

# The Fen Edge Trail

## Stanground to Yaxley via Farcket

7.3 miles (11.8 km), shorter option 6 m (9.8 km)

In partnership with  
**Fenlandia** and  
**The Great Fen Heritage Group**

*'I love this part of the Fens, there is so much history here'*  
**Stewart, Fenlandia**

*'You really get the feeling of being on the fen edge'*  
**Paul M, Fen Edge Trail team**



### The route: 'the ancient river, the high ridge and great fenland views'

Having travelled through the **historic city of Peterborough** and past the **Nene Washes** to **Stanground**, the Trail now follows an **ancient course of the Nene** along the fen edge, keeping to about 5 metres above sea level for much of the way. It then turns 'inland' to travel uphill into the village of **Farcket**, situated on the high **Stanground-Yaxley ridge**, formed from material left by glaciers about 300,000 years ago during the '**Ice Age**'. Here, there are great views over the fens to the south including the large **gravel island in Farcket Fen** and the site of **Whittlesea Mere**, once probably the largest lake in lowland England. After returning to follow the edge of the low fen, the walk winds up through the village of **Yaxley**. The cultural and environmental interest of the area is significant, from the abundant **natural resources of the fenland** and the complex system of **waterways** to the influence of nearby **religious centres** and **brickmaking** on the **Oxford Clay**. Following the old course of the Nene along the distinct fen edge, this walk takes you through an **historic landscape full of geological, ecological and cultural heritage**.



*Photos: 9.2f Farcket church; 9.1f Farcket village sign; 2.1f Sustrans Millennium signpost 'Fossil tree'7; 5.1f Footbridge over King's Dyke; 4.2f Lidar image of Horsey Toll Fort with Nene Washes to north and Stanground-Yaxley ridge to west; 10.1f Farcket cemetery chapel, with fen view behind; 1.1f View from lock along King's Dyke; 7.1f Old Nene, approaching Farcket Bridge; 16.3f Yaxley church and Pound Lane Pond.*

**Practicalities** As with all walks on the Fen Edge Trail, you can complete the full walk using transport one way or choose a short or long round trip option, or just visit some places on the route. The walk is divided into numbered parts as shown on the two maps. Photos are shown in the order seen except for those on this front page (f). The walk can easily be split into two parts, one between Stanground and Farcket and the other between Farcket and Yaxley. For information on **Stanground Wash** see [www.wildlifebcn.org/nature-reserves/stanground-wash](http://www.wildlifebcn.org/nature-reserves/stanground-wash). For information on the **Great Fen Heritage Group** see [www.greatfen.org.uk/great-fen-heritage-group/](http://www.greatfen.org.uk/great-fen-heritage-group/). For Green Wheel see [www.pect.org.uk/projects/green-wheel/](http://www.pect.org.uk/projects/green-wheel/).

**Length of walk** (one way) approx. 7.3 miles (11.8 km). Short option 6 miles (9.8 km) without walk into Farcket. Walking guide time 3.5hrs plus stops (3hrs shorter option). Grid ref for start TL208973 Maps O.S. Explorer 227. 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** There are **buses** ([www.stagecoachbus.com](http://www.stagecoachbus.com)) between **Stanground, Farcket and Yaxley** and to each from Peterborough plus **train services** to Peterborough. On-street parking is possible in Stanground and Yaxley. Please only park where allowed and in consideration of others. There are pubs and shops in Farcket, Stanground and Yaxley and cafes in the latter two.

**Safety** Be aware of risks you may encounter and take note of warnings given by landowners or on pathways. The terrain is **generally flat**, but with a slight **walk uphill** into Farcket and at the end, up to the church. Potentially **muddy ground** near the river in places. 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

## Walk: Stanground to Yaxley via Farcet

### Directions map

7.3 miles / 11.8 km (shorter option 6 miles / 9.8 km)

[www.fenedgetrail.org](http://www.fenedgetrail.org)

[www.cambsgeology.org](http://www.cambsgeology.org)

1 Start at **Stanground Lock**, walk along road a short way (towards Stanground) to **take footpath left** (signposted 1.4) across grass to river, south of lock.

2 Walk south alongside **King's Dyke** on the **Green Wheel path** until the bend just before a small bridge.

3 At bend turn right to follow the **Old Nene** past a **sluice**. Walk alongside the river on footpath to continue parallel with the river.

4 Passing under main (Whittlesey) road, the path (4.1) crosses to the other side of the river, alongside **the B1095**. Continue on path, south along river.

