



THE BISHOP'S WAY



Cambridgeshire
County Council

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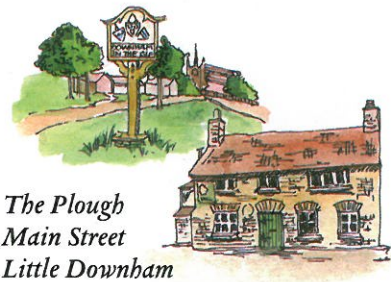
CIRCULAR ROUTE 7-9 MILES

Allow approximately 4 hours

Following medieval tracks out across the fens, The Bishop's Way takes you along the route used by the Bishops of Ely to their Palace in Downham. Hundreds of years ago, before the fens were artificially drained, Downham-in-the-Isle was a real island among flat and boggy reed fen. It was here that Athelwold, Bishop of Winchester set up his monastic settlement in 970. The estate grew and prospered for 500 years and played host to many bishops from Ely. In the summer months, when the roads were best, they travelled by horse up what is now Hurst Lane to their summer Palace. Today the views across agricultural land are very different to those the bishops would have seen. Today's fields are highly productive and produce thousands of tons of grain and root crops. The orchards, vineyards and fields of pasture have all been replaced except around Chettisham where cattle still graze. All along the route you can glimpse pieces of our medieval history along with the most modern farming methods. Look both forward and back as you retrace the steps of Bishop Athelwold and his successors.



One of the two remaining portions of the fifteenth century palace, now part of Tower Farm in Little Downham.

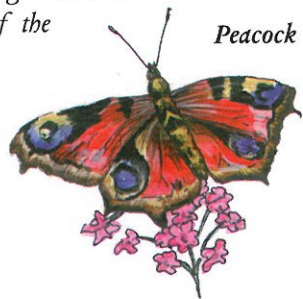


The Plough
Main Street
Little Downham

The Village Centre was formerly the guildhall of this wealthy settlement. In the 1700's it was a workhouse and in 1779 donated to the village for use as a school by the Downham People's Charity, still in existence.

The Bishop's Palace in Downham has a long history of occupation and use. The Monastic property here was first described in 1086 when it was said to have sufficient meadow for all the plough teams, pasture for the cattle, woodland for 100 pigs and fisheries producing 300 eels a year. Little remains of the Palace today.

Butterflies such as the Peacock can be seen between the months of July and late September.

