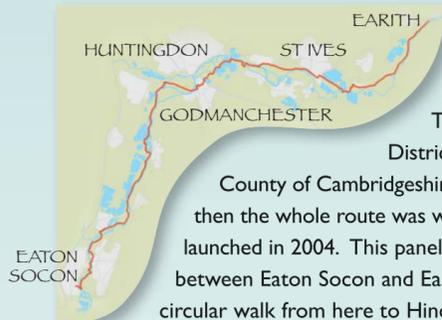




Welcome to the Ouse Valley Way

The Ouse Valley Way is one of the longest river valley walks in Britain. It follows the route of the River Great Ouse for approximately 150 miles from its source at Syresham near Brackley in Northamptonshire.

It runs through Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Norfolk, and into the sea at King's Lynn.



The first section through the District of Huntingdonshire in the County of Cambridgeshire was opened in 1990, then the whole route was waymarked and launched in 2004. This panel is one of a series between Eaton Socon and Earith. It shows a circular walk from here to Hinchingsbrooke Country Park and on to Huntingdon, and back to this point via Portholme Meadow. Should you prefer to continue along the Ouse Valley Way you will find the next panel at St Mary the Virgin Church, Godmanchester. A detailed map will be useful as you go.

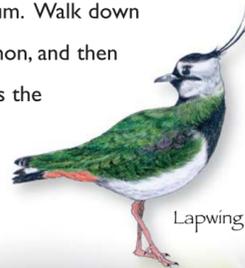
What you will see Take time to explore the ancient landscape along the Great Ouse Valley and you will be rewarded in many ways. The beauty of the great flood-plain meadows is outstanding. Their management has remained unchanged for millennia and they are rich in flora and fauna, as are the neighbouring tracts of lakes and reedbeds, some of which are of international importance for wildlife. Enjoy the tranquillity of the gently meandering river with its picturesque villages and historic market towns, and discover their architectural and cultural heritage. The panels will give you a taste of all this, plus some fascinating local archaeological discoveries.

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Hinchingsbrooke Country Park is a green space comprising open grasslands, mature woodland and lakes. It is a great place for families with children with plenty of space for play and games or to picnic. Look out for their information panels.

If you follow the circular walk to and from Huntingdon, or you choose to continue on the Ouse Valley Way down Bromholme Lane and on to Godmanchester, you will in either case enter the largest ancient hay meadow in the country – Portholme Meadow.

Circular walk Continue down Bromholme Lane to the B1514, turn left and cross the road into the Country Park. Follow the path alongside the lake and turn right for the café. Continue down Chestnut Avenue. Turn left to pass Hinchingsbrooke House on the way to Huntingdon and the Cromwell Museum. Walk down Princes Street, across the ring road to Mill Common, and then under the A1307 to enter Portholme Meadow. Cross the river and follow the path on the right across the meadow, under the railway and back to here.



Lapwing



Hinchingsbrooke House was the home of the Montagu family, the Earls of Sandwich. It was formerly a nunnery dissolved by Henry VIII and given to the Cromwell family. In 1963 the estate was sold to the County Council and became a comprehensive school. Hinchingsbrooke House is occasionally open to the public with guided tours.



The Cromwell Museum is housed in the old Huntingdon Free School where Oliver Cromwell and Samuel Pepys were pupils. The building is part of a larger, earlier building; the Hospital of St John, c1170. Huntingdon Town Hall in Market Square was built in 1746. Nearby is the Old Falcon Inn - reputedly Oliver Cromwell's recruitment centre for his Model Army.



Portholme Grandstand was an important horse racing venue in the 17C visited by Samuel Pepys and Horace Walpole. The meadow was also used for public flying demonstrations in the early days of flight.



Kestrel

Portholme Meadow is a Site of Special Interest (SSSI), and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) as an internationally significant 'lowland hay meadow'.

It supports a rich variety of wild flowers and is especially noted for Snake's-head Fritillary which creates a purple and white haze of nodding heads in April. Look closely and you'll see the reptilian scale pattern on the petals. In May, the hay meadows turn gold as the Buttercups flower in profusion, and among them grows another aptly named flower –

when dry the seed capsules of Yellow Rattle

certainly make themselves heard!

As do churring Common Green Grasshoppers – until they leap from your feet!

Other distinctive sounds of Portholme include the 'jangling bunch of keys' song of the Corn Bunting perched on

overhead wires, and the joyful, non-stop cascade from the Skylark on high.

Kestrels hover over the grasses and in winter flocks of

Lapwings gather.



Yellow Rattle



Corn Bunting

For your safety

- Wear suitable clothing and footwear
- Do not attempt the walk if the river is flooded or at risk of flooding – check with the Environment Agency if unsure. Visit www.flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk
- Never swim in the locks or gravel pits – they are dangerous, deep and cold
- If you swim in the river, once in avoid the margins and look out for warning notices for blue-green algae
- Do not touch Giant Hogweed which looks like very tall Cow Parsley. It can cause a serious rash
- Keep your dog under control, especially around sheep and cattle – see the Countryside Code below



Reporting an issue

If you wish to report an issue on the Ouse Valley Way please visit the Cambridgeshire County Council website www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk and go to 'Report a highways fault'



Remember the Countryside Code

- Consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors
- Park cars and bicycles carefully so access to gateways and driveways is clear
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Follow paths but give way to oncoming walkers on narrow stretches
- Leave no trace of your visit. Take all your litter home
- Don't have BBQs or fires
- Keep dogs under effective control
- Dog poo: bag it and take it home

— Ouse Valley Way Bromholme Lane to Godmanchester 1.6 miles
 - - - Footpath link Circular walk 3.4 miles
 - - - Public footpath Other information panels



Skylark



The Great Ouse Valley Trust exists to protect, promote and enhance the special landscape of the Great Ouse Valley in Cambridgeshire.

www.greatousevalleytrust.org.uk



This panel was funded by Highways England's A14 Legacy Fund and delivered by Cambridgeshire County Council in partnership with the Great Ouse Valley Trust.

Text by Great Ouse Valley Trust 2021
 Illustrations and design by Coral Design Management 07821 198114
 Maps updated from the originals commissioned by HDC's Countryside Services
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