

Eaton Ford

This trail starts at the Riverside car park and takes a route around the lost hamlets of Eaton Ford, which existed for hundreds of years and had grown up around the road junctions.

Imagine the scene for centuries with just a few houses in each hamlet, the tracks around the settlements well worn and rutted from cart wheels, farmers and farm workers busy in the fields, children playing in the roads and mothers busy with their washing or helping out in the fields. Farm carts pass by and perhaps daily coaches and horses travel with their passengers along the Great North Road or to St Neots, a busy market town, with shops and the weekly Thursday market.

Up near Haile Bridge were the springs providing healing water, which were recognised on and off during the centuries but the other well known industry in this area was basket weaving, which employed many local people when the willow rods were being stripped.

From Victorian times the hamlets steadily expanded but addresses still reflected them with Maltmans Cottages and Crosshall Ford still shown on legal documents. In 1948 roads were officially named and the houses numbered, losing the names of the former hamlets of Crosshall Ford and Maltmans Gardens.

It was only in the 1970s and 1980s that all the hamlets were joined up after the A1 bypass had opened and the fields were developed for housing. Today there is no farming, no spring water and no basket weaving in Eaton Ford – many people work away from the area but there are still meadows and open spaces within the housing estates giving the feel of space in an otherwise built up area.

We hope that you will enjoy wandering around Eaton Ford, exploring the former hamlets and discovering new information about this area.

Please open for map 

TRAILS AROUND THE TOWN

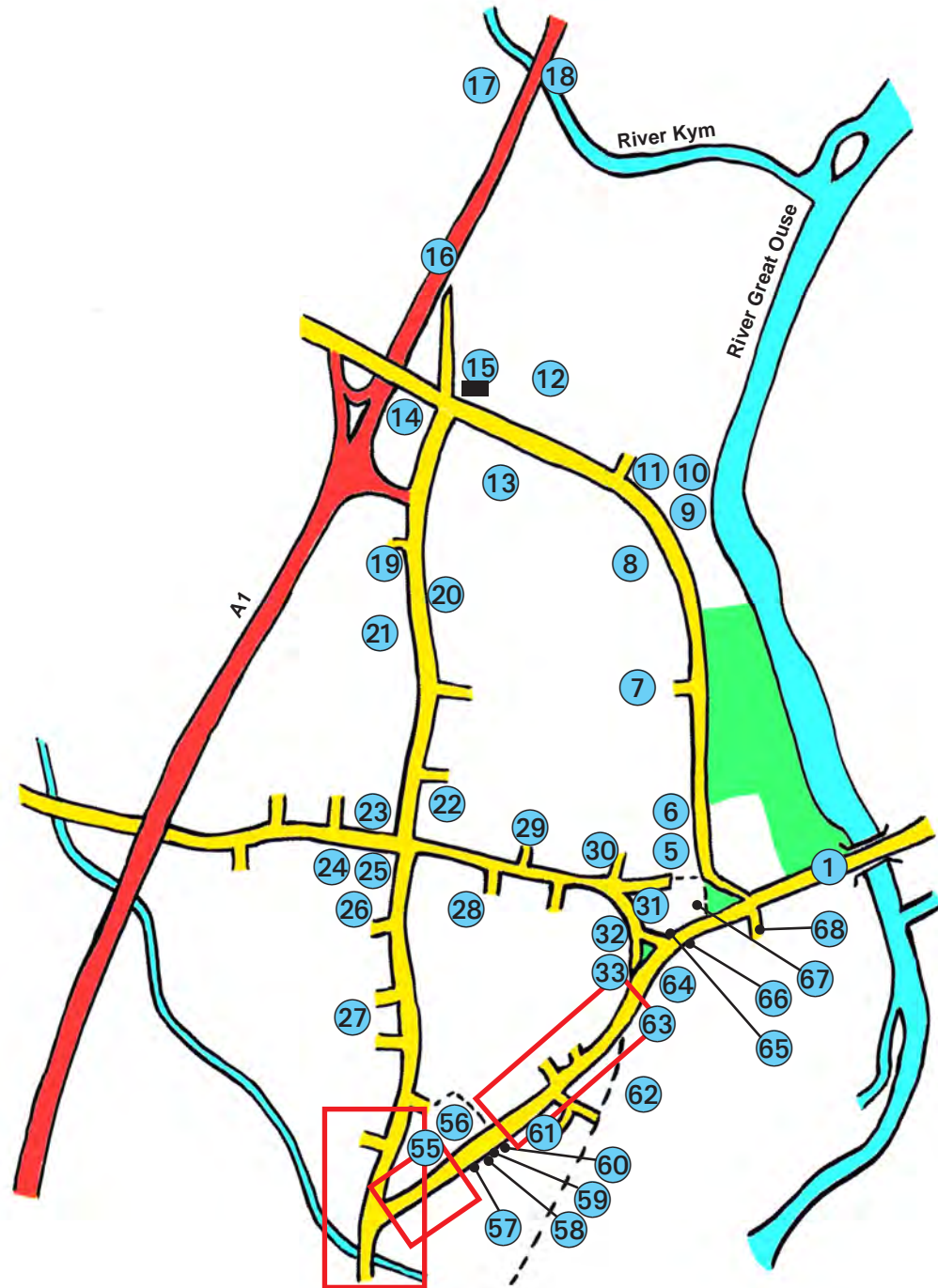
Eaton Ford



Farming, basket weaving and stonemasonry were the three occupations seen for centuries in this area.



Eaton Ford Trail



Start of Eaton Ford Trail

Start: Riverside Car Park, Eaton Ford
 Distance: 3 miles
 Time to complete: Allow 2 – 2 ½ hours

■ Heritage Board ● Blue Plaque

Riverside Park and Car Park – this is part of the floodplain of the River Great Ouse, laid out as a park from the existing meadows and osier beds in the 1970s.

Walk towards the bridge through the park and go under the bridge and up the steps to stand on the -

1 Town Bridge - In the Civil War a battle was fought on and around the Town Bridge, when Colonel Scroope won a victory for Cromwell's side in 1648. Here in the centre of the river for centuries was the county boundary between Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire and the parish boundary between St Neots and Eaton Socon. The county boundary was only altered in 1965 when the line of the present A1 was decided.

While on the bridge look at the rough patch of land in the park adjacent to the bridge. Older residents remember a boathouse here belonging to the Half Moon Inn (Bridge House pub in St. Neots).

Walk back towards Eaton Ford and the roundabout and cross the road to the small green -



2 this green, and the land opposite on which stands the large wardened flats complex – Cavendish Court, see 4, were once one large field owned by a St Neots Charity. Around 1780 part of the field was bought by the Turnpike Trust and the road diverted across it, no doubt helping the horses and carriages by not having to negotiate a sharp bend at the end of Crosshall Road. The line of the old road can be seen as a footpath on the left.

The rent from four cottages built on this land, see right, was to be used for the poor of St. Neots. The wall around the cottage gardens fell down in the 1947 flooding and the cottages were demolished in the 1960s, leaving the land open on this corner.



Map of Eaton Ford showing the former hamlets and the naming of the housing estates north of Duloe Brook, the former boundary between Eaton Socon and Eaton Ford

