



**CULTURE**

## Stour Valley Sounds

Dr Thomas Wood was a composer and author who lived at Parsonage Hall in Bures, between Sudbury and Colchester, from 1924 to 1950.

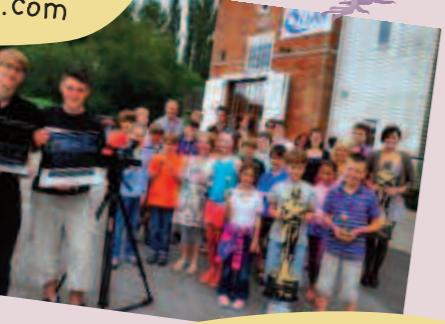
If in spring, you wake up early you can hear birds singing the dawn chorus as the sun rises. The earliest to start singing are skylarks, song thrushes, blackbirds and robins. .... They eat worms, so perhaps the old saying 'the early bird catches the worm' is right.

## Bures Music Festival

A charity fund raising event every summer on the bank of the River Stour at Bures where a wide range of music can be enjoyed over several days.

For more information:  
[www.buresmusicfestival.com](http://www.buresmusicfestival.com)

Another charity fund raising music festival, Leestock is held every May in the grounds of Melford Hall, Long Melford [leestock.org](http://leestock.org). An early music festival is held every year in six historic churches of the Stour Valley [www.suffolkvillagesfestival.com](http://www.suffolkvillagesfestival.com)



Discover what's on at:  
[www.quaytheatre.org.uk](http://www.quaytheatre.org.uk)

**SVEN**

STOUR VALLEY EDUCATION NETWORK

Picture credits: Ellie Mead, Jane Crone, Ronnie Blythe, Victoria Connelly, Graham Brundell, Jonathan Oldham, Emma Black, Gainsborough's House, Long Melford Hall (NT), National Trust Images,

Published March 2019

He collected songs from two local men, Maurice Cardy and William Sparkes, both of whom he knew well. Maurice Cardy sang songs called 'The Constant Farmer's Son' and 'The Young Squire'. William Sparkes lived at Mount Bures and was well known for singing a song called 'Donnybrook Fair'. Here is the first verse of it:



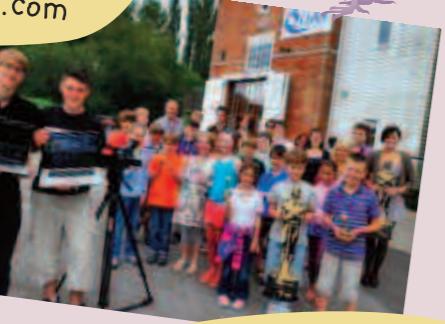
The swans on the River Stour are not a very vocal species and are called Mute Swans. But in flight, the whooping sound their wings make can be heard up to a mile away!

## Bures Music Festival

A charity fund raising event every summer on the bank of the River Stour at Bures where a wide range of music can be enjoyed over several days.

For more information:  
[www.buresmusicfestival.com](http://www.buresmusicfestival.com)

Another charity fund raising music festival, Leestock is held every May in the grounds of Melford Hall, Long Melford [leestock.org](http://leestock.org). An early music festival is held every year in six historic churches of the Stour Valley [www.suffolkvillagesfestival.com](http://www.suffolkvillagesfestival.com)



Discover what's on at:  
[www.quaytheatre.org.uk](http://www.quaytheatre.org.uk)

**SVEN**

STOUR VALLEY EDUCATION NETWORK

Picture credits: Ellie Mead, Jane Crone, Ronnie Blythe, Victoria Connelly, Graham Brundell, Jonathan Oldham, Emma Black, Gainsborough's House, Long Melford Hall (NT), National Trust Images,

Published March 2019

# STOUR VALLEY Discovery Fact Sheet

## VALLEY OF INSPIRATION



With its wide skies and long horizon line, the Dedham Vale and the Stour Valley is a natural inspiration for artists, writers and performers.

For centuries its inhabitants and visitors have celebrated this part of East Anglia with their skills and talents and made it recognisable throughout the world.



Thomas loved the landscape of the Stour Valley and spent many happy hours walking and sketching in the woods and meadows around Sudbury.



