



Title: Clare

Distance: 7 miles

Time taken: 2½ hours

Location: 14 miles north of Braintree

OS Explorer Map: 210

Grid Ref.: TL 771 452

Parking: Clare Castle Country Park, CO10 8NW

Bus: 2 hr service Sudbury - Haverhill. SMS: sufgdpm

Train: No train service

Refreshment: Half Moon, Belchamp St Paul (01787 277402); several pubs and restaurants in Clare

PEAR Rating: 

Walk Description

Right from the off, from the car park in the grounds of a Norman Castle, it's clear this walk is a little bit special. The Motte is still there and can be climbed giving clear views across the historic town of Clare and over the surrounding countryside. The walk takes you along the banks of the River Stour then up through the hills of north Essex to the lovely village of Belchamp St Paul, with its stunning 16th century thatched pub overlooking the village green. A gentle stroll through farmland brings you to the 15th century parish church of St Andrews.

Finally, there is a long gentle descent back to the riverside and Clare, where there are plenty of pubs and restaurants. Here and there, the route changes direction mid-field and there are no waymarkers: we have described the route through, but you will need to use the map and your judgement.

Directions

- A.** Leave Clare Castle Country Park car park (*P*) via an old railway bridge over the River Stour, in the south west corner. At the far end of the bridge, turn hard left immediately along a narrow path through trees towards the south bank of the river (*1*).
- B.** Follow the towpath (*2*) with the river on your left for around a quarter of a mile, to the weir at Clare Mill Gates. Continue ahead to the old mill building, then fork right across the meadow towards a footbridge (*3*).
- C.** Cross the footbridge and continue ahead over a field to the roadside. Turn left for 180 yards. Turn right into Claredown Farm, and 60 yards later, go through a gap in the hedge on your left (*4*). Immediately turn right to walk southwards up the slope, with the hedge and farm on your right. Follow the field-edge path with the hedge on your right: there is no right of way through the farm.
- D.** After about 500 yards the field begins to level out and the hedge stops. Continue ahead to the next hedge and cross a footbridge a few yards to your left (*5*). Continue southwards, again with a hedge on your right.
- E.** After about 300 yards, on the opposite side of the field you will see a waymarker near the corner of some woods. Don't go straight across the field towards this: continue ahead for a further 40 yards or so to another waymarker on your side of the field and zag back to the woodland post (*6*).
- F.** Turn right and walk south for 50 yards with the woods on your left. Bear left across a field boundary then continue south with a ditch and trees on your right (*7*).
- G.** After 250 yards the ditch on the right stops and the field opens out. Continue ahead across the field passing slightly to the left of a pylon. About 100 yards before the facing hedge, the footpath splits into a Y-shape with arms heading to the south east and south west corners of the field. There's no waymarker, however the farmer does clear a path through his crops (*8*).
- H.** Take the left fork heading south east. As you approach the corner you will see a small scrub area on your right: cross this diagonally and go through a gap into the adjacent normal-sized field (*9*).
- I.** Bear right, then with the hedge on your right walk southwards for 500 yards to the roadside and turn left. 180 yards later, just before the Belchamp St Paul sign, turn right along a grassy bridleway with a hedge on either side (*10*).
- J.** Once the hedge on your left ends, continue ahead for about 200 yards. Look for a footpath crossroads. Again, there is no waymarker at the junction although the farmer does clear a path through the crops. (If the way is not obvious, look for a pylon off to your right in the adjacent field: the footpath junction is about 50 yards south of this.)

K. Turn left (east) towards an inverted field corner and cross the footbridge (11). Continue eastwards for 250 yards and go through a kissing gate (12), then bear right towards a wooden gate leading to the roadside.

L. At the roadside, turn left and walk along the wide grass verge towards Belchamp St Paul village green (13) 300 yards later you will reach the village green, the Half Moon is opposite.

M. Bear left opposite the pub, across the village green then along Bakers Road heading northwest for about 120 yards. Look for a footpath on the right heading north, opposite a long low building (14).

N. 100 yards after leaving Bakers Road, cross an easy-to-miss footbridge through the hedge on your right. Turn left to continue northwards with the hedge now on your left. When the hedge stops, turn right to cross the field (15).

O. Go through a gap in the facing hedge and turn left along an enclosed path through trees (16).

P. When the trees stop, continue ahead northwards with a hedge on your left (you can see the tower of St Andrew's Church across the fields to your right), cross a footbridge in the facing hedge, and keep going north to a T-junction (17).

Q. Turn right heading east for almost 400 yards, until you reach a wide field entrance. Turn left through this gap and walk north with a hedge on your right (18).

R. After 160 yards, turn right along a wide grassy path towards some silos, then continue east along a gravel track to the roadside. Turn left along the road then a few yards later, turn left again into St Andrew's churchyard (19).

S. Leave the churchyard via a stile in the north west corner (diagonally opposite the entrance) (20).

T. Turn immediately left alongside a wall. After a few yards bear right to cross diagonally towards the north west corner of the meadow. Look for a ridiculously large stile a few yards along an enclosed path and clamber over it (21).

U. A few yards later, turn left over a footbridge into a field. Turn right to walk down the field initially with a hedge on your right and then bear very slightly left to cross the field towards an inverted corner (22).

V. At the inverted corner, continue ahead now with a hedge on your left. Cross the footbridge onto a lane and turn left. 120 yards later locate a camouflaged footpath through the hedge on your right (23).

W. Walk north with a hedge on your left for about 250 yards until you reach a farm track. Turn left along the gravel track (24) following it as it curves to the right and passes a house (Simpson's), then continue ahead along a grassy track, and over a rather awkward stile.

X. Continue ahead along an enclosed track. Follow the track downhill for almost half a mile. When the land levels out you will come to a space where the hedge on either side ends and you have reached junction of field entrances, with wide openings ahead and to the left and right. Turn left to walk west, with a hedge on your right (25).

Y. Continue west keeping the hedge on your right for about half a mile, until the hedge stops. Follow the track around to the right and walk downhill to a stony track. Turn left and walk south west back along the track (26) for about a third of a mile, to the roadside. Turn right, passing the entrance to Claredown Farm, and re-trace your steps back to the car park.

[ROUTE DIRECTIONS at www.essexwalks.com](http://www.essexwalks.com)

The ROUTE MAP and ROUTE PHOTOS **also** need to be downloaded and saved on your computer for printing.



The Route Map PDF can be downloaded from this page: [Description & Map](#)



The Route Photos PDF can be downloaded from this page: [Photos](#)

This route description is not meant to be used in isolation, it is one piece of a three part guide to the walk. The other two pieces are the route map, and the numbered photographs. The walks work best when the description, map and the photos PDF are printed off and used in conjunction with each other.

The numbers in brackets in the description refer to specific points along the route, marked with numbered symbols and these in turn are matched to illustrative photographs which show you the lie of the land.



These symbols are shown at strategic points along the route, overlaid on a 1:50K Ordnance Survey map: [Online OS Map at www.essexwalks.com](#).