Introduction

Distance | 21m/34km, or as little as 10m/16km
Start Point | Sawtry
OS Map | Landranger 142 Peterborough

This circuit takes in some classic fenland, with characteristic straight roads which stand above the level of the fens and the rich black soil. At Conington, the church has a distinctive tower which is a landmark visible on a number of these rides. The pulpit inside commemorates a vicar who served here for 50 years. As well as some quiet villages, you can also see a post which was sunk into the fens in 1842 to measure the rate of sinking. The top is now several feet above ground level, and a descriptive panel tells you that you are at the lowest point in England - 7 feet below sea level. So the homeward route must be uphill! Some short cuts are suggested.

Cover photo shows Glutton.

Points of Interest

Sawtry (A)
- This large village has plenty of places for refreshment. The church was rebuilt in the 19th century from two previous ones.

Norman Cross (H)
- A monument near the Holiday Inn commemorates the French prisoners of war, who were held near here in the Napoleonic Wars between 1797 and 1814, 1770 of whom died. Some houses from that period still stand beside the A15 road a little way towards Yaxley, including the large white house which was the residence of the Governor.

Stilton (I)
- Famous for its connection with cheese, this village is on the Roman Ermine Street. In the 1730s the landlord of The Bell inn brought the cheese from Leicestershire and sent it to London by coach. Note the 19th century village pump near the red telephone box.

Caldecote (J)
- The 13th century church has been restored and converted to a private dwelling.

Glatton (K)
- This village has many 17th century cottages in Church Street, but the recent development is sympathetic with the old.

Bruce’s Castle (B)
- In Cooks Lane, just beyond the double bend by Bruce’s Castle farm, is a round hill which was once a fort. This is in a wood, and is not open to the public.

Conington (C)
- The 15th century church of All Saints has a distinctive pinnacled tower and is in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust. A note near the door gives addresses in Conington where a key may be obtained. The church is noted for its memorials to the Colton family who had lived at Conington since 1460, and the Heathcote family which has its own chapel. The finely carved pulpit commemorates the Reverend George Heathcote, who was rector from 1834 to 1884. Sir Robert Cotton was a noted antiquary who built Conington Castle nearby (demolished in the 1950s).

Peterborough Business Airport (D)
- From the road you can see the runways from the World War II airfield. This was named Glutton, although the village is on the other side of the Great North Road.

Holme (E)
- A detour can be made a short way to the left, around this small village. Church Street is an interesting mixture of former estate cottages and modern housing.

Holme Lodge (F)
- To the left of the road is an iron post which was driven through 22 feet of peat to the underlying clay in 1852 by William Wells, the Lord of the Manor of Glatton-cum-Holme. It now has a replacement nearby, and shows how far the fens have sunk in the intervening years (13 feet). About 200 years ago prisoners of war heading for the camp at Norman Cross were brought to Yaxley by boat via the inland port of Whittlesea Mere.

Yaxley (G)
- This village has expanded greatly in recent years. The most picturesque part is in Main Street, which is part of this ride. It contains many old buildings, some of which are listed. Inside the church is a medieval wall painting of Doubting Thomas and the Road to Emmaus.

Getting Here...

Rail Enquiries: 08457 484950
Bus & Coach Enquiries: 08705 808080
Traveline (bus/coach/rail): 0870 2254858 (national rate call).

Huntingdon Tourist Information
Tel: 01480 388588 Fax: 01480 388591
Email: Hunts.TIC@huntsdc.gov.uk

St Neots Tourist Information Centre
The Old Court, 8 New Street
St Neots, Cambs PE19 1AE
Tel: 01480 388788 Fax: 01480 388791
Email: StNeots.TIC@huntsdc.gov.uk

Electronic Tourist Information Kiosks:
Huntingdon St Benedict’s Court, Huntingdon
Ramsey Great Whyte, Ramsey
St Ives Market Hill, St Ives

For details of accommodation vacancies, contact Huntingdon or St Neots Tourist Information, or Huntingdonshire Association for Tourism’s Vacancy Line Tel: 0870 2254858 (national rate call).

