Queen Anne" bricks.

Follow this road all the way to the bypass, turn left and go under the underpass (fp-) and follow the cycleway around the marina. Where the cycleway turns right follow the path around the Marina towards the River Nene bank, and then to the top. At a fence on the top turn right and follow the footpath off the bank and alongside trees, an old farm and eventually a bungalow, onto the road at the end (-fp). Turn left at the road and follow the road past a factory on the left to a track on the left leading to a small pumping station. Follow this track (pp-) to the river bank again. Turn right (-pp)(fp-) and follow the bank, past an old farm, across the gardens of three houses to an old road that used to pass over the bridge across the river.

(Note: The towpath originally crossed the river near the factory complex and continued to March on the other side of the river. However the crossing was made by using the barge as the bridge for the horse, and therefore there was no bridge for walkers.)

Go up onto the old overgrown road, and across it to the other side, and follow the field edge on the right to a track (-fp)(pp-). Turn left and follow this track to Top Hakes Farm (-pp)(fp-). Just past the farm buildings turn right and follow a track, Hakes Drove, that goes out into the fen, gradually becoming less distinct then more made up.

You cross the Greenwich Meridian half way along.

Follow Hake's Drove, grass in the middle section, (-fp) along Quaker's Drove to the main road at the end.

Along the way notice the changes in the topography of the fields. Raised and light areas of soil will be seen standing out from the dark fen soil. These areas were once river beds containing silt. These twisting routes of old waterways, known locally as "roddons" or "rodham" did not shrink as much as the peat, and therefore appear today and can be traced across many fields. It can be seen that before the drainage of the fens, waterways were random and widespread. The whole area was a maze of dank creeks amongst reeds and willows.

Throughout the fens houses were built on these "roddons" as the foundations were reliable and more solid than the peat. However some builders did not estimate the width of the roddon correctly, and today many buildings lean backwards at alarming angles.

Most of Hake's Drove is below mean sea level, so the Earl of Bedford and his Adventurers should be thanked for their fen drainage schemes.

At the road junction turn right and follow the road through Turves, over the railway, past the Three Horseshoes and continue to the 20ft drain. Turn left and follow the road alongside the drain, keep straight on into a minor road, under a railway bridge and continue on the bank top (br-) past another bridge. Look for a farm (Angle Bridge Farm) on the left, and a grass drove leading towards the farm and the road. Follow this drove to the road (-br). Turn right and follow the road over Angle Corner bridge, go up onto the bank top on the left and where the road turns right, keep straight on, on the bank top. (fp-) Follow the bank top past a farm across stiles and fields to a road at Turningtree bridge (-fp).

Waterways were usually classified by their width in feet, and therefore are known as "... Foot". Today their original width has changed as a result of the needs of the drainage of the area.

At Angle Bridge, Whittlesea Dyke crosses the junction of the Twenty Foot River and Bevills Leam.

The word Drove is often used in the fens, and it usually denotes a wide grass track. These droves were used as highways for the movement of cattle between towns.

The names in the area conjure up the mystic nature of the fens. Names such as Wype Doles, The Turves, Birds Hundred, Adventurer's Fen, Oldeamere and Botany Bay to name but a few. All have their derivations - and many are found in books on the locality especially those by Edward Storey. He captures the mood of the once flooded area inhabited by a strange and reserved people, many of whose idiosyncrasies still exist.

Note also on the old 1:25000 OS maps, the "BH" symbol. These "beer houses" existed, it seems, every couple of miles, supplying the workers with their daily needs.

