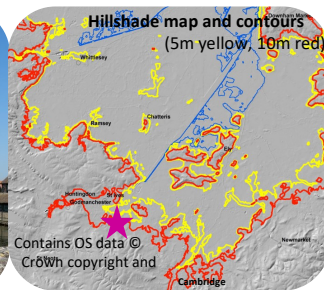
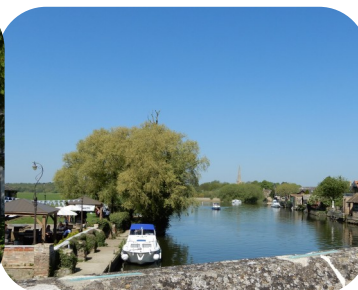


# The Fen Edge Trail St Ives to Swavesey via Fenstanton and Fen Drayton

6.1 miles (9.8 km)

*'I like the  
variety of  
interest on this  
walk'*

Nick, Cambridgeshire  
Geological Society  
Geosites team



## The route: 'down the Valley of the Great Ouse and across its floodplain'

This walk is the first one on the section of the Trail between the famous market town of **St Ives** and the city of **Cambridge**, several miles to the south-east. Starting on the **iconic limestone bridge** in its attractive riverside setting, the Trail turns east to travel down the valley and across **flood meadows** to pass through the villages of **Fenstanton** and **Fen Drayton**. Once past the marina near St Ives, you descend below the 5 metre contour for the rest of the walk, except where **River Terrace sands and gravels** have created higher, and therefore drier, land on which the settlements are located. Flood waters continue to create fertile pastures in the valley, although these are now replaced in many areas by lakes formed from excavated gravel pits. In the **RSPB Fen Drayton Lakes Nature Reserve**, a large area is being transformed into a mosaic of wetland habitats reminiscent of the once extensive, wildlife-rich marshes and wet meadows that once covered the river's floodplain and adjacent fenland. Since 1950, considerable development has taken place in St Ives, as it also has in Fenstanton and Swavesey, and to a lesser degree in Fen Drayton but it is still possible to see clues to the local history and the landscape setting of the original settlements. Generally, most buildings are located higher than 5 metres above sea level. **St Ives and the three villages all deserve return visits to explore more of their history and a whole day could be spent at Fen Drayton Lakes Nature Reserve exploring for wildlife.**



*Photos: 2.2f View across Wilhorn Meadow; 10.1f House with bridge over ditch in Fen Drayton; 1.4f View upriver past Dolphin Hotel: 9a.2f Fen Drayton church; 1.3f View of chapel from the Quay; 7.1f Oldest house in Fenstanton; 8.1f Fenstanton church; 8.2f 'Capability Brown' memorial; 9a.1f Lock up and ditch in Fen Drayton.*

**Practicalities** As with all of the walks along the Fen Edge Trail, you can complete the full length of any walk or choose a short or long round trip option, or just visit some of the places on the route. Two shorter walks can be taken using Fenstanton or Fen Drayton as finish or end points. Alternative paths along the river can be used for a round **trip from St Ives or from Swavesey**. The walk is divided into numbered parts as shown on the two maps. Photos are shown in the order they are seen except for those on this front page (f). The walk links with the Ouse Valley Way and the Greenwich Meridian Trail. The Norris Museum in St Ives has displays on local fossils and geology [www.norrismuseum.org.uk](http://www.norrismuseum.org.uk). For RSPB Fen Drayton Lakes info [www.rspb.org.uk/days-out/reserves/fen-drayton-lakes](http://www.rspb.org.uk/days-out/reserves/fen-drayton-lakes).

**Length of walk** (one way) approx. 6.1 miles (9.8 km) plus additional options. Walking guide time 3hrs plus stops. Grid ref for start TL312711. Maps O.S. Explorer 225. Free, easy to use online geology map viewer on [www.bgs.ac.uk/map-viewers/bgs-geology-viewer](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/map-viewers/bgs-geology-viewer).

**Transport and services** The **Guided Bus** stops at **St Ives, Fen Drayton Lakes** and **Swavesey** ([www.stagecoachbus.com](http://www.stagecoachbus.com)) and also travels on to either **Huntingdon** or **Cambridge** where there are **train services**. Parking is available at Cattle Market Car Park in St Ives and at the Guided Bus car park in Swavesey and there is some street parking in Swavesey (please always park in consideration of others). There are cafes, pubs and shops in St Ives and a shop and pubs in Fenstanton, Fen Drayton and Swavesey.