5 Follow footpath right over footbridge back **across river** (5.1f), continue left.

6 Follow the footpath/cyclepath around the bends in the river (6.1).

7 Follow path along the river and then as it turns right to enter **Farcet** (7.3).

8 Emerging onto T-junction, cross road to go straight on along **Cross St**, turn right into **Middle St**, then **Main St**.

8a If you do not wish to see more of Farcet, miss 9-10 by walking straight on along **Cross St** to crossroad with **Main St** (11) and walk straight across onto track.

9 Turn left onto **Broadway** (B1091) and walk to the **cemetery** and **chapel**.

9a To visit **Crown Lakes Country Park**, go right on **Haddon Way**.

10 Go back along **Broadway** and **Main St**, continuing downhill on latter until you get to crossroads with **Cross St**.

10a To see **trig point** (plus view/information board) walk short way further along road (return same way).

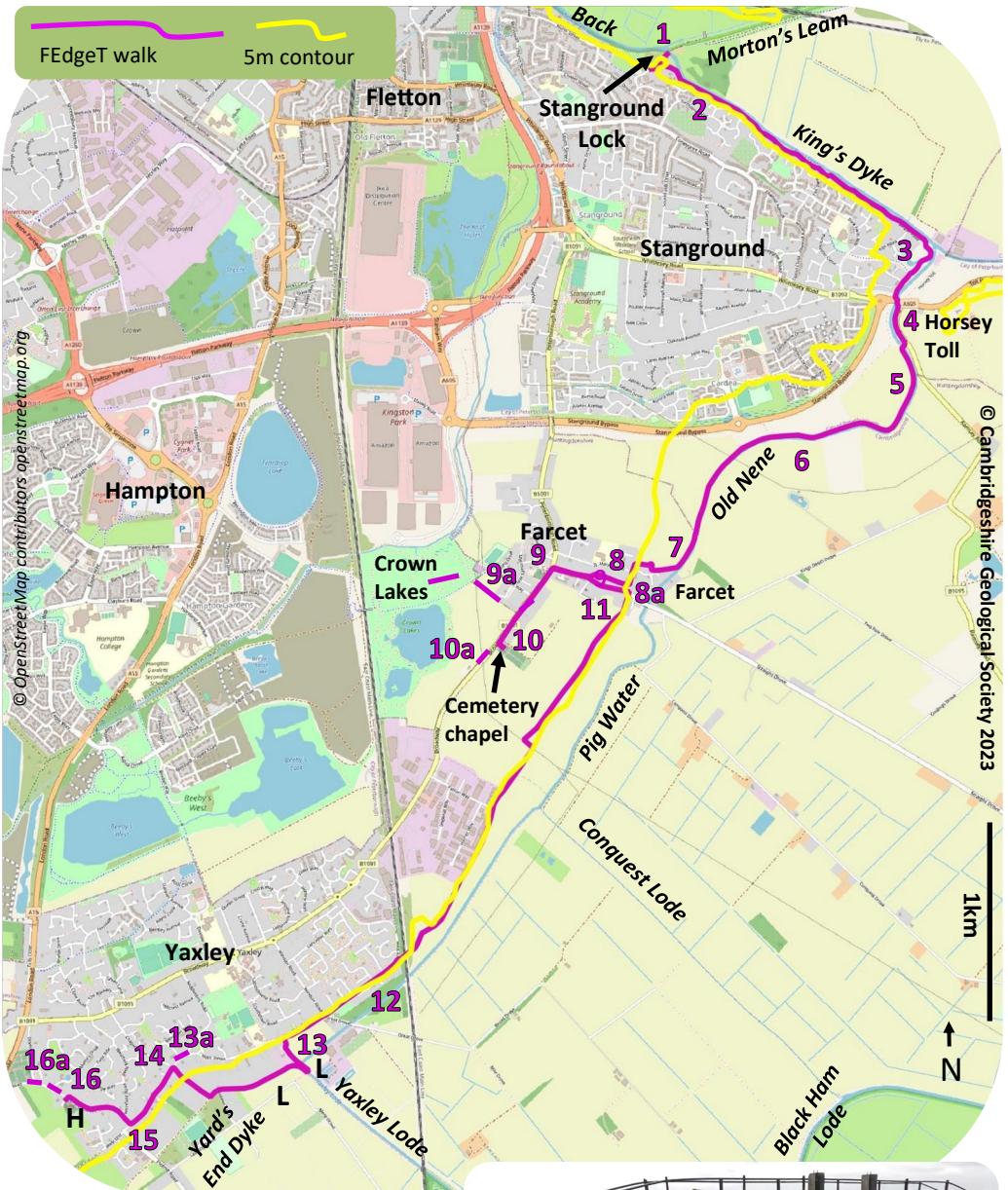
11 From **Main St**, turn right along **Cross St** (track). At end, go through gate to walk along grassy, hedge-lined path. Continue straight on, then left and right round field corner. Pass industrial estate on right to go under railway, exiting on **Mere View**.

