

# 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.

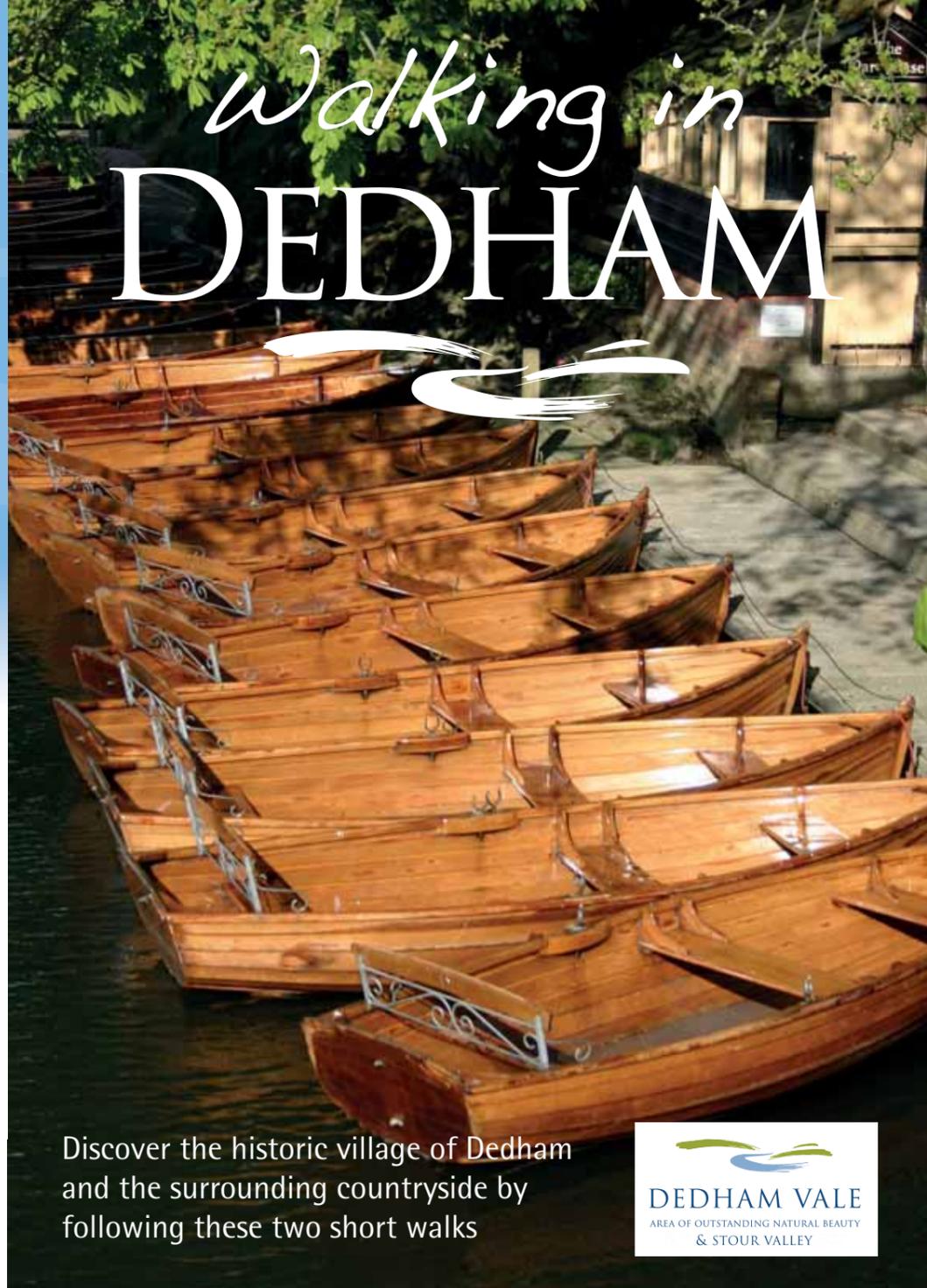
## VISITING CONSTABLE COUNTRY

-  Ordnance Survey Explorer Map No. 196 (Sudbury, Hadleigh and the Dedham Vale).
-  Dedham can be reached by following the B1029 from the A12 (junction 30).
-  Dedham Mill car park - CO7 6DH

-  Public transport information: [www.traveline.info](http://www.traveline.info) Tel: 0871 200 22 33
-  Dedham can be reached by bus or taxi from Colchester or Manningtree Stations, which are on the London Liverpool Street to Norwich main line. Train information: [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk) Tel: 03457 48 49 50

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Discover the historic village of Dedham and the surrounding countryside by following these two short walks



## DEDHAM Highlights

Dedham has a history stretching back many centuries. The high street is lined by beautiful buildings and the surrounding countryside inspired the artist John Constable to create some of his most famous paintings.

