

A gentle stroll around Historic Swavesey

This is a circular walk, so you begin and finish at any point, though this guide begins in and finishes in Market Street .

1 The name comes from it being the **Market Square**. The charter granted to the Lord of the Manor Alan de la Zouche in 1244 to hold a market here is the oldest in the county. There are more details about the square and its history on an information board on the Green.

2 Walk down to the end of the Green and you will cross the **medieval canal** from the River Ouse that brought the goods to be sold at the market. It would have been a bit wider then, and the boats narrow and flat bottomed.

3 Continue down Cow Fen, passing a not very impressive marker to tell you that you are crossing the **Greenwich Meridian**, till you come to the sign for **Brick Kiln Drove**. The drove on the left leading to Over was once one of the main routes to Over. The brick works were just over what is now the guided bus way and what was then the railway. A young man was killed at the brick works in an accident in 1877. Walk down Brick Kiln Drove towards the Village Green.

4. The land for the **Village Green** was given to the village for recreation by the major landowner, Thomas Cockayne, in 1840 at the time that the village fields were enclosed and reorganised.

5 When you reach the road ahead of you is the **Old School House**. The village school established in 1849 stood on the corner of School Lane till 1936. You could have seen the village clock on its wall so everyone in the village could know the correct time.

6. On the opposite corner of School Lane was the shed where the village **fire engine** was housed until the 1930s. Bought second hand at the beginning of the 1800s, it was used in the Great Fire of Swavesey in 1913.

7 Walk down Middle Watch till you stand outside **Ryders' Farm**, the oldest house in Swavesey and the oldest inhabited house in Swavesey. Its roof beams have been dated to 1330.

8. Retrace your steps past the Old School House. Cross the **Turn Bridge**, so called because there was a primitive draw bridge here, turned at night to keep the top part of the village safe. The houses beyond that on your left have the front doors at the back so there would be no unsightly view of women sitting in the doorways gossiping. In the 19th trades along this street included carpenters, bricklayers, thatchers, shoe makers, tailors, basket makers, washerwomen, bonnet makers, railway men, butchers, bakers, publicans and agricultural labourers.

9 You have reached the **Memorial Hall**. It was built to remember the sacrifice of the 25 young men of the parish who died in the Great War of 1914-1918. Inside the hall is the Roll of Honour with names of those men. The Memorial Garden was added to mark the hundred years since that conflict ended.

10 Turn down Black Horse lane, so called because the house on the corner was the Black Horse pub, one of the 16 that have existed in Swavesey over time. On your left is a low redbrick building that was once a Quaker Meeting House built in 1719 replacing an earlier one destroyed by fire next to the substantial red brick house also enlarged at that time after this fire. This was once called **Chantry Farm House**, and so to Chantry Close.

But it is possible the farm got its name from a small chantry chapel built here in 1283 so prayers could be said for the soul of Ellen De La Zouche.

11 Continue down the lane till you come to track leading to the allotments. There is a lot to say about this corner. Just visible is the mound of Swavesey's **castle**, built to defend the road to Fen Drayton, at times the only dry way into this fen village. The area around this mound would have provided some shelter for the villagers from raiding bands of armed men. It is called Amen Corner because it was just outside the boundary of the village so nonconformists to the Church of England could gather here for prayers. On the corner here too is **Constables' Road**, small parcel of land given to the village constable for an allotment to grow vegetables. From here you can see the **Windmill** built by James Radford in 1866 to replace an earlier mill that had stood there before 1811. As well as being millers the Radfords ran a bakery (The Old Bakehouse) on the corner of Market Street. Good information board here.

12 Come back into the village along Taylors Lane and notice the white house on your left. It has a plaque commemorating 1913, the date of the **Swavesey Fire**. The fire started as a chimney fire in the house next to this one and spread very quickly to this house and then across the road and up Station Road. You will notice the date 1913 over the opticians as well. This building replaced some farm buildings. All the thatched cottages from here to the end of the village were destroyed and people made homeless.

13 Walk past Swan Pond, and the houses built on a causeway to prevent them from flooding. The **Swan with two Nicks** was one of the substantial public houses here and on the opposite side of the road was the Chequers. The houses are still there. Can you guess which ones they are?

14 Continue towards the Church over the **old bridge**. The bridge was built in 1843 when this road became the road to Over carving through the churchyard and the grounds of the Manor House. Before that a road to Over went down Middle Fen Drove. The bridge had gates to prevent flood

water from the river backing up into the village. Recently restored the gates now work automatically.

15 The **Church of St Andrew** dates from the 11th century. There are good information boards about its history on a board outside Church and one on the busway.

16 The Busway runs on the line of the **railway**. The railway came early to Swavesey and there was a station here in 1847, the last passenger train ran in the 1960s and closed in 1970.

17 There has been a **Manor House** on this site since before 1066. In the Domesday Book Swavesey was one of the two biggest villages in Cambridgeshire, some of its wealth coming from the thousands of eels caught in the river. The Manor House you see gradually grew from those early beginnings.

18. Walk back passing the newly established Community Orchard. On your left are the **Frere Cottages**, built to house people from Swavesey made homeless by the Great Fire on land donated by two sisters, the Freres. The cottages are still held in a charitable trust to support village residents.

19 At the end you are back in Market Street outside our only pub now, the **White Horse**. This has always been an important meeting place in the village for private and public events. It was here for example that details of the 1840 Enclosure Act were settled.