12 Continue on **Mere View**, past **Great Drove** on left, along **Main St**.

13 A short way past **Duck and Drake pub**, turn left down **signposted footpath** next to house. Follow it until you reach **Yaxley Lode** on right and **cross bridge** (13.1) over lode to **turn right** onto footpath (**not straight on**) to walk along the lode, soon with gardens on right. Reaching **Askews Lane** go right to follow it as it bends right. 13a To see the village green, turn right on **Main St**. 14 At **Main St** turn left.

15 Turn right up **Church St** to turn left down Pound Lane alongside church to pond, and finally to **Yaxley church**, the end of the walk 16.

16a To see the **cemetery** and **War Memorial**, carry on up **Church St** to the gate at junction with **Waterside Rd** on the left.



13.1 Bridge over Yaxley Lode



## Ages of the rocks

### Holocene:

Alluvium, Peat, Lake marl, tidal clay under 11,700 yrs

### Pleistocene:

#### River Gravels, Slope

Deposits, Woodston Beds  
c.30,000 - 400,000 yrs

#### Glacial Gravel, Lake

Deposits, Till c.425,000 yrs  
(possibly younger c.300,000)

### Bedrock (Jurassic): (millions)

Oxford Clay c.160, Kellaways Sand, Kellaways Clay c.163-4

The fenland deposits, such as Peat and river Alluvium, reach approximately as far as where the land rises to 5

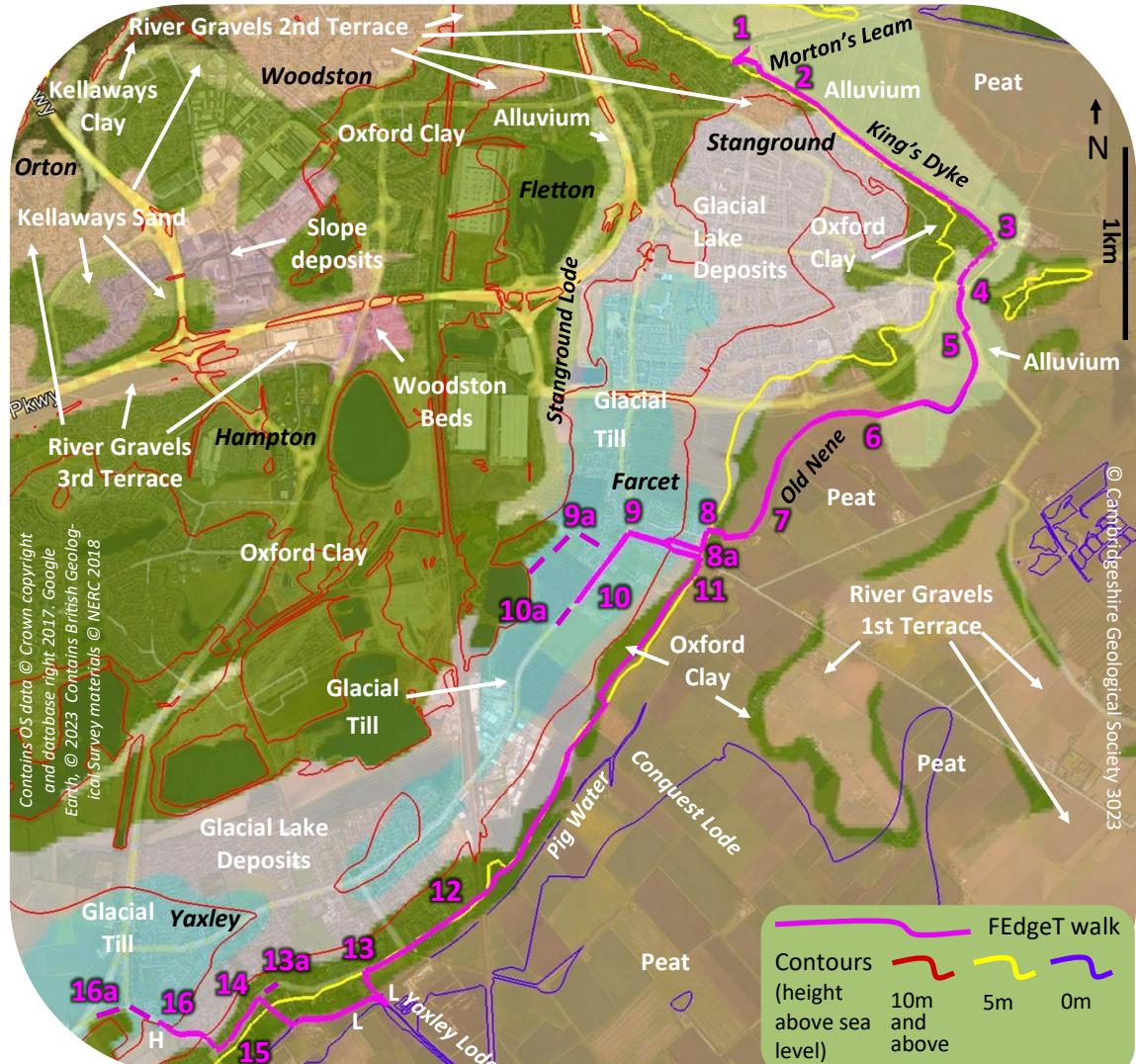
**metres above sea level.** In this area the 5m contour runs along the south-east edge of a **high ridge** formed by **glacial gravels** and other material (Till) left by Pleistocene ('Ice Age') glaciers and lakes. This higher land is where **Stanground, Farct and Yaxley** are situated.