**Safety NB Do not do this walk when the river is in flood as it is not safe to walk near the river and some access will be closed.** Be aware of risks you may encounter and take note of warnings given by landowners or on pathways. The terrain is generally flat, with potentially muddy ground in the river meadows. Take particular care with uneven terrain, when near water, on soft or slippery ground, in the presence of livestock or walking along or crossing roads. Ensure your dog is kept under control as needed. All Fen Edge Trail walks are on publicly accessible routes. **Anyone undertaking walks on the Fen Edge Trail does so at their own risk; these notes are for general guidance only.**



# The Fen Edge Trail St Ives to Swavesey via Fenstanton and Fen Drayton Directions map (6.1 miles / 9.8 km)

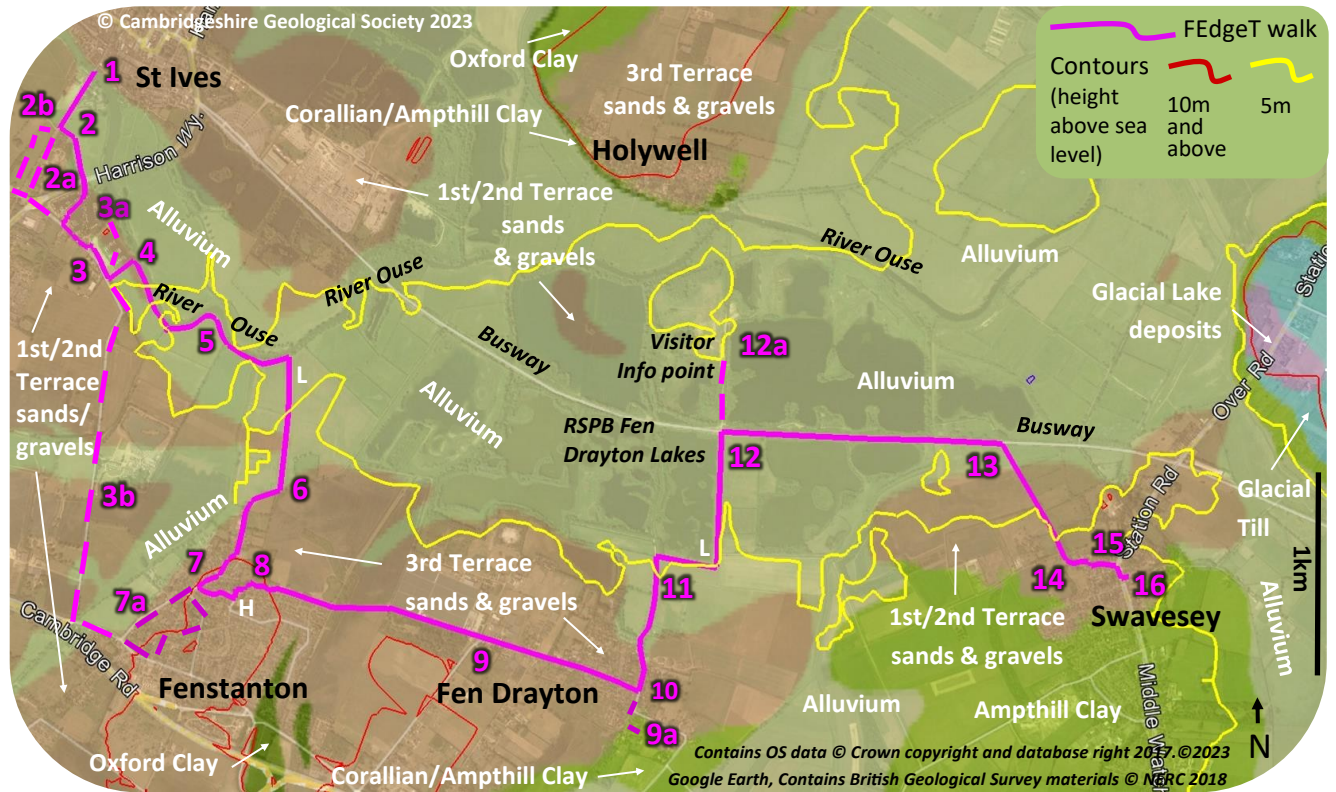


- 1** Start at the **chapel** on the bridge over the **River Great Ouse** at **St Ives** and walk south, away from town (left if you were coming out of the chapel) on the old London Road to walk past the Dolphin Hotel on the right and then straight on along the **New Bridges causeway**.
- 2** At end of causeway, turn left through gate into **Wilhorn Meadow** (by info board), to follow path towards the main road flyover. Go through gate under the road and then through the gate into the boatyard. Cross footbridge **NB 13 steep steps up/down (see 2.5)**, and follow path right, past line of willows and shop, to exit boatyard (or follow diversion through boatyard as directed). **Turn left at road.**
- 2a** To avoid bridge with steps on **2**, continue straight along **London Rd** to reach **Hemingford Rd**. Turn left on **Hemingford Rd** to **cross the (very busy) A1096** (new London Rd) using the 'pedestrian island' at the roundabout. Walk ahead along **Low Rd**, past **Boatyard to 3**.
- 2b** Or turn right after causeway onto footpath to follow **Filberts Walk** (bending left). Turn left at end along **Hemingford Rd** to join **2a**.
- 3** At driveway entrance turn left towards large gate and **go through small side gate on the right (3.1)**. Follow path skirting the back of the marina and then turning left to reach the river. **NB this is a revised Right of Way route** due to removal of a bridge in the marina.
- 3a** To see **the lock** turn left at footpath sign (**3a.1**) on road, crossing ditch through hedge and follow track straight ahead towards lock.
- 3b** To avoid a '12 steps up/12 down' bridge continue along **Low Rd** to turn left at T junction to Fenstanton clock tower (rejoining at **7a**).
- 4** On reaching **river**, turn right along **riverside path**. Cross **wooden bridge** (5 steps up, 4.3) over backwater. Once over bridge continue along with the river to your left. Cross **2 more footbridges** (metal then concrete, 4.4, 4.5) before arriving at multi-direction signpost.
