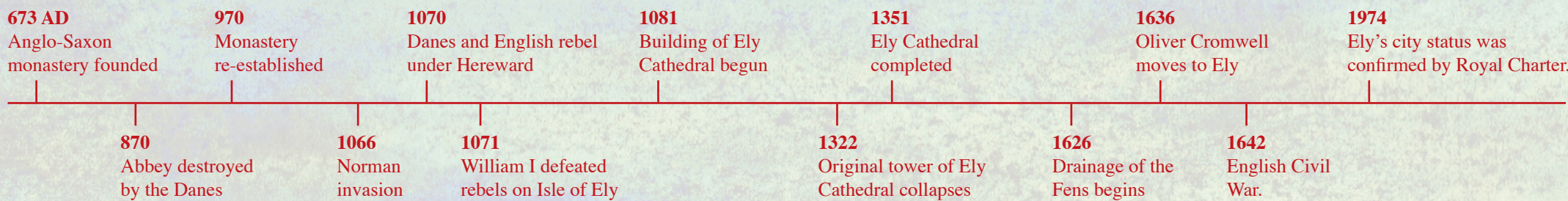


# WELCOME TO ELY AND THE EEL TRAIL

Ely lies in the heart of the Fens and was once an island surrounded by marshland and water that contained many eels. It is thought that the abundance of eels led to the name that the city bears to this day. The Eel Trail celebrates the city's past and present offering a fascinating blend of a rich heritage and architecture with contemporary artworks depicting Ely's association with the Eel.

*We hope you enjoy exploring Ely as well as its fascinating past and present.*

## ELY TIMELINE



Eels were historically part of the local staple diet as well as a valuable source of income. Jellied eels were popular until recent times and clients would come from London such was the reputation of Ely's eels.

Eels are still caught in the Great River Ouse although only one commercial catcher still remains. Smoked eels, now considered a

delicacy, can be purchased on Ely's award winning Farmers Market and dishes such as eel stew and eel pie can be found regularly on the restaurant menus in the area.

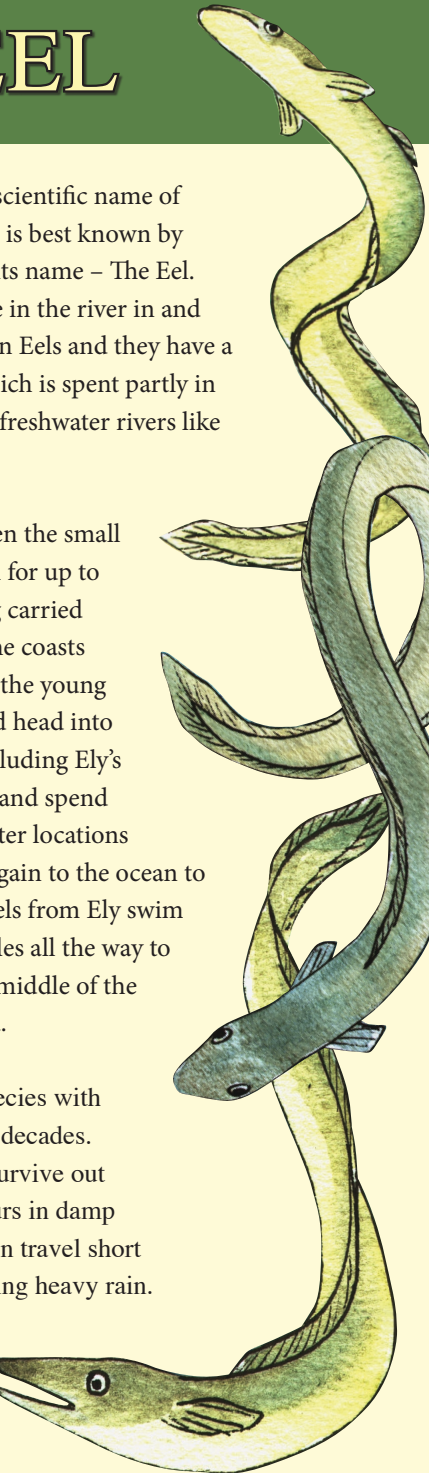
## THE EEL

Anguila Anguila is the scientific name of the remarkable fish that is best known by the name that gave Ely its name – The Eel. The type of eels that live in the river in and around Ely are European Eels and they have a fascinating life cycle which is spent partly in the ocean and partly in freshwater rivers like Ely's Great Ouse.

