

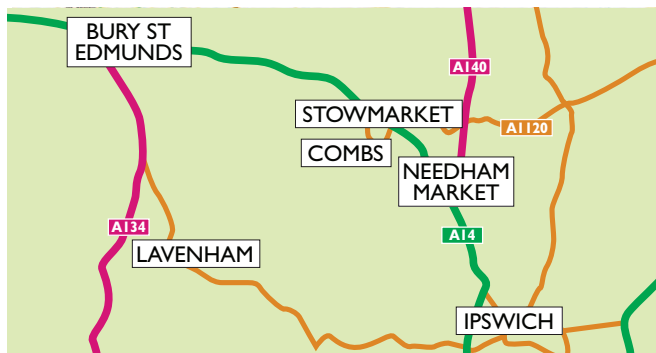
Introduction

Only a short step away from busy modern life, this walk will take you to an almost forgotten world of rural tranquillity in the heart of Suffolk. Step back in time in this treasured piece of Suffolk countryside with ancient lanes, historic churches, traces of grand gardens and the ghosts of the great houses that sat within them.



This walk connects the impressive St Marys Church, Combs with the delightful St Marys Church, Badley. Between the two are lovely views across the broad Gipping Valley. As you gently rise and fall in height – wandering along sunken lanes one moment, gazing across the landscape the next – discover the historic landscape, the people that have influenced it and the origins of intriguing place-names; Holyoak, Halfpenny, Pennyplot.

The walk is a mixture of on and off-road paths mainly using quiet lanes and public rights of way. There is one short section of pavement along the busy Stowmarket Road (B1113), although this could be avoided by taking a short cut at Badley Church. There are some stiles to climb over but overall this is a very easy walk through some undulating landscape with good views and many fascinating stories.



Combs lies on the south side of Stowmarket. In Stowmarket, take the Needham Road exit (signed for Combs Ford) off the Gipping Way/Needham Road (A1308) roundabout. In the one way system at the Magpie Pub, turn left into Poplar Hill, signed for Combs. Turn into Church Road, signed for St Mary's Church. Parking is available along Church Road (see inside for a more detailed map).

Public Transport

Public transport is available to Combs. Visit www.suffolkonboard.com for timetables or www.travelineeastanglia.org.uk (0871 200 22 33) to plan your journey

Use O.S. Explorer Map 211 Bury St Edmunds & Stowmarket to enjoy this walk.

Treasured Suffolk

Treasured Suffolk are a series of walks based on archaeological finds and historic sites around the county. Each walk starts in a town or village, where you can find local shops or pubs for refreshments. Each of the walks can be downloaded from Suffolk County Council's Discover Suffolk website.

Discover many more walks and rides and great days out in the countryside at www.discover Suffolk.org.uk



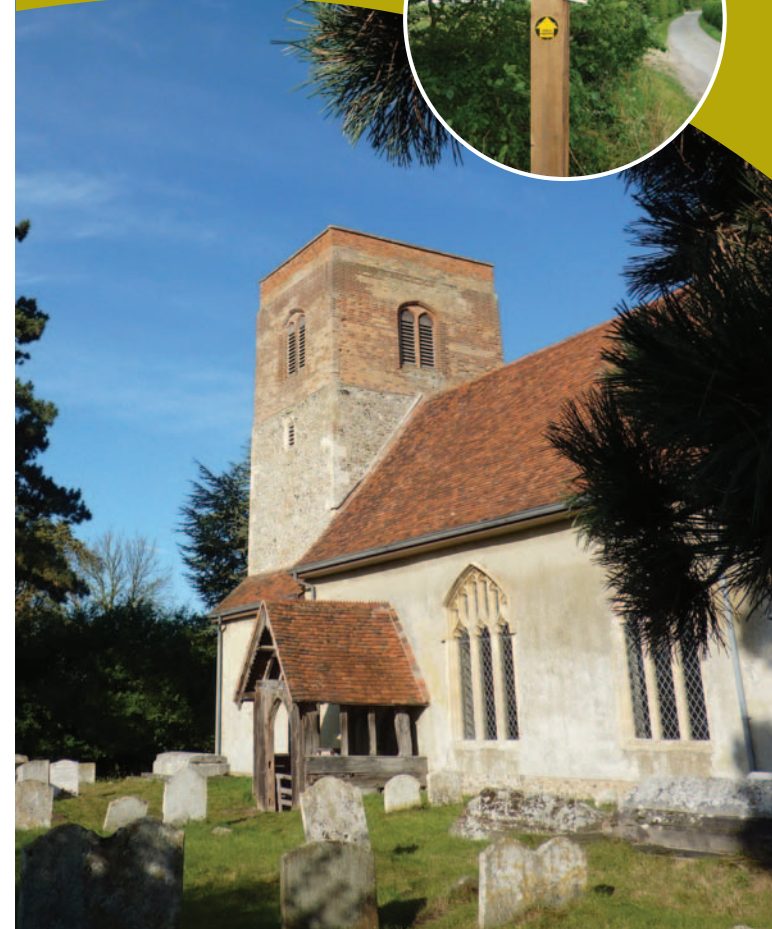
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Treasured Suffolk Combs & Badley