**Cross the last stile, turn right and follow the road joining another major road. Keep straight on past factories, and Whittlesea station. Turn left down the next road on the left, Aliwal Road, to the lock at Ashline. Turn right onto the towpath (fp-) and follow the path towards Whittlesea. Just as you reach the houses turn right over a small stone bridge, (the Hero of Aliwal pub is to the left) follow the path in front of a large house, bearing left past the health centre, (-fp) the Falcon Hotel and onto the road. Look for a small passage on the right into the churchyard, (fp-) go down this and around the left hand side of the church into the market square (-fp).**

Whittlesea was at one time a larger town than Peterborough and, because of its position on the edge of the flooded fen, was a thriving market centre for the area. The railways came to Peterborough - Lord Burghley would not allow them in Stamford - and therefore Peterborough grew at the expense of Whittlesea, and Stamford, thank goodness.

The ending of town names in "ey" or "ea" derives from the original old English name for an "island".

A number of houses and a pub, still retain thatched roofs - the reeds once a common product of the fens. More modern buildings passed en route are now becoming rarer, the wartime "pill boxes".

Sir Harry Smith, victor at battle of Aliwal in East Punjab during the Sikh wars in 1846, and Governor of the Cape of Good Hope from 1847 - 52, was born in a house near the Falcon Hotel. He lends his name to the local school, and pub the Hero of Aliwal.

There is a town trail for those who wish to discover more of Whittlesea.

Food is available in Whittlesea, at pubs, hotels and cafes. There are a number of places to stay overnight, but it is advisable to check first.

Fairly regular British Rail train services stop at Whittlesea Station, connecting with Peterborough and Ely. Regular bus services connect Whittlesea with Peterborough.

**Leave the market square along High Causeway, past shops, across the bypass, past the thatched pub New Crown Inn, and into Arnolds Lane (fp-). Continue to the main road (-fp), turn left to the Moreton's Fork (pub now close but look at the window !!), go straight across into Stonalds Road, and follow the road to the end. (Fen Causeway and Roman Road). At the metal fence turn right (fp-) and follow the raised track around the edge of the brick fields.**

The River Nene becomes tidal at the Dog in a Doublet, over in the distance to the right, with the outfall at Sutton Bridge 25 km to the north in the Wash.

Fenland drainage required a large number of pumping stations to lift water from the lower levels "uphill" into the main channels and rivers. Windmills were used at first, but these were eventually replaced by steam engines. Many good examples still exist, but not now in full working order (e.g. Stretham near Ely). Diesel engines, and now electric pumps continue to provide power to keep the fields drained, so that the fens have become a vast "grow bag" for the provision of most of the root vegetables we eat.

The many brickyard chimneys seen in the distance, are part of a vital industry of the area. The name "Fletton", a type of brick, is derived from one of the brickyards near Peterborough. Many old yards have now been closed, and been replaced by modern yards built in the bottom of the old clay pits, like those at Whittlesea.

Another large new industry, seen and smelt among the brickyard chimneys, is potato chip

manufacture.

The fields to the north of the footpath are flooded in Winter, providing free skating facilities for all those who can keep on their feet !!

**At the footpath junction turn right off the raised path (-fp)(pp-) and follow the track towards a new curved bridge, cross (-pp) and turn left onto the raised bank (fp-)(N). Follow this bank past Flag Fen in the distance, a sewage farm and rugby club.**

Recent excavations at Flag Fen, on the right before the tarmac road have revealed an extensive Iron Age settlement complete with semi preserved dwellings. These have been reconstructed to show what the conditions were like in the area at that time. There is also an exposed section of the Fen Causeway - of the same age, and used by the Romans, showing the construction. This causeway can be followed in many places on the Hereward Way.

**Follow the bank to a bridge on the left across the Nene, do not cross . Descend from the bank, (-fp) cross a small bridge and follow the river side under the parkway bridge, past the Key Theatre and Custom House to the Town Bridge at Peterborough.**

The course of the Old River Nene can be seen under the last black bridge to the south as it flows on to March and Denver. The river is navigable through the fen waterways to the Ouse at Ely.

The meadows between the river banks, which are flooded in winter with the excess water from the River Nene, provide stock with good grazing in the summer. They are also a valuable site for nesting and migrating birds that require the special flooding treatment to provide their insect food.

