THE QUY FEN WALKS
A NETWORK OFFERING WALKS of 2-6 MILES
Allow approximately 1 - 4 hours

Come and explore this fascinating fen-edge landscape. Waymarked paths lead you from the historic villages of Lode, Stow-cum-Quy and Horningsea into a countryside full of farming activity. At the heart of this agricultural landscape lies Quy Fen, a peaceful common with a rich variety of wildlife habitats. Visit Anglesey Abbey, Lode Mill and the site of the Cambridgeshire to Mildenhall railway line, and learn about some of the changes this area has seen. A good network of rights of way provides the opportunity to explore this area from a variety of starting points, and enables you to create a walk of an appropriate length for your needs.

Starting from Lode
Join the network at Lode Mill, at the end of Mill Road, Lode. Parking is available at Anglesey Abbey (during opening hours).

Starting from Stow-cum-Quy
Begin at Station Road, Stow-cum-Quy. Parking is available at The Wheatsheaf Public House, Stow-cum-Quy.

Starting from Horningsea
The walk commences at the layby on the Horningsea Road, just north of the village.
FEN-EDGE VILLAGES

Now often seen as peaceful backwaters of rural life, Lode, Horningsea and Stow-cum-Quy were once prosperous, busy hamlets.

The waterways linking with the Cam provided vital communication and trade links for internal as well as foreign trade, allowing these communities to grow and prosper.

The fen-edge sites provided several alternative sources of income, not only from trade, agriculture and grazing, but also from the undrained fens, which provided wildfowl, fish, eels, reeds (for thatching) and turf (for burning).

Lode - This village derives its name from Bottisham Lode, one of a number of artificial waterways which were cut through fenland swamps. Lodes are thought to date back to Roman times and were part of an early drainage system, as well as being used for navigation. Lode, the village, was part of Bottisham until 1894.

Stow-cum-Quy - Originally Stow and Quy were separate hamlets, but by Doomsday they had been combined as one village. Stow, meaning holy place, is the southwest part of the village and has the church standing on its edge. Quy, meaning ‘Cow Island’, is the northeast part.

Horningsea - This word signifies the island of the descendants, or followers, of Horn. The village has given its name to a fine, grey paste pottery, produced in the Iron-age and Romano-British period, and which was exported by river to neighbouring villages.

Cambridge - Mildenhall RAILWAY LINE

Cutting through the network of paths, this dismantled railway line is clearly visible at several points. The line was opened in 1884, after great efforts from landed proprietor Charles Peter Allix of Swaffham Prior, to persuade the Great Eastern Railway to construct it. At its peak, five freight and passenger trains ran each day from Fordham to Cambridge. However, by 1961, the viability of the route was in serious doubt, and it was closed in 1968.

Today, many parts of the track have been returned to agricultural use. Only the section owned by the National Trust is open to the public as a Permissive Bridleway.

Special thanks are due to the inhabitants of Lode, Stow-cum-Quy and Horningsea who provided information for this leaflet; also to the Cambridge Green Belt Project and Cambridge Conservation Volunteers who did much of the practical footpath improvement work.

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!
ANGLESEY ABBEY

A visit to this National Trust property makes an enjoyable addition to the walk. Anglesey Abbey was probably founded by King Henry I in 1135 as an Augustinian Priory. The 3rd Lord Fairhaven now lives here, but the house and gardens have been bequeathed to the National Trust and are open to the public at certain times (see below).

It is the permanent home of an outstandingly rich collection of furniture, pictures and objet d'art, and the landscaped gardens are magnificently laid out, with examples of garden sculpture from C18th and C19th, and an arboretum.

Opening Times - The Abbey is open in the afternoons from approx. mid-March to mid-October, Wednesday to Sunday and Bank Holidays. The Gardens are open in the afternoons from approx. mid-March to the beginning of July, Wednesday to Sunday and Bank Holidays; and from the beginning of July to mid-October they are open daily in the afternoons; and from mid-October to mid-March, Thursday to Sunday in the afternoons. Lunches and teas are available when the Abbey is open. For more details telephone Anglesey Abbey on 01223 811200

QUY FEN

The 70 acres of Quy Fen form an oasis amidst the surrounding arable land. Quy Fen is now pastureland, with water-filled 'cuts' providing important open-water habitats.

