

A visitor's guide to

CONSTABLE COUNTRY IN THE DEDHAM VALE

AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY



“WELCOME TO THIS ENCHANTING
AND TRANQUIL CORNER OF ENGLAND.

We invite you to savour all that it has to offer and
help us ensure it remains unspoiled and as beautiful
as it is today, for future generations to enjoy”.

Robert Erith

Robert Erith TD DL,
Chairman of the Dedham Vale
AONB and Stour Valley Partnership

Front cover: A Barge on the Stour at Dedham (c1930) by Sir Alfred Munnings
© Estate of Sir Alfred Munnings. All rights reserved, DACS 2017.
This page: The River Stour Opposite page: Walkers on the Stour Valley Path



Dedham Vale AONB & Stour Valley Project,
Dock Lane, Melton, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 1PE

Telephone **01394 445225**

dedhamvalestourvalley.org email dedhamvale.project@suffolk.gov.uk

EXPLORE

With its gently rolling farmland, ancient woodlands, meandering river and picturesque villages, the **Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)** embraces one of our most cherished landscapes and is to many, a rural idyll and a prime example of the traditional, English lowland landscape.

Throughout the seasons, the landscape changes dramatically. In winter, the valley floor is clearly visible, occasionally blanketed in a carpet of fresh snow, while in spring and summer, the valley becomes more enclosed with leafy green lanes and woodland canopies. Autumn of course, brings with it a rainbow of warm, golden colours.

The Dedham Vale has been a source of creative inspiration for many artists and writers over the centuries, but is most well known for its connections with one of England's greatest landscape painters: John Constable RA. The artist was born and grew up here and gave credit to a childhood spent in this captivating landscape, for making him the painter he became.

There are 46 AONBs in Great Britain and each is designated in recognition of their national importance to ensure that their character and qualities are protected for all to enjoy.

The Dedham Vale AONB covers an area of 90km² on the Suffolk-Essex border. It is one of the smallest AONBs and is unique in that the area's cultural heritage was instrumental in securing this designation.



Visit the AONB website for more information and to download maps, walks and cycle routes

dedhamvalestourvalley.org





CONSTABLE COUNTRY



Lying in the Dedham Vale AONB, and straddling the border between Essex and Suffolk, Constable Country encompasses some of England's most instantly recognisable views and includes the villages of Dedham, East Bergholt and Flatford.



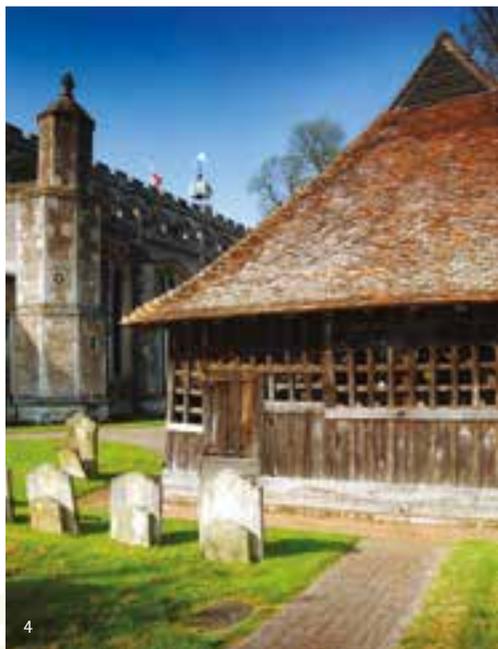
Suffolk Secrets

The Old Water Tower, Southwold IP18 6TB
Telephone **01502 722717** suffolk-secrets.co.uk

The area has affectionately become known as **'Constable Country'**, due to the strong connections with John Constable.

John Constable was born in **East Bergholt** in 1776 and spent much of his time in the countryside near his home. It was here that he developed a love of painting from an early age and he drew inspiration from his beloved Suffolk, which was to sustain him creatively, for the rest of his life.

