

The

# Bishop's Way

Ely • Little Downham



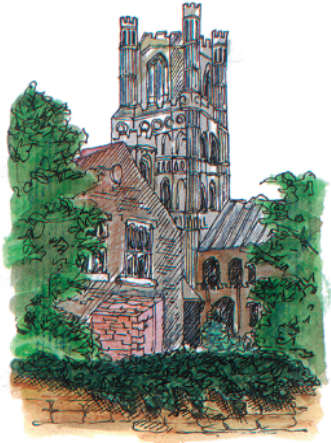
## Wildlife meadows

Green lanes, which form most of the walk, and Chettisham Meadow (owned by the Wildlife Trust) are rich in wildlife. The lanes are bordered by trees and hedges which may be 600 years old. They offer food and shelter to many common birds such as blackbirds and thrushes, and to less common ones like the wren. Look out for herons, kestrels, kingfishers, warblers and buntings.

Field ditches provide wet conditions needed by bulrushes, water crowfoot and marsh marigold. In the summer you can see dragonflies hunting over the water and butterflies feeding on the flowering plants that can be found here.

Chettisham Meadow is regularly mown for hay and then grazed by cattle, which is the traditional use of such meadows. No fertilizers or herbicides are used. The Meadow and surrounding countryside are constantly changing with the seasons so look out for seasonal flowers and wildlife on your next visit.

## 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 and gravel which raised above the peat fen.

The islands were easy to defend and were dry enough to support the buildings. Buildings

erected on the peat fens very often sink in 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 St. Etheldreda can be seen in the choir of the cathedral.

Downham is Anglo-Saxon for dune or hill. The village is built on a ridge of sand and gravel which was excavated up until the 1940s for building. 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 for washing horses' feet before they came through the village.

Cattle were kept to provide meat and milk which, without refrigeration, rapidly went bad. Until the 1950s, the cattle were grazed along the wide grassy droves, which now form part of the Bishop's Way.

## Lost villages

As well as villages which have prospered on the 'islands', the Bishop's Way goes through a village that 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. There was also a pub known as the Cross Keys which was located near the river bank before it closed in the 1950s. 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/rail 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 hedgerows, new houses are being built and more facilities provided. If you have enjoyed this walk, bring your friends and family along this ancient and well trodden path!



### Follow the Countryside 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 boundaries; don't let your dogs disturb stock and don't interfere with crops or machines.



The Cambridgeshire countryside is there to be enjoyed by *everyone*. This route follows farm tracks and grassy field edge paths. The surface is uneven.

The Public Rights of Way and Access Team is endeavouring to replace stiles with gates where a barrier is necessary. More information about other walks is available on the Cambridgeshire County Council website at [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/environment/countrysideandrights](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/environment/countrysideandrights) and [www.visitcambridge.org](http://www.visitcambridge.org)

*Come and enjoy it!*



This project is supported by the Fens Adventurers Local Action Group (LAG) who deliver the Rural Development Programme England in Cambridgeshire and West Norfolk through the Leader approach. The LAG is managed by Cambridgeshire County Council & Cambridgeshire ACRE and supported by EEDA, Defra, Local Authorities and the EU's European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe Investing in Rural Areas.

Web Link: [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/index_en.htm)

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

Public Rights of Way and Access, Box CC1305, Cambridgeshire County Council, Castle Court, Castle Hill, Cambridge CB3 0AP  
Tel 0345 045 5212

[www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/environment/countrysideandrights](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/environment/countrysideandrights)

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

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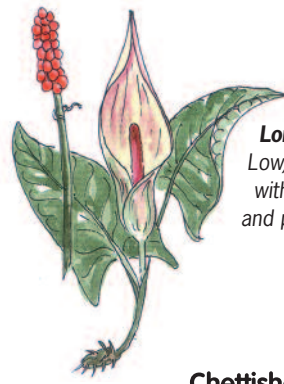
The Bishop's Palace in Downham has a long history of occupation and use. The monastic property here was first described in 1086 when it was said to have sufficient meadow for all the plough teams, pasture for the cattle, woodland for 100 pigs and fisheries producing 300 eels a year. Little remains of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

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

In addition to the Cathedral, the City of Ely contains many beautiful buildings including the 15th century Bishop's Palace. Cromwell's House, former home of Oliver Cromwell, is another notable building now used as the Tourist Information Centre.