Hedgerows and scrub surround the fen and provide cover and nesting for the many birds living here. Cuckoos and peering flax can be seen in the grassland, and the ponds surrounded with reeds are very attractive to dragonflies. The great variety of habitats has led to the designation of Quy Fen as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Its history is also interesting. Originally, it was an 'intercommunion' between the parishes of Stow-cum-Quy, Fen Ditton and Horningsea. Until the last war, no grazing was allowed on the fen, although the parishioners of the three villages had rights of 'estover' (hay, pea-sticks), 'piscary' (fishing), and 'turbery' (peat-cutting).

Most of the land was worked during the second half of the last century for coprolites (phosphatised shells, bones and nodules of clay used as fertiliser). Trenches were dug, the bed of coprolites lying some 15-20 ft deep was extracted, and the trenches backfilled as the next strip was dug. Fisons of Harston, the large agro-chemical company, originally grew as a result of the coprolite industry. Now the industry is virtually forgotten and only in the landscape can we see its mark. The 'cut' in Quy Fen was dug for coprolite and left to fill with water, and various earth mounds still visible in the fen are further remnants of this industry.

Quy Fen is now maintained as an open space for the benefit of the inhabitants of Stow-cum-Quy, Fen Ditton and Horningsea, and is looked after by the Quy Fen Trust.

LODE MILL

This prominent feature was built in the early C19th as a corn mill. However, between 1880 and 1910, cement became an important commodity; it was derived from the layer of chalk uncovered by coprolite mining, and the mill was owned by the Bottisham Lode Cement and Brick Company. Competition killed the business by about 1920 and the mill became derelict.

The Mill now belongs to the National Trust and has been restored. It is open to the public in the afternoons from approx. mid-March to mid-October on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays.

Lode Mill is situated on the banks of Quy Water, which is an artificial watercourse. Shrinkage of the land following improved drainage has left the river high above the surrounding countryside.
HOW TO GET THERE

By bus: Stagecoach Cambs and Whippet coaches operate services between Cambridge and Waterbeach which stop in Horningsea; and Stagecoach Cambs operates services between Cambridge and Newmarket/Ely which stop in Stow-cum-Quty and Lode. For timetable details Tel: Stagecoach Cambs 01223 423554 Tel: Whippet Coaches 01480 463792

By train: The nearest station is at waterbeach, which is about 2km/1¼ miles (by footpath) from the route at Horningsea. For timetable details call National Rail Enquiries Tel: 08457 484950

By road: From the A14 take the B1047 north to Horningsea (NB - exit on eastbound carriageway only), or the B1102 north to Quy and Lode.

Enquiries: Cambridgeshire County Council Public Transport General Enquiries Tel: 01223 717740

*Footwear* - The route can be wet and muddy in places, particularly after heavy rain. Strong, waterproof footwear is essential.

*Maps* - The route can be followed on OS 1:50,000 Landranger Sheet 154 (Cambridge and Newmarket), or on OS 1:25,000 Explorer Series Sheets 224 (Ely and Newmarket) and 209 (Cambridge).

*Waymarking* - All the rights of way are signposted at metalled roads. Look also for waymarks which indicate the direction of the route along the rights of way. Other rights of way connect with the main network and can be used to create shorter or different walks. Yellow arrows mark footpaths, blue arrows bridleways, and red arrows byways.


ACCESS FOR ALL

The Cambridgeshire countryside is there to be enjoyed by EVERYONE. This route follows paths that cross grazing pasture, arable fields and farm tracks. Some of the paths can be muddy and uneven, especially in winter, and cattle graze the pasture on Quy Fen Nature Reserve. The path along Quy Water and the droves provide a firm and level surface during summer but may become poached by cattle in the winter. There are kissing gates and stiles along the route to contain stock. The Quy Fen Walks 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.