You can visit Thomas's birthplace and see his paintings at Gainsborough's House in Sudbury [www.gainsborough.org](http://www.gainsborough.org)

## The Quay Theatre

You can find this cosy theatre in a restored Maltings on a cut in the River Stour in Sudbury.

There are exciting shows for both children and adults. The Quay also runs a drama group for children.



## For the love of Bottengoms!



What is Bottengoms?  
It was the Wormingford home of John Nash: painter, illustrator and engraver.

He settled there after working as a war artist during World War II and spent many happy years working there. He, like Gainsborough and Constable, loved the landscape of the Stour Valley which you can see in his work.



**SVEN**



# JOURNEYING DOWN THE RIVER...

## Racehorses and Rivers

Sir Alfred Munnings (1878-1959) is best known for his paintings of racehorses. His greatest desire, however, was to paint landscapes.

### He wrote in his autobiography...

'My one joy, was in knowing that my home was near a perfect river, the banks grown with sedge and meadowsweet; groups of cattle against the sky reflected in the water'. He lived at Castle House, Dedham for forty years and now the house is a gallery for his art.

## Constable's Country

John Constable (1776 – 1837), was a Suffolk born artist whose paintings can now be seen in major museums and galleries throughout the world.

Flatford Lock by after John Constable, RA  
(East Bergholt 1776 & London 1837)

Visit the John Constable exhibition at Flatford to find out more  
[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/flatford](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/flatford)  
You can go on guided tours and see where Constable painted.

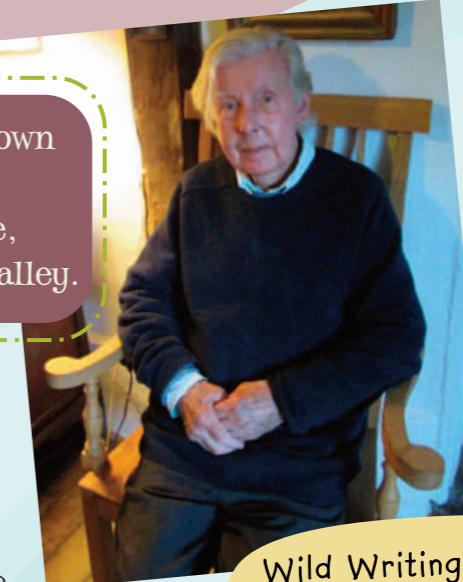


To visit Munnings' house check out the website at [www.munningsmuseum.org.uk](http://www.munningsmuseum.org.uk)

## ...things to see and do

## Ronald Blythe

Ronald Blythe is a well-known local author who lives in John Nash's old farmhouse, 'Bottengoms,' in the Stour Valley.



He writes books and poems about life in this area as he observes it: the changing seasons, wildlife, celebrations, cultural events and the landscape.

## Jemima Puddleduck at Long Melford

Did you know that Beatrix Potter, the author of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* and many other children's books, often visited Long Melford Hall?

Long Melford Hall is owned by the National Trust. Details of opening can be found here: [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/melford-hall](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/melford-hall)



## Poem by Ronald Blythe

June, Nine pm (extract)

I sprawl in the mid-year garden  
To hear the poplars clatter,  
And to admire what I have done.  
The day is advanced, the bees  
Drone vespers, the sun hits the wheat  
Farmers sat on this doorstep at  
This hour, aching and comfortable,  
Their eyes registering patches  
Of pinks and mignonettes  
As their gaze settled for the Big Field.

**Wild Writing Challenge!**  
Could you write a poem about a part of the Stour Valley you know or have visited? Use your senses to describe the sounds, sights, scents, tastes and textures.



## A Dragon Tale - The Suffolk Black and the Essex Red

A local folk tale tells of two dragons who met and fought on the banks of the River Stour near Sudbury.

Are you interested in dragons?  
Have a look at the Heritage Fact Sheet to find out more...

Here is an extract from the legend: 'They shot back across the valley, racing and tumbling over each other all the way up Kedington Hill. Then they fell back to course over the water meadows by Henny Street. The grazing cattle fled. The word got around that the dragons were back.'

