

HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY in The Stour Valley

Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

Stour Valley and surrounding Wool Towns

Stour Valley Path

Wool Towns

1 CLARE CASTLE

Malting Lane, Clare, CO10 8NW

www.clarecastlecountrypark.co.uk

01787 277902

2 CLARE ANCIENT HOUSE MUSEUM

26 High Street, Clare, CO10 8NY

www.clare-ancient-house-museum.co.uk

01787 277249

3 MELFORD HALL

Long Melford, CO10 9AA

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/melford-hall

01787 379228

4 KENTWELL HALL

Long Melford, CO10 9BA

www.kentwell.co.uk

01787 310207

5 LONG MELFORD HERITAGE CENTRE

Chemist Lane, Long Melford, CO10 9JQ

www.suffolkmuseums.org/museums/long-melford-heritage-centre

6 SUDBURY HERITAGE CENTRE

Town Hall, Sudbury, CO10 2EA

www.sudburyheritagecentre.co.uk

7 LAVENHAM GUILDHALL

Chemist Lane, Long Melford, CO10 9JQ

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lavenham-guildhall

8 LITTLE HALL MUSEUM

Market Place, Lavenham, CO10 9QZ

www.suffolkmuseums.org/museums/lavenham-little-hall-museum

www.littlehall.org.uk

12 COURT KNOLL

Nayland, CO6 4JL

www.naylandandwiston.net/history/index.php

13 BRIDGE COTTAGE AT FLATFORD MILL

Flatford Road, East Bergholt, CO7 6UL

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/flatford/features/

9 MOUNT BURES MOTTE

Hall Road, Mount Bures, CO8 5AR

www.mount-bures.co.uk/Motte.htm

10 BURES DRAGON

St Stephen's Chapel, Bures, CO8 5LD

www.bures-online.co.uk/lodge.htm

11 THE LOST TUDOR HUNTING LODGE

The Crown, Wormingford, CO6 3AB

www.bures-online.co.uk/lodge.htm

Cambridgeshire

Essex

Suffolk

CLARE

LONG MELFORD

SUDBURY

LAVENHAM

HADLEIGH

MANNINGTREE

Great Watting

Kedington

Stoke by Clare

Sturmer

Steeple Bumpstead

Glemsford

Cavendish

Foxearth

Bulmer

Twinstead

Lamarsh

Bures

Leavenheath

Nayland

Boxted

Wormingford

Great Horkesley

Langham

Dedham

Flatford

East Bergholt

Gattawade

Stour Valley Path

Stour Valley

Stour

Stour Estuary

To Newmarket

To Bury St Edmunds

To Ipswich

To Halstead

To Colchester

To Colchester and London

To Ipswich

Great Eastern Main Line to Ipswich

Great Eastern Main Line to Colchester and London

Gainsborough line to Marks Tey

Information of each location:

1. CLARE CASTLE

Built in the 11th century, Clare Castle has a motte and bailey structure. The motte, which stands at around 60 feet, is one of the highest in the country. Many artefacts have been found on the grounds of Clare Castle over the years. In the 1860s an extremely rare and valuable 15th-century Clare Cross was unearthed. It is a small crucifix made of gold with four grey pearls on a gold chain, and with a cavity for relics, the Cross was eventually claimed by Queen Victoria. Today, the Clare Cross can be seen in the British Museum.

2. CLARE ANCIENT HOUSE MUSEUM

Opened in 1999 the Clare Ancient House Museum is in a Grade 1 Listed Building which dates to the 14th century. The museum's exhibits not only tell the story of the medieval town of Clare, but also feature artefacts from the Iron Age, pre-Roman and Victorian eras including tools, clothing, coins and domestic items.

3. MELFORD HALL

Although predominantly built in the 16th century, parts of Melford Hall date back to the medieval monks who once lived there. Devastated by fire in 1942, the house was restored by the Hyde Parker family who still live there, and has been in the ownership of the National Trust since 1960 with much of the house and gardens open to visitors. Melford Hall is well known for having a famous visitor, Beatrix Potter, whose sketches are on display along with Chinese porcelain and Naval paintings.

