



Castor and the Nene Valley Steam Railway

A riverside and country walk affording a visit to a fascinating steam railway. One bit of strenuous ascent towards the end!

Essential Facts

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| ▪ Route distance: | 13.2 km (8.3 miles) |
| ▪ Approximate time: | 3 hours 40 mins |
| ▪ Optional shorter route: | 9.3 km (5.8 miles) |
| ▪ Approx. total ascent: | 30 metres |
| ▪ Start point Grid Ref: | TL 141 984 |
| ▪ GPS Ref: | TL 14195 98487 |
| ▪ Recommended O.S. Map: | Explorer 227 |
| ▪ Toughness Rating | 2 |

Please see the notes on Toughness Ratings at the end of this report

Up For A
CHALLENGE?
Take a Great Walk and HELP
your favourite charity with
A Donation
An Individual Walk
A Team Effort

Full Info from the Great Walks web site

THE ROUTE

This walk starts from the usually ample parking area just off the A47 slip-road towards Castor village from the Peterborough direction. From the slip-road take the first minor road on the left. It is not well signed, but you pass a very large house to your right and drive down hill to the parking area.

From our start point, **S**, at the lowest part of the car park continue down hill until reaching the old stone bridge on the right. Don't cross the bridge, but take the signed path to the right, which you follow with the river on your left and the rising hill to your right.

Now follow the Hereward Way parallel to the river as it meanders round in a slight loop, generally southward. Ignoring footpaths off to the right, and having traversed the line of the Nene Valley Steam Railway, you come to a crossing of a stream called Back Dike. Now our path turns sharp right to more or less follow this stream on our right. Soon coming to a footbridge you cross over, and continue with the Back Dike now on your left.

Arriving at Castor Mill follow the meadow path up to a gate, through which you come to the end of a lane. Follow the lane round a bend to the right, and very soon pick up the footpath sign to the left, at **A**, taking the path adjacent a private drive. Continue with the main river beyond the next field boundary to your left, and through the remains of the Roman Villa. Stay on the Hereward Way, with the river to your left and ignoring footpaths off to the right.

When you have crossed a wooden footbridge over a minor stream at **B**, you have the chance to turn right for the shorter route. This crosses the Nene Valley Railway track and then continues up a lane to the village of Ailsworth. Here you re-join the main route by turning right, into the village.

To follow our main route from **B**, simply pick up the signed path and continue ahead, keeping the river to your left. The site of another Roman Villa is again on your right. Just beyond the Villa site, and shortly after passing a weir, the path takes a dog-leg, first right then left. It now follows the foot of the railway embankment until reaching a stile leading to the foot of a bridge at **C**.

Now you have the opportunity to take the metal steps straight ahead, up to the old Wansford Station, actually in the village of Stibbington, where the Nene Valley Railway is based.

If not visting the railway, take the path to the right, under the rail bridge and intially on a wooden boardwalk. Then strike out over a meadow, following the path slightly right, towards houses at Sutton visible through trees ahead. Passing successive field boundaries you come to a gate into a pathway, with a bungalow to your left. Take this path to the lane, with the church almost straight ahead.

Now turn left up the lane, with the church to your right. Ignore the sign for the Nene Valley Way. Continue up the lane, over a bridge, and then turn right at the junction. Now follow this road straight ahead and out of the village. When the road takes a sharp left turn carry straight on, along the farm track .

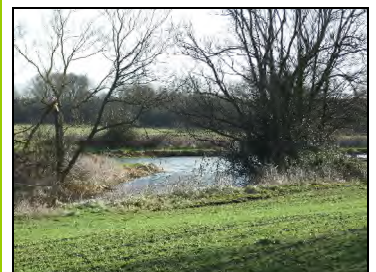
Follow this track in virtually a straight line and when it meets a bend in the road, at **D**, carry on ahead using the right-hand verge, towards the outskirts of Ailsworth, less than a kilometre distant. When you reach the village simply follow the High Street, which almost seamlessly leads into the neighbouring village of Castor. Take care to go straight ahead into Castor where the main road appears to go left, but is in fact only to a housing estate.



**The Nene Bridge
Near Castor**



**The Old Signal Box
Nene Valley Railway
Stibbington**



**The Riverside path
Near Stibbington**

In these twin villages you are spoiled for choice with three excellent pubs; The Prince Of Wales' Feathers, The Fitzwilliam Arms and lastly the Royal Oak. Passing (or not?) all three on the left just carry straight ahead out of Castor and steadily up hill. Near the top of the hill take the lane to the right, down to the car park from which you started, **S**.

Refreshment

The Royal Oak
Public House
Castor
Tel: 01733 380217
Meals and bar snacks
available

The Prince Of Wales'
Feathers
Public House
Castor
Tel: 01733 380222
Pub with food and
snacks

The Fitzwilliam Arms
Public House
Castor
Tel:
Pub, food and outdoor
seating.