The fens have been subject to various drainage schemes since Roman times. Their Car (Karr) (Cnuts) Dyke passes to the east of Peterborough, and still exists in sections today. The narrow channel to the west of Fitzwilliam Bridge is one of these sections. 13th century drains such as Moreton's Leam were the forerunners on an increasing activity in land drainage culminating in the present system, finished in the 17th century, and organised by the Ashley family who were at the time the Earls of Bedford. The title of Duke of Bedford was not conferred until later. Hence the Bedford Levels.

The main interest in Peterborough is the 12/13th century Cathedral, found behind the arch in Cathedral Square. The town, now trebled in size by the New Town Development, retains a small number of ancient buildings dotted around, mostly near the Cathedral. The Museum contains a number of interesting items from the surrounding area.

Longthorpe Tower is a fine example of a fortified house, and can be found to the north of the Rowing Course.

There are plenty of hotels, pubs and other eating, and resting places of all types in and around Peterborough.

Peterborough has one of the best railway services, with excellent links to London and Scotland. Services also link with Birmingham to the west, Norwich and Cambridge to the east.

Excellent inter-city coach services exist especially to and from London.

Peterborough is probably the best base for the Hereward Way walk.

(To get to the Station, either follow the pedestrian walkways through the town and into Queensgate, taking the western exit from the shopping centre (first floor past John Lewis) to the station; or turn off the riverside path before the railway bridges, and follow a track (River Lane) to the A47 bridge, thence north to the station).

## PETERBOROUGH to STAMFORD - 26 km - 16m

### Rivers, railways and roads, roman and recent

*Can be walked in two separate days of 15kms and 11kms stopping at Wansford. Irregular bus services connect Barnack and Wansford to Stamford and Peterborough, and Castor, Ailsworth and Alwalton with Peterborough, and times must be checked beforehand. No pubs are on the route but there are ones at Barnack, Castor and Alwalton, mentioned in the text, but check opening hours.*

Starting at the City side of the Town Bridge, on the western side look for a small alley - Hills Yard. Walk through the passage (pp-) and through the back of a supermarket and flats, keeping to the left until you see a footbridge across the river between two blocks of flats. Do not cross, but go to the left and turn right underneath the bridge and follow the riverside path under railway bridges. Continue along the bank, (-pp)(fp-) soon becoming narrow and grass near the river, cross a wooden footbridge over a cut to the rowing course. Pass the rowing course and under the parkway bridge, pass the lock and onto the golf course beside the river. At the end of the course turn right (-fp)(pp-) into a small lane and then almost immediately left into woodland. There are two choices of route, one high and one low, but they both follow the river around a bend to Ferry Meadows bridge (-pp).

To the left is Ferry Meadows Park, a pleasure ground provided as part of the Peterborough Development Corporation's recreational policy. The Nene Way was created also by the Corporation, following a mixture of definitive rights of way and long sections of permissive paths under management agreements.

At the bridge do not cross but keep on the north side through gates into a grass field. Go along the bank and then diagonally up the bank into a thicket and down again to the riverside path, under the railway and along the bank (-fp)(pp-) to the mill stream.

In the field above the Ferry Bridge are two stones named "Robin Hood" and "Little John", believed to have been erected in the bronze age.

Turn right and cross over the bridge to the other side of the stream.

Alwalton, a pub and hotels are over the lock on the left, and about a mile on well marked and used paths and roads.

Follow the stream to another footbridge(-pp)(fp-), cross this and follow the track to the mill. Go through the gate, turn right on the access road, and immediately left (fp-), cross a stile and out onto a high level path above the river. At a stile next to a gate, turn left (fp-) on a path going down off the higher level, cross a bridge and around the right hand side of an ox bow lake to rejoin the river bank. Follow the river bank, across a bridge to a stile onto a track near the railway on the right and river on the left.

Castor and Ailsworth villages, where a Roman pottery industry (now excavated) was sited, can be approached by a number of footpaths.