**1 DEDHAM** became a focal point for visitors to Dedham Vale from the late 1900s. It is easy to see why – the handsome red brick buildings are surrounded by beautiful countryside. Before the village was a magnet for visitors, it was a prosperous wool town and then a centre for local trade. The woollen industry reached its peak in the late medieval period and funded many fine buildings. After this industry declined in the 1500s, Dedham remained a centre for local trade. The village also became a centre for education – the Grammar School was granted a charter by Elizabeth I in 1575. This encouraged wealthy local families to settle in the community. In the 1800s, the old timber framed buildings were re-fronted in brick, giving the high street the appearance it has today.



**2 ST. MARY THE VIRGIN** has one of the tallest towers in the area. Profits from the local woollen industry helped to fund this imposing building, which was completed in 1492. A dedicated pew celebrates the church's link with the community of Dedham in Massachusetts. 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 Ascension.

**3 CASTLE HOUSE** was the home of the celebrated artist Sir Alfred Munnings from 1919 until his death in 1959. Munnings is most famous for his equestrian paintings and for his controversial view of modern art. Castle House, which Munnings described as "the house of my



dreams", was turned into a museum by his widow, Violet. Visitors today can enjoy looking at Munnings' paintings in the elegant interior of the house. Along with numerous equestrian pictures, are beautiful paintings of the Dedham Vale. Entrance fee applies, limited opening times – see [www.munningsmuseum.org.uk](http://www.munningsmuseum.org.uk) for more information.

**4 SOUTHFIELDS** is one of the most significant buildings in Dedham. This ancient structure, which in part dates from the late 1300s, was once a factory, where wool was woven into cloth. The building is in the form of a quadrangle, with a central courtyard. Parts of the buildings were for domestic use whilst other areas were used for cloth production, such as the burling shop, where knots were removed. Since the mid 1800s, the building has been cottages. Please note that this building is not open to visitors.

**5 THE RIVER STOUR** is a peaceful water way today, but 200 years ago, it was the main trade route into north Essex and Suffolk. Cargo, such as coal and bricks, was unloaded from sea going vessels at the estuary port of