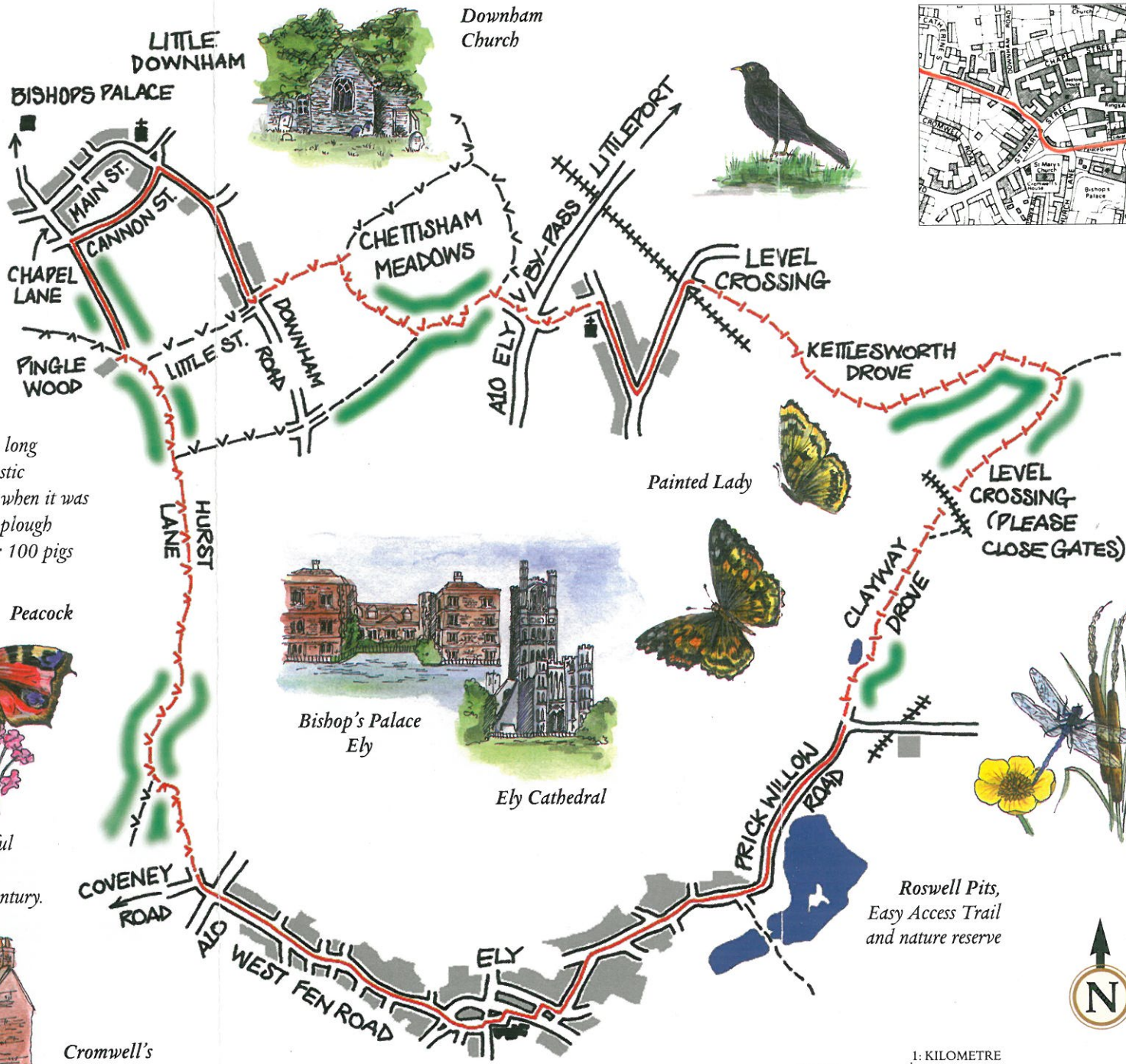


Peacock

The City of Ely contains many beautiful buildings including The Bishop's Palace which was built at the end of the 15th century. Cromwell's House, former home of Oliver Cromwell, is another notable building now used as the Tourist Information Centre.



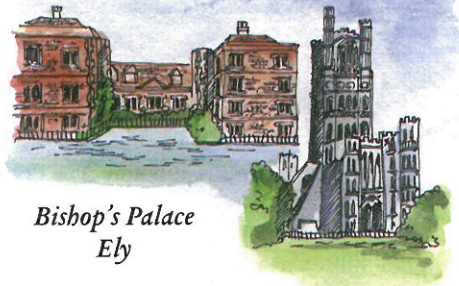
Cromwell's
House



Downham
Church

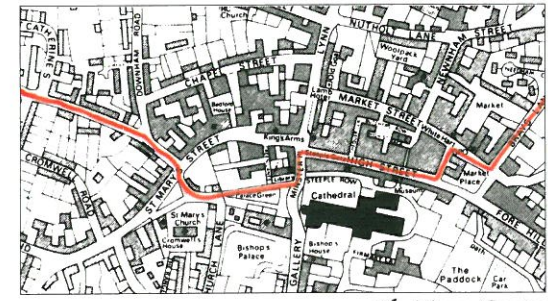


Painted Lady



Bishop's Palace
Ely

Ely Cathedral



Ely Town Centre

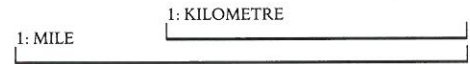
The drainage of the fens in the 1800's led to the creation of a 'new' parish at Chettisham. It was first described in 1170 as "wooded assart" leased from the New Barns estate.

The hedges offer food to many common birds such as Blackbirds and Thrushes. Field ditches provide wet conditions needed by such plants as Bull rushes.



KEY

- Footpath
- - - - - Byway
- - - - - Bridleway
- — — — — Roads
- - - - - Circular Route
- +++++ Railway
- Woods/nature areas
- S Stile
- KG Kissing Gate
- G Gate
- ☩ Church



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THE ISLAND VILLAGES

Ely Cathedral, the great 'ship of the Fens', is built on an island like the village of Downham. The early settlers of the fens built their homes on the islands of clay which are raised above the peat fen. The islands were easy to defend and were dry enough to support the buildings. Buildings erected on the peat fen very often sink into the soft peat producing some very crooked houses.