The Alluvium shows where larger channels once flowed including the **old course of the Nene and Stanground**

**Lode.** Peat built up over thousands of years in the freshwater marshes that filled the extensive basin between the ridge and higher land to the south. Some Peat at Holme Fen dates to almost 8,000 years ago. Bronze Age tidal silts remain at the surface in the east. There are also **River Gravels** left by the Nene when it was more powerful, forming a braided delta on reaching the fenland. The gravels were deposited in a series of three 'terraces', the youngest being the 1st (c.30,000 years old), which forms the gravel 'island' south of Farct. The 2nd Terrace is c.125,000 years old, its gravels mostly being limestone with flint. The 3rd is the oldest (c.400,000 years old), as are the **Woodston Beds**, which consist of silty clay and sand containing both marine and freshwater shells. On the ridge, there are older **Glacial Lake clays, silts and sands** and **Glacial Till** that is mostly chalky 'boulder clay' with far-travelled 'exotic' cobbles but also some sand and gravel, quarried in places. Underlying the glacial and fenland deposits is the **Jurassic bedrock**, over 160 million years old. Peterborough has a complex geology with several types of rock including **Kellaways Sand and Clay**. Under all of this walk, is **Oxford Clay**, famous for its use in brickmaking and also for its **fossils**, including huge marine reptiles such as **Pliosaurs and Ichthyosaurs**, the biggest (bony) fish ever found, **Leedsichthys**, and many **ammonites and belemnites**. **Peterborough Museum** has a superb collection of these fossils.

The start of the walk is on **Alluvium** deposited in an **old course of the Nene** as it flowed south to enter the fenland through Whittlesea Mere. Passing a small patch of **2nd Terrace Gravels**, you follow the edge of the ridge of **Glacial Lake** deposits (up to 15 metres thick in places) whilst walking on **Oxford Clay**, more **Alluvium** and **Peat**. After crossing a band of Oxford Clay, you climb up onto the **ridge** where Farct lies. The glacial deposits here are coarser (called **Till**) being a mix of material deposited by melting glaciers. After returning to the strip of **Oxford Clay** along the **fen edge** you finally climb again onto the high glacial deposits underlying the church.

## Walk: Stanground to Yaxley via Farct - geology and landscape



**Whittlesea Mere:** Before the 19th century drainage, the basin to the south of the Yaxley-Stanground ridge was dominated by this **huge, freshwater, fenland mere** that formed c.2000 years ago and became famous for its unpredictable weather and dynamic seasonal changes. The basin was created by periglacial activity (freeze thaw) before c.12,000 years ago. Today, the site of the mere is managed by **The Wildlife Trust** as part of the **Great Fen**, a fenland restoration initiative. It is also within the **Local Geological Site** in the northern part of the Great Fen, designated for its **significant geology**. See [www.greatfen.org](http://www.greatfen.org) and [www.camsgeology.org](http://www.camsgeology.org).