The Fitzwilliam Arms
Castor

LOCAL INFO

The **Nene Valley Railway** uses a section of line which once ran into the long departed East Station at Peterborough. Having been axed by Dr Beeching in the 1960s the short length of track was rescued and put to good use by a band of hearty steam buffs.

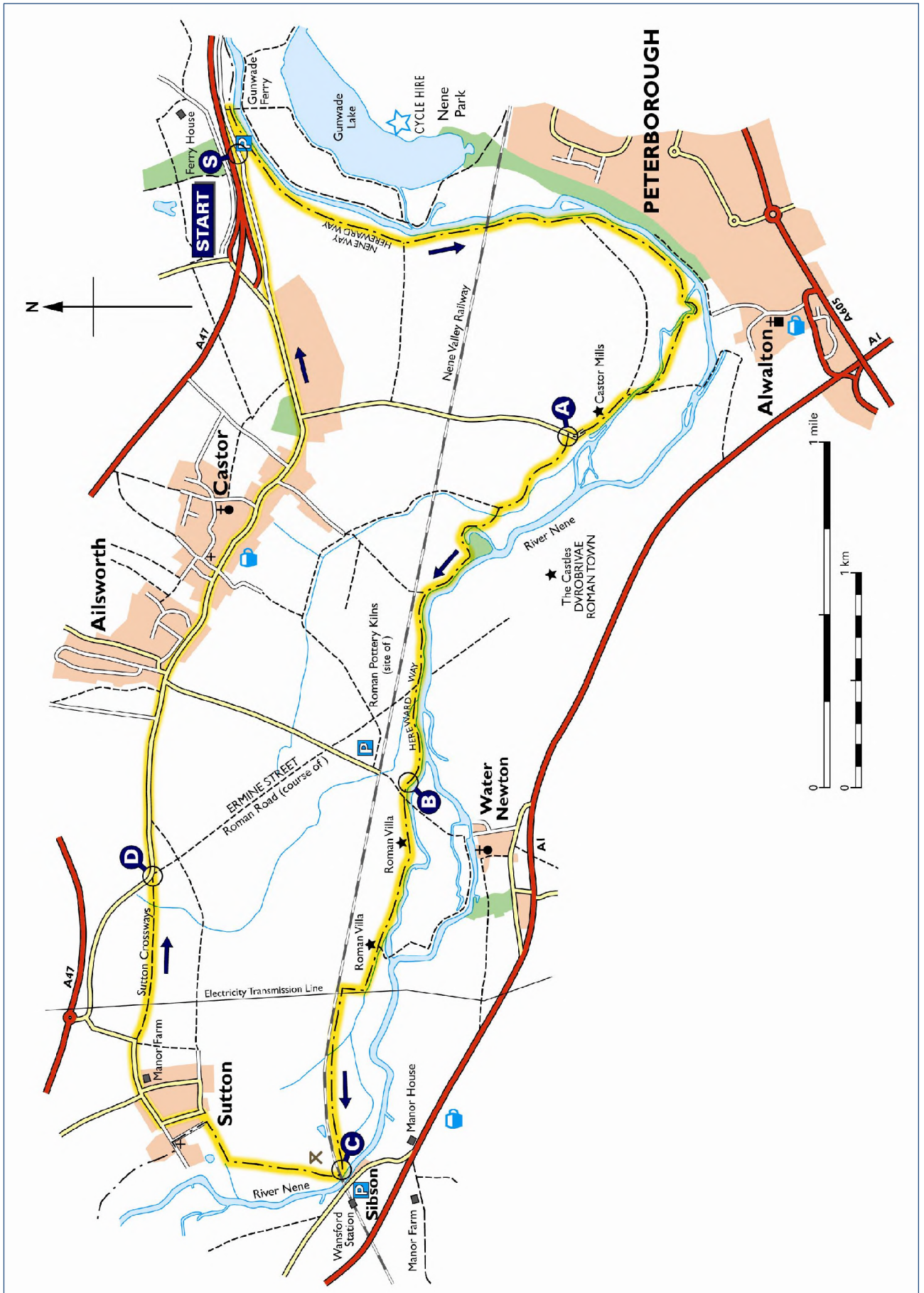
Our walk goes right up to the bridge leading to the old Wansford Station, actually in the village of Stibbington, where the steam railway is based. Even if you never actually wanted to be an engine driver in childhood these locomotives are a fascinating sight. Some days you may be lucky enough to see an old G.N.E.R. steam locomotive puffing along the line.