Castor is a charming little village, now bypassed, containing many attractive old stone houses with thatch and stone roofs. The church is unique, as is the remains the walls of a Roman Villa complex that once covered almost the whole of the eastern part of Castor.

To the south across the river is Dvrobrivae an important roman camp and junction of many Roman Roads.

There are shops and pubs in Castor and Ailsworth, all easily accessible by footpaths that are marked. The pubs are; The Royal Oak; The Fitzwilliam Arms (Italian Restaurant) and The Prince of Wales Feathers.

Keep on the north side of the River Nene (fp-), and follow the path through gates alongside fields to the weir (-fp)(pp-) then to the railway. Descend from the railway and turn right under the bridge (-pp)(fp-). (Keep straight on for Wansford station and a train back to Peterborough, when running - private line).

The Nene Way is **16 miles** long, starts **at.....** and ends at the light houses on the Wash. It makes an ideal challenge walk and training ground for long distance walking. The Hereward Way follows part of the full length.

Follow the broadwalks then field to a bridge, used if the field is wet, to a stile. Cross to the corner of the wood and turn right towards a stile. Go over, (-fp) turn left into Lovers Lane and follow the lane to the road, turn left and almost immediately right through a kissing gate (fp-). Follow the narrow path to a gate into a field, follow the track westwards towards the old railway line. Just as you join the edge of the old line turn left down through old stone workings back to the river bank. Follow the bank across a bridge (-fp)(pp-)and long field, cross stiles and above a pumping station to the entrance road to a car and lorry park (-pp)(-N).

(To go to Wansford turn right into the car park and along the Nene Way to the end, bear left (pp-) next to the toilets, to reach the bridge under the A1. Go under the bridge and turn right to follow a track up to the road at the top (-pp). Turn left here and follow the footway to the church, turning left (-N) to cross the old bridge into Wansford).

The 16th century bridge in Wansford was once the crossing for the A1 road. It now offers a quiet aspect of peaceful grandeur. Queen Victoria slept at the 17th century Haycock Inn. Petanque is played in the grounds of the Haycock on most summer weekends.

There is a shop in Wansford as well as two pubs and an hotel; The Crown and The Paper Mills and The Haycock Hotel.

Turn right towards the very busy A47, and carefully cross over onto the entrance road to Sacrewell Farm Park. Follow this road (pp-) to the Park (café), (br-) past the camping site (br-)(fp-) and keeping on the roadway make for the Lodge buildings on the right. Go all around the left hand side of the buildings onto a track, bearing left on the track into fields. Follow this track on the right hand side of a hedge to the end, turn right along the track, then left and right around a field edge to a large tree. Go through the gap in the hedge and diagonally across a field to the wood. Cross a bridge and through the woodland path to an open field. Cross to field to the right hand side of a hedge, and follow this to a track. Cross the track, through a gate, around the right hand side of a house, along the entrance track to a kissing gate at the road. Through the gate and turn left onto the road. After about 50m turn left through a gate (br-) into a field and follow the raised roman road - Ermine Street.

You now follow one of the best sections of the Roman Road to the west of Walcot Hall, raised above the surrounding fields, you can capture the feel of the roman soldier marching to his camp at Dvrobrivae.

Cross the field to a gate, along a hedge, open field and then wall, to join the raised section of roman road alongside the high wall to Walcot Hall. At the end go through the gates and onto the road (-br).

(To get to Barnack, follow the wall (fp-)on the right just after the white gates, keeping it on the right to the end, where it joins the village road; (-fp) turn left there and follow the roads bearing to the right past to the Millstone pub - no shop now in village.

To the east is Barnack with many old buildings of stone, quarried from the surrounding sites. This stone was also used for the cathedrals at Ely and Peterborough, and some of the Cambridge colleges. You pass by the Hills and Holes, now a nature reserve and home to many orchids and other rare plants. Previously the pits were the site of the Barnack stone quarries. The remains of an old windmill can be seen on your left, most villages in the surrounding area had one, to prepare the abundant grain for bread flour.

