

SOMERSHAM RESIDENTS GUIDE

www.somersham-pc.gov.uk
Can be downloaded from the website



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The Essential Guide for Residents Old and New

April 2025

Contents

- Page 3 A Brief History of Somersham**
- Page 6 Map of Somersham**
- Page 7 Local Government contacts**
- Page 8 Parish Communications**
- Page 9 Parish assets and services**
- Page 12 Playgroups and primary schools**
- Page 13 Volunteering**
- Page 14 Local Organised Events**
- Page 15 Churches & Community facilities**
- Page 16 Community groups, sports groups/clubs and social groups**
- Page 17 Transport information**
- Page 18 Health services**
- Page 19 Emergency services**
- Page 20 Allotments & Refuse and waste**

Brief History of Somersham

It may not seem like it today, but to appreciate the origins of Somersham and its importance you need to let your imagination run away with you a little. Imagine the road (the B1050) from Somersham to Colne Bluntisham and Earith is the sea shore. Imagine walking down the High Street and carry on past the old railway station towards Chatteris and you are walking out into saltmarsh. In fact by the time you are a few hundred yards beyond the station and you'll be able to swim!

For time immemorial the importance of Somersham was that it was the first dry land you reached when crossing the seas and saltmarshes from the Isle of Ely. Raised well above sea level, surrounded by thick woods which were filled with deer, wild boar and fruits of the forest Somersham was a natural place for early man to settle. In the Norris Museum in St Ives you can see a flint from Somersham that was part of an axe from the Lower Paleolithic era. Which tells us our ancestors were living in and around Somersham over 200,000 years ago.

From then on the area around the modern village was more or less in continuous occupation. Traces of post holes from iron age huts have been found along Parkhall Road and the Chatteris Road. The Romans too left their mark with remains of a Romano British villa being identified at Turkington Hill just north of the Chatteris Road and many coins and pottery shards were found in the vicinity.

As is all too common in English history, we then enter something of a black hole until the end of the 10th century when it is clear that Somersham was a thriving manor, one of several in Cambridgeshire owned by the ealdorman Britnoth or Birtnoth, the subject of a well-known Anglo Saxon poem. Britnoth took an army of East Anglians down to Maldon to engage with a Viking invasion in 991AD. According to a story propagated by the monks of Ely, they fed Britnoth and his army after the Abbot of Ramsey refused. In return Birtnoth gifted to Ely many of his manors including that of Somersham should he die in battle. Maldon turned out to be a major victory to the Vikings, Somersham passed to the Abbey of Ely and a long running feud with the Abbot of Ramsey (who owned manors at Chatteris and St Ives) began.

At the Norman Conquest Somersham had become a substantial settlement of probably 40 families with livestock, three fishponds and ploughed fields. Shortly after the Conquest, Ely was promoted from a mere Abbey to being a cathedral. The importance of Somersham mushroomed with the influence of the diocese of Ely. Quite simply when the Bishop wanted to visit his other manors or travel to court in London, Somersham was the first dry land he came to. By the 12th century there was a manor house with gardens and by the middle of the 14th it had transformed itself into a palace. The bishop kept a boatman in Somersham to provide regular transport for him whenever he wanted to leave his island. Kings from Edward III to James I would from time to time pop into Somersham to visit and most importantly, enjoy the hunting.

Brief History of Somersham continued:

And what about the other villagers. By 1221 a survey of Somersham appeared to show that the number of households, 45 were not significantly more than at Domesday, yet when we look at the land holdings and the size of the farms they managed, it is clear the village had expanded. Marshlands were drained and forests cleared (“wasted”) to enlarge farms and grow more crops. By 1190 Somersham had a market on Thursdays and by 1319 a four day long fair on the feast of St John the Baptist. On the eve of the Black Death a tax return of 1327 shows there were at least 69 households in the village or at least 69 taxpayers!

Throughout the middle ages there were disputes between the Abbot of Ramsey and the Bishop of Ely over the lands around Somersham. There were frequent incidents, fighting, cattle rustling and illegal hunting in an area known as Crowlodemor in the saltmarsh between Somersham and Chatteris.