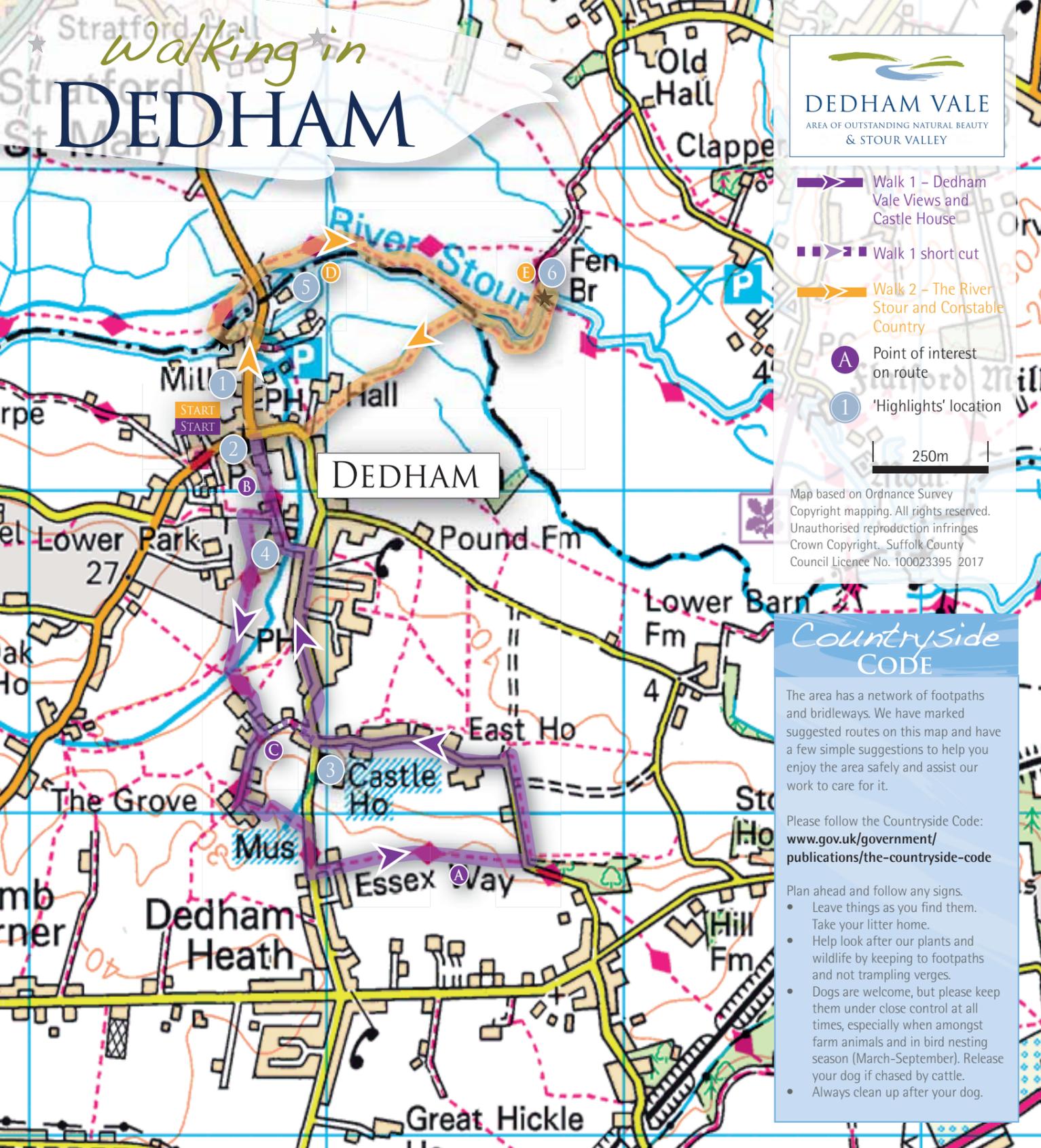
Mistley and transported 25 miles by barge to the inland port of Sudbury. Local goods, including grain and wool, were exported in the same way. This river traffic stopped many years ago, but the river is still popular with canoeists and people hiring rowing boats from Flatford and Dedham.

**6 FEN BRIDGE** is an historic crossing point across the river Stour. Although the bridge is a modern replacement, the young John Constable would have known the route well in the late 1700s. He walked along Fen Lane each day from where he lived in East Bergholt to school in Dedham. Fen Lane inspired some of John Constable's most famous paintings, including The Cornfield. A little further along the path, as you cross a sluice, you will pass the view which inspired his painting The Leaping Horse.



Front Cover: Boats at Dedham; A Historic buildings in Dedham High Street. B The Old Grammar School, where John Constable was a scholar; C The imposing tower of St. Mary's Church; D Castle House, once home of artist Sir Alfred Munnings; E Horse Fair, Lavenham by Sir Alfred Munnings – credit: the estate of Sir Alfred Munnings, Dedham, Essex. F Southfields – one of the most ancient buildings in Dedham. G Dedham Lock, hints that the river was once an important trade route. H The River Stour near Fen Bridge.

# Walking in DEDHAM



**DEDHAM VALE**  
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY & STOUR VALLEY

- Walk 1 - Dedham Vale Views and Castle House
- Walk 1 short cut
- Walk 2 - The River Stour and Constable Country
- Point of interest on route
- 'Highlights' location

250m

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## Countryside CODE

The area has a network of footpaths and bridleways. We have marked suggested routes on this map and have a few simple suggestions to help you enjoy the area safely and assist our work to care for it.

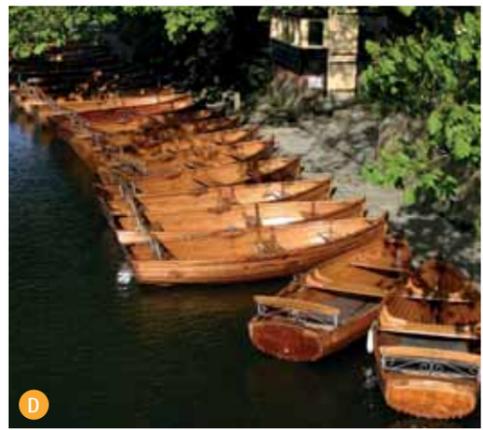
Please follow the Countryside Code: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code)

- Plan ahead and follow any signs.
- Leave things as you find them. Take your litter home.
  - Help look after our plants and wildlife by keeping to footpaths and not trampling verges.
  - Dogs are welcome, but please keep them under close control at all times, especially when amongst farm animals and in bird nesting season (March-September). Release your dog if chased by cattle.
  - Always clean up after your dog.