Continue along the road past a road on the right, and at the road junction go straight over into a field, (fp-) again following the old roman road. Cross the field then alongside the old road on your right to the wood. Go straight through the wood on the track, ignore the tracks in the middle. Keep on the same line as you took through the wood across a large field, eventually cross a track and another field to a copse. Cross stiles, copse and a bridge to enter Burghley Park. Keep on the field side of a large ditch and wall, past horse jumps, to a large stone gate. Turn left over a stile and then immediately right to follow the tarmac road between the golf course on the left and roman road on the right. Follow this road to the main road. (-fp) Turn right along the main road and follow the footway down hill. Turn left into the first road on the left - First Drove, Wothorpe. Then after 50m across a stile on the right (fp-). Go down the field across stiles,

bridges and through gates bearing right in the last field to a kissing gate at the A43 (-fp). Cross straight over the A43 into the road ahead Wothorpe Road, and follow this carefully watching for the bridge over the railway on the left. (To get to the station, turn left just after the bridge down a narrow alley.) Keep straight on along the road ignoring all left and right turns to a bridge across the River Welland. Cross into Stamford Meadows.

Tarry awhile in Stamford, - again a quiet but busy old town - built of stone and financed by the proceeds of the 16th century wool trade -Stamford cloth was renowned throughout Europe. Settled by the Romans, it contains many old buildings, churches and numerous hotels and pubs and eating places, enough to suit most tastes.

Accommodation is also available to suit most pockets, and can be arranged usually at short notice.

If time is available, visit Burghley House, one of England's greatest Elizabethan buildings.

There are regular services to and from Stamford Station, on the line connecting Peterborough and Birmingham. Regular bus services run locally, as well as a good express service to and from London and Scotland.

## STAMFORD to OAKHAM - 25 km - 16m

Quintessentially England - shire country, rolling hills, woods and stone buildings.

*Can be walked in two separate days of 14kms and 11kms stopping at Empingham. Regular bus services follow the main road from Oakham to Stamford via Empingham and to Stamford, to and from Ketton and Easton On the Hill. Pubs en route are; The Grainstore (Oakham Brewery); The Railway, Station Approach; The Griff Inn; The Wheatsheaf, Northgate; The Old House Tavern, Station Road: **Oakham:** Noel Arms, **Whitwell:** White Horse, **Empingham:** The Railway, Northwick Arms, **Ketton:** The Blue Bell, **Easton on the Hill.** Many pubs are not open weekday lunchtime.*

Starting in Stamford Meadows with your back to the town, walk west away from the town through the meadows (br-)(J-)(M-). Go through gates and across fields towards the raised A1. Cross a metal bridge, (-br)(fp-) under the A1, and across the railway. Follow the footpath across a wet area, field (fp-)(pp-) and then track uphill alongside a wood (-pp)(fp-). Cross stiles to the road next to the church (-fp). Turn left and follow Church Street down and uphill to a road and memorial at the top of the hill.

Take a long look at the old stone buildings in the village of Easton-on-the-Hill where Collyweston stone roofs are a feature. The roofing stone is once again being mined locally in Collyweston by the old traditional methods. It takes years to obtain the correct stone as it is all split by water and frost.

Turn right, pass the Blue Bell pub and keep straight on for a while into a gradually less made up road (br-) - Keton Drift. Just before a gate at the end of the track turn left (-br)(fp-) and follow the footpath diagonally down hill across fields and through hedges and stile onto a road (-fp). Turn right and cross Colleyweston Bridge and the River Welland, and follow the road uphill to Geeston. At the top of the hill keep straight on into Geeston Road, the minor road, and look for a footpath (fp-) on the left across the railway. Cross the bridge, and follow the path through gardens and housing estate to the road at the bottom of the hill (-fp). Go straight over, cross the footbridge and follow the pavement to the church.