- 5** At multi-direction post take path right to turn away from river, following it until reaching a gravel bridleway.
- 6** Turn right to walk along the bridleway and then along a street called **The Fen** to a triangular **green**. Walk on, along Honey Hill, with the green on your right and continue along Chequer St to another **green**.
- 7** From the green, turn left on **Church Lane**, (before the **United Reform Church**), taking you to the **Church of St Peter and St Paul**.
- 7a** To see the **Clock Tower** and more of the village, from the green walk straight on down **Chequer St**, past a narrow green, to **High St** and turn left. Continue along **High St** to turn left to walk along **Bell Lane**, and left along **Tall's Lane**, winding back to the **green 7**.
- 8** Facing the church, walk through the churchyard **to left of church**, following the path behind the church, to the right and along a path of pollarded trees to **exit churchyard**, turning left along footpath. Turn right at footpath sign to take path between houses and go left along **Hampton Close** towards play area on left. Then take footpath ahead along **Cranesbrook** eventually passing glasshouses on left.
- 9** At end of footpath, you emerge on road. Walk straight ahead along **Cootes Lane** until you reach **High St** in **Fen Drayton** village.
- 9a** To visit the church, turn right (and right again) along **High St** past stream to right and take left turn along **Church St**. Retrace steps.
- 10** Go north along **High St** and continue straight on along **Hollywell Ferry Rd** (**RSPB Fen Drayton Lakes entrance track**) towards **river**.
- 11** Follow main track turning right (over small stone **Oxholme Bridge**) then left (ignoring road to right) **to go north to Busway**. **11a** To see more of **Fen Drayton Lakes**, **carefully** cross Busway and walk ahead to Visitor Information Point (return same way, turn left at **12**).
- 12** Turn right (east) along the cycle/footpath keeping the **Busway track on your left**. Continue on past two lakes and over a drain.
- 13** Where there is a vehicle track crossing the Busway (and accompanying no entry signs), with bridleway mileage signs to St Ives and Cambridge, turn right on the footpath (no footpath sign but turn after signs) along **Mow Fen Drove**.
- 14** On reaching a road, at a bend with the **Castle Moat** site on your right, continue straight on to follow **Taylor's Lane** into Swavesey.
- 15** Reaching the main street of Swavesey (at shops), turn right along **High St** to reach, on the left, **Market St**, the end of the walk **16**.



