



Circular Walk Series

Originating from and returning to Clare Castle Country Park.

Houghton Hall

Walk No

2

Distance: **5 miles**

Approx Time: **2 hours**

Difficulty: **Intermediate**



CLARE CASTLE
COUNTRY PARK



Circular Walk Series

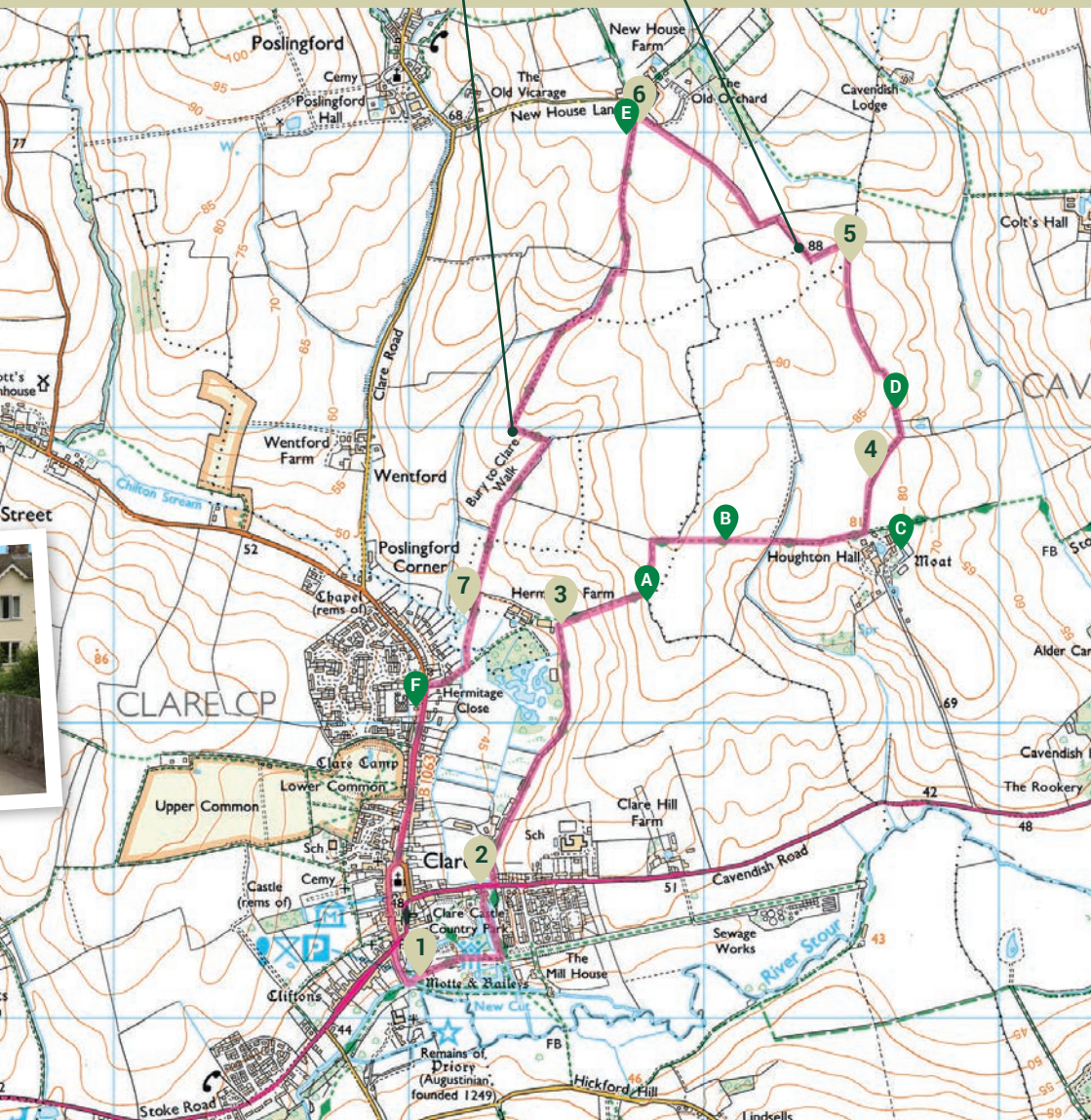
Houghton Hall - Walk 2

This walk takes in views over the Stour Valley, turns north into a rolling landscape where deer and hare are frequently encountered, has wide views over the Suffolk Heights and descends back to Clare along the Bury to Clare Path.