Eels breed in the sea then the small larvae drift in the ocean for up to three years before being carried by the Gulf Stream to the coasts of Europe. At this stage the young eels are called elvers and head into freshwater locations including Ely's Great Ouse. They grow and spend several years in freshwater locations before returning once again to the ocean to spawn. Incredibly the eels from Ely swim over three thousand miles all the way to the Sargasso Sea in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean to breed.

This is a long-living species with some fish surviving for decades. Remarkably, they can survive out of water for several hours in damp conditions and may even travel short distances over land during heavy rain.

Eels cover image and detail used throughout leaflet  
© K J Lewis, 2010  
www.cambridgeart.com



As you explore The Eel Trail and Ely's history you will also see a number of public artworks that tell the story of the life of the eel as well as celebrating the river that runs through our historic city.

## EEL ART



At the front of Oliver Cromwell's House (1 on the map) you will find the first of five pieces of art created by Elizabeth Jane Grosse of the trees and inscribed on the bench installed around one of the trees and inscribed on the bench is Mrs Cromwell's very own recipe for roast eel. Cromwell himself would have eaten roast eel made to this recipe.

Down in the Waterside area you will find Ely's Babylon Gallery where the Trail's second piece of art can be seen. In the glass door entrance off the river, the various pieces of glass depict the varied lifecycle of an eel showing the different shape, size and colours as the eel grows and experiences life in Ely and in the Atlantic Ocean.



The third piece of art by Elizabeth Jane Grosse can be found erected on the green outside the Maltings steel gloves or gloves as they are sometimes known, which are spare like tool used by individual eel fishermen to catch eels in small numbers, are erected on the green outside Ely's riverside entertainment and conference venue. The gloves are presented in the shape of an octagon, echoing the unique octagon roof in Ely Cathedral.



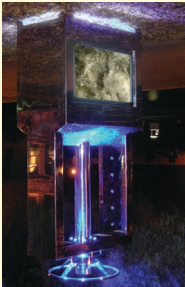
Jubilee Gardens holds the next Elizabeth Jane Grosse artwork, the yellow eel mosaic. This impressive piece of work is made from thousands of pieces of pottery excavated as part of the Time Team visit in 2000 when Cambridge Archaeology explored the site. The yellow eel shows the adult stage of the eel's life and by its snaking path, the eel is depicted on its downhill journey towards the river.



As you pass through Jubilee Gardens look to the left to see another artistic reminder of Ely's association with the eel. The 3m high galvanised steel eel sculpture by local sculptor Pete Baker was a gift from Ely Rotary Club to the people of Ely to mark 100 years of Rotary International.



The final piece of art takes you across impressive eel hives made from willow to Ely's Cherry Hill Park where an impressive eel hives made of willow which has been planted. Eels were commonly caught using hives made of willow which was an original industry on the River Ouse as far back as pre-Norman times. The eel hives, woven from living willow in the shape of a tunnel is 9 meters long and 2 meters high so it is possible to walk through and consider what may be the final journey of the eel's life cycle.



Sluice contains moving video footage that starts with the sound of gushing water every fifteen minutes as the sluice gate opens. With low water levels the scenes are quiet and tranquil but, as the water levels rises, the video displays a growing sense of energy. The video shot locally on the River Ouse and portray different water movements depending on the actual local water levels. At night the structure comes alive with additional lighting.