**'Superficial'**  
**Holocene:**  
**Alluvium**  
 < 11,700  
**Pleistocene:**  
**River Terrace**  
**sands & gravels**  
 1st/2nd  
 c.20,000  
 3rd  
 c.120,000+  
**Glacial Till & lake deposits**  
 c.130,000 –  
 c.425,000

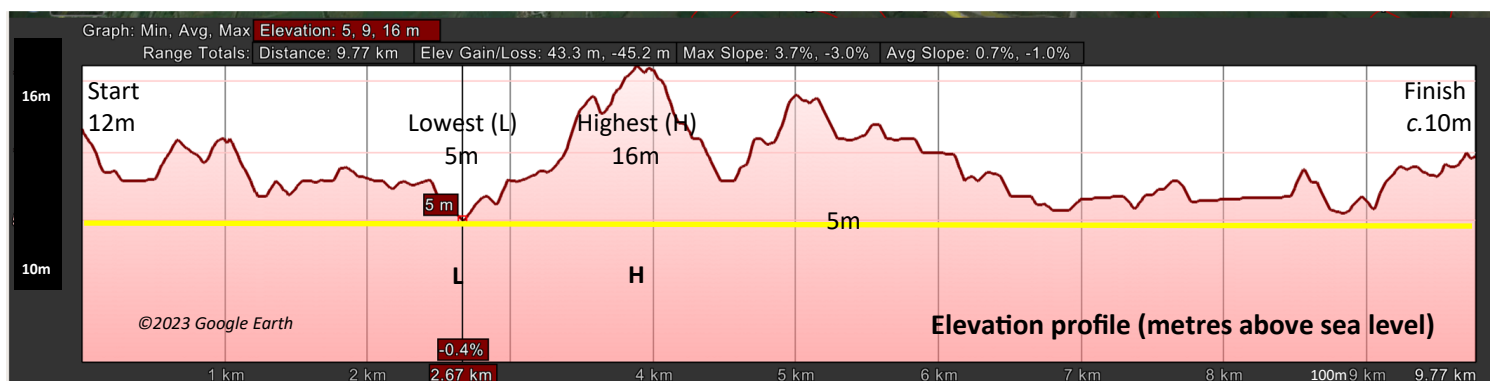
**Bedrock**  
**(Jurassic):**  
**Amphill**  
**Clay/West**  
**Walton Fm**



**Oxford Clay**, of Jurassic age and known for its use in brickmaking, is the bedrock in most of this area; the beds here being from the Upper Oxford Clay. The **How Brickpit** west of St Ives produced numerous fossils including ammonites and cephalopods, but few of the huge marine reptiles such as **plesiosaurs** that are found in the older Lower Oxford Clay around Peterborough. The younger **Amphill Clay** bedrock lies to the south and east of the Oxford Clay and is at the surface in the southern part of Swavesey. Between the two clays are **bands of limestone** known by their local names, such as '**St Ives Rock**', which occurs at the surface in small patches to the south of Fen Drayton and to the north of the river. These form part of the '**Corallian Group**' due to the **coral limestone** they contain.

In most of the area the bedrock is not at the surface as it is covered by younger (**'Superficial'**) deposits. Over the last c.480,000 years, during the **Pleistocene 'Ice Age'**, the forces of ice and water have created a gradually deepening river valley with an often-changing pattern of channels. This has resulted in the deposition of a complex collection of **sands and gravels** that form a series of **River Terraces**. Three terraces of the Ouse have been identified, representing different stages in the river's history, with the **oldest (3rd)** generally lying furthest from the river and at the highest elevation. The 3rd dates from the temperate **Ipswichian stage** (c.120,000 ya) and the **preceding cold (Wolstonian) stage**. Fossils found in this Terrace include **Giant deer, Woolly rhino, Straight-tusked elephant, Aurochs, Woolly mammoth and bison**. The younger (**1st and 2nd**) contain material from the last glaciation, the **Devensian**, which ended c.11,700 years ago. A large braided river existed here in a tundra environment with periglacial conditions, depositing large amounts of sand and gravel. During the **Holocene** (the last 11,700 years), a fine (and very fertile) material (**Alluvium**) has been deposited along the valley, especially in times of flood. The presence of Alluvium to the west of Fenstanton, to the east of Fen Drayton and to the east of Swavesey show the **courses of rivers that have now disappeared** (or are reduced to much smaller channels).