Waiting At The Station
Nene Valley Railway
Stibbington

CASTOR AND THE NENE VALLEY STEAM RAILWAY G.P.S. WAYPOINTS

WAYPOINT NAME	MAP REF	CO-ORDINATES	ELEVATION: Metres
CAS S	S	TL 14195 98487	13
CAS A	A	TL 12824 96936	10
CAS B	B	TL 11172 97681	8
CAS C	C	TL 09413 97987	6
CAS D	D	TL 10778 98849	12



MAP LEGEND					
	Great Walks route		Church with tower		Spot height - metres
	Motorway		Church with spire		Information centre
	Main road		Other place of worship		Parking
	Secondary road		Cathedral / Abbey		Public convenience
	Minor road		Building		Public house
	Other road or track		Built up area		Picnic site
	Footpath		Woodland		Camp site
	Bridleway		Sand		Major tourist feature
	National trail		Water feature		Other tourist feature
	Railway				

Safety First

Safety should always be your first priority in planning and undertaking a walk, whether on your own or leading a group. Please read these Safety First and Walking Our Routes notes.

Lead a group of other walkers only if you have leadership and navigational experience adequate for the 'worst case' conditions which may be encountered on the particular walk, bearing in mind the terrain, possible weather and navigational demands.

Weigh up the capabilities of your party, in terms of fitness and walking speed. Adjust your time expectations accordingly.

Ensure all your party are adequately clothed for the weather and conditions. Footwear is particularly important. Clothing must protect against cold, wet or strong sun according to the time of year.

Emergencies are quite rare, but it is essential to think ahead about what to do if someone in your party sustains an injury. Will you have a First Aid kit? Is there a qualified First Aider in the party? How could help be summoned in a serious eventuality?

Refreshment, particularly water, can be vital. Dehydration in hot summer conditions can be rapid, and frequent intake of fluids is essential.

On tougher walks it is a good idea to tell someone where you are planning to go – and when you expect to be back. Remember - mobile phones often lose reception in mountainous or isolated areas.

All our walks use legitimate routes: Public Rights of Way, Public Footpaths, Bridleways, Permissive Paths, Access Land, Byways and Roads.

Road walking calls for particular care. When there is no defined footpath or verge wide enough for safe walking it is usually best to walk on the right – facing oncoming traffic. An exception may be a tight bend, where walkers would be more visible on the left.

Occasionally you may find a public footpath blocked or unuseable. It is perfectly in order to take the shortest available diversion without damaging crops, perhaps around a field margin.

It is courteous to close gates after passing through, sometimes even if the gate was open when you arrived – particularly if it is obvious livestock may escape.

Mutual respect for farm animals is to be encouraged! Don't frighten or annoy them, but equally don't put your party members in danger or discomfort. You certainly wouldn't be the first walkers to go round the outside of a field of frisky bullocks.

Dogs should always be kept on a lead anywhere near farm animals, and under close supervision elsewhere in the countryside.

Walking Our Routes

Our walks are designed to be negotiated using the route directions in conjunction with the map section provided. We suggest walkers also take the Ordnance Survey Explorer or Outdoor Leisure map recommended for each walk.

On mountain, moorland and open heathland walks it is **ESSENTIAL** to have navigational expertise and tools, including the recommended Ordnance Survey map(s).

Take care to observe any cautions in the route description; exposed paths, areas liable to flooding etc.

Consider conditions before setting off. Will heavy rain have made a water meadow impassable? Will frost or snow make a path slippery?

When navigating the route look for clues to confirm you are in the right place. Are map features where you would expect on the ground? Are features mentioned in the text where expected? If you suspect you may have taken a wrong turn, take action sooner rather than later. It is better to re-trace to a known point rather than carry on regardless with the possibility of becoming increasingly confused.

All our routes are carefully checked before publication, but features can change on the ground – sometimes surprisingly quickly. Footpaths may be re-routed, buildings can appear or change significantly and these days pub names seem to change frequently.

The approximate time given for each walk is based on an average walking speed of 2.5 miles per hour (4 km/hour), plus an allowance for ascent, descent and any difficult terrain.

Total ascent is the approximate total ascent over the whole walk.

GPS users can enter in the waypoints provided in each of our walk reports. It is important to read our guide **Introducing GPS for Walkers**, available as a PDF file from the Great Walks in Britain web site.

Remember that GPS is a great navigational tool, but only one of those available to the navigator. Never dispense with conventional map and compass – and the training and skills to use them, especially on mountain, moorland or open heathland walks.

TOUGHNESS RATINGS

All our **Cambridgeshire & North Essex** routes can be undertaken by reasonably fit walkers able to utilise our map segments, together with the route guidance notes. Always consider recent and forecast weather.

Each walk has been allocated a **Toughness Rating**:

1. Easier walks with modest ascent and generally on well defined paths. There may be stiles or narrow gateways to negotiate.
2. Routes which are more demanding. They may include more ascent and possibly paths which are looser or more difficult underfoot.
3. More strenuous walks with some steep sections, higher paths or places which may be wet and boggy.
4. The most demanding walks in this edition. There may be prolonged steep ascents. Conditions may be challenging underfoot.

Toughness Ratings are allocated in the context of the terrain in the edition area. For example a walk rated as demanding in Cambridgeshire may be equivalent to an easier or moderate route in the Brecon Beacons.