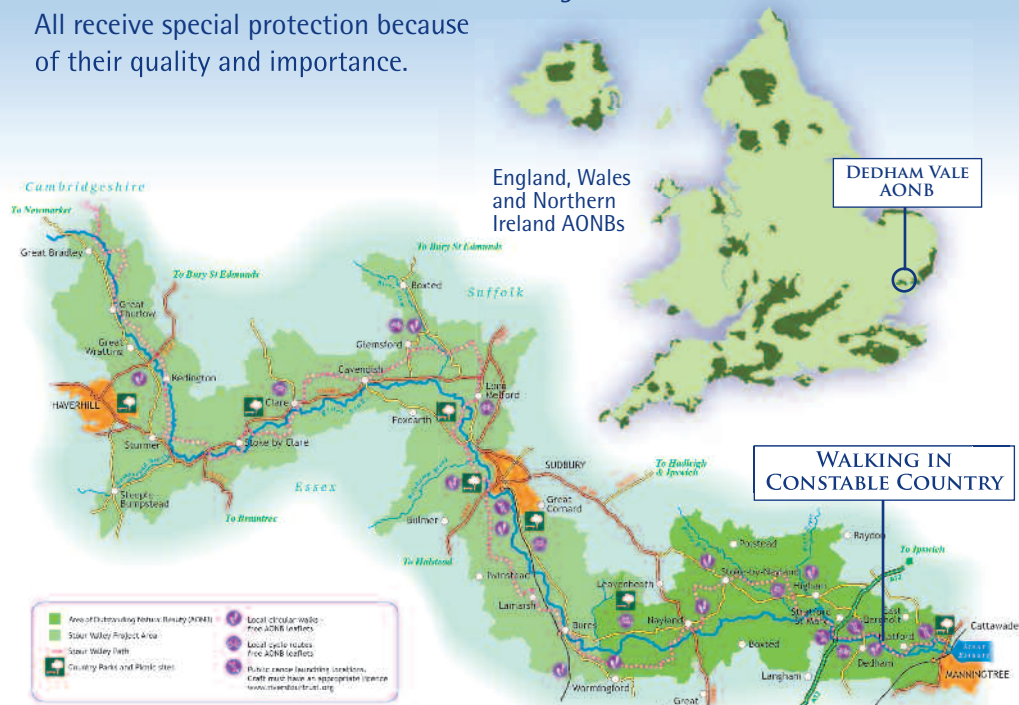


# THE DEDHAM VALE AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

The Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is one of Britain's finest landscapes. It extends from the Stour estuary in the east to the village of Wormingford in the west. A wider project area extends further west along the length of the Stour Valley to the Cambridgeshire border. The AONB was designated in 1970 and covers 90 square kilometres. It is a diverse landscape which includes ancient woodland, rolling farmland, rivers, meadows and attractive villages.

A partnership of organisations and landowners, coordinated by the AONB team, cares for the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley. The team acts as a champion for the AONB, working to conserve the area's natural beauty and encouraging sympathetic, sustainable use. AONBs are part of the UK's "family" of protected areas that includes National Parks and Heritage Coasts. All receive special protection because of their quality and importance.



## CONSTABLE COUNTRY Highlights

The villages and hamlets of Constable Country are famous for their beautiful buildings and fascinating history. These communities are linked by the river Stour, which was once a major trade route into the heart of Suffolk and north Essex.

**1 THE DEDHAM VALE** is an area which stretches from Flatford in the east to Wormingford in the west. The Dedham Vale was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1970 because of its landscape and history. In the Middle Ages, the combination of woodland and pasture was ideal for sheep rearing. This made the area wealthy through wool production, allowing for the construction of imposing churches and impressive village buildings. Later still, artists such as Thomas Gainsborough, John Constable and Sir Alfred Munnings immortalised the landscape in paint. Despite being close to Ipswich and Colchester, the landscape has survived relatively unaltered, making it a very special place to visit.

