

Unsung



Clare & Poslingford



Tourists to West Suffolk tend to head for the ‘likely suspects’ of Lavenham, Long Melford and perhaps Kersey. But there are other pretty villages just as worthy of a visit. If you take the B1063 to Bury St Edmunds out of Clare (which I will talk about later) you’ll find a narrow road that climbs for a mile before you reach Poslingford. This is another of Suffolk’s lovely secrets.

I leave my car in The Street, outside the Old School House (complete with bell), right opposite St Mary’s Church where early daffodil spears show amidst pale primroses. A stream runs alongside the road.

I set off up the hill with a few houses and former pub - The Shepherd and His Dog, now a pink-painted home. I pass several pretty thatched cottages behind old, rambling apple trees where noisy sparrows chirp. I am on a quest to find Chipley Abbey. There is a steep bank edging the road but as I get higher the views open on either side. A wide sweep of spring-green fields rise and fall with the contours of the land. A line of tiny telegraph poles march across, adding to the sense of distance. And then the wind hits me with a mighty gust as the hedges

Angie Jones discovers some fine walking country, and a butcher selling squirrel and Moo & Blue pie



Walk: Approx 4 miles on mainly roads, some muddy bridle paths

thin and soon I’m feeling the full force, as it roars in the trees. Head down, I battle on!

I reach a sign and turn left to Assington Green. Thankfully the road drops and soon it becomes more sheltered. To my left I can see the church tower already far away. There are sharp bends as the lane follows the field boundaries. Small streams trickle on either side. I come to a fork and take a diversion to Chipley Abbey Farm built on the site of an Augustine Priory founded in 1235. Among the Laurel bushes and Scots Pines that line the drive I find a memorial stone to the Clopton family. By 1455 the priory was in ruins and today fragments of its building are incorporated into the 17th century farmhouse I can see. (Inside St Mary’s church are a stone coffin and bell from this site). I learn that many of the Clopton family are buried here, the Sir Williams and Sir Walters of the 1300s together with their wives.

I retrace my steps to the lane that passes farm cottages (1880) where empty milk bottles sit on the doorstep awaiting collection. I round a bend and there is Clopton Hall with a thick box hedge arching the front door. Behind the façade is a 17th century timber framed house. →

→ Suddenly I see them – clumps of delicate snowdrops in the verge and on the roof of a tumbledown log cabin and in white drifts beneath the apples trees in the garden. Now there's a reward for winter walkers.

The road leads to Gosland Green and a footpath going left beside a hedge. Time to leave the road and tramp across a muddy field. My footprints join many others, deer and fox and perhaps badger. Little yellow signs assure me I am on route. My boots are becoming heavier with each step, this is real mud - the kind that sticks in slippery lumps. But away across the fields is a far-reaching view of the valley if I lift my eyes for a moment while picking my way around deep puddles.

Soon I see buildings ahead and then thankfully, the road. This is Shadowbush Farm. Here I turn right. Behind a fenced woodland I get a glimpse of Poslingford House. During World War II a Mustang hit a tree here and crashed into a field killing the pilot, Flying Officer Weston.

I come to a cottage with a mossy thatched roof. Beneath a low window stands a rustic bench. Next is Flax Farmhouse where a black Alsatian sits and watches me with interest. His ears



Sunlit shops in the centre of Clare

pricked forward. I can just see the church and rooftops of Poslingford – a very long way off! And in the far distance is Clare. But I'm on the home stretch now and the road gently takes me down to the village. Before I leave, I visit St Mary's Church with its attractive 15th century red brick porch and 12th century lancet window. Inside is an ancient font – but the door is locked.

Back in Clare I am soon enjoying hot chocolate topped with a generous helping of cream and marshmallows in The Antiques Centre tea room. It's tucked away down Maltings Lane not far from Clare Castle Country Park with the remains of a 13th century stone castle on a high motte. I treat myself to a scone, thick with yellow butter and dollops of strawberry jam. After all, I reckon I've

walked about four miles. I mooch around the antique stands where assorted Royal Doulton Toby Jugs grin at me (£17). In a glass cabinet old rings sparkle; Burmese Rubies and Chocolate Quartz and suspended from nails in the ceiling are chairs, bellows and a birdcage.

You can even buy an antique hippo tooth. I stroll along the High Street pausing to window shop. There are several interesting little shops including 'Hare's Tail' selling garden accessories, nesting boxes and herbs.

I return to my car parked by J.R. Humphreys and Sons, the butchers where you can buy squirrel (£1.50), partridges and pheasants as well as 'Moo and Blue Pies' (beef and Stilton) at £3.95. Squirrel... hmm! Another day perhaps!

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