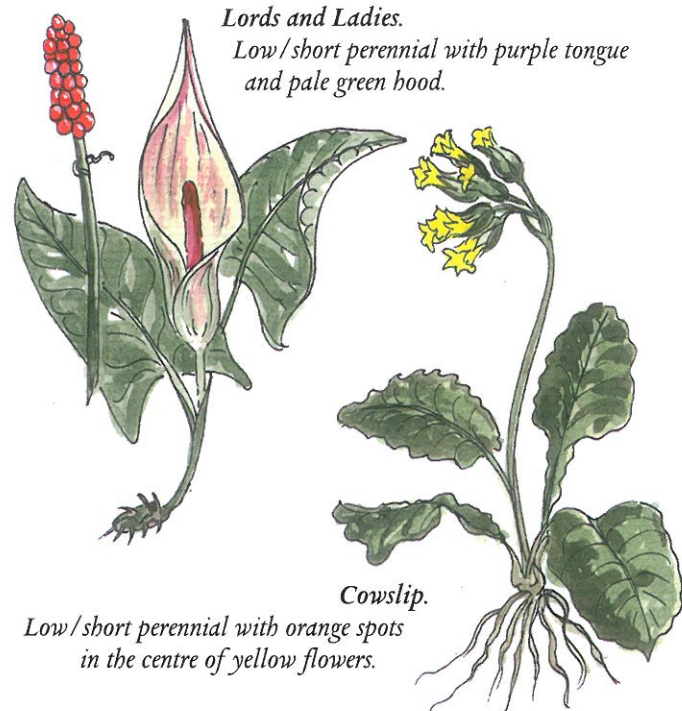


Princess Etheldreda, daughter of the king of the East Anglian Britons, came to Ely in 673. She was a religious woman and it was from her religious foundation that the cathedral city developed. A shrine to her can be seen in the choir of the cathedral.

Downham or Duneham means home of the dunes. The village is built on a ridge of sand and gravel which was excavated up until the 1940's for building. Downham is also Anglo-Saxon for Dune or hill. The village has a long agricultural history with orchards, vineyards and fruit gardens along Cannon Street being recorded as early as 1286. There used to be ponds at either end of the main street which were used to wash the horses feet before they came through the village. Cattle were kept to provide meat and milk which, without refrigeration, rapidly go bad. The cattle were grazed along the wide grassy droves, which now form part of the Bishops Way, until the 1950's.

Of the twenty pubs that used to exist in the parish only two remain on Downham High Street, The Anchor and The Plough. Tinmans shop can still be seen in the High

Street. It was known as 'Tinmans' because the founder was a tinman by trade. The old Guildhall on the corner of the High Street and School Lane was formerly the school and a workhouse. Today it is the Village Centre.



Lords and Ladies.

Low/short perennial with purple tongue and pale green hood.

Cowslip.

Low/short perennial with orange spots in the centre of yellow flowers.

FOLLOW THE COUNTRY CODE - WHY?

- ❖ Because the countryside is a place to be enjoyed by all; do protect wildlife, plants and trees, don't leave rubbish behind, don't disturb others with unnecessary noise.
- ❖ Because the countryside is a place of work; do keep to paths and use stiles and gates to cross fences. Don't let your dogs disturb stock and don't interfere with crops or machines.

Enjoying the countryside means respecting its life and work. If you don't you won't!