An Enchanted World
of Lost Halls and
Remote Churches



Treasured Suffolk

Combs and Badley

Distance: 5 miles (8km)

Time: 3-4 hours

Terrain: Slightly undulating, easy to gentle

Park along Church Road before the road narrows.

The walk starts near St Marys Church, Combs, hidden in a little valley to the south of Combs Ford. The two hillsides that flank the church site are the 'combs' or crests that give rise to the place-name.

Follow Church Road, past the Parish Cemetery and Church Meadow Local Nature Reserve, along a tarmac drive towards Holyoak Farm, picking up the footpath around the left of the Farm.

1 Holyoak Farm

A tale recorded in 1897 recounts that in former times a Bible was chained to a 'venerable tree' near this 16th-century house 'and that people used to assemble there at night to hear it read'. Recorded as Holy Oak in 1710, it is Hollow Oake in 1667 and Holleoke in 1598, suggesting that other explanations may be possible!

Go over the stile, turn right and follow the footpath signs to the lane at Halfpenny Cottage. At Pennyplot House the lane becomes a track.

2 Halfpenny Hall and Pennyplot Farm



So-named in 1885, these are probably joke names for narrow house plots beside the lane. Across the field to the right you can glimpse the tiny hamlet of Little London – another joke name.

The open arable landscape to the right of the lane was the Great Park of Badley Hall in 1741 and a continuation of Badley Walk ran through it and terminated on this lane.

Continue along this track until you reach the pond at the entrance to Badley Green Farm. Go though the iron gate on to your left in to the fenced grassland which is Badley Green.

3 Badley Green

Still grazed by sheep, this remote and tiny medieval green, now only has one farmhouse on its margin, which dates from 16th-century.

Exit the green, turn left, and follow the lane to Church Green and Badley Church.



4 St. Mary's Church, Badley

Set within a peaceful green, this is a visual and atmospheric delight. It dates from around 1200 (see the south doorway), but was much rebuilt in the 15th century (including windows and tower base – the brick top is 16th century). It can be locked, but if you get an opportunity, the interior, largely untouched since the 18th century, has wonderful silvery woodwork and is full of monuments to the Poley family of Badley Hall. It was virtually their private chapel and housed a chantry from the 1490s down to the Reformation. The large monument that dominates the church exterior commemorates a sister-in-law of the owner of the Hall – Henrietta Maria Robins (d.1728).

At this point you can short cut the walk by 2 miles (3km) by going round the back of the church, past the broad grassy expanse of Badley Walk (it is well worth exploring this to the top of the rise for views back to Badley Church and Hall), and then follow directions from Badley Hall 7.

If keeping to the walk, from the church, follow the track uphill and to the right onto Badley Lane.

5 Badley Hill

This takes you on to Badley Hill, with good views over the broad Gipping Valley. The area to your right was the manorial coneyfer or rabbit warren.

Walking on you reach the Stowmarket Road (B1113). Cross the road with care, turn left, and follow the pavement to the entrance to Badley Walk on the left side (there is a bus stop and post box nearby). Re-cross the road to enter Badley Walk. Past the modern houses the Walk becomes a woodland path.



