Stoke by Clare Walk – (Walk 18)

This 5 mile circular route takes you along both sides of the Stour valley making use of footpaths and quiet country roads. Most walking surfaces are hard so this could be a walk for the winter. Take Explorer Map 210 Newmarket and Haverhill as your companion.

The 'Lion' public house (07951 066228), in the high street, is open from midday most days.

You may notice waymarks referring to the Stoke-by-Clare Circular Walk. This circuit is described in italics below.

The village is not blessed with obvious parking places so it is best to head for the area around the Village Hall/The Barn. To find this go down the road opposite the 'Lion' pub. and within 25 yards you will find a secretive turning on the left signed to 'The Barn'. If this area is full park in front of the church. To find the Barn from here enter the church grounds and turn left to follow a flint wall through a kissing gate to the road. Turn left and quickly right. These walk directions start from the Barn.

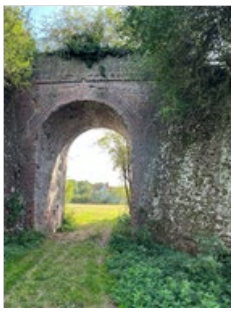
Take the path that runs between the tennis courts and the garden fences until you have the opportunity to turn left on a grassy patch. Swerve between houses and veer left in front of the old village school to reach the main road. Cross the road and head along the left-hand side of the village green. Beside Meridian House, you will spot a finger post. Follow this. You will soon be faced by a large field. Turn left and then right in the corner to follow the path uphill. It is a steady climb but frequent about turns will confirm progress. Ignore the path on the left and continue until you reach a small wood with a seat in front. You can perch for a while and look down on the village. On a clear day you may spot the remains of Clare Castle to the left. Continue beside the little wood until reaching a cross track. Turn left. At the road turn right and follow this round to the left through a series of junctions. Ignore the drive to Stonards Farm and the footpath on the left opposite Sandpit Cottage unless you wish to shorten the route.



[The Stoke by Clare circular walk is slightly shorter and takes you up to the hilltop and big skies area. To follow this, walk up the drive to Stonards Farm, continue along the track skirting the farm and along field edges for some way.

The path will eventually cross a culvert so that the ditch changes from left to right and after another stretch you will see a 'Deer Stalking' sign. Turn right at this point and follow the track gently downhill. Halfway down you will find a welcoming seat overlooking a pond.





Soon after you will meet a road which will take you back to the Stonards Farm junction. This time ignore the turning and head along the road until you find a fingerpost pointing left. Obey this, follow the headlands of three fields and a meadow, climb stiles and pass under a railway bridge. At the main road turn left to head back into the village and car park.]

Continue for some way along the road as it climbs steadily to a height of 85 metres with good views in all directions. Across the valley you will glimpse Baythorne House, in whose grounds you will be in 45 minutes. At the next junction turn left and start a gentle descent. Halfway down you will notice a path coming in from the right which you ignore. This is the Stour Valley Way, which will join you back to the car.

After passing under a disused railway bridge this quiet road eventually reaches the hurly-burly of the A1092. Veer right and carefully cross the bridge over the Stour. Cross the road and join the A1017 in front of the 'Swan'. Turn left and almost immediately veer left through the gates of Baythorne Park. After a while the main drive veers right and the house comes into view on top of the hill. Just before reaching two large concrete balls either side of the main drive the footpath turns left through a waymarked kissing gate. Cattle can sometimes be found in this parkland.

Walk beside a row of trees to find another kissing gate to the right of fenced lakes. Another kissing gate will allow you to follow a path through a copse. Use yet another gate and follow the path along a stretch of headland. Enter a second field over a sleeper bridge and continue ahead still on the headland. You will come to a stile with a Stour Valley Walk waymark. Locals seem to ignore this and continue along the headland and enter a wood at a gentle right hand curve. Beware of significant badger excavations on this stretch. Go through a kissing gate and enter a meadow. Again, cattle are often present. Veer left to join the river and walk alongside until you cross the bridge beside the mill pond. You pass the buildings of Stoke College on the way. Continue through more gates to reach the road. Turn left to find you way back to the village hall.

If you have time to visit the church seize the opportunity. The church of St John the Baptist has one of the smallest pulpits in the land, measuring just 20 inches across, a one-handed clock, and a well preserved doom on the east wall, partly hidden by the organ. You can also read about the 'miser of Ashen'. The Elwes family purchased what is now Stoke College in the 17th Century. John Meggott Elwes, the miser (depicted on the village sign) is reputed to have made incredible economies to save money. He repaired his windows with brown paper, saved fuel in the winter by sitting in the greenhouse, employed only one servant to deal with the whole estate and when travelling avoided turnpikes and public houses. He died at the age of 75 worth £300,000 which he was convinced he could take with him. There are no records to show if he succeeded.

Roger Medley Walked on August 2026