



## ST. IVES - PIKE & EEL INN

(3.75 miles) - O.S. Pathfinder Series Sheet No. 960

This section of the Ouse Valley Way starts in the centre of St. Ives where there are public conveniences, car parking and refreshment facilities. The focal point of St. Ives is Market Hill, with the Town Hall and Golden Lion Hotel looking out on the central statue of Oliver Cromwell. This is probably the best place to start this section of the Ouse Valley Way.

At the end of Market Hill, turn left into Market Road, and continue in the same direction along Cromwell Place until you come to The Quadrant, opposite a car park. Turn right and head towards the nearby roundabout on the busy St. Ives Bypass. Cross over the bypass and, heading in the same direction, proceed down Meadow Lane passing gravel extraction plant and water-filled pits, and eventually into a rural lane.

At the bridge leading into the meadow at the end of this lane, turn right and walk down to the river, then turn left to follow the river bank for about 0.5 mile until you come to a boundary where a small stream runs into the river. Follow the bank of this stream, walking away from the river, until you find a footbridge, which you cross. Head towards a stile adjacent to the picturesque Holywell Church, standing high on the hill, with its 13th century chancel and a strange 17th century tower. The name refers to a spring of water running into a well in the churchyard.

Turning right at the stile, the village road leads downhill past Holywell Front, a pretty row of mainly 16/17th Century cottages, towards the Ferry Boat Inn. This was the site of an old chain ferry link to Fen Drayton village, on the south side of the river.

Just past the Inn, a track leads off eastwards to run along the top of a flood bank. In these low-lying areas flood banks serve a dual purpose, acting as barriers to control flood water and providing dry routes for access when the surrounding land is flooded or soft.

For just over a mile, this bridleway gives walkers fine views over river flood plain meadows.

The path comes out on Overcote Lane, Needingworth near the rear of the Pike and Eel Inn, which, in former years stood alongside another ferry, which provided a link to the villages of Over and Swavesey on the far side of the river. There are car parking and refreshment facilities available at this point.

