

**6 Woodwalton Fen National Nature Reserve** would not



be here today if the wildlife enthusiast Charles Rothchild had not bought the fen in 1910, to ensure its survival. The peaceful, wildlife haven is now one of only four

remaining fragments of the ancient fens, and part of the Great Fen project. There are grass paths, waymarked trails and the amazing 100 year old, thatched bungalow on stilts erected by Charles Rothchild.

**7 Wildlife Trust Countryside Centre** is a lovely small



reserve with ponds, reedbeds, meadows and trees, and is perfect for families or those with any disabilities. The centre is open during the wide range of regular events and

activities it provides, along with school and adult learning programs. However, the Reserve is open at all times with plenty of wildlife and fen heritage to explore.

**8 RAF Upwood** emerged in 1917 when The Royal Flying



Corps requisitioned the farmland as a night-landing ground for No.75 Squadron. During WW2 the grass runways were upgraded to concrete which was more suitable for the

heavier planes such as the De Havilland Mosquitoes of No.139 Squadron flying pathfinder missions over Nazi Germany, and the heavy Lancaster bombers of No. 156 Squadron. The now abandoned station is earmarked for housing.

**9 Ramsey Abbey Gatehouse** is all that remains of the



wealthy and once great, Benedictine Abbey at Ramsey – built on an island in the Fens.

An ornate carved exterior with a glorious oriel window is all that survives of the gatehouse.

See the interpretation board nearby for lots more interesting information. Look for the stained

glass window in the adjacent Church of St. Thomas à Becket, which depicts monks from the abbey returning across the fens in a boat, with the relic of St Felix.

**10 Abbey House** was originally built as a manor house in



the 16<sup>th</sup> century by Sir Henry Cromwell, on the site of an old monastery, using stone from the demolished Abbey. Since then the house has undergone many changes and alterations to become the imposing house we see today.

Hidden in the basement of Abbey House are surviving rooms from the monastery, known locally as the **Lady Chapel**.

Although some think it could have been the monk's refectory.



**A journey across a landscape and time**

A walking route around the Cambridgeshire Fens, following roughly where the low-lying fenland meets surrounding higher ground.

The Fen Edge Trail is a project co-ordinated by Cambridgeshire Geological Society in partnership with local community groups including the Fenland Trust and Discover Ramsey.



[www.fenedgetrail.org](http://www.fenedgetrail.org)  
[www.fen.land](http://www.fen.land)



Ramsey is a gateway to the Great Fen, a developing landscape around two existing nature reserves with the aim of creating a huge wetland area for wildlife and for people. The Great Fen is one of the largest restoration projects of its type in Europe. [www.greatfen.org.uk](http://www.greatfen.org.uk)



There's so much more for you to discover in Ramsey .....



**Ramsey Walled Garden** Discovered by chance almost 20 years ago, the recently restored Kitchen Garden is now an enchanting secret in the heart of Ramsey. Access via the Rural Museum. [www.ramseywalledgarden.org](http://www.ramseywalledgarden.org)



**Ramsey Rural Museum** A series of beautifully renovated 17<sup>th</sup> century farm buildings housing exhibits and archives showcasing country life. Tea Room. [www.ramseyruralmuseum.co.uk](http://www.ramseyruralmuseum.co.uk)



**The 1940's Camp** Come and visit this unique site as the clock is turned back. Events are held all year round especially, the 1940s weekend in Aug. [www.ramsey1940s.co.uk](http://www.ramsey1940s.co.uk)



**The Mortuary Chapels** – a unique and interesting Victorian building [www.ramseymortuarychapels.org.uk](http://www.ramseymortuarychapels.org.uk)

# Ramsey

Open for Discovery

## Heritage Drive Trail: Peterborough Cathedral - Ramsey Abbey



Heritage Drive Trail  
approx 30 mins + stop offs'  
13 miles/20km





As you begin your journey, imagine the scene in times long ago, when most of the fenland we see today was under water. The magnificent buildings at Ramsey and Peterborough were built on the fen edge on the islands of higher ground. Life was harsh for the fenlanders who settled on the little pockets of less marshy ground around these isles. The land was subject to seasonal flooding and during the long dark winter months they might be completely cut off, when neither boats nor people could navigate the frozen fenland.

It was during the 1600s that Dutch drainage engineer, Cornelius Vermuyden, began work on a system to drain the fens, creating an agricultural area now famous for its vast flat landscapes and rich dark peaty soil. However, if you look closely you can still see signs of the past along your route – so take your time and discover the hidden secrets of this once, watery land.

**1 Peterborough Cathedral** is one of



the finest Norman cathedrals in England. Founded as a monastic community in 654 AD, it became one of the most significant medieval abbeys in the country. Much of the surrounding land was owned by the Peterborough monks – records show in 1150 the monks of Ramsey paid a rent of 4,000 eels to the monks of Peterborough 'for leave to quarry stone at Barnack'.

**2 St Peter's Church** at Yaxley is



mentioned in the Domesday survey as 'Takesley'. From its eminent position on the edge of the village it is conspicuous for many miles round. The gravestone images of skeletons, skull & crossbones and hourglasses echo a fen society acutely aware of man's mortality.



**3 Holme Fen National Nature Reserve**, part of the Great



Fen project, is a wonderful place to explore the finest silver birch woodland in England with its abundance of wildlife and the famous Holme Posts, which at 2.75 m/9 ft below sea level are the lowest point in England.

The village sign at Holme, shows the Fenland Ark, a unique floating church, complete with altar, that set out to reach remote fen villages from 1897 to 1912.

**4 Whittlesea Mere** was the largest



lake outside the lake district, before the area was drained in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Mere

provided a rich source of food and income for local people. Decoy sledges on bone runners, specially designed for catching ducks were a regular feature on the Mere, as were recreational events such as skating competitions, sailing regattas and ice fairs. Early botanists valued the area for its rare, collectable, species. 'Buried treasures' were found when the Mere was drained including an engraved medieval sword, 13<sup>th</sup> century green glazed jug and the magnificent Ramsey Abbey censer and incense boat. Also discovered were 17 stone blocks, presumably a boat capsized on the way to Ramsey Abbey from Barnack quarry.

**5 Great Fen Information Point** has a



series of interpretation panels, that will not disappoint even the brief visitor, showing the fascinating history and nature of the fens. For a longer visit, try either of two circular walks: Dragonfly trail - 3km approx 90 mins and The last of the Meres Trail - 10.5km approx 4 hours. There is a picnic area shaded by an old walnut tree. You can download a free app about the Great Fen for you to enjoy during your visit.