Cromwell's House



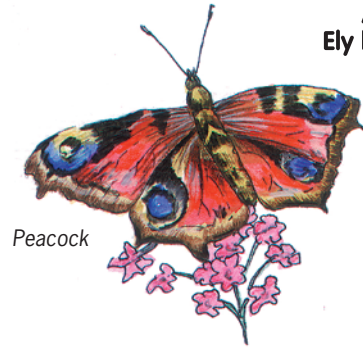
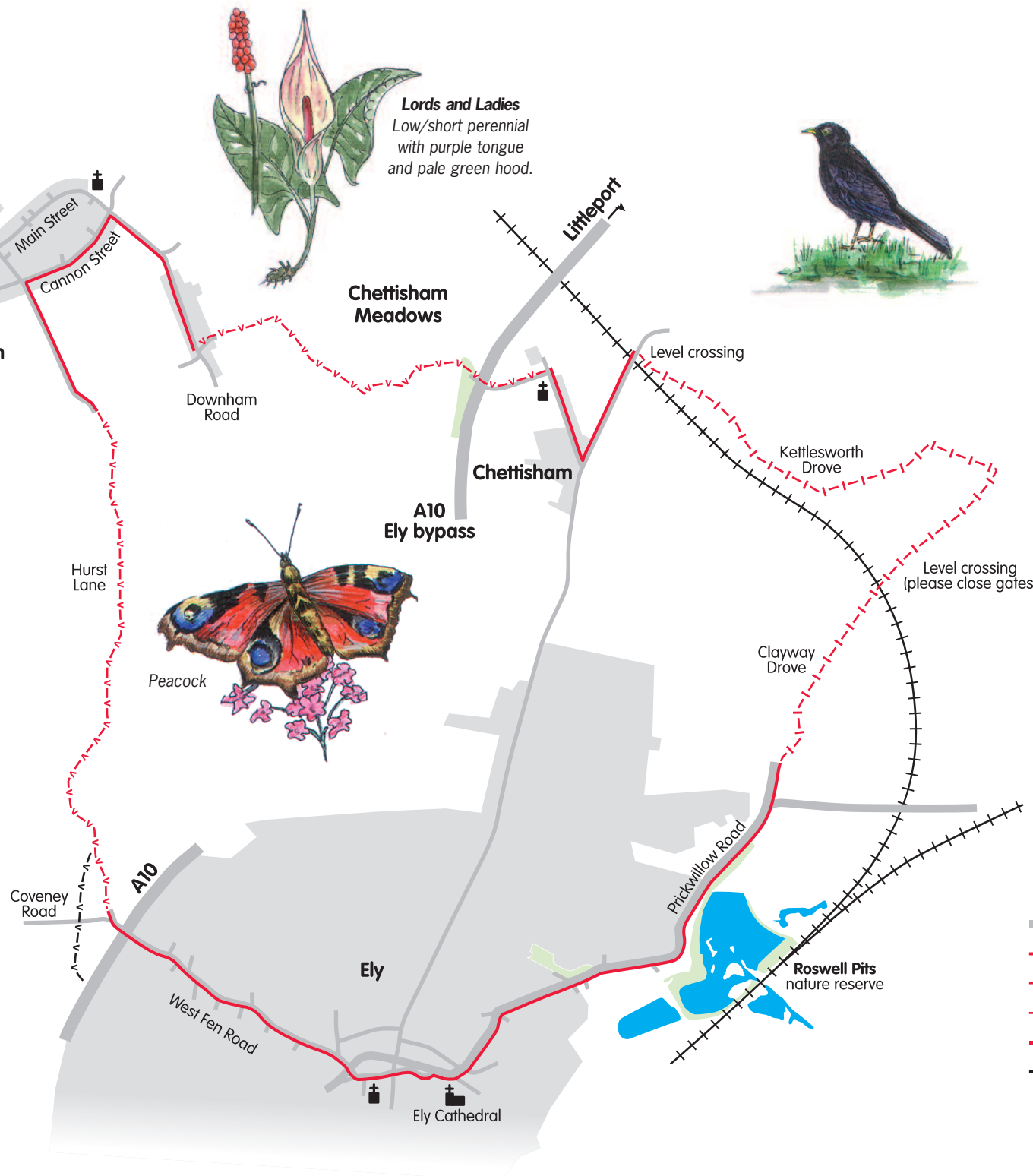
**Lords and Ladies**  
Low/short perennial with purple tongue and pale green hood.



