



SUFFOLK DOG WALKS

Olive, the Australian Labradoodle, leads the way with owner, Sara Green, and writer Lindsay Want, in tow



WIGGLY WALLS & WAGGING TAILS

An enjoyable set of circular walks around historic Letheringham and Easton down near the River Deben

Apparently Australian Labradoodles can attempt to outsmart their owners, if left untrained. At just 15 months, that's probably why an astute, colourful character-of-a-pup like Olive Green finds herself taking most walks on a rather short lead. A dog's life perhaps, but she's happy to go with the flow. Although on her favourite home-territory walk from Easton near Wickham Market, the

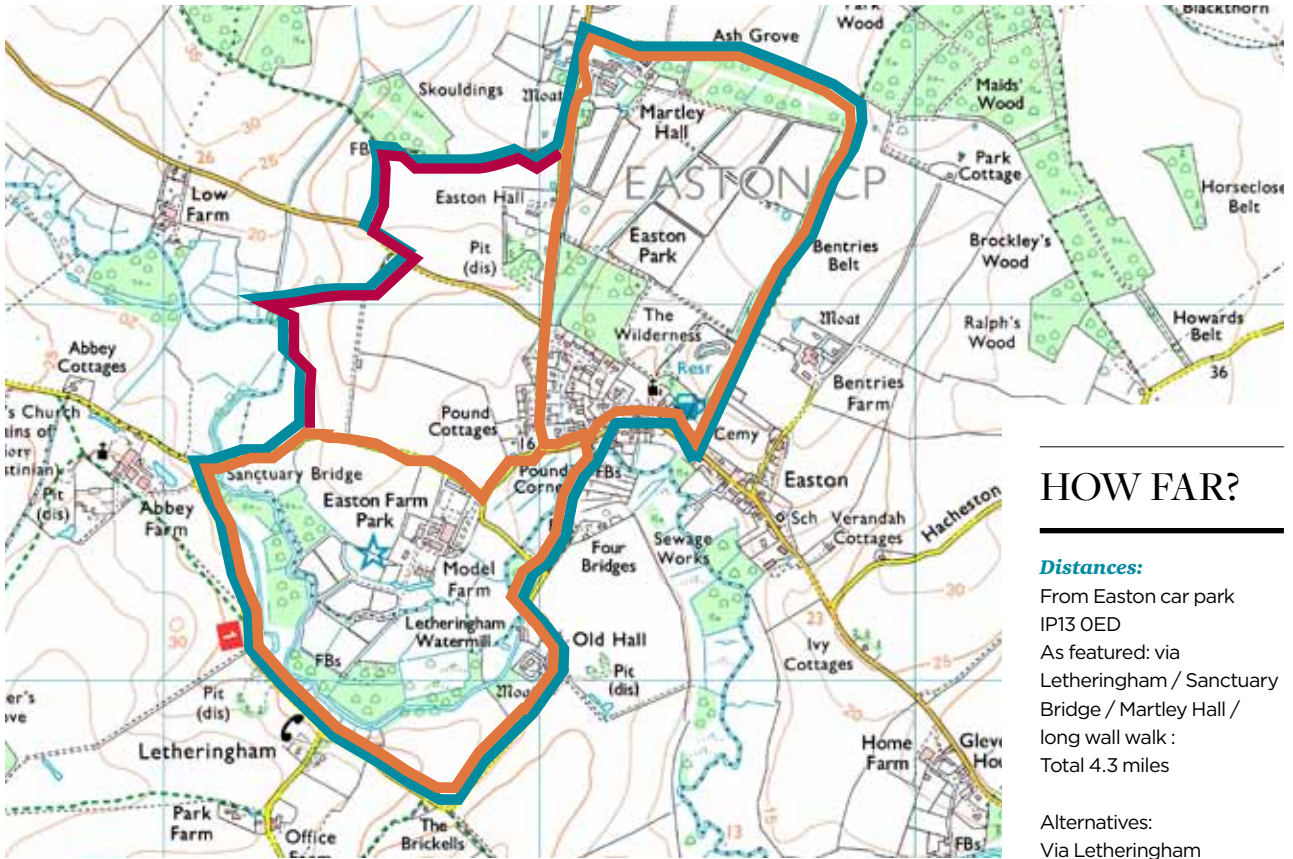
much-loved route does quite the opposite.

Somewhere behind Easton's car park, the River Deben heads down towards Woodbridge, meandering like the village's famous 2.5 mile crinkle-crinkle wall. Today, though, we'll stroll upstream.

With a leap of doggy faith, excited Olive is out of the car and soon enjoying being made a fuss of by a fellow walking companion in waiting.

"Please, just ignore her," owner Sara tries to insist, but Labradoodles are born communicators and amidst the nuzzling cuddles, those big, brown, pleading puppy-dog eyes look up and seem to say exactly the same.

Leader of the pack, Sara, gives her short shrift and (eventually) a short leash, throwing me a cheeky, "See? I'm in charge really" sort of smile, together with the map. Not that we'll be



HOW FAR?

Distances:

From Easton car park IP13 OED
 As featured: via Letheringham / Sanctuary Bridge / Martley Hall / long wall walk : Total 4.3 miles

Alternatives:
 Via Letheringham - Sanctuary Bridge - Martley Hall - shorter wall walk to Easton: 3 miles
 Easton 'Figure of 8': total 4.25 miles
 Letheringham Loop only: 2.25 miles
 Easton 'Round-the-Wall' Loop only: 2.75 miles

Parking: Free public car park at The Street, Easton IP13 OED

Map OS: Explorer 212

Terrain: pavements, quiet lanes, wide grassy verges, field edge public footpaths, fairly flat

Local vets: Saxon Vets (Wickham Market) T: 01728 747427

Ts and Ps: Easton White Horse

LEFT:
Olive catches up with Uncle Ted

BELOW:
New friends to be made en route

needing it Olive's already keenly leading the way towards the picture-perfect cottages by the nearby village green.