The stone houses and roofs of Ketton are typical of the local construction. The church in Ketton is worth a visit especially to see if one qualifies for any of the charities listed in the porch !!

Another pub can be found in Ketton on the Stamford Road - the Northwick Arms, as well as a shop, by the pub.

Pass the Railway pub and immediately turn right up Chapel Lane (fp-) and follow this lane bearing left (-fp) down a small passage to the small village square and memorial. Turn left, cross the road and turn right down an access road - The Green - just before the main road junction. At the top of the road turn right and follow the estate road to the end, keeping a tall wall on the right. Follow a footpath (fp-) alongside the wall to the end, turn left and follow the track into a large field. Go through the first kissing gate and cross the field generally in a right diagonal direction - you may have to use the well worn paths and change direction in the middle of the field. Look for a wood on the right in the distance and make for the stile in that direction in the hedge. Cross over and turn left onto a track going uphill. N.B. From 2007 - 12 there will be various temporary diversions around the new quarry workings - please follow the waymarks and re-join the route at "to the edge of the quarry workings". Follow this track to the top of the hill, over the top and down to an old windpump. Cross a field and stiles to the edge of the quarry workings. Cross stiles and two more fields to the edge of a wood, then the edge of a farm yard and to a road at the top of the hill. Go over the stile (-fp) and immediately turn right through a gate (br-) and follow the field edge down to the main road (-br). Cross straight over (by-) and follow the track down to a footbridge (-by)(fp-), cross and join a road ((-fp)(by-) to the right of a house. Bear left and follow this road for about 300m to a footpath on the left. Go over the stile (fp-) and bridge to a stile into a housing estate (-fp). Keep on the lower road to the first uphill turn. Turn right uphill, then left into a cul de sac. Go along the footpath at the end and into another road. At the end turn right then left into a narrow footpath. Follow the footpath out into another road in front of thatched cottages, and to the church.

The 13th century church of St. Peter contains a beautiful double piscina (stone basins), and a triple sedilia, as well as fragments of medieval glass.

Turn left around the church, then turn right on the footpath alongside the main road. Look for the first minor road on the left, and cross the main road. Follow this minor road and keep straight on onto a footpath (fp-)

between houses, next to No 15. Continue over a stile into a field, bear left to a stile in the corner of the field, cross and turn right to a stile into a small wood. Cross a bridge and follow the path in the wood to an open field (-fp)(pp-). Cross a stile and keeping to the right of the dam in front, cross another stile and ascend to the right hand side of the dam.

The village of Normanton was covered by the water and the church only remains.

Cross a stile on the left into a carpark and keep straight on near the water's edge to the surfaced path around Rutland Water. Go through gates, and follow the path around the inlet that contains the sailing club. Just before the main sailing club, turn right onto the club entrance road up to the access road to Whitwell.

To join the Viking Way and access to Whitwell turn right and follow the exit road leading to the church, then following the small alley to the south of the church to the very busy A606. The pub is on the opposite side of the road, and route of the Viking Way. A bus service runs between Oakham and Stamford, stopping at Whitwell.

To continue to Oakham, turn right then left into the carpark and onto the perimeter footpath around the water. Follow the path through the woods and into another carpark. For views of the water and Hambledon, ascend the steep bank on the left to the perimeter fence.

Across the water on the imposing island is Hambledon village; in fact it is connected to the mainland by a small strip of land. Rutland Water is a popular centre for fishing, sailing or just walking and cycling around the edge of the water enjoying the views.

All paths and tracks within the Rutland Water boundary are permissive, with only a few definitive links to the adjoining countryside - a great pity, since many miles of right of way were submerged, with no compensation.

To the north of Rutland Water is seen the imposing 17th Century Burley Manor.

The Viking Way is a long distance footpath from Oakham in the south, to the Humber Bridge in the north.

