

The Lodes Way



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The Lodes Way is a 9 mile cycle way from Wicken passing Anglesey Abbey to Bottisham, which forms part of National Cycle Network route 11 (NCN11).



The route uses both traffic free cycle ways and minor public roads. Cyclists and walkers share the cycle way, and horse riders can use the grass track that runs alongside. Expect to meet farm vehicles and other traffic on the road sections. The section from Lode village to Bottisham has a cycle way beside the road.

At present the Lodes Way crosses Burwell Lode by means of a footbridge. Cycles have to be carried and riders of tandems, trikes and trailer bikes may have difficulty. This section is not suitable for horse riders. A new bridge suitable for all users is planned for 2013.

The Lodes Way is signed using blue national cycle network signs; links to nearby villages and to NCN51 are also signed. From Wicken the Lodes Way links to Ely via NCN 11 and from Bottisham you can reach Cambridge via NCN51. This numbered route also leads from Burwell to Newmarket.



There are circuits linking villages to the Lodes Way; some of these use 'soft' public byways and are recommended for walkers and off road mountain bikes only.

Cycle hire should be available from Wicken Fen in 2011 and from Anglesey Abbey in subsequent years.

The Lodes Way has been made possible with financial support of sustainable transport charity, Sustrans, via a £50 Million grant from the Big Lottery Fund's Living Landmarks: won as a result



of the People's Millions public vote in 2007. The route is part of the Sustrans' Connect2 scheme, which is developing new walking and cycling routes throughout the UK. Other partners who have generously contributed to the development of the Lodes Way include Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire Horizons, Department for Communities and Local Government, Environment Agency and Natural England.

The Cambridgeshire Lodes

The Cambridgeshire Lodes comprise six historic manmade waterways connecting fen edge villages to the River Cam. They have a fascinating history and their origin and purpose has been much debated by archaeologists. They were once thought to have been dug by the Romans, but this is now thought unlikely.



The Lodes were most likely designed for water management, ensuring that excessive spring and summer water did not flood the rich grazing land between the villages and the River Cam. They were probably built by the monasteries at Ely and Ramsey which in the late Saxon period acquired land in this area.

Each Lode has its distinctive character and history.

Wicken and Monks Lodes, were used from the middle ages to transport sedge – a thatching material and fuel - to Cambridge and Ely.

Wicken Fen remained the main source of this

commodity throughout the 19th century, when other areas had been drained for agriculture.



A century ago Burwell Lode was the busiest in terms of water traffic. It gained a new importance when the Burwell Chemical works opened in 1865, making phosphate fertilizer from coprolites – phosphate rich fossil remains dug from local pits. By the early 20th century 10,000 tonnes of fertilizer a year left on barges

pulled by steam tugs. The Burwell brickworks, which manufactured up to 10 million bricks a year, added to the trade. Barges were built or repaired at Burwell until 1936. Gradually water borne trade declined and by the 1960s it had all but ceased.



Reach Lode carried timber, stone, salt, wines and spirits inward, and exported clunch, the locally quarried building material, in coasters travelling to Kings Lynn and beyond. Though the coming of the railway in 1850 provided competition, clunch was still being transported by water until the 1930s.

Swaffham Bulbeck Lode enjoyed a period of trading prosperity in the late 18th and 19th centuries and the peaceful hamlet of Commercial End has a number of fine merchants' buildings from that period.



Bottisham Lode is too shallow for navigation today but this problem was addressed in the 19th century by building a 'flash lock' which temporarily raised the water level while boats travelled up and down the Lode.

Today the Lodes stand well above the surrounding landscape. As the fens were drained for agriculture their peat soils shrank and oxidised, and the cutting of peat for fuel also played a part. The level of Burwell Fen fell 2-3 metres in the 30 years after its drainage in 1840.

Mainly used by recreational craft today the Lodes provide a peaceful and relaxing way to discover the unique landscapes of the Cambridgeshire Fens.



Wicken Fen (1)

Discover a lost landscape, as you explore this last piece of un-drained fen with its amazing abundance of wildlife.



Wicken Fen has been shaped by centuries of human influence on the land. Fen dwellers lived off the land by cutting sedge and peat, by fishing and wildfowling. But while most of the fens were drained for agriculture, Wicken was saved from this fate by the local villagers, Victorian wildlife enthusiasts and then the National Trust who purchased two acres of the fen for £10 in 1899.

Today Wicken Fen is a haven for wildlife with over 8400 recorded species, such as bittern, hen and marsh harriers, otters and rare wildflowers.

Wicken Fen Vision

The Wicken Fen Vision is an ambitious 100 year project by the National Trust to create a 53 square km nature reserve stretching from Wicken Fen to Cambridge. The aim is to recreate fenland habitat to help secure the survival of many threatened species whilst creating an vast area of easily accessible countryside to explore by foot, cycle, horse or boat.



Bakers Fen and Guinea Hall (2)

Bakers Fen and Guinea Hall are an ideal location to spot Wicken Fen's free roaming herds of Konik ponies and Highland cattle. The animals are part of a low density extensive grazing project helping to create new habitats for Wicken's diverse range of wildlife.



Burwell Fen (3)

Burwell Fen is one of the lowest parts of the Cambridgeshire fens at nearly two metres below sea level in places.



The fen is part of a major European Union funded project to create more sustainable habitats in response to the threats posed by climate change.

Here the construction of a low level clay bund will enable wet grassland habitat to develop. In turn this will create new areas for threatened wildlife.

Tubney Fen (4)

Tubney Fen was a turf farm a little over 5 years ago. Since being purchased by the Trust a mere has been created which is now home to several species of rare wading bird. Avocets with their distinctive curved bills have successfully bred on Tubney Fen in recent years. A bird hide overlooking the mere can be accessed from Little Fen Drove.



White Fen (5)

A joint project between the National Trust, Woodland Trust and community of Lode with Long Meadow will see the creation of a woodland on White Fen. Planting is set to commence over the winter of 2010/11.



Anglesey Abbey, Gardens and Lode Mill (6)



Developed by the 1st Lord Fairhaven in the 1930's, Anglesey Abbey and Gardens is a Jacobean style country house with formal gardens and parkland.

It is noted for its displays of snowdrops in spring, herbaceous borders and dahlia gardens in summer and colourful Winter Garden. The water powered Lode Mill dates from the 18th Century.



Wicken Fen

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