



## SUFFOLK DOG WALKS

**Mike Trippitt** is a journalist who enjoys exploring the county, especially with his clumber spaniel, Farley

# Along the Beeching way

A circular stroll from Aldeburgh to Thorpeness, via the old, disused railway line is perfect for early autumn

In 2003, Maggi Hambling's Scallop was installed on Aldeburgh beach. It divided townsfolk. Walking north along the shingle beach towards Thorpeness, with wife Clare and dog Farley, I wonder what, 16 years ago, the fuss was all about. The sublime sculpture is now as much a part of Aldeburgh's seafront as the blackened fishermen's huts, lifeboat station and the lookouts.

Today, we plan to walk from here, round and through Thorpeness, taking in parts of the Thorpeness North Walk and South Walk, as well as short sections of The Suffolk Coast

Path and Sandlings Walk.

We have brought our trusty Ordnance Survey map. Public footpaths (where eyes are instinctively drawn when studying an OS Explorer) have to be treated with caution. Although they denote a right of way they can undo the unwary. How often have we followed the green broken lines only to find some all-consuming quagmire or perilous ravine standing in our way?

But dismantled railways are different. A magnet for dog walkers, cyclist and strollers, the trails left in the wake of Beeching's Axe are sheltered and safe, with nothing more taxing

**RIGHT:** Walkers enjoy the autumn sunshine as the path merges with the Sandlings Walk towards Thorpeness

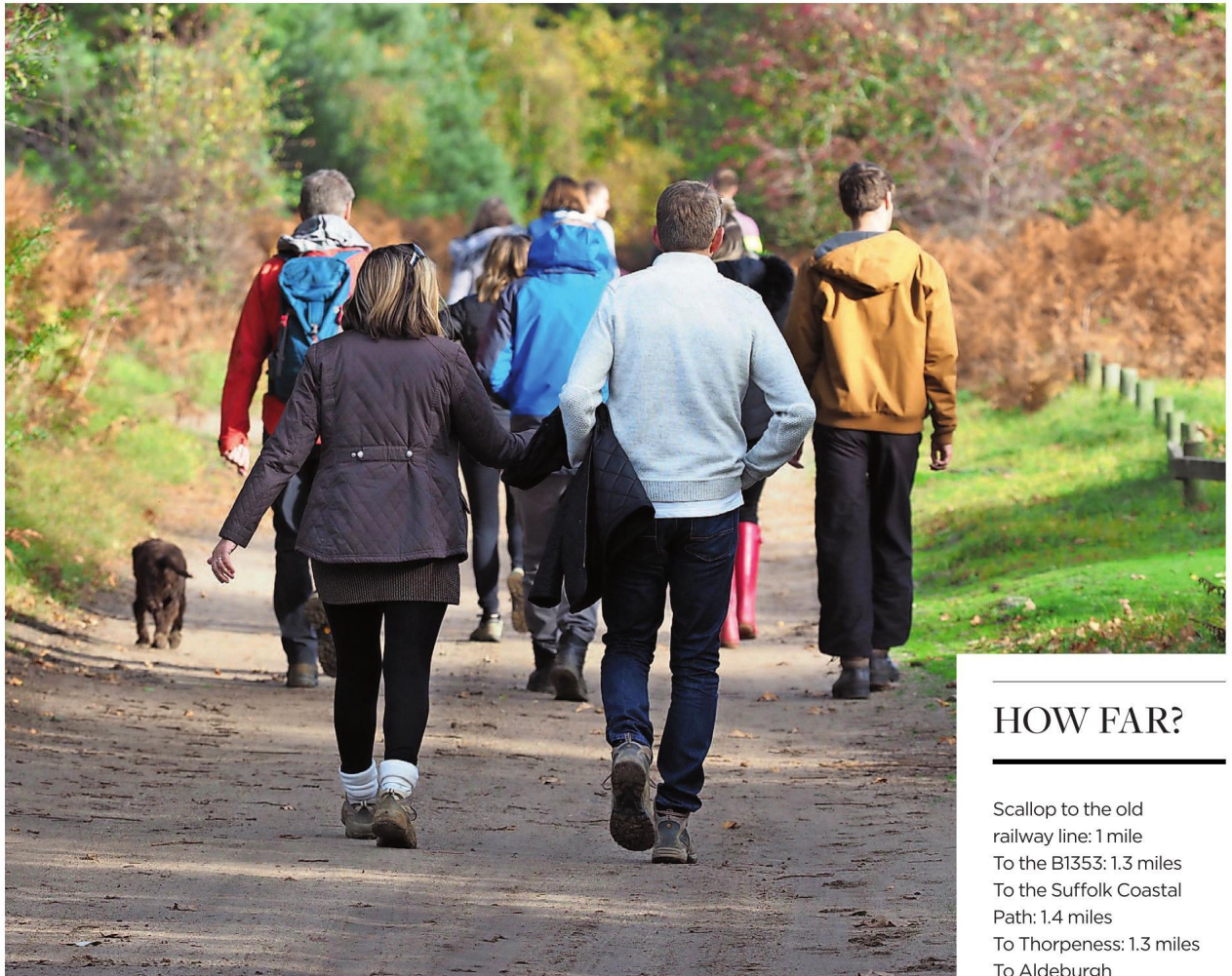
than gentle inclines. Perfect places to walk. So after half a mile of beach and dunes, we turn inland, cross the road and follow the path towards the disused Saxmundham to Aldeburgh branch line of the London and North Eastern Railway.

