



THE CAWDLE FEN WALK

Ely - Little Thetford



Cambridgeshire
County Council

Environment & Transport

40p

THE CAWDLE FEN WALK

CIRCULAR ROUTE 6 MILES

Allow approximately 3-4 hours

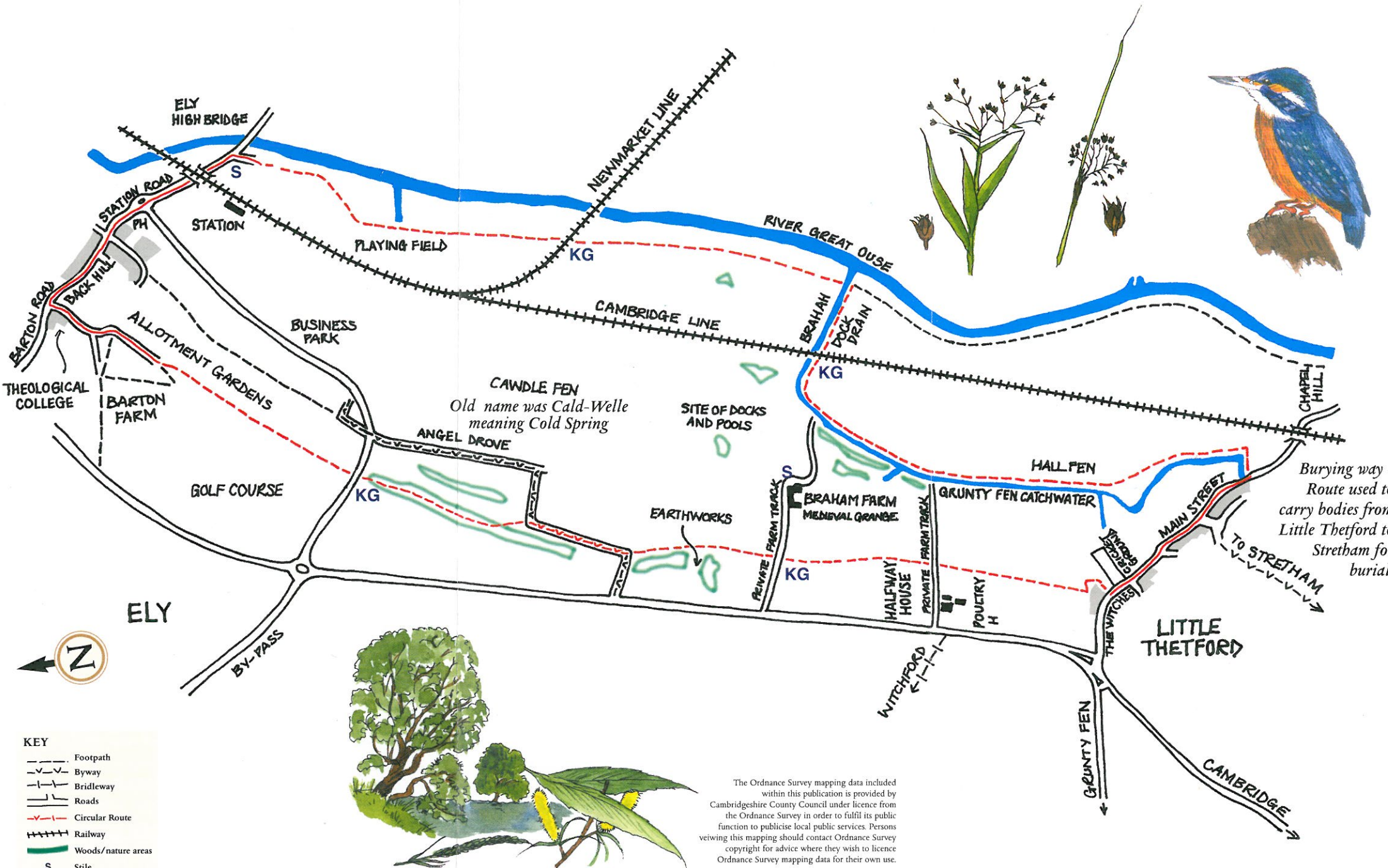
A walk to the south of Ely takes you along the sturdy banks of the River Great Ouse, a river which has been the life and blood to Ely and its settlements through the centuries. This ancient and once powerful river now idles through open fenland, by-passing an area known as Cawdle Fen. 'Cawdle' means 'cold spring' and this spring once supported a thriving monastic community at Brahmewere.

