

13 miles | 20 km **cycle route**

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The Haxey Strip



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RIDE WELL

Start - Epworth

Description

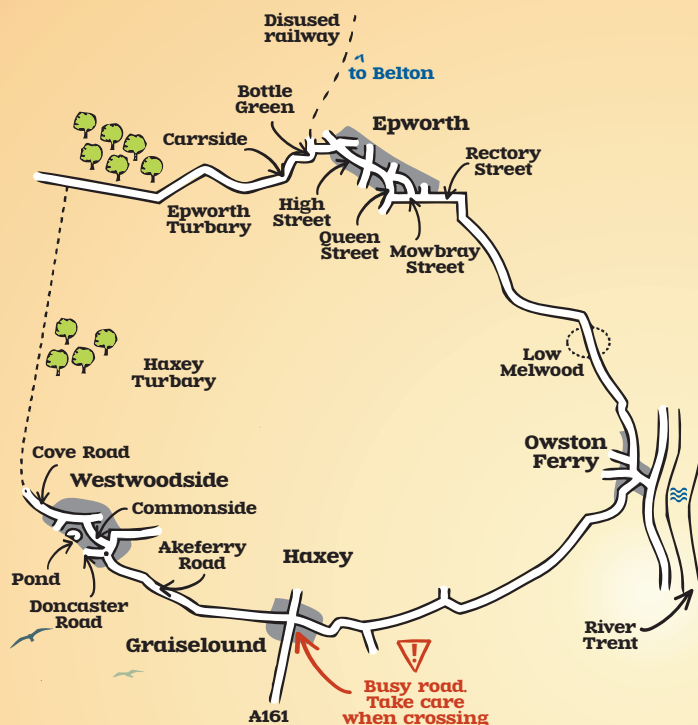
A circular route, passing through open arable farming countryside with fine views, interesting small villages and historic sites.

Attractions

The historic town of Epworth with the newly launched Wesley Trail, Epworth and Haxey Turbaries, areas of medieval strip farming and the Museum at Owston Ferry.

Traffic Levels

Moderate away from the villages. One section of the route is more suitable for a sturdy cycle or, of course, one can always dismount and walk!



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Epworth, home of the Wesleys, is the birthplace of world Methodism. Why not take a self-guided tour of the well-established Wesley Trail? Leaflets are available from the Heritage centre, which has displays on the drainage of the Isle.

The route leaves Epworth to the west of the village via Battle Green, the second left after the traffic lights. Along the route keep an eye out for the strip farming which was once prolific in the Isle. A relic of medieval farming, the narrow strips covered almost all the cultivated ground. Each owner had several strips around the parish, giving everyone a variety of soils. Up to the 1970s much of the system survived, but now most are joined into wider areas more suitable for modern machinery.

A kilometre out of the village the route passes the wooded Epworth Turbary, a Lincolnshire Trust nature reserve. Here, landowner John de Mowbray, through the Mowbray Deed gave commoners the right to cut peat for fuel. When the Dutchman, Vermuyden came to drain the Isle there was a great conflict between the new settlers and the commoners.

Shortly after leaving the Turbary, turn south along Greenholme Bank, marked by the Loveden Estate sign. To the east is Haxey Turbary, another one-time peat digging area, now a nature reserve.

(Take care here as the tarmac road soon stops and its place is taken by a sandy track where it may be more suitable to dismount and walk).

Rejoining the road, turn east through Westwoodside to recross the abandoned railway line at the small village of Graiselound. There are several surviving narrow strips in this area, most used for market garden crops.

The villages of Westwoodside and Haxey take part in the annual game of Haxey Hood each Epiphany Day (6 January). This 700-year-old tradition started when Lady de Mowbray lost her scarlet hood in a gale on her way to a Twelfth Night church service. Labourers dashed from their field to retrieve it, resorting in a scuffle for the privilege. So impressed was she by the show of chivalry that she left 13 acres of land to provide money for the hood to be fought for annually by 12 men dressed in scarlet jackets and velvet caps. Today the Haxey Hood is a leather baton, competed for by the residents of both villages.

Leave Westwoodside via Akeferry Road, for Owston Ferry with its village smithy museum and raised mound of a Norman motte and bailey castle. In 1952 a farmer uncovered a hoard of 120 Roman coins whilst ploughing. This former small port once had a steam packet the 'SS Caledonian' running between Hull and Gainsborough.

Cycling along the Epworth road up onto the higher ground of the Isle, you pass High and Low Melwood. This is the site of Axholme Priory, founded in 1397 owned much of the Southern Isle. Following the dissolution of the monasteries, most of the land was taken over for country houses and farms.

The route continues through open countryside, re-entering Epworth past the Old Rectory, home of the Wesley family.

An alternative ride leads to Haxey where in 1802 a six-foot wooden statue, thought to be of a Roman warrior, was discovered. The route takes the bridleway off Greenholme bank track, passing Haxey Turbary. From Haxey follow the road to Owston Ferry.

The grades for cycle rides - **ride easy**, **ride steady**, **ride well** and **ride strong** have been developed by British Cycling to help cyclists to decide whether a particular route is appropriate for their ability and experience.

The routes shown on the N Lincs map have been designed and approved by North Lincolnshire Council and the colour grading system serves only as a guide as to the terrain, duration and nature of the ride.