Don't miss the **Church of St. Mary the Virgin**. The building of the bell tower was never completed, and the 'temporary' bell cage, which was built in 1531 to house the bells, has been in use ever since. The heaviest set of five bells currently being rung in England, it is remarkable that they are rung by hand!



1. Willy Lott's House 2. Sign in Dedham 3. Bridge Cottage and Flatford Bridge, Flatford 4. Bell Cage, East Bergholt Church 5. Sir Alfred Munnings Art Museum 6. Rowing boats at Dedham



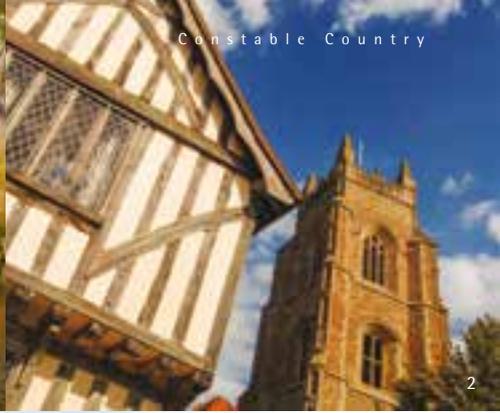
Follow in Constable's footsteps and walk down **Fenbridge Lane** in East Bergholt, alongside the River Stour to Dedham in Essex, where John attended school.

Dedham is perhaps the most well known village in Constable Country; with its vibrant high street, magnificent church, the **Sir Alfred Munnings Art Museum**, a bustling **art and craft centre** and a fascinating history. It's a village which truly does have something for everyone.

Milsom Hotels & Restaurants

Gun Hill, Dedham, Colchester, Essex CO7 6HP
Telephone **01206 323150** milsomhotels.com





The Angel Inn, Hotel & Restaurant

Polstead Street, Stoke by Nayland, CO6 4SA
 Telephone 01206 263245 angelinnsuffolk.co.uk



1. National Trust Bridge Cottage, Flatford 2. Stoke by Nayland 3. Stour Trusty II 4. RSPB Flatford Wildlife Garden 5. Flatford Mill

The tiny hamlet of **Flatford** is a pleasant 40 minute walk across the fields from Dedham and was the source of many of Constable's most famous works. It remains little changed since the artist lived here in the late 18th century.

Bridge Cottage, owned by the National Trust, houses an exhibition about Constable and there is also a tea room where you can sit by the river and take your time over lunch or a cream tea.

Courses in environmental and arts-based subjects are run in **Flatford Mill** by the Field Studies Centre and the RSPB have a dedicated **wildlife garden** in Flatford, where visitors can sit and relax, and learn all about wildlife gardening.

Boat trips are on offer during the summer on the River Stour between Flatford and Dedham. Visitors can hire a rowing boat or take a peaceful trip with the River Stour Trust in one of their electric boats.

See the area as Constable did, by taking a **guided walk** to the scenes of some of his most famous works, with a National Trust guide.

Other villages

There are many other gems worth exploring in the Dedham Vale, including **Stoke by Nayland** with its splendid church, often painted by Constable; the pretty village of **Nayland** on the banks of the River Stour; **Stratford St Mary**, with many fine timbered buildings and an excellent farm shop; and **Polstead**, another lovely village, with its beautifully positioned church with views across the valley.

Stoke by Nayland Hotel, Golf & Spa

Keepers Lane, Leavenheath, Colchester, CO6 4PZ
Telephone **01206 262836** stokebynayland.com



Where Constable Painted

- (A) The Leaping Horse
- (B) The Hay Wain
- (C) Boat Building at Flatford
- (D) Stratford Mill
- (E) Dedham Mill
- (F) The Cornfield