**2 FLATFORD** inspired many of John Constable's most familiar paintings, including The Hay Wain and Flatford Mill. When Constable painted at Flatford, around 200 years ago, it was a working grain mill and bustling riverside hamlet. The dry dock was used to repair barges, as depicted in the famous painting by Constable. Constable's family ran the milling business and owned



## VISITING CONSTABLE COUNTRY

- Ordnance Survey Explorer Map No. 196 (Sudbury, Hadleigh and the Dedham Vale).
- East Bergholt and Flatford can be reached by following the B1070 from the A12 (junction 31). Stratford St. Mary and Dedham can be reached by following the B1029 from the A12 (junction 30).
- Flatford car park - CO7 6UL; Dedham Mill car park - CO7 6DH; East Bergholt Red Lion car park - CO7 6TB; Manningtree Station car park - CO11 2HH
- Public transport information: [www.traveline.info](http://www.traveline.info) 0871 200 22 33
- Manningtree Station is on the London Liverpool Street to Norwich main line. Train information: [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk) - 03457 48 49 50

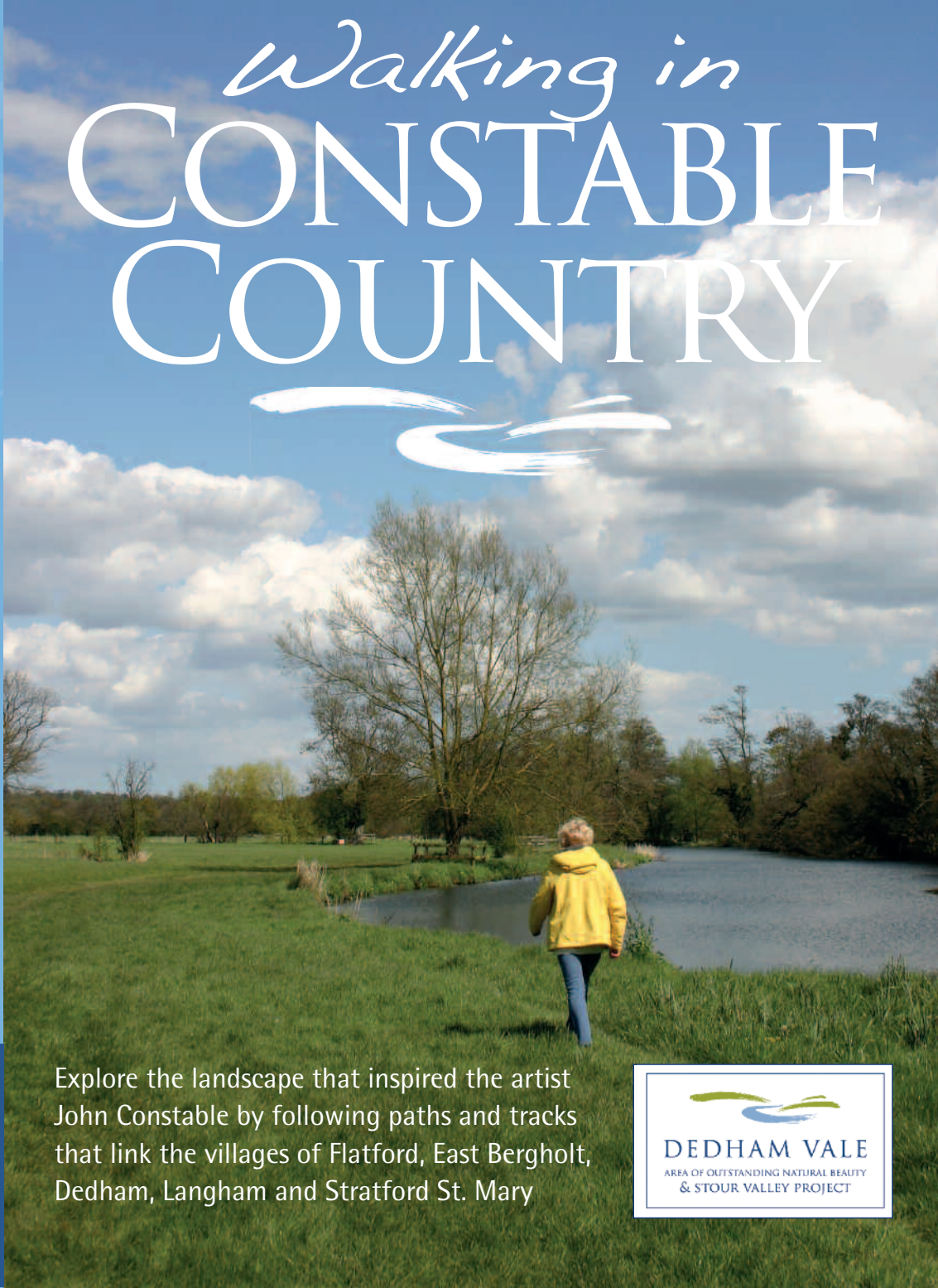
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Discover more of Suffolk's countryside - walking, cycling and riding leaflets are yours to download for free at Suffolk County Council's countryside website - [www.discoversuffolk.org.uk](http://www.discoversuffolk.org.uk)  
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DISCOVER Suffolk