By the reign of the Tudors the palace at Somersham had been rebuilt in the contemporary style and probably looked like a scaled down version of Hampton Court. Elizabeth I liked it so much that she extorted it from the Bishop of Ely. The manor became crown lands and when Charles I gifted it to his wife Henrietta Maria, she enclosed much of the common land to the outrage of the local people. Control of the manor, and with it dominance over the village drifted over the next century before ending up in the possession of the Hammond family. The 17th century saw a gradual decline and when Anthony Hammond, once a minister of the crown ended up in the Fleet prison, the manor was sold and the purchaser the Earl of Manchester, finally had the decaying remnants of the palace demolished.

But if the old order had crumbled, a new one was ushered in. Somersham soon found itself a hive of industry once more. Turnpike roads were built linking the town to Huntingdon and by the 1848 there was a railway link to St Ives and March and shortly after a branch line took passengers to Warboys and Ramsey. By 1866 there was gas and on the north side of a town a flourishing brick works too. Somersham grew and flourished.

In World War Two fields to the south of the village were used as training grounds for special forces but Somersham was to experience a tragedy of its own. After a bombing raid on Aachen launched on the 5th October, one of the Wellington’s returning to base at Warboys lost control and the crew bailed out shortly before it ploughed into Somersham High Street. 10 local people were killed in the disaster and a plaque on the wall on the north side of the High Street on the St Ives side of King Street commemorates the loss.

Since the war Somersham has continued to grow and flourish. As traditional businesses and farming have employed fewer people, so the town has attracted more people who work elsewhere but enjoy the pleasures of living in the countryside. New estates have been built to the north and south of the crossroad that mark the centre of the community. Once a stringy settlement spread out along the High Street, today’s town is all but square in shape and with a population is 3,800. It has come a long way since the days of ealdorman Britnoth.

Brief History of Somersham continued:

Passing acquaintance

Somersham has had connections with a few interesting characters throughout its history. Neither Adam Easton nor Simon Langham ever (as far as recorded history can tell) visited Somersham Church, but both were vicars of Somersham. Simon was Lord Chancellor of England, then Archbishop of Canterbury and finally a cardinal in Avignon. Adam Easton too rose to be a cardinal in the papal court in Rome and ultimately second only to the pope himself. Catherine of Aragon remembered Somersham less fondly. She resisted all of Henry VIII's attempts to send her to live in Somersham Palace after the coronation of Anne Boleyn. She was convinced that Somersham was malarious and Henry was hoping she would catch fever and conveniently die. In the end a compromise was reached and she was sent to Kimbolton Castle instead. Finally there was James Hammond, a famous (in his day) Elegiac poet of the mid-18th century. He was the son of Sir Anthony Hammond and was born and raised in Somersham and may (though we cannot be certain of this) have written many of his poems while he was here. A book of his poems ran to several editions and his work continued to be popular throughout the 19th century.

Buildings and remnants

Considering its long and rich history Somersham is not well blessed with buildings that reflect that. To pick out some of the best though, the 17th century barns on the High Street opposite King Street are fine examples of their type though and look out for the impressive fire hooks on the front. At the bottom of Church Street a sunken field on the west side of the road gives the outline of one of the larger mediaeval fish ponds used for keeping eels and perch for the bishop's table. Carrying on down the lane you can make out the moat which is now all that remains of the bishop's palace site. All trace of the buildings have now gone.

The church is a lovely example of a mediaeval rustic church with a 12th century chancel, very plain and very much of its time. The main body of the church was added in the 14th century. note also the 14th century carved roof bosses.

There is a fine red brick manor house half way along Parkhall Road on the east side probably also dating from the late 17th century.