Follow the fence around to the right, down to the carpark exit road and continue through the wood to the road at the top of the hill. Turn left down the road to a gate on the right, and just before the water, through the gate on the right and follow the footpath past the Barnsdale Hall Hotel and holiday cottages, to a gate near the main road (-pp). Cross, turn left and follow the tarmac path, watch out for cycles, all the way to the Hambledon Road on the left. Turn right (fp-) just before the road to Hambledon into the sewage works entrance and follow the track, then footpath to the right of the works. Continue to and zig zag through the old barns and cottage, turn left (-fp) and follow estate footpaths across the bypass and estate roads straight through a new estate, then Woodland View to the main road. Turn left and follow the footway to the road junction. Cross the junction into a small park (fp-) and follow the diagonal path to the church. Keep to the left of the church and at the end turn right and onto the road (-fp). Go straight across into Northgate and continue to the end. Turn right to Oakham station and Grainstore Brewery.

Oakham, County town of Rutland (used to be in Leicestershire), still retains its market town charm; with stocks, a market cross, and Oakham School as notable features. Visit the Castle remains, especially the Great Hall, the finest of its kind in England. The museum has in particular, a collection of horse shoes, made from centuries old custom of every passing Peer leaving a horseshoe. Rutland Park, a working farm, is stocked with a number of rare breeds of animals.

To leave Oakham the best service for the walker is by rail, there being regular services to and from Oakham Station. Services are available between Peterborough and Birmingham, with connecting trains to most sections of the Hereward Way.

There are several pubs in Oakham serving good food and beer, especially the Brewery at the station. What better way to finish - if licencing hours allow - but that's another story and another part of conservative Britain. There are also other unlicensed eating places in the main town. There are also a number of places to stay overnight, from simple "bed and breakfast", to "starred" hotels.



## The Walker and the Law

Most of the law associated with walking away from tarmac roads, and in the countryside, is quite simple and easy to follow. It is the same law that is used to control pedestrians and traffic on the roads and footways in towns. There are few problems over the use of these town footways, as there is a strict check on obstruction and safety. However, the situation is different in the countryside, where it is quite common to find that a particular legal route cannot be used because it is not able to be found, or it is obstructed.

**Public Rights of Way (Definitive)** - These are classified as **footpaths, bridleways, restrictive byways (old RUPPs) and byways.**

**Footpaths** can only be used by pedestrians, with dogs, prams etc;

**Bridleways** by pedestrians, horseriders and pedal cycles;

**Restrictive Byways (old RUPPs)** by all bridleway traffic and horse drawn carriages etc, **motorised vehicles** are not allowed by the law;

**Byways** by all traffic including motor vehicles.

These classifications refer to the respective rights of passage over the surface of the right of way.

1. The location of the "Definitive" rights of way are recorded on the Definitive map, held in each County Council Office. They may also be found in other locations such as libraries, town Halls, and are recorded on the Ordnance Survey (OS) Explorer and Landranger maps.

These rights of way recorded on the definitive map cannot be lost by lack of use. However, they may be diverted, or extinguished, by a number of legal means. There is a fairly comprehensive procedure that ensures that all interested persons have an opportunity to object to any alterations to the rights of way that may affect them. The local Group of the Ramblers' Association keeps an keen eye on these changes, and takes all steps to ensure that the public retains the best possible network of rights of way.

In addition to these "definitive" rights of way, there may be others not on the definitive map, but having a legal right to be used. However, in these cases, it is up to the person claiming the right to prove that one exists. The procedure to claim a right of way is fairly simple, but certain tests should be applied first. The right of way should have been used for at least 20 years, and not subject to any restrictions by the landowner. It should be a defined track, not a number of paths across open land. The actual legal process of placing a claim on record should only be carried out after studying the legal requirements, and preferably after advice from the Ramblers' Association or Open Spaces Society.