Explore the landscape that inspired the artist John Constable by following paths and tracks that link the villages of Flatford, East Bergholt, Dedham, Langham and Stratford St. Mary



barges on the river. Today, the landscape is managed by the National Trust to reflect this history. You can sit by the river in the National Trust Tea Room or hire a rowing boat. The RSPB owns a beautiful wildlife garden whilst Flatford Mill is now an environmental learning centre run by the Field Studies Council.



**3 THE RIVER STOUR** is a peaceful water way today, but 200 years ago, it was the main trade route into Suffolk and north Essex. Cargo, such as coal and bricks, was unloaded from sea going vessels at the estuary port of Mistley and transported 25 miles by barge to the inland port of Sudbury. Local goods, including grain and wool, were exported in the same way. This river traffic stopped many years ago, but the river is still popular with canoeists and people hiring rowing boats from Flatford and Dedham. The River Stour Trust run trips on electric launches from Flatford, Dedham and Sudbury.



**4 DEDHAM** has a history stretching back many centuries. The main street is flanked by beautiful buildings, some of which feature Georgian façades in front of Tudor timber frames. The Sun Inn is a beautiful survivor from the Tudor period and even features a covered carriage way from the days when it was a coaching inn. The magnificent church of St. Mary the Virgin has one of the tallest towers in the area. In the summer, the tower is open and the views from the top reach to the sea at Harwich. Inside the church, you can see Constable's painting, The Risen Christ.



**5 EAST BERGHOLT** has many links to the artist John Constable. The house where he was born, East Bergholt House, was demolished in the 1840s, but there is a plaque on the railings of the present house to indicate where it was located. Constable's first studio, Moss Cottage, is situated opposite the village shop. His parent's tomb is in the churchyard of St. Mary's, although he



was buried in Hampstead. St. Mary's Church does not have a bell tower, probably due to lack of funds when the church was built in the 16th Century, so the bells are hung in a wooden bell cage at ground level. Watching the bells being rung is a fascinating (if noisy) experience!

**6 STRATFORD ST. MARY** is located on what was the Essex Great Road. For centuries, this was the main route from East Anglia to London. The three pubs in the village indicate it was a key stopping point. In the 1970s the old road was bypassed by the A12, making the village a more peaceful place.

**7 LANGHAM CHURCH** is situated on the Langham Hills, well away from the village. One of Constable's earliest patrons, Dr John Fisher, was rector of the church. His enthusiasm for Constable's work is the reason why the artist did so many sketches and paintings of the surrounding area. Dr John Fisher went on to become the Bishop of Salisbury. To the left of the church is the Hurlock Schoolroom, built in 1832 for the education of the girls of the parish.



Front Cover: Walking beside the river Stour; The Dedham Vale - a gentle landscape of fields and woods Willy Lott's House - features in Constable's painting The Hay Wain; The River Stour - willows, water meadows and cows; Dedham Main Street - features many beautiful buildings; East Bergholt Bell Cage - houses the heaviest set of 5 bells in England; East Bergholt Church - an imposing building; Stratford St. Mary - traditional buildings of timber frame and red tile; Langham Church - a peaceful location.