The younger deposits cover the Jurassic bedrock along the whole of this walk. These are either the **River Terrace sands and gravels**, deposited during the Pleistocene Ice Age, or more recent **Alluvium**, left by the river during the warmer conditions of the **Holocene**. The **walk starts** on the bridge over the **river channel**, which is infilled with **Alluvium**. It then crosses the **1st/2nd Terrace** (it is not possible to distinguish between the two here) sands and gravels on which most of **St Ives** sits. After returning to the **Alluvium** nearer the river, the walk reaches **Fenstanton**, which is located on the older and higher **3rd Terrace**, with the **highest point** of the walk being reached at the **Parish Church** (16m). **Fen Drayton** is also on the **3rd Terrace**, although not as high as Fenstanton. Descending once more onto the Alluvium of the **floodplain** you reach the **lowest points of the walk**. The elevation profile (below) shows the route as at or above 5 metres in the floodplain due to the banks built up along the river, tracks, footpaths and guided busway, although the adjacent land is below 5 metres. The **walk finishes** back on the younger (**1st/2nd**) Terrace on which the northern part of Swavesey sits.





# Places of interest along the Trail

**St Ives is named after** St Ivo, a Persian bishop, whose bones were found in a stone coffin near the town in about 1000AD. A **gravel terrace** has formed land higher than the floodplain of the river and this provided drier land on which the town has developed. Its original (probably Saxon) name of '**Slepe**' reflects its location by a muddy river. The layout of St Ives, the Market Hill and Broadway, developed on **ridge and furrow ploughlands** between the church and the priory (to the east of the Quay), stimulated by the Charter of 1110 to hold a fair here and encouragement by Ramsey Abbey to make the most of the town. By the 18th and early 19th centuries, St Ives was one of the most important markets in the country (particularly for its cattle). There are now over 150 listed buildings in or near its centre. The bridge was also very significant as it provided an important 'fen edge' crossing point of the river, once tidal this far upstream and with possibly no other safe crossing to be found further downstream. Erosion of the river bank has provided a ready-made **Quay** that sits above the level of the river. Flood defences are not required in the middle of the town but are needed at the Waits (upstream from the Quay) and also downstream. On the Quay, behind the Electric Riverboat pontoon there is an **Ordnance Datum (OD) Scale**, indicating the water level (in relation to sea-level). In times of full flood (up to 6.43 m), water can cover the decking just downstream and the nearby riverside meadows. The exceptional **1947 flood of 6.8 m** (22.2 feet) is marked near the top of the scale (now overgrown).

Before starting the walk, a good **view of the bridge** (1.1) can be had from **the Quay**, alongside the river just to the east of the bridge (1.2). There is also an **information board** (provided by the Rotary Club) just before the bridge, giving the history of the town (the '**Old Riverport**'), bridge, chapel and the mill that was on the opposite side of the river. The **Norris Museum** (on Broadway) is a very good, small museum with important local finds and interesting displays (including geology and fossils) and is a great place for a pre-walk visit as it can tell you much about the area's history.

**1 The bridge** is one of only a few with a chapel on it (1.3f). A Scheduled Ancient Monument (and also Grade I listed), it has had many uses and is now sometimes open to the public. Replacing a wooden bridge, it was built, together with **St Ledger's Chapel**, in the 15th century of Barnack limestone - a Jurassic stone quarried near Stamford that was used for many important buildings including Ely and Peterborough Cathedrals. The bridge has **six arches**; the two southernmost were 'blown up' during the Civil War (by Oliver Cromwell) and replaced with round arches. The chapel was, at one time, a private dwelling (when it had an extra 2 storeys) and at another (in the 19th century) a pub 'of ill repute'! Fires in 1680 and 1689 burnt much of the town but the **Manor House** remains, built in the 16th century and one of St Ives' oldest buildings. Now a café, it is the three story timber and pebbledash building on the left, just beyond the bridge as you look back to the town. **Ouse Villa**, on the left just to the south of the bridge, is 18th-century and the adjacent building probably 17th-century. Both are Grade II listed. The **Dolphin Hotel**, on the left looking upriver (1.4f), was rebuilt in the 1980s, the original having been the oldest recorded licenced premises in the town. The causeway, named the **New Bridges**, is of historical importance (Grade II\*), being the longest viaduct with **55 arches** of one design dating from before the railway age. It was built in 1822 using c.1¼ million bricks made in The How brickyard upstream (one of three in St Ives) and brought here by boat. The soft bricks don't weather well and have been extensively restored. It was part of a **major turnpike road**, with a toll once in the chapel. The bump in the road with red brick walls is where the **St Ives to Huntingdon Railway** crossed the road, built on wooden posts. The railway closed in 1959, the rails were pulled up, bridges demolished and land sold to adjacent properties. The St Ives to Wisbech line closed in 1967 and in 1969 the St Ives to Cambridge line closed to passenger trains, but the route was retained to haul gravel from the pits to the east of St Ives to the Cambridge junction and then further afield. The route to Cambridge is now used by the **Guided Busway**. **If the land by the river is in flood here (1.5) it is likely to be further along too - come back another day!**