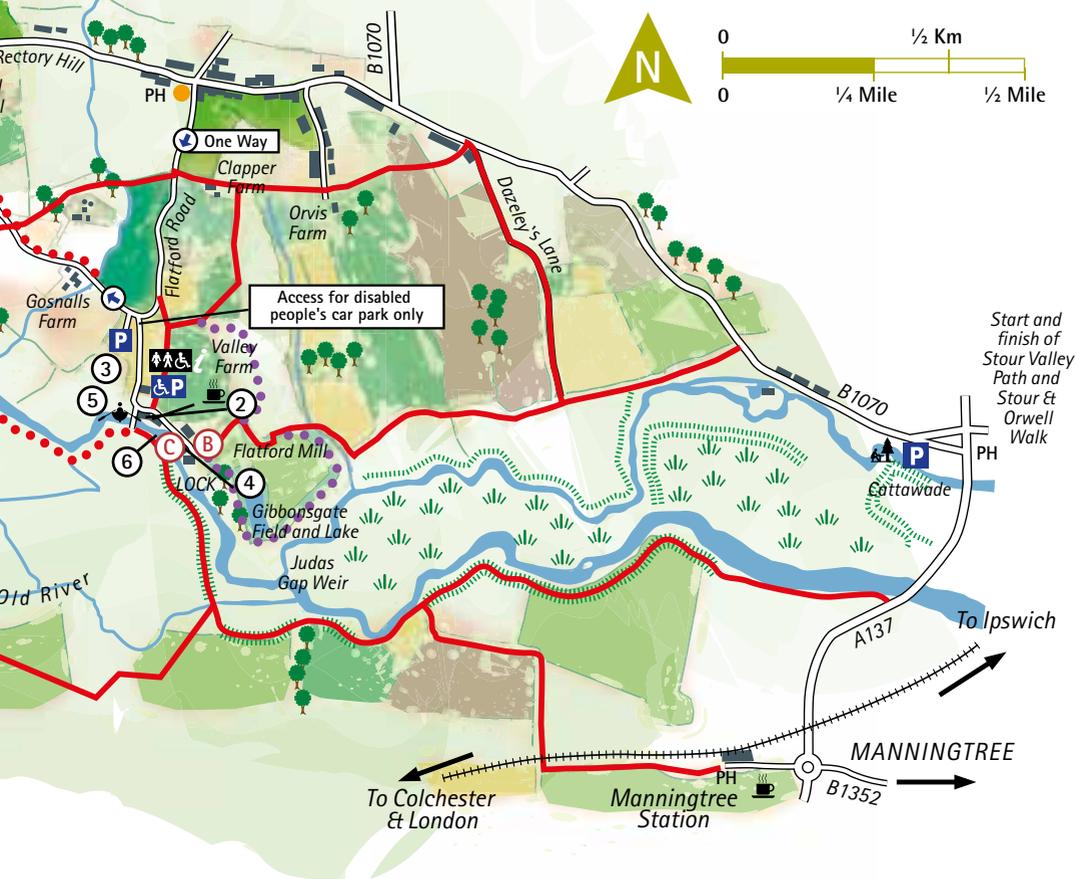
Key

- | | |
|--|--|
| Parking | Boat hire (canoe and rowing) |
| Disabled parking | Church |
| Picnic facilities | Public house |
| Accessible toilets with radar key scheme | Marsh |
| Bus stop | Public rights of way with kissing gates (not stiles) |
| Café / restaurant | Public paths |
| Farm shop | National Trust walks (stile free) |

Constable Country Attractions

- ① **St Mary the Virgin Church & Bellcage:**
eastbergholt-bells.org.uk
- ② **National Trust Flatford Constable exhibition/tea room/shop:**
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/flatford
- ③ **RSPB Flatford Wildlife Garden:**
rspb.org.uk/flatford
- ④ **Flatford Mill Field Studies Centre:**
field-studies-council.org/flatformill
- ⑤ **Rowing boat hire**
- ⑥ **Stour Trusty II (river trips):**
riverstourtrust.org
- ⑦ **Sir Alfred Munnings Art Museum:**
siralfredmunnings.co.uk
- ⑧ **St Mary the Virgin Church:**
dedham-parishchurch.org.uk

EAST BERGHOLT



Take the Train...