These ancient waterways, hedgerows and pastures yield up their treasures to the inquisitive, so take a trip out alongside the river to the forgotten villages at Braham now hidden away by lines of willows and enclosed meadows.



Starting in Ely or Little Thetford

Public footpaths take you through Cawdle Fen. Car parking is free in Ely and the walk may be started at Barton Square (near Kings school) or from the station at Ely High Bridge. Two footpaths lead from the village of Little Thetford to Hall Fen. A slightly longer walk along the riverbank can be made by crossing the railway line at the South-Eastern end of the village and walking up Chapel Hill to the riverbank.



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

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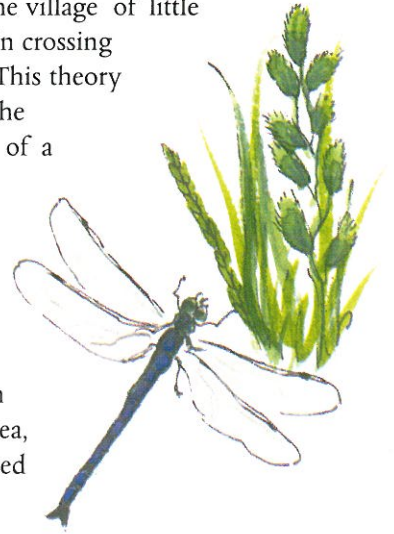
1: KILOMETRE
1: MILE

CAUSEWAYS AND WATERWAYS

The River Great Ouse ploughs through landscape of open fenland, hedge-lined meadows and cloud-filled skies. this powerful river, now enclosed by elevated earth banks, used to sweep across the land, changing course regularly. Now complemented by a system of dykes and catchwater drains, the river carries excess water to the Wash avoiding flooding miles of fen land.

The importance of the river to people living in the area can be traced back many years. The village of Little Thetford was first mentioned in 972 AD when it was spelt 'piutforda', meaning people (piut) of the ford (forda).

It is thought that the village of little Thetford was a main crossing point of the river. This theory was reinforced by the discovery, in 1932, of a Bronze Age causeway leading from Barway to Chapel Hill in Little Thetford. There is also some evidence of Roman settlement in the area, again, probably based on the river.



Special thanks for all the practical work on the route which was completed by the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers. We would like to express our thanks to all those volunteers who worked on the project and have, therefore, enabled many more people to enjoy the countryside.

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; and 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 allow dogs to 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!



FARMING AND FORTIFICATIONS

The occupants of the grange must have earned a good living from their estate because they remained independent for so long. They would have kept sheep, pigs and rabbits, as well as bees, whose honey would have been used instead of sugar and to make mead. They would have obtained fish and birds from the waterways and would have cultivated some arable fields using oxen. The old ridge-and-furrow pattern formed by the oxen's plough lines is still faintly visible from the path to the west of Braham Farm. In later years a fortress was built on top of the ridge-and-furrow fields for defence during

the Civil War (1640-1660). Only 100 years previously, the Grange had become part of the lands owned by Ely Cathedral. Henry VIII challenged the power of the monasteries and in the early 1500s dissolved them, bringing to an end 500 years of independence at Brahmewere.

Today, some of the land is still administered by the Church Commissioners. Cattle and horses now graze amongst the cowslips on the site of the old village. The channels and former turning pools now accommodate dragonflies, swans, kingfishers, water crowfoots, reeds and rushes. The river itself continues its relentless journey northwards, still carrying boats to Ely, but now they are filled with holiday visitors rather than monks and eels!