4. KENTWELL HALL

This Hall is part original Tudor, with later classical elements, mixed with the owners' personal style. Visitors can appreciate Tudor portraits, interesting artefacts and historic tapestries in this family home with a difference.

5. LONG MELFORD HERITAGE CENTRE

Display cases show artefacts found locally, from the Paleolithic stone age when hunter gatherers first settled in this part of the Stour V-ally, to the Roman occupation of the village when it was a Romano British small town, and also Medieval artefacts from when Long Melford was a thriving Wool Town.

6. SUDBURY HERITAGE CENTRE

Explore Sudbury's long history at this interesting space within the Town Hall building. There is also a substantial online archive on the website.

7. LAVENHAM GUILDHALL

One of the most spectacular timber framed buildings of medieval England at the heart of Lavenham, considered to be Britain's best preserved medieval village. A range of artefacts, especially from the weaving industry are on show at this National Trust building.

8. LITTLE HALL MUSEUM

In one of the oldest buildings in Lavenham is a collection by Gayer-Anderson of art and artifacts, plus examples of the cloth industry.

9. MOUNT BURES MOTTE

It is estimated that the Mount Bures 'Motte' was built a short time after the Battle of Hastings in 1066 as a stronghold and lookout of the land and rivers. On top of the mound would have been a wooden tower. The 'Bailey' or courtyard would have housed the troops and supplies. The mound is accessible to the public via a road leading up to the church. There is a wooden flight of steps to the top. It's well worth the climb to enjoy the fabulous views of the surrounding Stour Valley countryside.

10. BURES DRAGON

Local legends reveal the tale of a knight in the Middle Ages who encountered a dragon on his land in Bures and tried to kill it with arrows. To honour the legend, and in celebration of the Queen's Golden Jubilee in 2012, the Bures Dragon was created on a nearby hillside. The dragon is on private land but can be seen in full from behind St Stephen's Chapel.

11. THE LOST TUDOR HUNTING LODGE

The remains of a 16th century wall, discovered by accident, led to a seven-year excavation and the finding of the site of a lost Tudor hunting lodge. The structure that was unveiled by the Colchester Archaeology Group included a hunting tower and a complex series of buildings. Please note: The Tudor hunting lodge is on private land and is not accessible to the public, however a similar hunting lodge from the 17th century can be seen at Melford Hall.

12. COURT KNOLL

The origins of Nayland and Wissington are shrouded in mystery but archaeological finds prove there was habitation in the area in the late Neolithic/early Bronze Age and probably earlier. The Anglo Saxon name for Nayland was 'Eiland' meaning 'at the island' and Court Knoll, a field of about five acres completely surrounded by a deep ditch, is believed to be the original site of the village. The site is listed as a scheduled monument.

13. BRIDGE COTTAGE AT FLATFORD MILL

A 16th century timber-framed and thatched cottage containing a permanent exhibition which tells the history of mill life and historical artist John Constable. Owned and managed by the National Trust.

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STOUR VALLEY HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY

The Stour Valley is well known for its outstanding landscape of meandering river and gentle valley slopes. The creation of this special landscape has taken place over many thousands of years and clues to its geology and unfolding history can be found throughout the valley.

Beneath the scenery made famous by artists John Constable and Thomas Gainsborough is a secret landscape with over 200 sites and artefacts recorded in Essex and Suffolk's Historic Environment Record for the Stour Valley. Evidence of human activity covers the whole of prehistory from the earliest Stone Age right up to the Iron Age. Relics such as a Stone Age flint hand axe and flint tools have been found, especially around Bures, proving that people lived in the valley since the end of the last Ice Age. The Stour Valley was also significant during the Roman period with the River Stour providing a route for trading and importing Roman luxury goods such as wine, pottery and jewels. Not all evidence of the region's past is underground. The remains of Clare Castle, built after the Norman conquests, is still visible and is popular with visitors to Clare Castle Country Park. At Mount Bures, the remains of a motte - thought to have been built during the 12th century civil war over



English succession as a lookout post and place of safety for residents - can still be climbed via a flight of stairs today.