**2 NB There is a bridge with steep steps on this next section - take 2a or 2b if you wish to avoid it.** You can see the improved flood defence banks both downstream and upstream either side of the causeway. You walk through **Wilhorn Meadow** (2.1), once traditional **Lammas land** (Hemingford Meadow, just upstream is still managed as Lammas land); it is very wet and used as rough pasture (2.2f). Looking back you have a good view of the causeway's arches (2.3) and of the six-storey building (2.4) that was a steam powered 'corn' mill from 1854 and then a printing mill (now apartments). Once under the road and over the bridge (2.5) you walk through **Jones Boatyard** (2.6), started in the 1940s, moving here in 1958. It is possibly the oldest inland marina in the country. In 2008, **Cambridge Archaeological Unit** found two palaeochannels here, including a probable former river course c.150 m to the west of the current one, and a **pit from the Beaker Period**. The evaluation suggested a **long history of agricultural use**, albeit probably only as **water meadows**, with rich grazing on fertile alluvium (plus haymaking) due to the shifting nature of the river and frequent flooding. There was little settlement compared to the 'known archaeological landscape' on drier land to the north.



**Photos: 1.1 View from Quay; 1.2 Looking from Quay to bridge and chapel; 1.5 View east from New Bridges, during floods; 2.1 Wilhorn Meadow info board; 2.3 Arches of the New Bridges from meadow; 2.4 View back to old corn mill; 2.5 Footbridge with steep steps in marina; 2.6 View from footbridge over marina and river.**



**2a** Approx 250 m south of the junction of the old London Rd and Hemingford Rd is a **milestone**, dating from when this was a **Toll road** from Bury (near Ramsey) to Stratton (near Biggleswade). Turnpiked in 1755, what was the main road is now replaced by the busy A1096, one of the few river crossing points in the area. It requires a there and back detour along the old London Rd to see **NB No safe path along the A1096 from the roundabout**. It is located by a pedestrian crossing past a petrol station. Once on Low Road, past the roundabout, note the bump in the road and other improved banking of flood defences in the field to the right.



**2b Filberts Walk** is an attractive walk, especially in the spring, with lambs often in the field and blackthorn hedges in flower. Just before the end of the path, notice a pumping station used to prevent flooding of the nearby houses.



**3** As its name implies, **Low Road** is vulnerable to flooding (especially in winter).

**3a** You can walk to and from **the lock** (sluice) (3a.2), where the river drops below 5 m OD. The normal range here is 5.14 to 5.36 m with a high flood level at 6.52 m on 25th December 2020. At **Brownhills Staunch**, 5 miles downstream, the normal range is 3.20 to 3.82 m, with a high flood level 5.08 m on 4th January 2003. The first staunch here was in 1676.



**4** There are good views back to **St Ives** (4.1). The river has eroded higher ground; the high field is unusual as most riverside fields need to be protected by an embankment - the ground on the other side of the river is much lower (4.2). On this side, the 5 m contour runs just below the top of the river bank, with the water level well below 5 m.

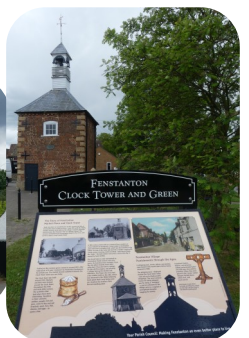


**5** The river meadows have a history of frequent floods; on 27th March 1908 there were '**sheep drowned Fenstanton**'. As you walk towards the village (5.1), you walk uphill (across the 5m contour). Its location on **higher land**, formed by the covering of **3rd Terrace gravels**, gives the village its name of Fenstanton (previously **Fenny Stanton**), meaning '**stoney place near the fen**'. in the **Domesday Book**, it was '**Stantone** in the Hundred of Toseland'.



