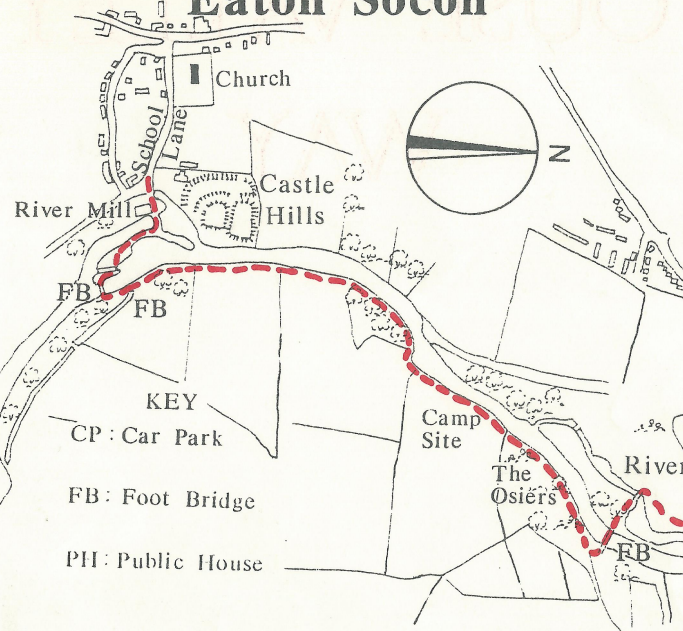


Eaton Socon



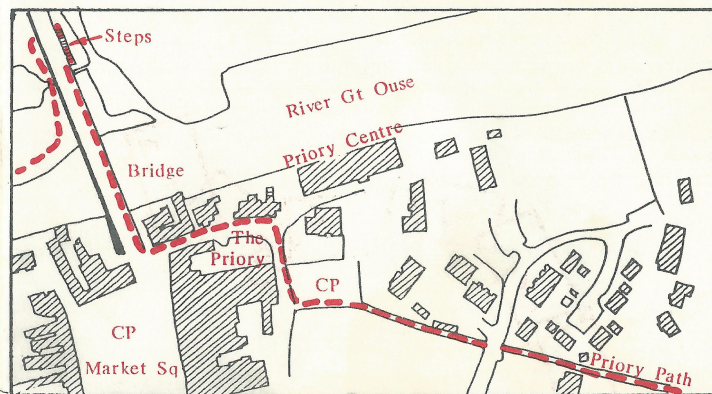
EATON SOCON - EYNESBURY - ST. NEOTS - LITTLE PAXTON

(3.5 miles) - O.S. Pathfinder Series Sheet Nos: 1002 and 980

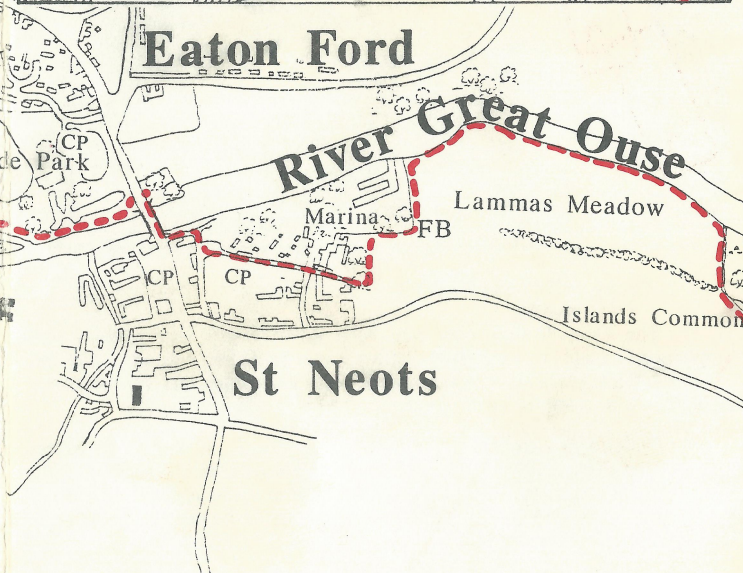
This section of the Ouse Valley Way starts at the River Mill in Eaton Socon where there are car parking and refreshment facilities available. Perhaps the best place in Eaton Socon to get your bearings is on The Green in front of the Church. This Green stands alongside the main road, formerly the route of the Great North Road. The fine looking St. Mary's Church is early 14th Century, but was extensively restored and partly rebuilt after a fire in 1930.

Proceed down the adjacent School Lane to the River Mill, and walk along the path over the lock and river footbridges to the east bank of the river. Follow the Ouse Valley Way markers northwards along the east bank of the river adjacent to arable land for about 0.5 mile. The path then runs through a neatly maintained caravan and camping site and along the riverbank into a small rough copse known as The Osiers, a reminder of its former use for providing materials for thatching and other purposes. An interesting remnant of older forms of navigation is the small ditch in the copse running parallel with the river, forming a spit of land sometimes called a "jump". Here, in earlier years, horses drawing barges could be embarked or disembarked, depending on their direction of travel.

On clambering out of The Osiers, the path crosses a car park running towards a large wooden pedestrian bridge over the river. This takes the Ouse Valley Way into the Riverside Park. (If you wish, you can continue on the road through Eynesbury and into St. Neots). Riverside Park is a popular recreation area and provides public conveniences, a car park and refreshments. Following the pathways in the Park, walk under the new road bridge and then up the steps to re-cross the river and enter the market town of St. Neots.



Eaton Ford



St Neots

Ahead of you is the large market square, upon which the prosperity of the town grew in medieval times. St. Neots has many fine buildings, including the predominantly 15th Century Church of St. Mary with its handsome tower and remarkable oak carvings. A Town Trail leaflet is available.

Once over the bridge, immediately turn left down The Priory and then alongside a car park and straight onwards following the waymarks down Priory Path, until meeting a track alongside a large meadow.

This track leads left towards a marina. Near the entrance to the marina enter the meadow on your right, called Islands Common, by a stile. This old grassland has been managed as common land for very many years and the resulting botanical interest is recognised in its legal protection as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Walk outside the boundary hedge of the marina and cross a small bridge into Lammas Meadow, to walk westwards alongside a backwater towards the river. During cold spells in the winter, this meadow is sometimes flooded and used for ice-skating.

Follow the riverbank until you come to a spinney, which you skirt. You will soon find a ditch on your right, and you follow this towards a stile at the northern end of the Common. Cross two roads.

Over the river you will see a large industrial factory building, the site of the Paper Mills owned by Samuel Jones Ltd. Paper has been manufactured or processed on this site for over 150 years. A raised walkway, to allow pedestrian access in times of flood leads towards two road bridges alongside the Mill. On the north-western bank of the river, a path called Hayling Way (a reminder of its former navigational use) runs eastwards alongside the river into Little Paxton. Car parking and refreshments are available in the village of Little Paxton.