**ELY TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE**  
29 St Mary's Street, Ely, Cambs CB7 4HF  
(located in Oliver Cromwell's House)  
Tel: 01353 662062  
Fax: 01353 668518  
E-mail: [tic@casticambs.gov.uk](mailto:tic@casticambs.gov.uk)  
[www.visitlely.org.uk](http://www.visitlely.org.uk)



Each year Ely holds an Eel Day and processes around part of the tail finishing in Jubilee Gardens for an afternoon of eel related demonstrations and activities. For further information on the Eel Trail, including Eel Day, contact the Tourist Information Centre.

The trail is waymarked by over 70 bronze eel plaques set in the pavement. The route is fully accessible although Fore Hill and Cherry Hill Park may prove more difficult for some due to their steepness.



The Eel Trail is the best way to explore Ely. This circular route takes approximately 1½ half hours, although we encourage you to take time out along the way to maybe visit an attraction, partake in some retail therapy in our delightful shops and award winning markets, as well as enjoying our parks and riverside - not forgetting of course to sample the local cuisine on route.

Your guide  
around historic Ely

[www.visitlely.org.uk](http://www.visitlely.org.uk)

# THE EEL TRAIL





3

### Cannon on The Green

This well-known Ely landmark on Palace Green, the original village green for the settlement of Ely, was captured from the Russians at Sebastopol during the Crimean War. It was given to the citizens of Ely by Queen Victoria in 1860 to mark the formation of the Ely Rifle Volunteers and has been in its current position ever since.

#### DON'T MISS...

Look for the Russian Cyrillic writing on the side of the cannon and the distinctive Russian double-headed eagle on the top. And this is a great place to take a photo of the Cathedral.



4

### The Bishop's Palace

As you walk towards the Cathedral, on your right is the splendid Bishop's Palace dating from the 15th century. Its gardens feature the oldest plane tree in England planted by a Bishop Gunning over 300 years ago.

Opposite the Palace is a privately owned home known as the Chantry named after the Chantry Chapel that once stood on this site, built by Bishop Northwold in the 13th Century. This chapel was used for saying or singing a paid-for mass for a specific reason or person.

#### DON'T MISS...

Look up at the end wall of the Palace nearest the cathedral for the bricked up doorway that used to lead to high-level walkway used by the Bishop to walk straight over to the Cathedral. That's why the street you will now cross is called The Gallery.

5

### Ely Cathedral

Ely Cathedral is one of England's architectural treasures and work began on the building you see today in 1081. Take the time to explore this remarkable building and marvel at the Octagon at its heart, built to replace the original Norman tower that collapsed in 1322. It is made of 8 huge oaks and took 30 years to build. In the 17th Century, the Cathedral was closed by Oliver Cromwell during the English Civil War. The Cathedral is 537ft (161m) long, there are 288 steps up the West Tower which is 215ft (66m) high and the total area covered by Ely Cathedral is 46,000 sq.ft (4273 sq.m).

#### DID YOU KNOW...

The Lady Chapel, frequently used as a location for period films including Elizabeth: *The Golden Age* and *The Other Boleyn Girl*



6

### Stained Glass Museum

Located in the Cathedral this museum houses a fascinating national collection of stained glass dating from 1200 to the present Day. The art of stained glass making has been practised in Britain for at least thirteen hundred years. Come and learn the secrets of this ancient craft and glimpse its role in British history.

#### DON'T MISS...

Children can design their own stained glass patterns on a light box, plus there are trails and activity sheets.

As you exit the Cathedral back on to The Gallery turn left. This will take you past the Bishops House, once the Great Hall of the Monastery.

7

### Ely Porta

Ely Porta (porta is Latin for gate) was once the main entrance to Ely Monastery and through it passed travellers, pilgrims, royalty and local people selling their wares to the monastery.