If you require a large print version of this information, please contact Huntingdon Tourist Information.
The Route

1 Sawtry to Holme

Leave SAWTRY (A) in a north-easterly direction on St Andrew’s Way. Visitors by car may use the car park in the south west corner of the village in St Judith’s Lane, shown on the Ordnance Survey map. Unless you want to see the centre of the village, the best route is as follows. Keep ahead out of the car park and then turn left out of St Judith’s Lane, and right into Beaumaris Road to its end. Then turn right and at the roundabout take the second exit towards Conington.

Beyond the bridge over the A1(M), at a roundabout take the first exit (which is the old A1) for a short distance. Our preferred way to Conington (although not the most direct) is to turn right into Cooks Lane which has no signpost, so watch out for it.

Follow this lane (B) over typical fenland. After about 1 mile it bends left and at another ½ mile it reaches a T-junction. Turn left towards Conington (C). Just before another T-junction, on the left and along a driveway is the church. This is worth a visit, if only to see the memorial in the churchyard to the United States Air Force members who served locally.

Unless making a detour to visit the village of CONINGTON (to the left) turn right in Church Road to pass the airfield (D) and to reach HOLME (E).

2 Holme to Yaxley

Leave Holme on the B660 towards Ramsey, and over the level crossing for about 1 mile. At a cottage turn left on a lane without a signpost. This passes through HOLME FEN nature reserve.

Follow the lane round a left bend, where there is a view of the brickfield chimneys and church tower of Yaxley. Soon after re-entering woodland look out on the left (opposite a layby on the right) for the HOLME POSTS (F). Go straight on and over another level crossing to a T-junction which has no signpost.

Turn right to YAXLEY (G).

3 Yaxley to Sawtry

Leave Yaxley at the west end, via Church Street and Waterslade Road to the A15. Cross this road and use the track on the other side to reach NORMAN CROSS. Shortly before the monument cross the A15 and use the shared cycway/footpath opposite to a roundabout (part of the National Cycle Network Route 12). Take the second exit, cross the motorway bridge and turn left to STILTON.

Keep forward along the High Street (I) and turn right opposite the Bell Inn to pass the church and turn left to CALDECOTE (G) for about ½ mile. At a junction turn left for ½ mile (part of the National Cycle Network Route 12) and then left again to GLATTON (K). At the church keep ahead to enter SAWTRY via the High Street.

Possible short cuts

Riding from Sawtry:
1) Omitting the detour from Holme to Holme Fen shortens the ride by 4 miles

Just before the level crossing in Holme, turn left on the Yaxley Road. The Holme Posts can still be visited by making a detour right about ½ mile along this road over another level crossing and returning.

2) From Holme to Glatton to give a circuit of 10 miles

Leave HOLME on the B660 heading westwards. At GLATTON crossroads turn left to rejoin the main ride in Section 3.

Riding from Stilton or Yaxley:
1) From Glatton to Holme to give a circuit of 17 miles

At GLATTON crossroads, turn left on the B660 to HOLME to rejoin the main ride in Section 2.

2) Omitting the detour from Holme to Holme Fen shortens the ride by 4 miles

An optional detour of 7½ miles from Yaxley via Farce and Hampton to Norman Cross (not shown on map)

In YAXLEY follow Main Street (which becomes Mere View) for about 1 mile to its end at the BT091. At the roundabout take the second exit for about 1 mile to FARCET.

For the next section which uses the Peterborough Green Wheel cycleway network, riders may find a map of the system useful. This can be bought at the Peterborough Tourist Information Centre at the Cathedral. Some of the tracks are stony in places but are easily rideable.

Turn left into Haddon Way (which carries a Green Wheel sign) towards the radio mast. Just before the entrance to Crown Lakes Country Park turn left on a reasonably surfaced bridleway. This leads to a bridge over the main railway line. Beyond the bridge the track turns sharp right and leads to the A15 near Hampton. (Warning - building construction works may create some temporary diversions).

Cross this road at the light-controlled crossing to the left, and then follow the track to the left. Soon, at a right bend, turn left through the hedge on a bridleway. Follow this to the former A1 road (which runs alongside the A1(M)).

Turn left to reach the A15 near NORMAN CROSS.