Flanked by pines, copses and bracken-lined margins, the permissive footpath travels north towards Thorpeness. Sheltered from the wind, it feels much warmer than the beach path.

We pass several people walking dogs. It's clearly a popular spot. South of Thorpeness our path merges with Sandlings Walk, before it flirts with the western

**BELOW:** No trains today, the disused Saxmundham to Aldeburgh branch line of the London and North Eastern Railway





## HOW FAR?

Scallop to the old railway line: 1 mile  
 To the B1353: 1.3 miles  
 To the Suffolk Coastal Path: 1.4 miles  
 To Thorpeness: 1.3 miles  
 To Aldeburgh (Scallop): 1.6 miles  
 Total: 6.6 miles

shore of Thorpeness Meare on its way north to Sizewell. After a mile-and-a-quarter, and close to the B1353, a concrete station platform lies derelict among trees and the fallen leaves of autumn. Thorpeness Halt opened in 1914 to serve the new visitors to the developing resort. But with war intervening and use falling

short of expectations, the little station never grew from the three converted railway carriages that housed its essentials. Like 2,362 other rural stations, it was recommended for closure by Dr Beeching and fell silent on September 12 1966.

Across the road the former railway line and footpath pass to the right of a bungalow. The eighth tee of Thorpeness Golf Course is to the left. Our path swings northeast towards the Sizewell Hall estate, owned by the Ogilvie family since 1859. It was there that Thorpeness was conceived. "Glencairn Stuart Ogilvie was my great-grandfather," says 71-year-old Stuart Ogilvie. "He was the seventh of eight children." Glencairn, he explains, inherited his parents' Suffolk land, and his vision for Thorpeness was born.

"Glencairn started the development of Thorpeness around 1910. One of the first things that was opened in 1912 was what is now the country club. The Meare was started in 1911 and opened in 1913.

"He had this dream of creating a holiday village, where there was something for everyone. He was a great believer in the great outdoors,

The Thorpeness North Walk and South Walk guide can be downloaded at [discoversuffolk.org.uk](http://discoversuffolk.org.uk)

Local vets  
 Leiston Veterinary Clinic  
 1D Eastlands Road  
 Eastlands Industrial Estate  
 Leiston IP16 4LL  
 T: 01728 833566

Fromus Veterinary Group  
 Street Farm Road,  
 Saxmundham IP17 1DU  
 T: 01728 602599

Ryder-Davies & Partners  
 Walnut Tree Avenue  
 Rendlesham IP12 2GG  
 T: 01394 420964



The Scallop is a landmark on Aldeburgh beach





The House in the Clouds basks in autumn sunlight

encouraging people to get outside.”

The Sandlings Walk touches the edge of Sizewell Hall, but our path onto the cliff line and back towards Thorpeness follows a small section of the Suffolk Coast Path. Thorpeness is like no other place in Suffolk, some would say like no place on Earth. While the world has changed enormously since the resort was created, Thorpeness has moved on just enough to keep itself comfortable during its timeless snooze.

At The Dolphin, the village’s only pub, we enjoy our lunch and a pint or two in the dog-friendly bar, while being served by most welcoming staff.

Although Thorpeness nestles in a duned landscape and salty air, it has freshwater coursing its veins. The Meare, a man-made lake, was and remains a safe environment for children to learn to sail and row. Many of the rowing boats, so popular today, are of the original 1913 fleet. “Great Grandfather certainly loved the Meare,” says Stuart Ogilvie. “He was great friends with J M Barrie. Peter Pan had a definite influence. One of the things we have tried to do with the Meare is not change it. So many people come back and say that it is just how they remember it 30 or 40 years ago.

After taking Farley back on the beach (there is a May to September restriction of no dogs on a small section of Thorpeness beach, otherwise it is dog friendly) our stroll back to the Scallop among fellow walkers is a delight. Autumn’s crisp afternoon and low sunlight has attracted scores to the seaside.

Today really is a reminder that a stroll on the Suffolk coast is fulfilling at any time of year, providing we pick our day and our clothing wisely. Autumn hues, dark long shadows and a fresh breeze have made our visit as rewarding as one in the midsummer heat. ♦



## IN ASSOCIATION WITH LEATHERINGHAM MILL COTTAGES

It’s wonderful to see another lovely dog walk in *Suffolk* magazine this month. We do enjoy telling all our guests here at Letheringham Mill about the walks around us and the dog-friendly places in the county. Suffolk has become even more dog-friendly over the last few years and providing really good dog-friendly accommodation is so important to us. It’s not enough to be ‘dog-tolerant’ – we aim to be truly dog-friendly. Dogs are allowed to wander free in our secure 7 acres of grounds and gardens. Our four, self-catering, gold star awarded cottages are designed with both luxury and practicality in mind, and if your four legged friend decides to jump in the river and then rush into the house, it won’t be the end of the world! Taking your dogs on holiday can sometimes be complicated but we do all we can to ensure a stay with us is as easy as possible. We provide

guests with information and ideas about dog-friendly days out as well as providing sumptuous doggy welcome packs that include a bed, blanket, towel, treats, bowl and more. This month we are suggesting to guests that they enjoy a family day out at Easton Farm Park, which is walking distance from us, where dogs (on leads) are made very welcome. As Autumn approaches what could be more seasonal than a dog walk followed by lunch by the fire in one of our fabulous local pubs. The Duck in Campsea Ashe is becoming a firm favourite.

Happy October!

Jacqui Fairey and Richard Gooding

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Jacqui Fairey and Richard Gooding, of Letheringham Mill. Photo: Suzanne Fossey