# Places of interest along the Trail

Now part of the City of Peterborough, **Stanground** was once a village known as 'Standy Ground' at the time of the Domesday Survey, perhaps the name referring to it being a place where you could stay all year as it was **above the seasonal reach of the marshes** to the east. In the 12th century the Manor was given to the **Abbey of Thorney** by King Edgar and the Abbot was not pleased when, in 1154, Henry II claimed the 'grove' at Stanground as part of his 'hunting forest', which covered all of the county of Huntingdonshire (therefore making it subject to forest law). **Stanground Manor House** was totally destroyed by fire in 1899.

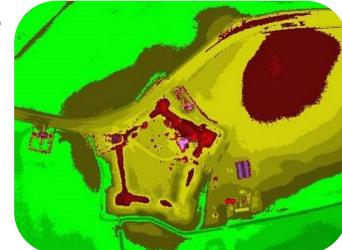


**1 Stanground Lock** (also a sluice) is at a major junction of fenland waterways (1.1f): where the old River Nene, having flowed from Peterborough past Stanground (as the **Back River**) splits into **Morton's Leam**, along the south side of the **Nene Washes**, and **King's Dyke** (1.2), which flows east via **Whittlesey Dyke** to join **Bevill's Leam**. Morton's Leam was a very early fenland drain dug under the direction of Bishop John Morton of Ely from 1478 to 1490, before the River Nene's main course to the north was straightened over later centuries. The land between it and the Nene, known as the **Nene Washes**, is used for **flood alleviation**, receiving excess water from the Leam. The water is then directed back into the Nene further east (near Guyhurn) when the risk of flooding subsides (at low tide). The **Nene Washes** is also a very important nature conservation area with several national or international designations: **SSSI, SAC, SPA and Ramsar Site**. The **Wildlife Trust's Stanground Wash Nature Reserve** is on the opposite bank to the north of the lock (access by crossing the lock (1.3) and turning left over the footbridge (see [www.wildlifebcn.org/nature-reserves/stanground-wash](http://www.wildlifebcn.org/nature-reserves/stanground-wash) for safety information).

The lock is important as it gives access to the 'Middle Level Navigations' which are now a **series of waterways between the Nene and the Great Ouse**. Originally, most were dug for drainage but they are now also **an important link between these two major fenland rivers**, providing a route that does not involve going through the Wash! **The Middle Level**, managed by the **Middle Level Commissioners**, is the central area of the **Bedford Level** (also known as the **Great Level**), with the **North Level and South Level** being the other components, north of the Nene and south of the Ouse respectively. Boats up to around 60ft can wind at the lock. The lock is also a key sluice for diverting waters from the Nene, via **King's Dyke and the Old Nene**, into the basin to the south, which would otherwise have low water levels in dry summers. The path to Farcet is part of **Peterborough's Green Wheel**, 45 miles of walking and cycling routes around the city, developed by **Peterborough Environment City Trust** and opened in 2000. Part of it is now managed by **Sustrans** as a cycling route. Just before the footpath off to the left, you pass a **Sustrans Millennium Milepost** (1.4), one of many around the country on the **National Cycle Network**. There are four designs, each by a different artist, this one being a '**Rowe Type**', named after the artist, who was inspired by the nautical and industrial heritage of his local area in Wales. They are based on the elements Fire, Earth, Air, Water and the Ether and represent a '**Time Trail**' (a journey through Time and Space); very similar to the **Fen Edge Trail**!

**2 King's Dyke** was once called **Cnut's Dyke**, but its age and links to King Cnut are unclear as it was recorded in 972, prior to his reign. An old name for it is Kingsdelf (delf meaning 'to dig') showing it was part of a canalised route of the Nene. On the other side of the dyke is **Stanground Wood**, planted by the **Woodland Trust**. Although woods are not a major feature of the floodplain, trees such as willow and alder surviving there and a pond was dug by **Froglife** for their River Nene Dragon Finder project. The path follows the 5m contour along the fen edge here and the low-lying land to the north is covered with large amounts of **Alluvium**, deposited by the river in times of flood. Along the bank of King's Dyke, you pass another **Sustrans Millennium Milepost**; this one being '**Fossil Tree**' (2.1f) in the form of an abstract tree with imagery of fossils depicting the passage of time from early primitive creatures to the ultimate demise of fossil fuel driven technology. Behind it, in the distance you can see the remaining **chimneys from the local brick making industry** at Whittlesey.