2. In order to provide a more suitable route for both the walker and the landowner, certain "permissive" paths are available in certain areas. These paths can be used only with the permission of the landowner, and have no legal rights for the walker, attached to them. Certain of these paths are obtained under management agreements, but most are freely given as part of the cooperation between the walker and landowner. A typical example is the track around Rutland Water. Others are "de facto", that is on land that has open access on tracks such as Forest Enterprise land.
3. The term "Tarmac Road" covers a number of different types of road or track. Most are used every day by vehicles, but many in the countryside are known as unclassified roads. It is difficult to determine the location of these unclassified roads, except from the Highway Authority's maps. They are all public rights of way in themselves, and can be used freely as part of the public highway.

## Obstructions

Walking in the countryside would be simple if all involved obeyed the law. However in many cases paths are obstructed in one way or the another. The most serious problem in East Anglia is ploughing. The farmer has the legal right to plough, all except field edge rights of way, but is required by law to reinstate the route ploughed over without delay. Many farmers do not reinstate and therefore the walker is faced with two options - struggle over the

ploughed legal route, or find the nearest alternative, usually the field edge. However the legal route should be kept to whenever possible.

Other obstructions take many forms. The physical lack of stiles, gates and bridges often leads to doubt over the actual route of the right of way. Stiles and gates should be provided by the landowner and kept in full repair. Bridges are the responsibility of the Highway Authority, and are often missing in the fens as a result of their removal during drain repairs.

Fingerposts to mark the start of a right of way from a tarmac road, are now common, (rare in '83), as are waymarks along the route. However most of the route of the **Hereward Way** is now provided with waymarks and fingerposts. These have been installed by the Ramblers' Association. The **Hereward Way** is distinctly marked with the "Tiger" and "Hereward" logo. Vandals however often remove them at crucial places, often in urban areas.

Obstructions due to vegetation, ranging from growing crops to overgrown hedges are less common now. The landowner has a duty to prevent these obstructions interfering with the right of way user. Should the legal route be impossible to follow because of obstruction, then the walker can find the nearest alternative route, - but take care not to do any damage. However this does not mean that you can walk anywhere in the countryside - keep to the legal rights of way whenever possible.

Other obstructions take the form of animals such as bulls (take the advice of the National Farmers Union, and keep well clear of all bulls), misleading "Private" signs, and verbal information often freely given by the land occupier and their agents - often vocal dogs.

All obstructions should be reported as soon as possible to the Highway Authority, who have a legal duty to ensure that they are removed.

## Bibliography

### Books of walks in the area adjoining the Hereward Way.

Walks in East Anglia I (Norfolk and Suffolk)  
Walks in East Anglia II (Cambridgeshire and Essex)  
Icknield Way - a Walker's Guide

Viking Way (Leicestershire)  
The Peddar's Way

Nene Way  
Santon Downham Forest Trail  
Country Walks around Peterborough  
Country Walks around Peterborough  
Discovering Cambridgeshire Woodlands  
Bishops Way (leaflet)  
Woodman's Way (leaflet)  
Thetford Forest Park (leaflet)  
Macmillan Way  
Rutland Round  
Jubilee Way  
Fen Rivers Way

### Other background books and information

Portrait of the Fen Country  
Introduction to the Black Fens  
The Cambridgeshire Fens  
Map of Roman Britain (3rd Edition)  
Buses in Cambridgeshire (Free)  
Rights of Way: A Guide to Law and Practice

Prickwillow Guide

Bruce Galloway  
Bruce Galloway  
Icknield Way Association  
(Cambridge Group RA)  
Leicestershire County Council  
Bruce Robinson  
(Norfolk Area RA)  
Peterborough City Council  
Forestry Commission  
Peterborough City Council  
Peterborough City Council  
Cambridgeshire County Council  
Cambridgeshire County Council  
Cambridgeshire County Council  
Forestry Commission  
Macmillan Fund  
CPRE  
Ramblers' Association  
Cambridgeshire County Council

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Open Spaces Society