**6** **Fenstanton** village developed on the northern side of the **Via Devana Roman road** from Cambridge to Godmanchester. Although not on the river, the village was connected to it by waterways. In 1086 there was one manor at Fenstanton; the annual rent paid to its lord in 1066 was £16, the parish had 33 households and it had a church and a priest. **John Howland**, born here c.1592, was one of the **Pilgrims** who arrived on the **Mayflower in 1620** at Plymouth, Massachusetts, USA. The **United Reform Church**, in Gothic revival style, is by the small green on Chequer St. Just inside the entrance to the farm shop on the right is an **old, wooden barn on stilts**. Used for drying onions in the early 1900s, the air circulated via the slats in the floor. Next door, past the building with the attractive tiled roof, is **The Manor House** (Grade II\*), once owned by the landscape architect **Lancelot (Capability) Brown**. In 1768 he purchased the manors of Fenstanton and Hilton from the Earl of Northampton and although he probably didn't reside there, he became the Sheriff for Huntingdonshire in 1770.

**7** **Church Lane** has a number of listed buildings, including the early 17th-century timber-framed house (7.1f) on the right (the **oldest in the village**, Grade II\*) and the thatched, late 17th-century cottage (7.2) on the left (no 6, Grade II). You also pass the **Particular Baptist Chapel** on the left.



**7a** A detour to the end of this road, the junction with **High St**, brings you to the **Clock Tower** (7a.1), originally used as a **lock-up**. It has a notice saying 'This Clock House, Built Circa 1650, Restored 1987 by Fen Stanton Parish Council'. The clock, with its octagonal face, came from Conington Hall in 1862/3 and faces east (down the original Roman road - now the High St). The village pond is also here. Pig House Lane once connected this area to Pig House Farm, located on the far side of the old A14 to the south. The village was probably on one of the **Drove roads** bringing cattle from the Fens to St Ives market in the 19th century and there were **15 or so inns or hotels** here. You can see the substantial buildings along the road indicating that this was an important part of the town (the Tudor Hotel, further along on the High St, was built in 1937).

**8** The current church of **St Peter and St Paul** (Grade 1) (8.1f) dates from the 13th and 14th centuries, although there was an earlier church here. It stands on a slight hill, whilst the village developed on the slope down to the main road to the south. Its finer stonework is made of **Barnack limestone** whilst the walls are mostly of **limestone rubble, clunch (chalk)** and other local stone that could be obtained including **water-rounded pebbles**. The **Brown family memorial** is on the left side of the chancel. As you walk through the churchyard, look outside the west gate (on the left) to see the **large piece of granite**, an igneous rock containing large **crystals**. Solidified from magma deep underground, granite is not found locally so it was brought here from hundreds of miles away - perhaps for a use (e.g. as a mounting block) or it could be an 'erratic', carried to the area by glaciers (at least 425,000 years ago). Near to the back wall of the church is 'Capability' Brown's **memorial gravestone** (8.2f); the exact burial place is unknown. The path you follow towards Fen Drayton (before you reach the road) was once a main track called **Green Way** (8.3).

**Photos: 3.1 Small gate onto path; 3a.1 Footpath to Lock; 3a.2 Lock; 4.1 View to St Ives; 4.2 Riverbank walk; 4.3 Wooden bridge; 4.4, 4.5 Small bridges; 5.1 Bridleway into Fenstanton; 7.2 Cottage; 7a.1 Clocktower.**



**9** Fen Drayton (previously **Fenny Drayton**) means farmstead in the fen where drays (a type of cart) were used. Along Cootes Lane, you see the widely spaced semi-detached houses, along with **many glasshouses** (9.1) that were part of the **Land Settlement Association** co-operative, set up in England in 1934 to help relieve unemployment by providing houses with enough land to make a living from. In this local settlement there were 54 smallholdings each of 3-6 acres with a piggery, a poultry house and several glasshouses. Although successful for a time, including supplying local air bases with food during World War II, the land here suffered from drought. The Association was wound up in 1983 although some co-operative farming continued here. In the early 1930s, **farming and gravel working** were the main sources of employment in the village, with about 60 dwellings and 200 people, a few farms, a primary school, the **Three Tuns public house**, a blacksmith's forge, a post office and shop, the parish church and the Methodist chapel.