**3 King's Dyke** continues to the west whilst the walk takes the footpath south along the **old course of the Nene** that is fed by water through the **sluice** here (previously a **lock**). A mile or so to the north-east along King's Dyke is the location of **Must Farm** (see [www.mustfarm.com](http://www.mustfarm.com)): '*the first landscape-scale archaeological investigation of deep Fenland*'. There is nothing to be seen on site now, but publications and (temporary) displays elsewhere describe the settlement that was '*lost to rising sea levels over three thousand years ago*' and how the '*exploration of deeply buried deposits is transforming our understanding of prehistoric life and revealing a level of preservation previously only dreamt about*'.



**4** A ferry at **Horsey** on the old River Nene is mentioned in 1555 and there was once a **toll** here. As you take the footpath south, look east to see (in the distance along the main road east), the well preserved ramparts of **Horsey Hill Fort**, a **Civil War** (Cromwellian) fort, built in 1643 to guard the bridge over the Nene. A pentagonal earthwork, it is now a (privately owned) scheduled monument. with the toll-keeper's cottage built on the north-west bastion of the fort. Lidar maps (4.2f, 4.3) show its strategic location on the raised land, with the Nene Washes to north and the Stanground-Yaxley ridge to the west. Alongside the river, the land is covered by **Alluvium** from the river, a fine material deposited when the river was much larger, but the fort is on higher land (4.4), a '**hill of Oxford Clay**'. Going south after **Horsey Toll**, you pass another **Sustrans Millennium Milepost**, this one being of the design '**The Cockerel**' (4.5).



**5** As the river bends, you cross from Peterborough into Huntingdonshire.

*Photos: 1.2 View along King's Dyke from near the lock; 1.3 View from the lock north over Stanground Wash; 1.4 The Millennium Milepost 'Rowe' by the signposts; 4.1 Footpath under Whittlesey Rd; 4.3 Lidar close-up of the fort remains; 4.4 View across to hill on which the remains of the fort lie; 4.5 Millennium Milepost 'Cockerel', south of Horsey Toll.*

6 As the path nears the road to the north, you **walk off the Alluvium** that the river has left and onto the **Peat**. This is the only part of the walk where you have Peat on both sides as the river flows through the low fenland. Peat has formed in the **freshwater marshes** during the c.10,000 years since the last glaciation. When there is little water flow, dead vegetation does not decay as there is no oxygen and the remains accumulate forming Peat. Many fallen trees have been preserved and are now found as '**bog oaks**' and the history of past environments is revealed by the type of plants found in the peat, e.g. **reeds, moss or woody material**. The conditions have also preserved cultural artefacts and the remains of many animals. Peat forms a very dark soil at the surface but underneath there may be various layers, including ancient lake beds and sand, silt and clay from tidal waters. A borehole in this area showed 3.6m of peat lying on 2m of river gravels, with the Oxford Clay bedrock c.6m down.

7 The river here was dug as a catchwater but also became the main course of the Nene, taking water from the Nene Valley around the fen edge, via **Trundle, Whittlesea and Ramsey Meres** onto **Benwick and March** and then to **The Wash**. Although now a quiet backwater (7.1f) lined with reeds and other water plants (7.2), it is still an important channel bringing water to this western edge of the Fens. The **Manor of Farcet** owned a fishery, called **Farcet Lode**, that, in 1562, extended from **Conquest Lode to Whittlesea Dyke**. The tenants of the manor had common rights of 'pasture, fishing and fowling' in **Farcet Fen**, but could only use two nets at once. The fen here was drained and enclosed in the 17th century and the drainage of **Whittlesea Mere**, further to the south, started in the mid-18th century, although it wasn't until a centrifugal pump was used in the **1850s** that this part of the fenland was finally drained and the main **shrinkage of the peat** took place.

8 **Farcet**, called **Fearresheafde** (possibly meaning 'bull's head') in the 10th century, was separated from Stanground in 1885 by an Order in Council dated 1882 and became a separate ecclesiastical parish and vicarage, with Emmanuel College, Cambridge, being the patron. **George Alcock MBE**, an astronomer who lived in the village, became famous for his work on discovering comets and nova; he discovered five of each from his house on the fen edge here between 1959 and 1991, with a **Sky at Night** programme filmed there in 1959. There is a plaque memorial to him in **Peterborough Cathedral**. You pass the **Primitive Methodist Chapel** (8.1) on the right on Cross St; rebuilt in 1907, it closed in the 1950s. The **village blacksmith** was also on Cross St. The last house on the right in **Middle St** (no 1) is **Grade II listed**, with coursed limestone rubble and a small, 17th-century casement window to the far right of the door. No 3 Main St, on the right, is also part 18th-century and Grade II listed. Next door is the **Village Hall** (8.2) which used to be the Wesleyan Chapel.