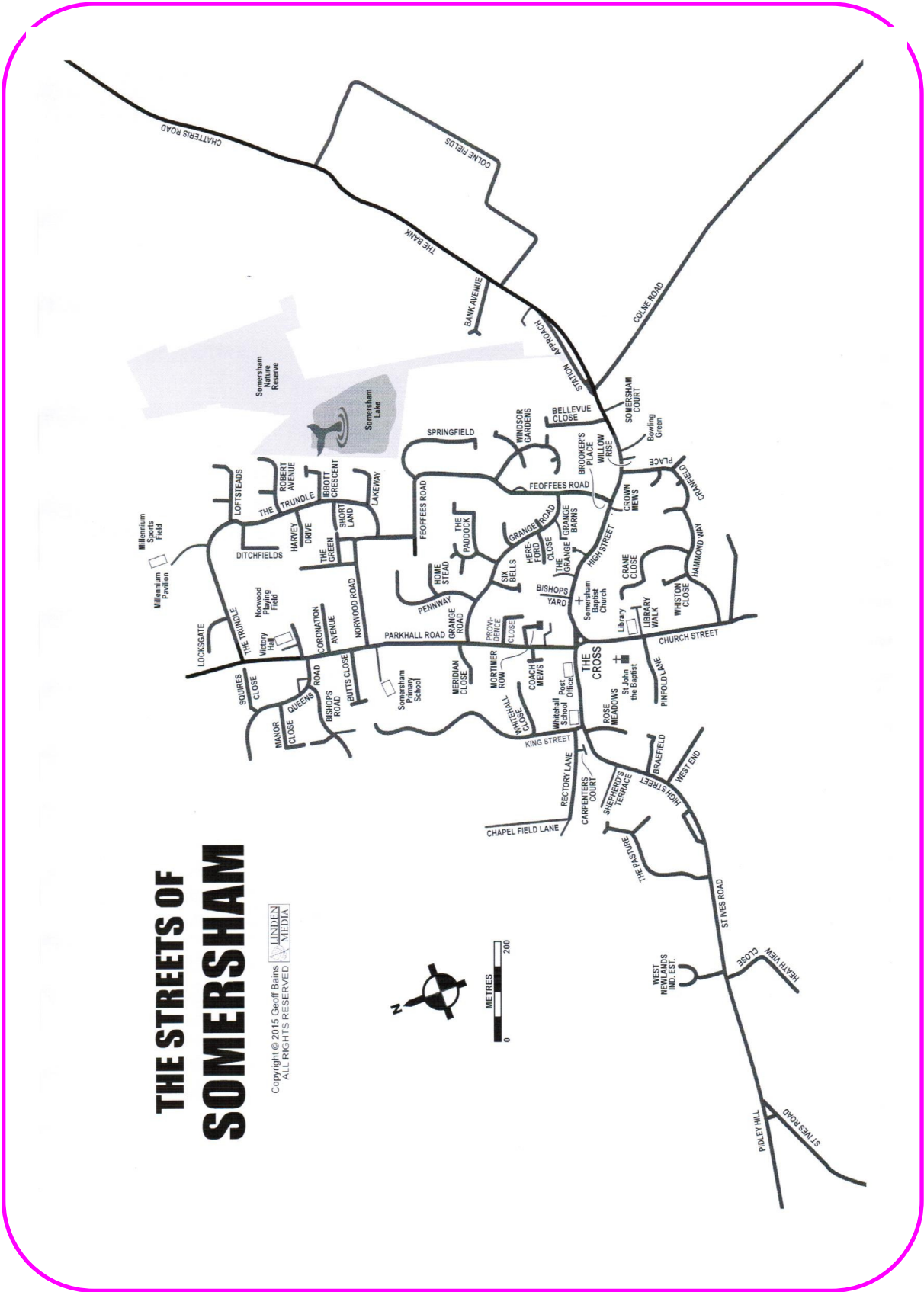
Finally look out for Somersham's rather special milestones. Mostly 18th century or early 19th they are an unusual legacy and have been well maintained.

Acknowledgement

Somersham Parish Council would like to thank Andrew Lee for writing this brief history of Somersham. It is not only fascinating to have a little information about Somersham's past, but his help has been invaluable.

Copyright Andrew Lee

Map of Somersham Reproduced with the kind permission of Somersham Carnival Committee



**THE STREETS OF
SOMERSHAM**

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Local Government

Somersham Parish Council

Website: www.somersham-pc.gov.uk

The Norwood Building, Parkhall Road, Somersham, Cambs PE28 3HE

Tel: 01487 841359

Office hours: Monday—Thursday 9 am - 1pm

Parish Clerk: Penny Bryant clerk@somersham-pc.gov.uk

Deputy Clerk: Irene Healiss deputy.clerk@somersham-pc.gov.uk

Parish Council Meetings usually take place every four weeks on a Monday. The public are welcome to attend and talk to the council for up to three minutes on any subject at a meeting.

