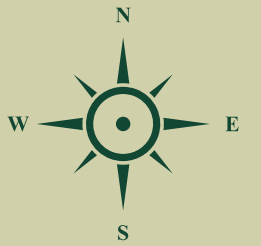




Trail Map



Ways to enjoy the park

Explorer Trail, 2.2km

(or extend to 4.7km via the Railway Walk)
Taking in the whole Country Park, this trail is packed with heritage and nature.

Accessible Trail, 1.2km

A charming stroll around the Park's perimeter. Note narrower and steeper paths marked with and . The most accessible paths of all are the centre path and station road in the middle of the Park.

Town Trail, 2.3km

The Town Trail explores the whole of fascinating and historic Clare. Pick up an accompanying leaflet from within the Park or at locations around Clare.

Nature Trail

The perimeter path between our otter and woodpecker sculptures takes in key nature stops with five information points on the way.

Trim Trail

Make the most of the Country Park for fitness; see the bottom right insert for more information.

Family Trail

Pick up a family activity trail leaflet from within the Park or at locations around Clare.

Ashen Road Walk

Take a picturesque 400 metre woodland walk to a cast iron bridge, built in 1813 and the second oldest in Suffolk. Follow the old railway line in one direction and return along the riverside path.

The Railway Walk

The Railway Walk extends for about 1,200 metres on the eastern side of the Park. It passes through woodland, grass sections and scrubland before reaching an open area by the River Stour.

The Railway Walk - 1,200 metres

EXPLORER TRAIL

Extend your route with a round trip to the end of the Railway Walk

The Trim Trail

The Trim Trail can be used by adults and children of all fitness levels to get and keep fit.

Do not strain yourself by trying to do too much!

- | | |
|-------------|------------------|
| 1. Step Ups | 4. Straddle Jump |
| 2. Chin Ups | 5. Ladder Walk |
| 3. Vault | |

Key

- | | |
|---|---|
|  Seating |  Story bench |
|  Steeper path |  Narrower path |
|  Exercise equipment |  Town Trail post |
|  Nature trail stop and information point | |



Grass Meadow



Old Railway Bridge over the Railway Walk



View of Town Centre from the top of the Motte



Ashen Road Walk



Ashen Road Walk
400 metres



Clare Priory



Old Station Buildings



New Cut Sluice Gates



Clare Castle Country Park Trails



Left: A swan with one of our finder posts in the background.
Right: A small skipper butterfly.

- In spring listen out for frogs and toads around the new cut, moat and ponds. You may also glimpse a grass snake; frogs are their favourite food.
- Veteran trees may be past their prime but we manage these too, as they play a valuable role as they decline and rot, sustaining fungi and invertebrates and providing roosts for bats and owls.
- Brush piles and cut deadwood (logs and stumps). We retain plenty of cut material as food and habitat for invertebrates, reptiles, birds and small mammals.
- Veteran trees may be past their prime but we manage these too, as they play a valuable role as they decline and rot, sustaining fungi and invertebrates and providing roosts for bats and owls.
- Our other and woodpecker sculptures by woodcarver Luke Chapman, marking the beginning and end of the nature trail.
- Look for:

As you follow the explorer trail, look out for information boards and 'finder posts' with more information on the management of, and wildlife to be found in, each section of the Park.

Clare Castle Country Park is actively managed to support diverse wildlife. In different sections of the Park there is evidence of otters, kingfishers, little grebe, treecreepers, grass snakes, slow worms, frogs and toads. There are rare wildflowers to be found along the Railway Walk, and interesting plants occupying the brickwork of the old platforms.

Wildlife

Clare Castle

Today's car park, where most people start and finish their visit to the Park, was once part of a moat. This looped around the motte to protect the keep and the inner bailey of a castle, built by the Normans on the site of a much earlier Saxon stronghold.

Look for:

- Saxon Earl Aelfric, son of Wihthgar, had a 'fortified seat' here overseen from a prominent wooden tower. A community of secular canons (clergy, but not tied to Rome) was based here. The Inner Bailey was a burial site for these canons. Nine bodies were found in a dig in 2019, more in earlier excavations. As you walk through the Inner Bailey, consider that dozens of bodies, laid to rest well over a thousand years ago, lie beneath your feet.
- The Clare lands were seized by the Normans and gifted to Richard de Bienfaite, who had built the first Norman Clare Castle by 1086. The Lords of Clare were highly important and influential in national affairs for over 200 years, but the heyday of the castle came under the twice-widowed Elizabeth de Burgh, lady of Clare, in the 14th century. As home to the nation's wealthiest non-royal, the castle housed hundreds of soldiers, servants and craftsmen.
- The ruin on the motte, a section of the stone 'shell keep' which was built in the 13th century, enclosing wooden buildings.
- The surviving wall on Lady's Walk which is probably 15th century.
- The ramparts of the Outer Bailey, most visible to the north of the playground.
- Part of the moat protecting the Inner Bailey, to the north of the Lady's Walk.
- Ramparts in the wood to the south of the railway, part of the fortifications for the Inner Bailey.
- Our story benches and information panels with more details of the castle and its occupants.



Left: Neolithic Axe Head, 5,000 BC. found in the river Stour.
Right: The seal of Elizabeth de Burgh, Lady of Clare (1295-1360).

Clare Railway

Clare station was on the Stour Valley line which was built in 1865 as a continuation of the line from Marks Tey (on the London-Colchester line) to Sudbury. It continued to Haverhill and Shelford Common near Cambridge. The line operated for just over 100 years, closing in 1967. It now forms part of the Explorer Trail.

Clare's is the only station in the country built within the grounds of a castle. It is Grade II listed as the only station of its type with a complete set of buildings - station master's house, ticket office, platform waiting room and goods shed.



Look for:

- The railway bridge crossing the New Cut by the car park. Unused piers here were built to carry a second line, which never came.
- Just beyond the bridge, towards Clare Priory, where the private owner arranged to have his own 'halt' to save the walk to the station.

- A level crossing and crossing keeper's house stood at Ashen Road near the historic iron bridge. Built in 1813 it is the oldest usable iron bridge in Suffolk.
- The position of a signal box, once on the north platform. Look for a gap in the brickwork at track level where rods and wiring passed from the signal box to operate the points.
- Imagine coal sidings, at the east end of the north platform. Coal was carted along Station Road to a site on the High Street for grading and distribution.

- As you walk east onto the Railway Walk, spare a thought for the navvies who dug cuttings for the railway by hand. A landslip here cost one 18-year-old worker his life, on his first day in the job.
- The story bench about a luckier worker who unearthed a precious jewelled cross while widening Station Road.

Left: A signalman about to flip a switch in Clare's signal box.
Right: Crossing keeper at Ashen Lane level crossing.