9 The **village sign** (9.1f) is on the small green. **St Mary's Church** (9.2f, 9.3) is on the opposite side of the road as you turn left along Broadway. It dates from the 12th century and was restored in 1852. The tower has a set of three bells made in the 17th century, one being recast about 1854. The church is built of **ashlar limestone** on the quoins with roughly cut limestone in the walls, along with some rubble. The roof is of **Collyweston limestone** 'slates' (seen well on the porch). The church is Grade II listed as are two chest tombs in its graveyard.



9a A short way to the west of Farcet, **Crown Lakes Country Park** has been created on land where two, now flooded, large pits (9a.1) were dug to supply Oxford Clay used for brickmaking. The brickmaking industry that developed on the west side of Peterborough was due to the qualities of the locally found **Peterborough Member** of the Lower Oxford Clay. It is very rich in organic material and therefore ignites easily making the bricks cheaper to fire. This, and its other qualities, were the basis of the very successful **Fletton brick** industry, named after Fletton, just to the north, where the process of producing these specific bricks was invented in 1891. Many of the pits in the area are now flooded and some, together with the surrounding land, are being maintained for their significant value for wildlife, with one area having the largest population of **Great Crested Newts** in Europe and, therefore, an international designation as a **Special Area of Conservation (SAC)**. Some areas, such as **Crown Lakes**, are also used for recreation including walking, cycling and fishing.



10 The walk goes as far as the **chapel of the village cemetery** (10.1f) from where there are extensive views of the fenland to the south (10.2 and 10.3). Some of the first burials in the cemetery date back to 1901. The chapel was converted in 2017 by the **Fenland Trust**, with the support of **Farcet Parish Council**, to the **Fen View Heritage Centre**, although this has now closed. It had an **extensive collection of historical maps**, documents and other local artefacts (soon to be displayed elsewhere). The nature writer, **Patrick Barkham**, visited the Heritage Centre in 2019, meeting several volunteers when he walked the Fen Edge Trail on the way to Ramsey.

10a Along the road a short way is a **trig point** with information board (10a.1) and **good views** towards where **Whittlesea Mere** was.



Photos: 6.1 Stanground to Farcet footpath (and cycleway); 7.2 Dredging of the Old Nene; 7.3 Path approaching Farcet; 8.1 Farcet Primitive Methodist chapel 8.2 Farcet Village Hall; 9.3 Farcet church; 9a.1 Reed bed at Crown Lakes; 10.2 View down to the fen from the cemetery; 10.3 View down over fenland from next to the chapel; 10a.1 Information board at trig point.

**11** Directly south on Main St, is **Faracet Bridge** and leading to **Straight Drove and Conquest Drove** which take you to **Faracet Fen**. This area of slightly higher land (but still under 5m) is formed by gravels from the **1st terrace of the Nene**, deposited in a periglacial environment in the latter part of the last glaciation when the Nene was a strong-flowing river. The '**gravel island**' would have provided valuable dry land at the edge of the tidal waters and within the freshwater marsh when it returned. As you walk along the path towards Yaxley, you are again on the 5m contour, with the dark soils of the **Peat** over the lower land to your left (11.1) and a narrow strip of Oxford Clay uphill to your right. The **Bronze Age (c.3,800 years ago) incursion of the sea** reached **this part of the fen edge** bringing tidal salt marsh, mud flats and creeks, the deposits (silts and clays) still being present beneath the Peat in places; a borehole near the start of **Conquest Drove** showed 1.6m of **tidal clay** under 2m of Peat, and on the far side of the gravel island there is c.3m of buried tidal clay. A little distance to your left, parallel with the path, is the **Pig Water**, carrying water west to Yaxley Lode. This would once have been a busy area; there were hythes on both the north and south banks of the Pig Water. **Conquest Lode** (previously **Merelade**) is listed in **Edgar's charter of 972** and other documents suggest it could be much older, perhaps **middle Anglo-Saxon or earlier**. The railway you walk under is the East Coast Main Line but was once part of the **Great Northern Railway**. To the north of the bridge, south of the road, was **Yaxley and Faracet Station**, opened in 1890 and closed in 1959. The railway was important to the huge local brickmaking industry to the northwest of the ridge, with several brickworks along the railway line.