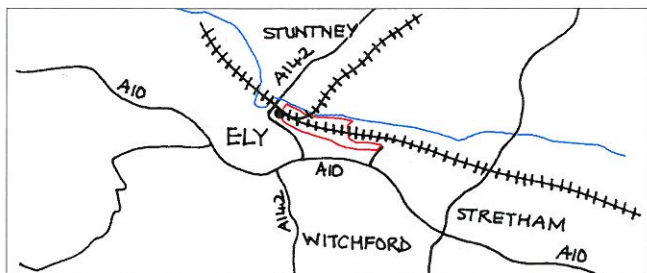
CANALS AND QUAYS

A former settlement at Braham Farm owed its prosperity to the river. In 1086, monks at a settlement called Brahmewere were recorded as supplying fish to the monastery at Ely. Unusually, the monks at Brahmewere were totally independent of any of the other monasteries. They lived in a Grange (now part of the present farmhouse) and were served by inhabitants of their own village settlement. When the Grange and village were at their most prosperous, the River Great Ouse flowed nearer the island of Stuntney. A channel was dug from the river up to Brahmewere, where it divided into two channels serving both the village and the Grange. At the junction of these two channels (now called Cawdle Fen Catchwater and Grunty Fen Catchwater), a turning pool was dug to allow boats to dock and turn around. The site of the turning pool can still be seen from the banks of Grunty Fen Catchwater and is now occupied by orchards.



HOW TO GET THERE

- By bus:-** Stagecoach Cambus operate services between Cambridge and Ely which stop at Little Thetford. For Timetable details Tel: 01223 423554
- By train:-** Ely Station is on the route and has regular connections to Cambridge, Newmarket and March, and all stations in between. For timetable details call National Rail Enquiries - Tel: 08457 484950
- By road:-** From the A10 follow signs to Little Thetford (the village is on the east side of the A10, approx 3km/2miles south of Ely) or go into Ely and follow signs to the railway station.
- By boat:-** Moorings are available at Ely Marina, 1/2 mile from the route. Ely Marina Tel: 01353 664622
- Enquiries:-** Cambridgeshire County Council Public Transport General Enquiries Tel: 01223 717740



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This leaflet is one of a series produced by Cambridgeshire County Council's Environment Division, 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 we would appreciate any comments you may have.

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FURTHER INFORMATION

Footwear - The surface is usually dry except after heavy rain, but sturdy shoes or boots are advisable for comfort.

Maps - The route can be followed on OS 1:50,000 Landranger Sheet 143 (Ely and Wisbech) or on 1:25,000 Explorer Series Sheet 226 (Ely and Newmarket).

Waymarking - The paths are marked with green metal signs from surfaced roads. Waymark arrows indicate the way along the route. Occasionally, other rights of way cross the route and these are also waymarked. Yellow arrows mark footpaths, blue arrows bridleways, and red arrows byways.

Refreshments - Ely has a wealth of tea shops, bakeries and public houses. The Cutter Inn on Annesdale serves cooked lunches and overlooks the river. The Maltings, also on the river, has a coffee bar which is open for most of the day. There is a Post Office in Little Thetford but no public house. The riverbank is a very good location for picnics but please take your litter home with you.

ACCESS FOR ALL



The Cambridgeshire countryside is there to be enjoyed by EVERYONE. This route follows paths along the riverbank and a short section across arable fields into Little Thetford. The route crosses the busy Ely bypass and the Kings Lynn - Cambridge Railway. Kissing Gates have to be negotiated at these points and there are stiles to contain grazing stock at Braham farm. Cattle may also be grazing the riverbanks. Most paths are grasses through out the year but may be uneven, especially the cross-field sections which are ploughed after harvest. *The Cawdle Fen Walk* leaflet is available on tape, on request. Further information on other 'Access for all' sites is also available on tape and as a leaflet.

Come and enjoy it.