

Father Christmas came  
to the Eaton Socon  
Garden Centre  
by boat in 1987



May Day Celebrations  
on Eaton Socon Village  
Green which still  
continue today

Why not search the website and find out about the town of St Neots and nearby villages.

- 1) Type in **st-neots.ccan.co.uk**
- 2) **Either** type in words in the **search box** (next to the magnifying glass) to find a group of images, eg flour mill, regatta, then follow steps 5&6 **or** Click on the word categories (above the changing picture) to see a range of **categories** below and then follow steps 3-6
- 3) Click on the required **category** (below an image) to find a group of **sub-categories**.
- 4) Click on the required **sub-category** (below an image) to find a group of images
- 5) Click on an image to enlarge the picture and to find out more information
- 6) To take a closer look at the image please click on the magnifying glass in the bottom right hand corner of the picture.
- 7) If you wish to make a comment below the picture - please click **add comment** and write your comment in the box. We will check all comments.

Get in touch: email: [ccanstneots@gmail.com](mailto:ccanstneots@gmail.com)

The CCAN project was initially funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and is now managed by Community Sites ([www.communitysites.co.uk](http://www.communitysites.co.uk))

St Neots Community Archive Group

# St Neots and nearby villages



View of the River Great Ouse in the early 1800s with Eaton Socon meadows  
on the left and St Neots and Eynesbury church towers in the distance

The rapidly expanding market town of St Neots is surrounded by fields and small villages. The present town includes the two ancient parishes of Eynesbury and Eaton Socon on either side of the River Great Ouse. The new housing developments beyond the railway line to the east now mean that the town is split into three sections divided by the river and the railway.

The St Neots Community Archive maintains and regularly updates a website with thousands of photographs of St Neots and its surrounding villages – their history and their changing landscapes.



St Neots was a new settlement which grew up in the Middle Ages near the market set up by the Priory beside the river crossing. The market and town on the east bank of the river prospered and grew until it overtook the mother parish of Eynesbury, gaining a market charter in the 12th century. The settlement of Eaton Socon thrived for centuries with its early castle site, its coaching inns on the Great North Road and the mill on the River Great Ouse.

The 19th century brought many changes with the development of new industry and in the 20th century large housing estates were built in Eynesbury and Eaton Socon for the London Overspill Scheme. In the 1960s the planned development of the Great North Road bypass (A1) resulted in part of Eaton Socon Parish (formerly in Bedfordshire) joining with St Neots and Eynesbury to form the present town.

More planned expansion in the 21st century beyond the railway line in the east will see the town's population grow by thousands as more houses are added to St Neots, the largest town in Cambridgeshire.

Little Paxton remains a separate settlement but it has always been important, with its mill on the river. At first this was a corn grinding mill belonging to St Neots Priory but in the early 19th century it became a paper mill which expanded and provided work for hundreds of people for many years.



*People in the Market Square looking at the flooding in 1890*

## Cambridgeshire Community Archive Network (CCAN)

There are around 40 groups in CCAN, which was developed to create an online archive of life in Cambridgeshire's towns and villages. The St Neots group is linked with St Neots Museum, St Neots Local History Society, Eatons Community Association and the St Neots U3A.

*The Cross Keys bus at the railway station – a service ran by Miss Cranstone of the Cross Keys to link the town and the railway station*



*A small boy watching guns being cleaned on the market square in WW1 (Photo by Horace Clarabut)*

St Neots has always been important to nearby settlements as villagers would travel to the town for weekly markets and auctions. Today St Neots is a thriving rapidly expanding town and residents of nearby villages still visit for shopping and the weekly markets.

Can you help us to record our area? Do you have photos or films we can add to our website? Would you like to get involved in this project? We are looking for volunteers who might like to take photos, add photos and documents to the website or record stories and memories. Perhaps you know someone who can help us record life in and around our town and nearby villages. Photos can be scanned into a computer and will be quickly returned undamaged. We can show you how we work, and what our plans are for the future.

Our town and villages are changing fast – please help us to help you.