Easton's an eccentrically quaint place – a Victorian Duchess' muse, funded by her wealthy Scots husband, William the 12th Duke of Hamilton. Little interested in his Suffolk estate, save for its country sports potential, he kept his wife happy by building a fashionable 'merrie olde England' just outside the

18th century serpentine wall of their vast, 27-bedroom mansion. It was half-timbered cottages, thatched roundhouses, a model farm and his licence to play steamships off distant shores.

On the triangle of green near Easton All Saints' octagonal tower, Olive cocks a snook at the hunting hounds on the village sign and pulls us over to a favourite bench. She jumps up to take pride of place, then thoughtfully moves along so her



two-legged friends can catch up a while, enjoy the view and make important pub plans for later.

Then it's off down the footpath beside the kennels, where the young pup sniffs at the home of the Hamilton Bloodhounds and turns to her own pack-leader for reassurance.

We cross over the Deben, only to be confronted by a second, distinctly narrower bridge. Firmly at heel, Olive takes it in her stride.

Down the fenced primrose path, past lambs, an old dovecote and as we turn left along the lane, she stays close, until by Letheringham Mill's white weather-boarded gantry, something instinctively stops her in her tracks. "Ah, we're home," explains Sara. "This is where her sister, Lola, lives with mum, Amber."

The gates swing open at the press of an intercom button and Olive has the green light to be let off the leash.

Letheringham Mill turns out to be not just a home, but an absolute home-from-home. The Grade II listed mill dating from 1740 together with its mainly 19th century outbuildings have been beautifully restored and converted into a handful of dream Deben-side self-catering cottages.



'The pleasant footpath stroll has plenty of scratch and sniff potential . . . open to fields in parts, alongside paddocks in others, home to wildlife, sheep. . .'

Clearly packed full of first-class creature comforts, they've won all sorts of awards for being not only luxury pads for people, but for their pooches too. To a young pup unleashed, it's a super-sociable place full of exciting smells and potential new playmates.

With a skittish sort of scamper, a small terrier-type escapes from

'The Woodshed' to run rings around our Olive and share a spot of communal tail-wagging. A happy little holiday-maker if ever there was one, he's just about to propose a snout about the wonderful garden terraces and ancient meadows, when white and wise English Labradoodle, 'Uncle' Ted, steps in.

A respectful, yet appropriately

ABOVE:
Up and over the Deben in Easton

BELOW:
Country ways by Sanctuary Bridge



frollicsome family hello later, Sara calls visiting time to a close. Olive scoots off – possibly to tell the terrier to look out for the new Letheringham Mill walk she’s test-driving – then happily takes up the lead again.

Beyond moated Old Hall and a brief encounter with Jack Russell near the Mill’s old grindstone on Letheringham’s tiny green. Past poplar-lined water-meadows and a right turn over Sanctuary Bridge, our faithful guide hesitates and looks longingly left up a field-margin footpath. Those big, brown, pleading puppy eyes are up to their old tricks again.

‘Mum’ and map-reader decide it’s dry enough to edge the hedge, the Deben and follow the footpaths up over Kettleburgh Road to meet Easton’s crinkle-crankle wall near Martley Hall – not quite as firm-under-paw as the figure of eight walk via the village, but hey.

Nose down, tail up, Olive is clearly delighted, and so are we as we look back over the river towards Letheringham’s historic priory church. The last stretch to the right of the footbridge is wide, grassy and popular with dog walkers. The wiggly wall has a wide, grassy roadside verge too, but Olive’s soon pulling us down a footpath which keeps its wiggles firmly by our side.

Sadly, the Duchess’ stately Queen Anne pile is nowhere to be seen, even when a crumbling crinkle or crankle permits view into the old park.

Demolished in 1924, only the stables by the church survive. But the pleasant footpath stroll has plenty of scratch and sniff potential (and a ‘dogs on leads please’ notice). It’s open to fields in parts, alongside paddocks in others, home to wildlife, sheep and what Ozzie Olive sees as daunting, but equally as auburn and exotic as she is, alpacas. They seem similarly intrigued but Olive keeps her distance until silent mutual stares mellow and canine concentration times out. After all, it’s only a few more wall wiggles to a full water-bowl and dog biscuits down on the pub terrace.

Turning the other auburn cheek, she’s off, with a wag of the tail and leading her two hanger-on-ers behind her.



SUFFOLK DOG WALKS IN ASSOCIATION WITH LEATHERINGHAM MILL

We just love this month’s walk, not least because we feature in it but more importantly because we are always asked by our guests for directions for a good (dog friendly) walk nearby.

And most of our guests appreciate a pub visit during or after their amble, so this ticks all the boxes.

Letheringham and Easton are such beautiful English villages. This time of year usually sees the annual village fete, although this year will be different, and there is nothing more English than a mix mash of different sized tents selling all sorts of goodies on the village green against the backdrop of the church and the crinkle crankle wall.

Easton and Letheringham sometimes appear lost in time, they provide a place of peace and escape in a world that may still be full of chaos and worry.

We do wish you all as peaceful a June as possible. ♦

Jacqui Fairey and Richard Gooding

Letheringham Water Mill, Hall Road, Letheringham, Woodbridge, IP13 7RE

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