Did you know it only takes 40 minutes to walk from Manningtree Station to Flatford, and around 40 more from Flatford to Dedham? Avoid the traffic and enjoy a relaxing day out by train.

CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

The charming villages, rolling landscape, meandering River Stour and ancient woodland have moved artists and writers through the centuries to create some of their greatest work.



1

Stay a while in this peaceful corner of rural England and discover just what inspired these great names ...

As well as being the birthplace of **John Constable**, the Stour Valley was also home to another of Britain's most famous painters. Known for his landscapes and portraits, **Thomas Gainsborough** was born in 1727 in nearby Sudbury, where his home is now open as a museum and gallery.

Born in Suffolk in 1878, **Sir Alfred Munnings** was a talented equestrian artist as well as a painter of portraits and landscapes and a wonderful sculptor. His home and studio, on the outskirts of Dedham, is open to the public.

John Nash was an esteemed painter, illustrator and engraver who spent many years of his life in his beloved Bottengoms Farm in Wormingford. Initially his works were focussed on war, but following the end of WW1, his attention turned to the alluring landscape of the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley.

On his death, Nash left Bottengoms Farm to his great friend, author **Ronald Blythe**, who is perhaps most well-known for his classic evocation of life in the Suffolk countryside in his book *Akenfield – Portrait of an English Village* (1969).

Father of BBC correspondent Martin Bell, **Adrian Bell** was a journalist, farmer and author who went on to compile *The Times* crossword. Bell lived for many years in Suffolk, at one time just across the Stour Valley from his friend John Nash. Nash helped Bell by illustrating his book *Men and the Fields* with woodcuts and engravings.

'Sexton Blakes'

Tom Keating was famous for reputedly forging over 2000 works of more than one hundred artists. Although never successful in his own right, he found fame in the 1980s through his imitations, which he called his Sexton Blakes (Cockney rhyming slang for fakes) which, since his death, have become increasingly sought after. Keating is buried in Dedham churchyard.

1. Engraving by John Nash
2. Thomas Gainsborough's House, Sudbury
3. Detail of *'My Wife, My Horse and Myself'* (1925) by Sir Alfred Munnings © Estate of Sir Alfred Munnings. All rights reserved, DACS 2014.
4. *'A Suffolk Harvest'* by Adrian Bell
5. *Flatford Mill ("Scene on a Navigable River")* by John Constable 1776 - 1837 © Tate, London 2014



Gainsborough's House

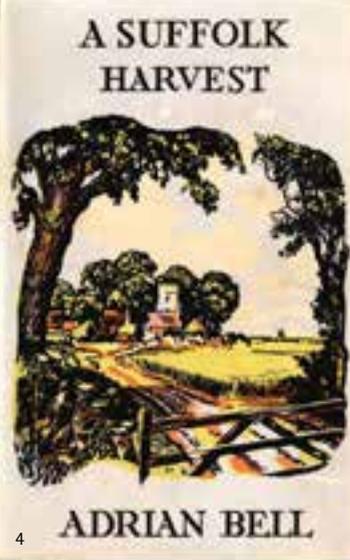
46 Gainsborough Street, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2EU
Telephone **01787 372958** gainsborough.org



2



3



4



5

The Swan Inn

Lower Street, Stratford St Mary, Suffolk CO7 6JR
Telephone **01206 321244** stratfordswan.com





THE GREAT OUTDOORS



Take your time to explore the Dedham Vale; it has much to offer and the changing seasons bring fresh and exciting discoveries.



On the Water

The River Stour provides a fantastic opportunity for seeing the Vale from a different angle. Get close to nature on the river, either under your own steam by canoeing or hiring a rowing boat, or you can take a gentle potter on an electric powered boat, with the River Stour Trust which operates from Flatford.

Walking

One of the best ways to explore the area is on foot. There are many established walks to take you off the beaten track and into some stunning landscapes which were so inspirational to Constable. There are many circular and linear walks; to add a sense of adventure, you can download some of our geocaching leaflets and hunt down treasures as you make your way through the Dedham Vale.