YOUR PARISH COUNCILLORS

Nicola David	nicola.david@somersham-pc.gov.uk
Christine Dolby	christine.dolby@somersham-pc.gov.uk
Julia Drury	julia.drury@somersham-pc.gov.uk
Daryl Potter	daryl.potter@somersham-pc.gov.uk
Tony Sansom	tony.sansom@somersham-pc.gov.uk
Dianna Skeggs	dianna.skeggs@somersham-pc.gov.uk
Richard Sutton	dick.sutton@somersham-pc.gov.uk
Ray Woolway	ray.woolway@somersham-pc.gov.uk
Andrew Chapman	andrew.chapman@somersham-pc.gov.uk
Bill Bruce	bill.bruce@somersham-pc.gov.uk

5 Vacancies

County Councillor & District Councillor Steve Criswell

23, The Bank, Somersham, PE28 3DJ

Tel: 01487 740745

Email : steve.criswell@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Email : steve.criswell@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Local MP (North West Cambridgeshire) Mr Shailesh Vara

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

Parish Communications

Parish Newsletter: Somersham4U

To contact the Editorial Team to submit content email:

Somersham4u.newsletter@btconnect.com

Facebook: Our Somersham
Somersham & Pidley Time Bank
Somersham Nature Reserve Group
Somersham Christmas Lights
Somersham Sprint
Somersham Library
Somersham Parish Council
Somersham Changing Lives

Twitter: @SomershamParish
@SomershamTime

Notice boards (Parish)

Tesco Express,
Millenium Pavilion (internal) digital screen
Norwood Building (Parish Council Office) including digital screen
Primary School, Parkhall Road
St John the Baptist Church, Church Street,
Community Information Centre (Library), Church Street,
Lake area, Springfields

Notice board (Community)

The Cross, High Street

Parish Websites:

Somersham Parish Council	www.somersham-pc-gov.uk
Somersham4u	www.somersham4u.wordpress.com
Somersham & Pidley Time Bank	www.somershamtimebank.wordpress.com
Somersham Changing Lives	www.changinglivessomersham.wordpress.com

Community Websites:

Baptist Chapel	www.somershambaptist.church
Millennium Sports Facility	www.millenium-sports-somersham.co.uk
St John the Baptist Church	www.somershamparishes.org/churches/somersham
Somersham Carnival	www.somershamcarnival.org.uk
The Victory Hall	www.somershamvictoryhall.com

Somersham Parish Council

Somersham Parish Council is responsible for the following areas:

Bridleway 7 — 5 miles from Short Drove to the Crafty Fox, Chatteris

Bus shelter, Chatteris Road

Local Nature Reserve—comprising the lake, Station Land, Sewters Pond and section of adjacent disused railway line.

Hattie's Map, Church Street

Norwood Playing Field & children's play area's

Norwood Building & car park

Meridian brass strips, in footpath at No 70 & No 96 High Street

Millennium Sports Facility, The Trundle

Millennium Stone, Church Street

Multi Sports area, Norwood Playing Field

Public Shelter, The Cross

Squash Court, Norwood Building, Parkhall Road

The War Memorial, High Street

The White Post area, St Ives Road/Pidley Road

Village direction sign, The Cross

Village sign, (outside Somersham Town Football Club), St Ives Road

Services:

Somersham & Pidley Time Bank

Changing Lives Project

Junior and Senior Youth Clubs

Seats at:

Chatteris Road

Church Street

Norwood Playing Field

Parkhall Road

Public Shelter, The Cross

St Ives Road, Near to West End

The White Post area

Somersham Parish Council

Bins at:

Local Nature Reserve
Norwood Playing Field
Footpath 4, Bishops Road

CCTV at:

Millennium Sports Facility
Norwood Building & Victory Hall
Public Shelter, The Cross

Street lights are all individually identified:

Parish owned lights are prefixed with PC and a series of numbers

Cambridgeshire County Council owned lights are prefixed with L and a series of letters and numbers

Additional Community Assets:

Christmas Lights — annual display

Community Information Centre (Library Access point) , Church Street
Managed by Friends of Somersham Library (FOSL)
Building leased by Somersham Parish Council from Cambridgeshire County Council.

