



SUFFOLK DOG WALKS

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



Waldringfield waterfront bathed in sunshine

Along the river bank

Time and tide make some surprising changes to a circular walk from Martlesham via Waldringfield but it's no less enjoyable for Farley, Mike and Clare.

This summer I discovered a canine quality that had previously passed me by – dogs do not complain about the weather.

For six weeks poor Farley endured record East Anglia temperatures – searing heat, sultry nights, and on more than one occasion, uncomfortably warm pavements. Yet he offered nothing more than bewilderment, and occasionally, a reluctance to move. When we leave home for our regular walk through Suffolk, heatwave over, flash floods in Europe and forecast decidedly unsettled, I am confident of three things. We have no real idea what the weather will be on our stroll around the Deben valley, that I will most likely grumble about it, and that whatever happens, Farley will take it in his stride.

So, another warm sunny day greets us, and with Farley's metronomic tail beating time, we leave the car park next to the Black Tiles pub at Martlesham for a circular walk to Waldringfield.

It is a while since we were here last and there is a housing development where my map shows open space. It will not be the only time today that life on the ground does not match my Ordnance Survey Explorer. But a brisk walk around the edge of The Sandlings estate brings us to an amenity area and then onto Martlesham Heath.

I love this kind of walk – soft dry footpaths through gorse and bracken, and grassland turned to parched straw in weeks without rain. The A12, Tesco and the BT Research Centre are but a

stone's throw away, yet we could be alone in thousands of acres. Between Martlesham and Waldringfield numerous public footpaths dissect the rural Suffolk landscape. We detour slightly to approach what I think is a campervan parked in the open country landscape. We are always happy to talk campervans to people we meet along the way, but I am wrong – it is no campervan. A large paramotor sits outside the VW, and British Paramotor Team member Paul Martin is packing away his paramotor wing.

Paul lives in Kesgrave and has enjoyed an early morning flight over Suffolk. He says conditions vary and at this time of year it can be a bit bumpy in the thermals. "If you get a decent thermal you can go up at 4,000 feet per minute. To start with it's a bit scary, but you get used to it and you trust your kit. I quite often go out in the early morning just before the sun comes up. It's nice and smooth, the sun comes up, and you get mist on the ground. It is really nice then."

His paramotor is similar to a paraglider, but has a 36hp engine to drive it forward and give it lift. He can be in the air for up to four-and-a-half hours travelling as far as 250 kilometres. "The other morning I went up to 8,500 feet, and just turned my engine off and drifted down. But because it was fairly windy I was doing 130kph from Felixstowe back to here."

Clare and I spend ten minutes talking to Paul about his sport and his success at the last World Championships (he came



Paul Martin and his paramotor

second), and as I walk away through the lanes towards Waldringfield I marvel at the good fortune of coming across something and someone so interesting on a quiet stroll through Suffolk.

At Waldringfield it is approaching high tide on the River Deben. The waterfront bustles with tourists, sailors, canoeists, crabbers and swimmers. In the distance a fleet of sailing dinghies from Waldringfield Sailing Club zig-zags across the river and motor cruisers and yachts laze at their moorings. Outside the sailing club I meet

HOW FAR?

Distances

Black Tiles, Martlesham -
Felixstowe Rd, Martlesham
0.5 m

.....
Felixstowe Rd - Heath Rd,
Wadingfield Heath 1.7 m

.....
Heath Rd - Maybush Inn
1.2 m

.....
Maybush Inn - Manor
House 0.8 m

.....
Manor House - Low Farm
0.5 m

.....
Low Farm - Sandlings
Walk 1.3 m

.....
Sandlings Walk - Black
Tiles 1.3 m

.....
Total - 7.3 miles

Nearest Vets

.....
Companion Care Vets
(Inside Pets at Home),
Beardmore Retail Park
Martlesham, IP5 3RU
Tel: 01473 636550

.....
Orwell Veterinary Group
Tommy Flowers Dr,
Kesgrave
IP5 2BZ. Tel: 01473 33367

.....
Ryder-Davies and Partners
18 Grundisburgh Road
Woodbridge, IP12 4HG
Tel: 01394 380083



Farley takes a dip in the Deben



Alyson Videlo, who has been sailing here since 1986, and is vice chair of Waldringfield Parish Council. She is also a member of the village history group, and explains that although the river is important, the village's heritage is not from its riparian location.

"Waldringfield was an agricultural and industrial settlement, which by 1850 had just a few scattered houses and some 140 inhabitants," she says. "Most men worked on the farms. But from 1860 the fertiliser coprolite was dug out from pits in the fields close by, washed and sifted on the beach before being shipped by barge for processing in Ipswich.

"Later in the 19th century a cement-making factory was built, bringing barges and prosperity to the village. The industry survived until 1912, when the village reverted to its agriculture, and sailing began to give it a new identity as a centre for leisure."

Farley paddles on the shingle beach before we stop for lunch at the Maybush Inn. Dogs are allowed in the garden and bar, but obviously not in the restaurant. Inevitably,



Waldringfield attracts dog walkers in droves. Dogs must be kept on a lead in Church Field and no dogs are allowed on the playing field, but on the foreshore and riverbank dogs roam freely.

Farley follows his nose once again when we head off up the water's edge footpath towards Martlesham Creek. Clare and I have debated for years whether an estuary, creek or shore is more pleasing at high water or low water. Farley's predecessor (a springer called Charlie) was just as happy up to his belly in the mud at low water as he was swimming among the ripples at high tide. It is perhaps the tides that give East Anglia's coast and rivers their charm. While calm reflections of yachts, buoys and riverside features are appealing, rivulets trickling through a drying river bed, waders foraging where waters have receded, and sailboats sleeping in the mud are equally alluring.

Farley remains oblivious to,

ABOVE: A view over the River Deben

LEFT: Farley takes a break in the quiet lane

or at least unconcerned by, the effect of the moon on the River Deben, and has no understanding of erosion, at least not until our way ahead is blocked. We had failed to spot the post script on a public footpath sign telling passers-by that there was no way ahead, and we would have to return the way we came. Wind and tide have washed the footpath away. For the second time today, our OS Map does not match what lay out before us.

So we join the Waldringfield Road back to Martlesham. It does not matter, as this 'Quiet Lane' leads us past attractive country residences, through rolling pastures onto the Sandlings Walk and back to our vehicle. Farley – fortunately on his extending lead at the time – even sees a hare at close quarters and meets donkeys for the first time. Back at the Black Tiles, he falls sound asleep under our table while we enjoy a much needed soft-drink before the drive home. ♦