Walk The Stour Valley Path

This 60 mile route meanders through the tranquil countryside of the Stour Valley, from Newmarket near the source of the River Stour, to Cattawade near Manningtree, where the river joins the estuary. The Stour Valley Path Guide includes ten route cards with maps and information. It's available at information centres or to download at dedhamvalestourvalley.org



Fishing

The River Stour provides many opportunities for coarse fishing. If you want to fish around Flatford, you must first purchase a day ticket.

- 1. Canoeing on the River Stour
- 2. Winter in the Dedham Vale
- 3. River Stour, Dedham
- 4. Walking in Constable Country
- 5. Otter
- 6. Fishing in the River Stour
- 7. Riding through the Dedham Vale
- 8. Barn Owls
- 9. Cycling through Dedham



Visit the AONB website for more information and to download maps, walks and cycle routes

dedhamvalestourvalley.org



Why not enjoy the area at its more tranquil time, by taking a peaceful evening stroll, with the setting sun providing an impressive backdrop; or visit mid-week or in the autumn/winter



Cycling

Enjoying the Dedham Vale from the saddle guarantees plenty of gorgeous scenery and a great workout too. The area lends itself perfectly to cycling with its network of quiet country lanes and gently undulating terrain; it's easy and enjoyable for cyclists of all abilities.

Wildlife

The Dedham Vale is home to a wide range of plant and animal species and habitats, many of which have been in serious decline over the last sixty years. The Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project are striving to reverse this trend by working with landowners to plant more trees, orchards and pollinating plants, and maximise provision of suitable habitats for vulnerable species such as barn owl, otter and dormouse.

OUTDOOR HIRE CENTRE NETWORK
BIKES | WATERCRAFT | CAMPING

STOUR BOAT HIRE

www.ohcn.co.uk 01206 700707

Discover suffolk

Your online guide to exploring Suffolk's countryside
www.discoversuffolk.org.uk

National Trust, Flatford

Flatford, East Bergholt, Suffolk CO7 6UL
Telephone 01206 298260
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/flatford



GETTING HERE

The Dedham Vale is a quiet, rural area and the country lanes can quickly become congested. Although it is perhaps easier to travel here by car, the area is well served with good public transport services, so why not consider alternatives?



By train:

London Liverpool Street, Harwich, Colchester, Ipswich and Norwich all connect with Manningtree Station, as does Sudbury (via Marks Tey) using the Gainsborough Line. Flatford is a pleasant 40 minute walk from Manningtree Station, along way-marked footpaths.

By coach/bus:

A daily service runs to Ipswich and Colchester and passengers can travel onwards via local bus or train to the Dedham Vale. The main villages throughout the area are served by regular local bus services.

For bus and train timetables, please see: traveline.info or phone 0871 200 22 33

Further information:

For information on places to visit, eat and stay, please contact the following Visitor Information Centres:

Colchester
visitcolchester.com
Tel 01206 282920

Ipswich
allaboutipswich.com
Tel 01473 258070

Sudbury
heartofsuffolk.co.uk
Tel 01787 881320

Or visit
dedhamvalestourvalley.org
for downloadable walks/
cycle routes and
information on the
Dedham Vale and
Stour Valley.



Top Tips TO KEEP IT SPECIAL



The tranquil, peaceful nature of this outstanding river landscape never fails to captivate and we all have a role to play in ensuring the Dedham Vale remains unspoiled for future generations to enjoy.

Please...

Respect wildlife, the environment and local communities. Park in designated car parks

Support local businesses. Extend your visit; shop, stay and explore more

Enjoy the scenery. Use public transport, bike or walk; travel off-peak to avoid the crowds

Protect the area. Keep dogs under control and take your litter home with you

Relax and explore. Visit the lesser known parts of the area at a leisurely pace

DEDHAMVALESTOURVALLEY.ORG