Grass verge cutting — under contract with Cambridgeshire Highway to cut some grass verges through the parish

Hanging flower baskets — The Cross

Local Nature Reserve (comprising the lake, Station Land, Sewters Pond and section of adjacent disused railway line), off Springfields

Owned by Somersham Parish Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and managed by Somersham Nature Reserve Group (SNRG)

Continued:

Somersham & Pidley Time Bank, Norwood Building, Parkhall Road, Somersham
Paula Peck, Time Bank Co-ordinator. Tel: 07599 628106

Scout Hut, Parkhall Road (on Norwood Playing Field)

Owned and managed by 1st Somersham Scout Committee. Land leased to the committee by Somersham Parish Council

Victory Hall, Parkhall Road. (on Norwood Playing Field)

Owned and managed by the Victory Hall Management Committee.
Land leased to the committee by Somersham Parish Council

Cambridgeshire County Council is responsible for:

Definitive footpaths

Highways including most public footpaths

Highway verges

Street lightings—see above

Huntingdonshire District Council is responsible for:

Footpaths and maintained green areas within most of the housing estates but not all.

Church street car park

Continued:

Playgroups/Schools:

Children's Centre, Primary School, Parkhall Road, Somersham
Tel: 01487 840225

Parkhall Playgroup, Primary School, Parkhall Road, Somersham
Tel: 01487 740774

Silks Farm Nursery School, St Ives Road, Somersham
Tel: 01487 843525

Schools:

County Primary School, Parkhall Road, Somersham
Tel: 01487 840412

Whitehall Independent School 117 High Street, Somersham
Tel:01487 840966

Post Office 101 High Street, Somersham
Tel: 01487 840201

Volunteer

Why become a Volunteer?

To meet new people, volunteering builds your personal network.

Your time helps others, no matter what you do reaching out helps.

For skill development. It looks good on your resume and this could enhance your job prospects or help you in your current work place.

It gives you the opportunity to participate in something you would not ordinarily have the chance to do or mix with people you would not normally meet and over all gain valuable experience.

Health wise volunteering can aid mild depression, social anxiety and other mood disorders.

Listed below are just a few of Somersham' s many local volunteering opportunities:

Carnival Committee

Tel: 07775 585713

Changing Lives

Tel: 01487 841359

Christmas Lights Working Party

Tel: 01487 841359

Community Information Centre (Library)

Tel: 01487 840266

Nature Reserve Group (Local Nature Reserve)

Tel: 01487 841359

Time Bank

Tel: 07599 628106

Victory Hall Management Committee (The Victory Hall, community hall)

Tel: 07849 186035

SOMERSHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Local Organised Events

Christmas Lights switch-on—1st December

Carnival week—mid June

Flower Festival—June/July

Local Nature Reserve—events throughout the year

Open Gardens—June/July

Lake Fun Day— September

Lake Apple Day— October

Facilities and Services

Churches:

St John the Baptist Church, Church Street, Somersham
Minister: Rev Susan Simpson Tel: 01487 840676

Somersham Baptist Church, High Street, Somersham

Community Facilities:

Community Information Centre (Library), Church Street, Somersham
Tel: 01487 840266

Millennium Pavilion and Sports Field, The Trundle

Bookings: Alex Scriven - 01487 841359
Office: admin@somersham-pc.gov.uk

Norwood Room, Norwood Building, Parkhall Road

Bookings: Alex Scriven - 01487 841359
Email - admin@somersham-pc.gov.uk

Norwood Playing Field & Multi Sports Area

Bookings: Alex Scriven - 01487 841359
Email - admin@somersham-pc.gov.uk

Somersham & Pidley Time Bank, Norwood Building, Parkhall Road, Somersham

Time Bank co-ordinator Paula Peck Tel: 07599 628106

Squash Court

Bookings: Alex Scriven- 01487 841359
Email - admin@somersham-pc.gov.uk

Stalls at The Cross (charity stalls only)

Bookings: Alex Scriven - 01487 841359
Email - admin@somersham-pc.gov.uk

**Parish Voluntary, Community Groups, Sports Clubs,
Social Clubs and Societies**

Bookings for:

Multi-Sports Area, Squash Courts, Norwood Playing Field, and Charity stalls
at The Cross - Alex Scriven - 01487 841359
or email - admin@somersham-pc.gov.uk

Millennium Pavilion and Sports Field – Alex Scriven - 01487 841359 or
email - admin@somersham-pc.gov.uk

Victory Hall Bookings - 07849 186035

Sporting Activities:

