

Bures Walks 8: Lodge Hills, out through Suffolk, Home through Essex

- about 7k



Enter Claypits Avenue from Nayland Road. After a few yards, cross a small footbridge into a field and follow the permissive path ahead, hedge on right. When you reach the road at the foot of Clicket Hill, cross carefully to follow the green track ahead (not the gravel one to its right). Go through a kissing gate, cross a cattle drove (not a right-of-way) and through a second gate. Continue ahead with a sewage works to your left.

Emerging into a field continue ahead along a bank, turning right at the next corner to drop down to a further kissing gate. Once through turn left and follow the hedge on your left. Entering a further field head for the gates ahead, one either side of a drive, and pass through them.

Beyond the drive go ahead for a few yards to cross a stream, and then bear left towards a large oak which you leave to your left. At the field edge bear right, and follow the hedge on your left until you find another kissing gate almost at the field's end. Pass through, turn right, and right again onto the road.

Ahead of you is Smallbridge Hall, and your path follows the drive, but to the left of it, bearing left in front of the magnificent house, and bearing right at the limit of its garden to take you to the riverbank with a lovely view towards Lodge Hills.

Continue to follow the field edge, away from the river. To your right you will see the indentation of the old canal, Swan Cut, that bypassed Wormingford Mill, taking barges through two locks. A few remains of one of these timber structures can be seen lying in the cut at the point where a road approaches on the other side. Continue ahead until you reach the road, and turn right onto a small bridge. On the other side of the bridge are the scant remains of the second lock.

Looking ahead from the bridge you will see an opening into a field. From this opening a public footpath crosses, bearing diagonally right to the far corner. Unfortunately this path is not always properly maintained by the landowner, but the more we use it the clearer it will become, so head boldly for the right hand end of the white-railed bridge you can see in the distance. If crossing is too challenging, just return to the road and follow it round to the bridge.

Here you move from Suffolk into Essex, and the arms of each County are carved into the uprights of the structure. Once across, turn right into the grounds of Wormingford Mill. This is a private

residence, but with a public right of way through its garden, so please proceed quietly with care and respect, and with any dogs under strict control. There may be dogs loose in the garden – noisy, but from my experience harmless!

Walk directly ahead, in front of the house, and on reaching a lawn continue across to a gate into a field. Follow the same line across the field towards some gnarled oaks, and on reaching them bear slightly left into a further field. Here a track leads uphill, and many people use this to reach the summit of Lodge Hills, though the true line of path continues ahead, following the field side, hedge and ditch on left, round and up until a spring is reached, at which point the path strikes right towards the hilltop.

However you have reached this point, before passing through the nearby kissing gate look for the information board on the further hill brown for information about the historic hunting lodge which once stood here..

After passing through the kissing gate, follow the fence on your right to a further one and go through it. The path weaves downhill to yet another kissing gate, and then on across fields, touching the trees surrounding Wormingford Mere to the right. Cross a track at the bottom, and head across the next vast field towards what looks like a black barn. At the further field-edge go through a gap, and continue ahead, hedge on right.

You soon reach the barn-like building which is actually a pumping station. So is the incongruous grey industrial lump you see ahead to your left. Two different planning authorities, one due pride and the other shame!

Leaving the first pumping station to your right, continue across the next field in the same direction, and then follow a field side, hedge on right. Cross a narrow strip of land to a footbridge and gate with the cottage, Long Gardens, to your left.

You now cross two meadows, going from one wooden kissing gate to another, and eventually bear slightly right to a metal kissing gate just beyond Bures Mill.

Here pass through the gate, cross a footbridge, and follow the path across what was once another of the navigation's locks. Leave the mill to your right, join the drive, and follow it back to the walk's start.

If you find any of these directions inaccurate, or encounter any problems, please let me know at hughturner447@gmail.com. Thank you.