**12** A few streets to the north, an archaeological dig found the remains of **medieval 'strip' quarrying** of the sand and gravel within the **Glacial deposits**. The **Duck and Drake pub**, on the right, is named after Yaxley's wildfowling past. It was apparently used by guards before they marched **Napoleonic prisoners** of war up the hill to **Norman Cross** after being brought across the fenland via **Yaxley Lode**.



**13** The house on Main St next to the footpath may once have been the **Customs House**, only accessible by a footbridge before **Yaxley Lode** (13.1) was diverted. As you walk toward the fen, you cross the **Pig Water** flowing from the east and then you cross **Yaxley Lode** which dates from when **Whittlesey Mere** (13.1) was drained and roughly follows a previous course that flowed across **Yaxley Fen** into the mere via the older, smaller **Trundle Mere**. As well as a complex landscape history, this area has a **rich cultural history** as shown by finds from Whittlesey Mere when it was drained, including a **Bronze Age log boat**, a metre-long, double-edged **medieval sword** and a **silver censer and incense boat** (the latter two now in the V&A Museum). Yaxley Fen is also known as the last place in Britain where the **Large Copper** butterfly was found (in 1847). The path follows **Yard's End Dyke**, that also flows into Yaxley Lode. The houses on the right are far enough uphill to avoid flooding, with their adjacent, once cultivated, long strips of land beneath.

**13a** A little way along Main St, on the right (behind nos 135-131), is the old building of the **ropemakers** - once an important local craft on fenland waterways; it was on '**Rope Walk**', leading down to Yard's End Dyke. The **village Green** has the cast iron **Victorian village pump** and a **post box**. The 18th-century thatched cottage on the far side corner was once the **workhouse** (all three are Grade II listed).

**14** The name of Yaxley in the 10th century was **laceslea** or **Geaceslea**, possibly from the Old English name for **Wood Sorrel** (*Oxalis acetosella*), *gēaces* *sūrea*, and 'leah', a clearing, referring to a place where the plant grew. A species that prefers free-draining soil (as found on the ridge), one of its common names was 'cuckoo bread' so Yaxley has sometimes been translated as 'cuckoo's clearing'. A cuckoo is depicted on the village sign. The change to 'Yaxley' was made in the 16th century. Once in **Norman Cross Hundred**, it was given a charter for a market in 1201 and the parish was once owned by the **Benedictine monastery at Thorney**. The **Manor** was owned by **Elizabeth I** throughout her reign, passing to James 1. From 1632 to 1909 it was owned by the Proby family of Elton Hall. As the Manor was bought by the Parish Council in 1984, the Chairman is now the **Lord of the Manor** and the Clerk is Steward. The thatched **Three Horseshoes** pub is early 18th-century and Grade II listed, as are the two early 19th-century houses next door with Welsh slate roofs. You pass the **old Fire Station** (1878) on the right and the **Primitive Methodist Chapel**, dating from 1850, on the left.



**15** The last two houses on the left, opposite Church St, date from the **17th century** and are **Grade II listed**, with **original local red brick** that is seen on the gable end.



**16** **St Mary's Church** (16.1), **Grade I listed**, stands high up on the Glacial Till in a commanding position, 50ft above Main St, overlooking the Fens (16.2); it is a distinctive feature on the skyline. There was a church here by 1086. Dating from the 13th century, with 15th-century spire and flying buttresses, it is built of **Barnack Limestone** ashlar with limestone rubble walls. Peregrines nest on its spire! **Pound Lane Pond** (16.3f), behind the church, was once the village pond and is named after the local pound which used to be behind the churchyard. It is now a restored, wildlife-rich pond, as shown by the information board (16.4), and managed by Yaxley Countryside Volunteers.



**16a** Further up Church St is Carysfort Close, with the **Manor House** (Grade II, 18th-century, coursed limestone) on the right corner and a millstone from Yaxley Mill in the wall on the left. Further on is the **cemetery**, with a **War Memorial (Grade II)**, made of **Aberdeen granite** with a black **marble** base. There are also five **Commonwealth War Grave Commission** headstones. The **Mortuary Chapel** (no longer used) dates to 1882. Past the cemetery, at the far end of Waterslade Rd, is the **village sign**. For more about **Yaxley** see

*Photos: 11.1 View over Peat towards Conquest Drove, near Faracet Bridge; 13.1 Whittlesey Mere map; 16.1 Yaxley church; 16.2 View from Yaxley church down across the fenland; 16.4 Pond information board.*