- Jolly Archers - David Gale - email davidgale49@hotmail.com
- Ballet - Gail Burgess - 01354 693464 or email gailpomfret1@hotmail.com
- Somersham Town Football Club - Ed Proctor 07506737308 or email edprocter@thurlownunn.co.uk
- Tang Soo Do - Colin Mann - 07906 450176 or email tsdmastermann@gmail.com

Uniformed Organisations:

- 2nd Somersham Brownies - Georgina Frogley 01487 841286 or email georginafrogley@live.co.uk
- 1st Somersham Guides - Vikki Hovell 07894152922 or email somershamguides@gmail.com

Children's Recreational Activities:

- Rainbow Children's Centre - Amanda Boyden 01487 840225 or email somershamchildrenscentre@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
- Xplorers (Primary School age) - Sharon Cusworth 01487 843352 or email sharon@cusworth.com

Transport

Bus Service:

Main bus operators in Huntingdonshire:

Stage coach - www.stagecoachbus.com

Whippet - www.go-whippet.co.uk

If bus service number is known go to www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/transport/around/buses/

Railway Stations:

Nearest station is Huntingdon

Brampton Road

Huntingdon
PE29 3BP

For train times log into www.nationalrail.co.uk or phone Trainline Customer Service on 0870 010 1296

Cambridge station

Station Rd,
Cambridge
CB1 2JW

Health Services

Dentist Practice:

Church Street Dental Practice

6A Church Street
Somersham
Huntingdon
PE28 3EG

Tel: 01487 843023

Doctors Surgeries:

Parkhall Surgery, Parkhall Road, Somersham

Tel: 01487 740888

Emergency Services

British Telecom fault reporting:

Lines open 7:00AM-11:00PM 7 days a week or visit <https://www.bt.com/help/report-and-track-your-bt-problem>

- For free on a BT line 151
- For free on a non-BT line 0800 800 151
- From a mobile 800 800 151 (there may be a charge)

Electricity helpline:

- UK Power Networks, www.ukpowernetworks.co.uk General enquires 0845 601 4516. Lines open Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm
- **Emergency 0800 316 3105** - free to call from a landline or a mobile phone.
- **Register for text messages during a power cut**
If your power's off, we can keep you updated with text messages. These will let you know how our repair works are going, and give you an estimated time that your power will be switched back on.
- To register for this service text '**Power**' followed by your postcode to **80876**. For example: **Power PE28 3HE**
- **Priority services during a power cut**
We understand that some people may need extra support during a power cut. Full details can be found at the address below:

www.ukpowernetworks.co.uk/internet/en/power-cuts/priority-services-during-a-power-cut

Gas Helpline:

National Grid Emergency Line on 0800 111 999

Water helpline:

www.cambridge-water.co.uk phone customer services team 01223 70 60 50

Fire Service Non-emergency details **Tel:** 01480 444 500.

Address:

Fire Service Headquarters
Hinchbrooke Cottage
Brampton Road
Huntingdon
Cambridgeshire
PE29 2NA.

Police non emergency calls—**Dial 101**

101 is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The system is smart and will identify where you are calling from and connect you with the local police for that area

Alternative contact details
Cambridgeshire Constabulary
Headquarters
Hinchbrooke Park
Huntingdon
Cambridgeshire
PE29 6NP
01480 456111

Services

Allotments

Colne Road, Somersham

Contact:

Harvey Feoffees Charity Committee

Judith Bullard, Clerk to the Harvey Feoffee Charity, on 01487 840059

Chapel Fields, off King Street, Somersham

Contact:

The Somersham & District Smallholdings Association Ltd

Geoff Parish Monday to Friday 8:30am to 5 pm 01487 740616

mobile after hours 07525901735

Refuse and recycling collection days:

Domestic Waste every other Thursday

Mixed Dry every other Thursday

Garden Waste every other Wednesday

Nearest Recycling Centres

Bluntisham Recycling Centre, Health Road, Bluntisham PE28 3LQ

Weekend hours April to September 8am to 5pm

Weekday hours April to September 8am to 5pm

Weekend hours October to March 8am to 4pm

Weekend hours October to March 8am to 4pm

SOMERSHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Somersham Welcome Pack produced by:

**Somersham Parish Council
The Norwood Building
Parkhall Road
Somersham
Cambridgeshire PE28 3HE**

Tel: 01487 841359

Email: executiveofficer@somersham-pc.gov.uk