The gate was begun in 1396, completed in 1417 and the outside remains largely unchanged. Up to Henry VIII's Dissolution of the Monasteries which ended in 1540, the building housed the Prior's Prison. Note the two different sized gateways, one for vehicles and carts and the other for people on foot. It is now used by the Kings' School, a private school.

#### DON'T MISS...

As you pass through the Porta look to your right at the 14th Century monastic barn once used to store wheat, malt, salted meat, fish and other foodstuffs. This building is now the King's School dining hall.

After going through Ely Porta, turn first left and follow the path by the trees. You are now approaching the most complete collection of monastic buildings still standing in Western Europe.



8

9

### Prior Crauden's Chapel & The Queen's Hall

As you head towards the Cathedral you will see on the right, the chapel that was built between 1324-5 for John Crauden who was Prior (head monk) of the monastery in Ely from 1321-41. The Chapel and the nearby Priors House (part of which dates from 1135) are both also now used by the Kings School. If you would like to see inside the Chapel you can request entry at the South Door of the Cathedral.

With the Chapel on your right look up at the impressive cluster of buildings that rise up to the towering Cathedral behind. Tradition says that in around 1330, Prior Crauden adapted an existing building to create the Hall to entertain Queen Philippa, wife of Edward III. Traces can still be seen of a bridge that used to link to Prior Crauden's Chapel. You can see the other side of this architecturally fascinating building from The Gallery.

#### DON'T MISS...

In the Chapel you can see the remains of 14th Century wall paintings and a superb medieval tiled floor.

Retrace your steps back towards Ely Porta then take the first path on the left and head towards the Cathedral's South Door with the meadow on your right.

# THE EEL TRAIL

1

### Oliver Cromwell's House and Ely's Tourist Information Centre

With its origins in the 13th Century, this was home to Oliver Cromwell and his family from 1636. During his time in Ely, Cromwell became MP for Cambridge and took an active part in the drainage of the fens. It was later a public house and also served as the vicarage for nearby St Mary's Church. Open daily year round, the House displays, exhibitions and period rooms give a fascinating insight into 17th Century life and the home life of one of history's most famous figures.

#### DON'T MISS...

Mrs Cromwell regularly used eels in her cooking a circular bench inscribed with Mrs Cromwell's recipe for roast eel has been installed around one of the trees outside Oliver Cromwell's House.



2

### St Mary's Church

This historic church, built by Eustace, Bishop of Ely to replace an earlier one, dates from the early 13th Century and had its tower and spire added in the 14th Century. Cromwell's youngest daughter was baptised here. The church contains many noteworthy architectural features and is an excellent example of the period.

#### DON'T MISS...

On the south wall of the church tower is a tablet commemorating five men executed for their part in the nearby Littleport famine riots of 1816.

As you head towards the Cathedral, on your left is the Old Fire Engine House that dates from the mid 18th Century and as its name suggests once housed the city's horse-drawn fire appliance.

18

### Ely Park

Enter the park gates on your left into Ely Park. About 100m along the path you will find an impressive eel hive made from willow. Eels were commonly caught using hives made of willow which was an original industry on the River Ouse as far back as pre-Norman times. The eel hive, woven from living willow in the shape of a tunnel is 9 metres long and 2 metres high so you can walk through it.

Continuing this pleasant stroll will take you back towards the Cathedral and Ely Porta. To the left on the higher ground in the wooded area is a huge mound, once the site of a Norman 'motte and bailey' castle. In the 14th Century, a windmill was built on the spot to mill corn for the monks' bread. To the right of the path is Dean's Meadow that was once the setting for a medieval vineyard and is now a wild flower meadow used for grazing stock.

#### DON'T MISS...

One of the best views of Ely's magnificent Cathedral – definitely worth getting your camera out!

Now make your way back to Ely Porta and turn right onto The Gallery. This will take you back towards Palace Green on your left which you cross to get back to Oliver Cromwell's House and the Tourist Information Centre.

We hope you have enjoyed The Eel Trail.