- 1** From the car park take the broad path east past Clare Park Centre and the old Railway Station. Cross a wooden bridge over part of the old moat. Turn left and follow the path with the Chilton Stream to your right. At the end of the path turn right onto a small path with an old cemetery on your left.

- 2** Cross the main road, turning right and then immediately left into Harp Lane. You are now on the Stour Valley Path. Go past the playing field and buildings on your left. Follow the path through a wooded area (care: may be slippery in winter) into a field. At the corner of the field turn right.

- 3** Walk up the hill, keeping the hedge to your left. Just as the path crosses through some scrub, look back over Clare below. Walk through this scrub area and on entering a field turn left. The path turns right at the edge of the field after 200m. Stay on this path until you reach farm buildings on your right hand side. Directly opposite the turning into the farm take the path to your left, keeping the hedge to your right.
- 4** The footpath proceeds slightly downhill. Bear left at a small wood. Keep to the left of the wood and follow the path slightly uphill, picking up another hedge to the right after 300m.
- 5** After 600m, at a corner, turn left, uphill, and follow the path through an opening on your right. Follow the path downhill. At the bottom of the hill turn left for about 100m and then right, going uphill. Follow this path, curving left, to the top of New House Lane.
- 6** As the field entrance approaches, turn left, keeping the hedge to your right; you are now on the Bury to Clare Path. Follow this track to the next corner. From this point there are wide views of Clare below.
- 7** Continue south down the hill. The track kinks left then right as it descends. At the point where the track turns left towards Hermitage Farm, proceed straight ahead along a narrow stretch of footpath, beside a fence to the left. Cross the stile and the small field to the next stile. Walk beside the Chilton Stream for 80m and join Hermitage Farm Lane, turning right over the Chilton Stream and, after 150m, left into Snow Hill for the walk back into the centre of Clare and the Country Park.





Points of interest

Houghton Hall - Walk 2

This walk is primarily on gently undulating land that was forested in pre-historic times (by the 16C only 5% of Suffolk was forested). Medieval farmsteads were mostly located on the shoulders of hills, usually near springs that are now seen as ponds. After the agricultural depression of the later 19C, with large numbers of workers leaving the land, the second half of the 20C saw an acceleration in large-scale arable farming. Surviving field boundaries are generally medieval. The walk can be muddy in winter so allow extra time and wear suitable footwear.

- A** The top of the hill behind Hermitage Farm provides excellent views back to Clare. The ancient earthworks on Clare Common can be seen clearly to the right of the Town.
- B** The section of path between Hermitage Farm and Houghton Hall forms part of the 60 mile Stour Valley Path and offers outstanding views of the Valley.
- C** Houghton Hall is a Grade II listed building dating from the 16C. A moat was added later as a status symbol. The site is mentioned in the Domesday Book as Hoketona.
- D** After Houghton Hall the views across the valley to Colts Hall, a 16C manor house, reveal faint earthworks believed to be Norman in origin.
- E** At New House Farm there are excellent views looking south across the Stour Valley and beyond. Beware, the footpath sign back to Clare is regularly obscured at this point (the path is to the left (eastern) side of the hedge): the path from here back to Clare forms part of the 19 mile Bury to Clare walk that is often used for fund-raising walks and runs.
- F** The area that is now Hermitage Close/Townend/The Hollow was the site of the Jarvis brickyard that opened in 1815. A small gauge railway crossed the road to the kilns on the west side for the clay from the digs to the East. The kilns were closed in 1916 because their light might attract bombing by Zeppelins.



Wildlife that may be seen includes:

buzzard, goldfinch, hare, muntjac, partridge, pheasant, roe deer, skylark, yellowhammer.

Crops: barley, beet, broad bean, oats, wheat, occasional stands of sweetcorn (for pheasant shoots). Good pickings of sloes and blackberries can be found in the hedgerows in early autumn.



© Crown copyright and database rights 2016 Ordnance Survey 0100053149. You are permitted to use this data solely to enable you to respond to, or interact with, the organisation that provided you with the data. You are not permitted to copy, sub-licence, distribute or sell any of this data to third parties in any form.