WALK 2

## THE RIVER STOUR AND CONSTABLE COUNTRY

**WALKING DISTANCE AND TIME:**  
1.9 miles/3km. 45 minutes (not including stops).  
**TERRAIN:** Paths and tracks, some minor roads and village roads. Route can be very muddy in places and flooded after heavy rain. Take care near areas of deep water.



Starting from War Memorial in Royal Square, carefully cross Dedham High Street and follow Mill Lane which leads between Essex Rose Tea Room and Marlborough Head Inn. Keep to left pavement and follow road. Shortly after Dedham Mill apartments, as road bends to left, cross small bridge and immediately take path sharp left. Follow path behind mill across sluice and lock. Turn right on Stour Valley Path along river bank to reach road. Cross road and bridge and continue on path opposite across meadows, keeping parallel with river. Bear right when path splits. At path junction at Fen Bridge (E), turn sharp right across bridge. Option - at this point you can continue walking to Flatford (allow 40 mins extra) or return to Dedham.

## WALK 1 DEDHAM VALE VIEWS AND CASTLE HOUSE

**WALKING DISTANCE AND TIME:**  
2.6 miles/4.2km. 1 hour (not including stops).  
**TERRAIN:** Paths and tracks, some minor roads and village roads. Route can be very muddy in places and flooded after heavy rain. Take care near areas of deep water.

Starting from War Memorial in Royal Square, follow path that leads away from High Street, signposted Munnings Museum. Continue on path across recreation ground until far side, then turn right behind pavilion. Walk beside boundary of ground and then take footpath exit through gate on left. Follow path across meadows. After fourth kissing gate by stream, continue straight and then left across meadow. Cross another stream and then continue straight, beside hedge and buildings. Turn right



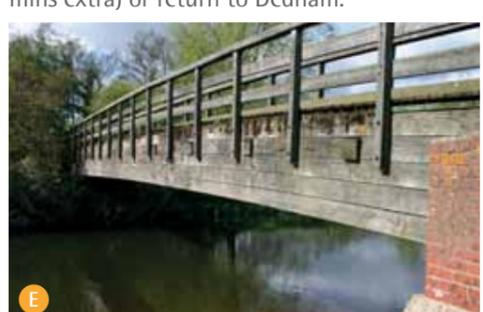
behind cottage and join driveway of Park Farm. Keeping to right side of driveway, continue until T junction with lane and then turn right (turn left here for a short cut to Munnings' Museum (C) and return route).

Continue on lane until Hunters Moon Cottage on left, then bear left up gravel driveway of The Orchard. Follow footpath as it turns left in front of house, keeping close to fence. Continue as path turns right beside house. Follow path, eventually climbing steps to field. Go straight across field to reach road. Turn right along far pavement. Take next left into Anchor Lane and follow Essex Way (an 82 mile long distance path between Harwich and Epping) between fields. When lane reached, turn left and follow lane back to junction with main road. Castle House (Munning's Museum) is on the left at the junction (entry fee applies, limited opening times).



Turn right on pavement and follow road into Dedham. After some distance, cross road and turn left into Southfields. Follow lane as it bends to right to re-join route across recreation ground. Continue straight to Dedham High Street.

A The beautiful Dedham Vale landscape in early summer; B A quiet country lane; C Castle House from the garden - credit: The Munnings Art Museum; D Rowing Boats - the perfect way to spend a summer afternoon; E Fen Bridge - an historic crossing point.



On far side, turn sharp right and continue beside river. Follow river around right bend and continue through gates and across small weir. Immediately bear left across field. Follow path through tunnel of hedgerows. At path junction, bear right and then straight. Bear left at entrance to business centre. Follow left verge of track to reach Dedham High Street.

Please note Fen Bridge was removed in January 2022 and is due for replacement in Autumn 2022

Thank You FOR HELPING US KEEP THIS OUTSTANDING LANDSCAPE BEAUTIFUL

Research, text and some photographs by Simon Peachey. First published June 2017. Reprinted May 2018.  
Disclaimer: Whilst the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of maps and information within this publication, they are provided as guidance only and we cannot accept any liability for their interpretation and use.  
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