

# Clare & Cavendish

Clare, a wool village that lies on the north bank of the River Stour between Sudbury and Bury St Edmunds in the South and Heart of Suffolk and voted BT Suffolk Village of the Year 2010, is infused with history and traditional charm. Clare Castle Country Park, the 13th century Priory and Great Gothic Wool Church provide a fascinating background for visitors to the village who will be spoilt for choice in terms of the excellent guesthouses and B&Bs on offer, plus the range of restaurants and cafés.

Cavendish, with its three village pubs, iconic Suffolk Pink cottages and village green, is the perfect place to stop for a picnic; it's time to take a deep breath and be transported back to another age, a gentler age when life moved at a different pace.

## The walk:

This walk links the historic towns of Clare and Cavendish, both picture postcard Suffolk villages. The walk to Cavendish is a gentle, undulating ramble following a section of the long distance footpath, the Stour Valley Path. There are delightful views of the countryside along the route, refreshments are available at the half way point at Houghton Hall, and Cavendish is truly beautiful – don't forget your camera! You return on the same route which in the ever changing Suffolk light offers a different experience every time.

During the centuries prosperous for the cloth trade, nearly every important building in Clare had associations with the cloth industry, from the selling of raw wool to the weaving of broadcloth and later bays, says and linen, to the houses of wealthy clothiers and mercers. The wealth of the town is reflected in the impressive size of the 14th and 15th century parish church of St Peter and St Paul.

### 1 Market Hill

The market dates to before Domesday – wool and woollens were sold there from shops and stalls that once filled the middle (these were pulled down in the 19th century for redevelopment as a pig and poultry market). Wool was also traded at local fairs, including the annual Wentford Fair. The Old Bear & Crown was probably once the 'new' hall owned by William Gilbert and used for wool. There are 17th century drapers' and weavers' shops at 1-2 and 6-8 Market Hill. Old Bank House was once the site of two weavers' cottages, pulled down in the 19th century.

### 2 12-16 Church Street

Owned by the Crispe family, this was the largest mid-17th century bay and say making business with weaving rooms at the rear. They issued tokens, including farthings coined at Clare.

### 3 Callis Street

The name is said to be a corruption of Calais, the compulsory port for all wool exports from the late

14th century; formerly a much wider street, this was a marshalling place for wool carters. Callis Street leads to Common Street and the common.

### 4 High Street

Once called Heigh Row (and possibly forming the western side of the early market), this street has many associations. The Swan was known as 'Quilters' in the 14th century. 'Gilberds' was the former name of 7-13 High Street, a 15th century half-timbered mansion owned by William Gilbert, the largest wool business in the 16th century. Clare Parish Church was known as the wool church in the 14th and 15th centuries. The Ancient House was bought by the important clothier John Fenn.

### 5 Nethergate Street

This has 15th to 18th century associations – including the houses of 15th century clothiers John Horold and John Fenn, and tenements owned by 16th century clothier John Martin. Nethergate House is a late 15th century half-timbered house (altered in the 17th century) which belonged to the Crosse family, important 17th century clothiers – Francis Crosse was an important dissenter. The house was later used as a school, and still later as a hotel. The adjacent house, currently 'Cloth House', was probably a weaving shed; behind is a tenter's yard. White House was the home of late 17th century saymaker Thomas Raymond, and Richmond House belonged to 18th century weaver William Hammond.

### 6 Clare Castle

Once owned by the immensely wealthy de Clare family, who were among the largest landowners in the early 14th century, known to sell wool locally and to London. The de Clares grazed their sheep on the common.

## Trail Details

**Distance:** 11 km / 7 miles

**Duration:** 4-5 hours

**Parking:** Clare Country Park

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