Combs and Badley

An Enchanted World of Lost Halls and Remote Churches



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0km SCALE 1km
0.5mile

6 Badley Walk

Almost a mile long, this was originally an ornamental straight avenue leading from the road to the front of Badley Hall. This dramatic landscape feature was probably constructed by the Poley family in the 17th century, but is first recorded on a map of 1741. The woodland path eventually turns into a path down the middle of the open grassland of a wide and long 'avenue' that leads all the way down to Badley Hall and the rear of Badley Church.



7 Badley Hall

A magnificent courtyard-plan house of the early 16th-century originally formed the focus of Badley Walk, but only a half of one of its sides survives – the door on the right was originally in the middle of the west range. Its

builder, Edmund Poley (1485-1548) is commemorated on a wall monument in the church. The last Edmund Poley (1655-1714) was a diplomat who served as an ambassador at many of the courts of Europe. On his death the Hall passed to a nephew, Richard Gipps, who sold it in 1735 to the Crowley family of London, who already had a Suffolk seat at Barking Hall. Badley Hall was surplus to their requirements and much of it was dismantled and sold in 1759.

Turn right behind the church and take the footpath through the hedge, over a small wooden bridge and across a small field. Continue to Sallow Grove, at the fingerpost turn left along a field edge, and at the next field boundary turn right to Combs Wood. Up the side of the wood enter through a gate and after a very short distance, take the straight ride on your left. This ride will bring you to a circular pond close to the edge of the wood.

8 Combs Wood

This ancient wood, (Combys Haye in 1598) belonged to the lords of the manor of Combs, but is now managed by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust. The ride through the wood is part of the long axis (extending over half a mile) of the early 18th-century gardens of Combs Hall and the round pond matches another round pond on Church Meadow, both being the same distance from Combs Hall.

Exit the wood and continue ahead across the field to the stile to enter grassland to the rear of Combs Church.

9 Combs Hall and its garden earthworks

The stile lands you on a long grassed terrace and before you, descending the slope, are further earthworks of a large formal garden that was laid out in the 1720s for Orlando Bridgeman (1680-1731) of Combs Hall. Orlando also replaced the original hall by a new, grander one that lay at the mid point of his garden. Unfortunately, his ambitions outstripped his finances and after his death his son was forced to sell the Hall (described as 'new built in a beautiful manner'). The purchasers were again the Crowley family and in 1756

most of it was demolished, saving a small service range at the rear (the present Combs Hall), the materials being advertised for sale 'very cheap' in the Ipswich Journal. The site of the Hall is just above the field boundary at the base of the slope. The flat grassed area beyond the hedge-line was the forecourt to the house and was divided from the meadow in front by magnificent iron gates and railings – also sold in 1756.



Follow the path to the next stile which brings you into the churchyard of St Mary's Church, Combs.

10 St Mary's Church, Combs

Unlike Badley, this is a large and grand church, with its 14th-century tower so close to the churchyard boundary that it had to have doorways in its base to allow processions to circle the church. Above the doorway is a shield with the arms of the Ufford family, earls of Suffolk and lords of the manor of Combs in the 14th century. The grand brick porch on the south side was the entrance from the Hall but is now bricked up; the entrance to the church is now through a less grand wooden porch on the north side. Inside the chief glory is the 15th-century stained glass in the south aisle. This was blown in by the blast from an explosion at the Prentice gun cotton factory in Stowmarket in 1871, but the fragments were rescued and re-set – you will see scenes from the Life of St Margaret, the family tree of Christ and the Seven Works of Mercy (coming at the end of the walk, note with gratitude that they include food for the hungry and drink for the thirsty).



Go through the churchyard and left along the tarmac track across Church Meadow.

11 Church Meadow

Now a Local Nature Reserve, this was formerly a continuation of Orlando Bridgeman's garden. It contains one of his round ponds and beyond it is his great rectangular 'basin' or lake with an earthwork dam at its north end; this glimmering sheet of water has been replaced by marshland, but in compensation orchids now flourish within it. He also straightened and dammed the adjacent small stream to produce an ornamental 'canal', but this too has returned to nature and his continuation of the garden as a broad tree-lined avenue that reached to the skyline on Poplar Hill has been lost under modern houses.

Continue past Church Meadow to Church Road, where you started your walk.