The drainage of the fens in the 1800s led to the creation of a 'new' parish at Chettisham. It was first described in 1170 as a wooded assart 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 bullrushes.

A correction is marked here but I can't make it out?



Peacock



- Road
- Footpath
- Bridleway
- Byway
- Route on road
- Alternative routes
- Church

# The Bishop's Way

Circular route **7.9 miles**  
Allow approximately **4 hours**

Following mediaeval 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.

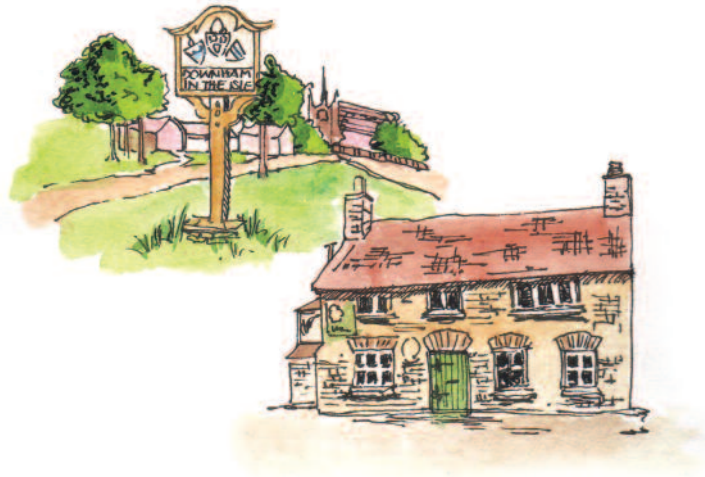
Hundreds of years ago, before the fens were drained, Downham-in-the Isle was a real island among flat and boggy reed fen. It was here that Aethelwold, Bishop of Winchester, set up his monastic settlement in 970. The estate grew and prospered for 500 years and played host to many Bishops from Ely. In the summer months, when the roads were best, the Bishops travelled by horse up what is now Hurst Lane to their summer palace.

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 mediaeval history along with the most modern farming methods. Look both forward and back as you retrace the steps of Bishop Aethelwold and his successors.



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



## Further information

Take care on the busy road crossings on the A10 and railway.

**Footwear:** Most of the route follows grassy drives which can become very muddy in winter, particularly after heavy rain. Strong waterproof footwear is essential.

**Maps:** The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey 1:50000 Landranger Sheet 143 or on 1:25000 Explorer Sheet 228.

**Waymarking:** Green signs indicate the route through Ely and also where paths leave the tarmaced road. Smaller waymark arrows indicate the route in open country.

**Refreshments:** Plenty of cafes and shops in Ely. Shops and pub in Little Downham. However, it's 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 • 01954 713500

Ely Tourist Information Centre Oliver Cromwell House, St Marys' Street, Ely • 01353 662062

## How to get there

**By bus** Ely Soham Dial-A-Ride 01353 661161

**By train** Nearest station is Ely  
National Rail Inquiries 08457 484950

**By road** A10 north from Cambridge

**Inquiries** Cambridgeshire County Council Passenger Transport Inquiries 0345 045 0675



### Cowslip

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