



" On a breezy bright June afternoon, we took the following walk from St Mary's Church, Aldham near Hadleigh in East Suffolk - off Aldham Church Lane.

Aldham is a small hamlet north of Hadleigh leading off the road to Elmsett Airfield. Access is from the A1071 Ipswich/Hadleigh road and taking the Elmsett Airfield lane after which is a turning signed for Aldham Church.

Parking by the church was easy for a few cars between a mediaeval farmhouse and its old barns.

A notice on the gate told us that at this time of year dogs need to be on the lead as the farm is worked to the highest environmental farming standards to promote farmland birds and wildlife.



St. Mary's church - still in use - was already old in the 11th century and recorded in the Domesday Book as: 'Aldham. Abbot of St. Edmund's and Berard from him; Aubrey de Vere. Church, 2 Mills, Priory remains.'



In fact a necklace of priories runs along this stream - the next closest being Hintlesham Priory - and there are remains of mediaeval stew ponds for fish still clearly visible today all along the valley floor.

Inside this church we found some very ancient mediaeval benches of great beauty and antiquity and the church has a 14th century Kingpost roof.



The setting of this church can only be described as jewel-like raised as it is on a mount above the valley floor. This small flint round towered church is thought to date back to 1340 with the circular west tower having an 11th/12th century base with some 13th century tracery. The lower part of the tower is thought to be Norman with remains of Saxon stonework found in the walls and window dressings.

We walked along a field path on the flat valley floor past the church mount and came across a 3-way Bridleway sign post beside an old stile - not now in use.

Amid clouds of butterflies and moths and with skylarks singing overhead we continued along this track towards woodland passing clear arrows and signs in a gateway at the end of this field where we could have followed the footpath up hill and circled to re-join our original route although we turned back and retraced our steps - all of which probably took us about 1 hour at slow ambling pace!

At one of the gateways there is a map showing Permissive Footpaths and Public Footpaths and Bridle ways so there are several longer options than the route we took.



No traffic sound could be heard anywhere on this walk.

This is a secret place and as the only other walker said to me in passing "one doesn't believe that places like this still exist" and she is right.

It is worth noting that at this location you are only about 4 miles from mediaeval Lavenham -

a place of great charm with the largest of the wool churches and a mediaeval timbered Guildhall -

now in the care of the National Trust - and where in normal times you can always find cafes and hotels for refreshment."

Trail created by:

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