

Eleanor Cross: Stamford

In 1290, Queen Eleanor of Castile died whilst on a royal visit to Harby in Nottinghamshire. Although their marriage was (as was typical of the time) of strategic importance, King Edward I and Queen Eleanor were devoted to each other. Eleanor's funeral cortège headed south, and Edward I had a stone memorial erected in each place the cortège rested overnight. Of the original twelve, three remain; Geddington, Hardingstone and Waltham Cross. Today's visit is to the modern recreation at Stamford. The Stamford monument is a bit odd and has absolutely none of the grandeur of the other crosses. However, Stamford is a rather pretty town and it's a good reason for a day out.

More info:

<https://bitaboutbritain.com/eleanors-cross-hardingstone/>

The controls are placed in order to make the route very flexible. You can do it in either direction, or start at a train station en route. Shortcuts can be taken, such as using the old Great North Road parallel with the A1 (although this is unpleasant at evening rush hour, and finding the cycle path at the Norman Cross memorial [well worth a look] is difficult in the dark. You can use e-brevet to start the route at a different point - instructions here:

<https://www.audax.uk/media/2285/ebriders.pdf>

Controls:

0km Shelford railway station

51km Kimbolton

102km Wing

[no control at Stamford, although do have a look around - it's a pretty town]

129km nr Willow Brook Farm Shop

210km Shelford railway station

Useful train stations:

Shelford

St Neots

Stamford

Peterborough

Huntingdon

Cambridge North

Cambridge

Cafes/toilets/water etc:

39km St Neots: public toilets in car park, Ambience cafe

51km Kimbolton: Oliver's cafe in village, Budgens on way out of village

76km Barnwell country park just before Oundle: public toilets with handy tap outside, cafe further into park

78km Oundle: Beans cafe, Tesco Express. Off route: Waitrose, Coop & public toilets

89km Bulwick: village shop and cafe open Tues-Sat 9.30am to 3.30pm

118km Stamford: Wetherspoons, cafe, shops etc mostly slightly off route

137km Ferry Meadows country park, Peterborough: toilets, cafes, taps just off route.

138km Peterborough: L onto Wistow Way for Tesco Express

156km Sawtry: Co-op, fish and chip shop

178km St Ives: shops etc. Public toilet in car park on West Street.

Points of interest and things to watch out for:

38km St Neots: Route across Riverside Park usually floods late spring. Use High Street.

40km on leaving St Neots, after A1 bridge: useable cyclepath on right if rush hour.

66km Winwick to Thurning: Road can be very icy in winter (stream drains down sheltered section of road). Consider B662 to Clopton (gritted), straight over A605, and R for road through Stoke Doyle instead.

96km Harringworth: Longest masonry viaduct in the UK. Now used infrequently.

102km Wing: Turf maze on left. One of eight in England, apparently this is a labyrinth in a standard Chartres design.

118km Stamford: Eleanor Cross on left. Tall pointy modern recreation of original. There's a Wetherspoons opposite.

120km Burghley House on right: enormous 16th century stately home in Capability Brown-designed parkland. Cafes, toilets.

124km Barnack: nature reserve on right in village called Hills and Holes. Barnack limestone first quarried here by the Romans. Used in the building of Peterborough and Ely cathedral, many Cambridge colleges, widely throughout Fenland including Crowland bridge, Bury St Edmunds and odd places in London such as within the Tower of London and Roman remains of London Wall.

137km Ferry Meadows park in Peterborough: may be some flooding in spring. Not my local patch, please report back if changes needed.

179km St Ives to Cambridge guided busway path: excellent traffic-free route, sadly impassable due to flooding Feb-April. Check "Cambridge Busway Passability" group on Strava in advance.

Busway avoidance route: use A1307 path (also shorter and less exposed to wind than busway route). Best to re-route on GPS device in advance but in brief: in St Ives, turn right into Bridge Street and over bridge with chapel on (one of only three in the country). L at crossroads, SO busy roundabout. Through Fenstanton (toilets in Shell petrol station) and continue as straight as possible into Cambridge. Contact organiser in advance if you need alternative route.