17

### Jubilee Gardens

In 2000, TV's Time Team excavated this historic location uncovering centuries of Ely's heritage. Finds included high-quality pottery, a medieval kiln and an ancient network of mooring channels of the river. Jubilee Gardens were opened in 2002 by the Duke of Edinburgh.

#### DON'T MISS...

The Eel Mosaic created from thousands of pieces of broken ancient pottery dug up by Time Team. The yellow eel shows the adult stage of the eel's life and is depicted snaking towards the river.

Head through Jubilee Gardens and cross the road, bearing right.



16

### The Maltings and Quai D'Orsay

Continuing along the waterside you will find The Maltings, Ely's riverside entertainment complex and conference centre with a restaurant, bar, function rooms, theatre and cinema. The Maltings was built by Ebenezer Harlock in 1868 for sprouting barley before it was taken to the brewery. Mr Harlock lived in the Quay House which you saw as you came down Waterside. Look out for the other piece of eel-related art on the green outside the Matlings. Eight stainless steel glavies or gleaves as they are sometimes known, which are spear like tools used by individual eel fishermen to catch eels in small numbers, are erected on the green outside The Maltings. The glaives are arranged in the shape of an octagon, the same as the unique octagon roofline in Ely Cathedral. Here you can also find the video art installation Sluice by Lulu Quinn that celebrates Ely's ongoing link with the River Ouse.

Walk along the riverside in front of the Maltings and you are on Quai D'Orsay, named to mark the twinning of East Cambridgeshire District with the French town of Orsay. You can also take pleasure cruises from here to see Ely from the water.



#### DON'T MISS...

The second boathouse across the river belongs to the University of Cambridge and the Cambridge crew practice here each year before the famous Boat Race.

15

### Babylon Gallery

The Babylon Gallery brings high quality arts to the people of Ely. The converted riverside warehouse hosts a varied annual programme including exhibitions of works from local and regional artists alongside national touring exhibitions.

#### DON'T MISS...

The Glass Eels artwork in the Gallery entrance depicting the lifecycle of an eel showing the different shape, size and colours as the eel grows.

With the river on your left, head back past the ducks towards The Maltings.



14

### Waterside

As you approach the river, with the antiques centre on your left, look to the right at the street called Quayside and the building called Quay House. This was the home of the builder of the Ely Maltings you will see shortly. The River Great Ouse that flows through Ely is the fourth longest river in the UK and flows from Bedford to King's Lynn. The river was an important trade route for centuries, but became un-navigable in the early 20th century. Today, the river is well used again and is a very popular boating destination. It was here in 1944, during World War II, that the Oxford versus Cambridge Boat Race was held instead of on the Thames.

#### DON'T MISS...

The local birds gathering place by the river. Here you can see Mallards, Mute Swans, Muscovy Ducks and Canada Geese.



13

### Market Place

Markets have always played an important part in the life of Ely. Today, the town's Market Square hosts markets every Thursday and Saturday, rotating between general markets, crafts and collectibles and famers markets. Continental markets and other special events are a regular feature too.

#### DON'T MISS...

The Human Sundial right in the middle of the Market Place. If there's no market on, you can use yourself to tell the time in daylight hours. Look for the information board on the nearby railings.

Head down Fore Hill, away from the Cathedral. This five minute downhill stroll will take you from the centre of Ely down towards the river.

12

### Ely Museum

This delightful local museum is housed in the Ely's Old Gaol that dates from the 13th Century when it was used as a prison by the Bishops of Ely. It has also been a tavern, a house and a registry office. The Museum presents the history of the Isle of Ely and its people through its eclectic collection and special exhibitions and is well worth a visit.

#### DON'T MISS...

The model of Ely Cathedral made of over 1000 matchsticks and the map showing the area before the Fens were drained.

When you come out of the Museum turn left along Market St and head straight down towards your next stop, past the Cloisters Shopping area on the left.