The River Stour

One of the defining features of the Stour Valley landscape is the river itself. Providing not only a route for transport and trade but also as a source of power for water mills grinding wheat for flour. The introduction of locks on the River Stour meant that specially designed Stour Lighters (similar to barges) could carry a wide variety of cargo including bricks, grain, flour and hay down to Mistley Quay where it would then be transported to London. The area can be best explored by walking all or some of the sections of the 60-mile Stour Valley Path.

Changing Landscape

The Stour Valley holds both the secrets of human past and evidence of how the landscape was created. Like most of the East Anglian region, the Stour Valley was formed by the impact of glacial climate conditions of the retreating Anglian ice sheet. This has left the valley with fertile grazing land and narrow flood plains surrounded by gently rising slopes. In Constable Country, the sunken lanes (hollow ways) where the lanes run down to the valley bottoms, the winding roads, and the isolated farms so typical of this area are evidence of this ancient landscape. It is commonly thought that the lower and middle parts of the Stour Valley is all ancient landscape, with more planned landscape in the upper Stour Valley in the Great Bradley to Sturmer area.

Planned landscape is often characterised by larger and more rectangular fields and straighter roads created by Parliamentary Enclosure in the 19th century.

Mighty Trees

The Stour Valley is home to important fragments of diverse ancient woodland. A key indicator species of this hugely important habitat is Small-leaved Lime. The area between Sudbury and



Hadleigh is especially important for this species, which was traditionally coppiced. Evidence of long-practiced coppicing, as well as pollarding, can also be seen on the impressive and mature Willow trees along the banks of the River Stour between Flatford and Dedham. Other typical ancient woodland and hedgerow species are

Pedunculate Oak, Ash and Field Maple. A particularly notable tree in Stour Valley woodland areas is Wild Cherry, with some impressive mature specimens at Arger Fen and Spouse's Vale. Elms were also once a common sight in Stour Valley hedgerows, although mature specimens are now very rare due to fungal Dutch Elm disease.



Historic Churches

More evidence of the past can be seen at the many historic churches and religious buildings of the Valley. For example: Clare Priory is one of the oldest in the country; the wool trade wealth of the past built soaring 'wool churches' that dominate the landscape; and changing architectural styles, such as flint work on outside stonework, or round towers designed as look out points, evidence different significant historical periods.

For more information about these unique and inspiring places, please see the 'Churches of the Stour Valley' leaflet, also available in this series and downloadable from www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org.



Left: Bures Dragon. Centre: Clare Ancient House Museum. Right: Ketwell Hall, Long Melford (Photo credit: Anthony Burch).

Exploring Online

There is a wealth of information available online about the history and archaeological features of the Stour Valley. The following archives are a good place to start if you're looking to learn more:

- www.suffolkarchives.co.uk/places/a-z-of-suffolk/s-for-stour-valley
- www.essexarchivesonline.co.uk

STEP INTO THE PAST IN THE STOUR VALLEY

Travelling through the Stour Valley offers visitors a window into the past. The beautiful towns and villages were developed on the wealth of the cloth trade with the River Stour providing the channel for trade, and the landscape being shaped by the underlying geology and human development. There are examples of prehistory at several locations along the river valley. Wandering through Long Melford or Lavenham for example, visitors can see many historic buildings and churches, in fact, in the town of Clare, there are 133 listed buildings. Step into the past at Clare Castle or Melford Hall or travel along the river in a Stour Lighter from Sudbury to experience how goods were once transported along the river. The Stour Valley provides days of exploration, as it reveals its hidden treasures one by one. Walking the many footpaths can help reveal the underlying shape of the landscape beneath your feet, and looking up while wandering the village streets will open your eyes to intriguing architecture and special features.

VISITING THE STOUR VALLEY



Please consider travelling sustainably where possible. There are good links to the Stour Valley on the Gainsborough rail line between Marks Tey and Sudbury, and there are bus routes throughout the area. For up to date local public transport timetables, contact Traveline on: www.traveline.info or 0871 200 22 33.



For detailed maps of the area, use Ordnance Survey Explorer Map No's. 196 (Sudbury, Hadleigh and the Dedham Vale), 210 (Newmarket and Haverhill), 211 (Bury St Edmunds and Stowmarket) and 195 (Braintree and Saffron Walden)

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Front cover image: Clare Castle Country Park

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Explore the Stour Valley with a series of guides