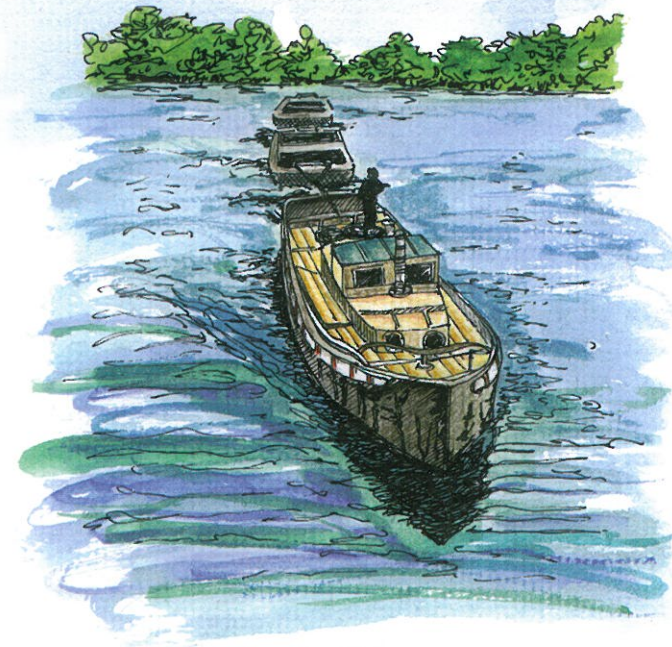
WILDLIFE MEADOWS

Green lanes, which form most of the walk, and the meadows at Chettisham are rich in wildlife. The lanes are bordered by trees and hedges which maybe 600 years old. They offer food and shelter to many common birds such as blackbirds and thrushes, and to rarer ones like the wren. Look out for herons, kestrels, kingfishers, warblers and buntings. Field ditches provide wet conditions needed by bullrushes, water crowfoots and marsh marigold. In the summer you can see dragon flies over the water and butterflies feeding off the flowering plants of the grassy lanes. The meadows at Chettisham have to be specially managed to keep the variety of plants that can be found here. The meadows are regularly mown for hay and then grazed by cattle which is the traditional use of such meadows. No fertilizers or herbicides are used. The meadows and surrounding countryside is constantly changing with the seasons so look out for fresh flowers and wildlife on your next visit.



LOST VILLAGES

As well as villages which have prospered on the 'islands', The Bishop's Way goes through a village which no longer exists! Along Kettlesworth Drove, between Chettisham and Queen Adelaide, there used to be a village of thirty houses. The people who lived here worked on the land and used spring water to drink. They also had a pub known as the Cross Keys which was located near the river bank and closed in the 1950's. Sugar beet, which is still grown in the area, was put on a barge at the Cross Keys pub and taken down to a factory at Queen Adelaide. This factory, now replaced by a road/air distribution centre, was one of the largest in Europe. Although the factory and the village have gone, the area continues to grow. Trees have been planted along the old hedgerow, new houses are being built and more facilities being provided. If you have enjoyed this walk, bring your friends along this ancient and well trodden path!



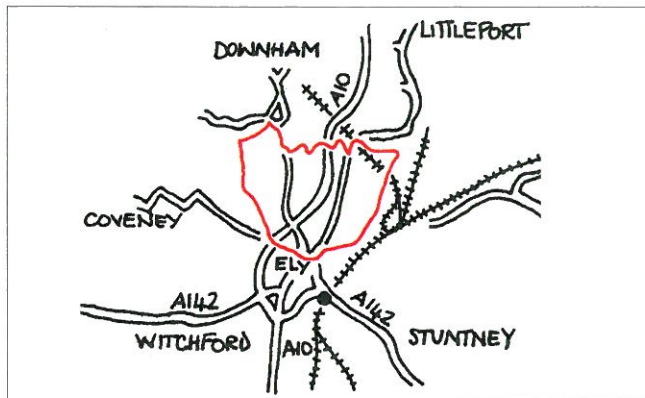
HOW TO GET THERE

By bus:- A&P Travel Tel: 01353 720430
Neals Travel Tel: 01638 780066
Stagecoach Tel: 01223 423578

By train:- Connections at Ely for Cambridge, Newmarket, Peterborough, Norwich and Kings Lynn.
www.nationalrail.co.uk

By road:- A10 to Cambridge, Downham Market and Kings Lynn. A142 to Newmarket and Chatteris.

Inquiries:- Cambridgeshire County Council Passenger Transport, General Inquiries Tel: 0845 045 0675



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This leaflet is one of a series produced by Cambridgeshire County Council's Countryside Access Team, to encourage the use and enjoyment of some of the many public rights of way that exist in Cambridgeshire. We hope you have enjoyed the walks and would appreciate any comments you may have.

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Cambridge CB3 0AP Tel: 01223 715558
www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk

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FURTHER INFORMATION

Footwear - Most of the route follows grassy droves which can become very muddy in the winter. Sturdy footwear or boots are recommended.

Maps - The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 Landranger Sheet 143 and Pathfinder Sheet 941 which also indicate other rights of way.

Waymarking - Green metal signs indicate the route through Ely and also where paths leave the tarmac road. Smaller metal waymark arrows fixed to wooden posts indicate the route in open country.

Refreshments - Plenty of cafe's and shops in Ely and Little Downham. However, it is a good idea to take a snack with you, for when you stop to rest and enjoy the countryside.

Detailed information from:

The Wildlife Trust,
The Manor House, Broad Street, Cambourne CB3 6DH

Tourist Information,
Oliver Cromwell House, St Mary's Street, Ely.
Tel: Ely 662062

ACCESS FOR ALL



The Cambridgeshire countryside is there to be enjoyed by EVERYONE. This route follows grassy droves which although muddy in winter are firm if uneven underfoot in the summer. There are no stiles and only one gate along the route and access to sections of the route from the road is good. Battery car owners can use sections of the route which are ideal for sitting and enjoying the countryside. 'Access for all' and 'The Bishop's Way' leaflets available on tape, on request.

Come and enjoy it.