**9a** You pass the **Three Tuns pub** which dates from before 1784 and part of it is early 16th-century and then pass the church **pump** (presumably giving filtered drain water) and the (Grade II) two cell **lockup** (9a.1f). The (Grade II\*) church of **St Mary** (9a.2f) has features from different periods; the north side nave wall is the original, with large windows, the south side aisle was added later. The gateposts in the churchyard wall are flushwork of **limestone with cut black flints** inserted (9a.3).



**10** The houses along the east side of the road have small bridges (10.1f) across the wide dyke which connects the village to the river. As you walk towards the river (10.2), you are again on the thick layer of **Alluvium** that covers the river gravels. There are many flooded gravel pits in the river valley, their extensive excavation a testament to the thickness of the river sand and gravel deposits.

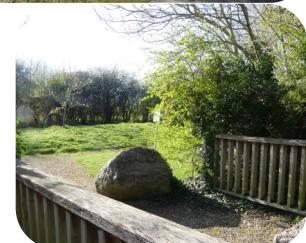
**11** You turn right to follow the track across a stone bridge, **Oxholme Bridge**, and walk left around **Oxholme Lake**, a flooded pit that is part of **RSPB Fen Drayton Lakes Nature Reserve**, now one of several very important wildlife conservation sites on the fen edge. Stretching from here to the river, it contains a variety of habitats including reed beds, scrub and grassland as well as open water.



**11a** Recent sightings of wildlife are listed on a board at the **Visitor Information Point** a short way along the path to the river. There is also a map of the nature reserve there, showing the **many lakes** (11a.1) and paths that deserve a return visit.



**12** This part of the **Guided Busway** was opened in 2011 and runs along the old railway track to Cambridge. 'Sand trains' from Fen Drayton ran to Cambridge until April 1992. The lower parts of the Busway footpath are prone to flooding and can be closed at times. You pass Far Fen Lake and then Trout Pond on the right before reaching **Covell's Bridge** where the footpath and busway go over **Covell's Drain**, that runs north to the river. To your right, you can see the different levels of the flood banks to the drain which ensure that floodwater goes into the nature reserve area first (west side), rather than the farmland (non RSPB area) to the east.



**13** **Swavesey Meadows**, to the left of the path, are designated as a **County Wildlife Site** for their **pollarded willows**. You leave the low, **Alluvium**-covered land and walk up onto the **River gravels** on which the original village was built, above the floodplain and reaching to over 10m in places. You pass the 5m contour not long before the bend. The newer, southern, part is on a ridge of **Amphill Clay**.

**14** On the right as you reach the corner is **Constables Rood** (14.1); a quarter of an acre (a rood) given to the constable in the 18th century for growing vegetables. Note the large boulder that sits in the entrance (origin not known but must be far distant as it is not a local rock). The notice board gives details of the history of this part of the village, including the medieval (Norman) **Castle Hill Earthworks Scheduled Monument** (its features now difficult to see). A causeway into the Fens ran from here at one time. A mortuary chapel stands in the graveyard on the opposite side of the corner. To get a better view of the **windmill** (14.2) (now a house, no access) turn right along Hale Rd and walk a short way.



**15** Once consisting of two gravel islands joined by a toll bridge, **Swavesey** developed as a linear village along an existing road. There is evidence of local **Iron Age pottery manufacture**. By 1066 the Manor was held by **Eddeva the Fair**. By the 12th century the village was a port.

**16** **Market St** is the centre of the old part of the village and the end of the walk. The **White Horse Inn** (16.1) dates from the 18th century (Grade II) as do the **cottages** next door, one with a slated roof and three thatched (Grade II). The area to the east of the market square (now a green) used to be the location of one of the two docks in the village until infilled. The **Village sign** stands in the square near the pub (although it may still be removed for refurbishing).



*Photos: 8.3 Green Way; 9.1 Glasshouses; 9a.3 Gateposts; 10.2 Road to Fen Drayton Lakes; 11a.1 Fen Drayton lakes; 14.1 Constables Rood; 14.2 Windmill; 16.1 Pub opposite the village sign.*



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