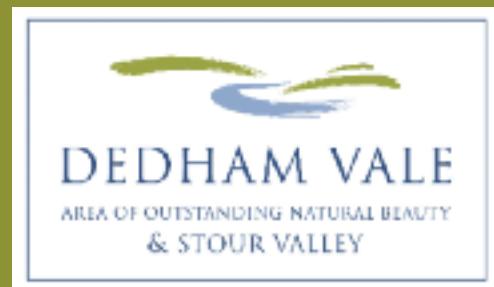


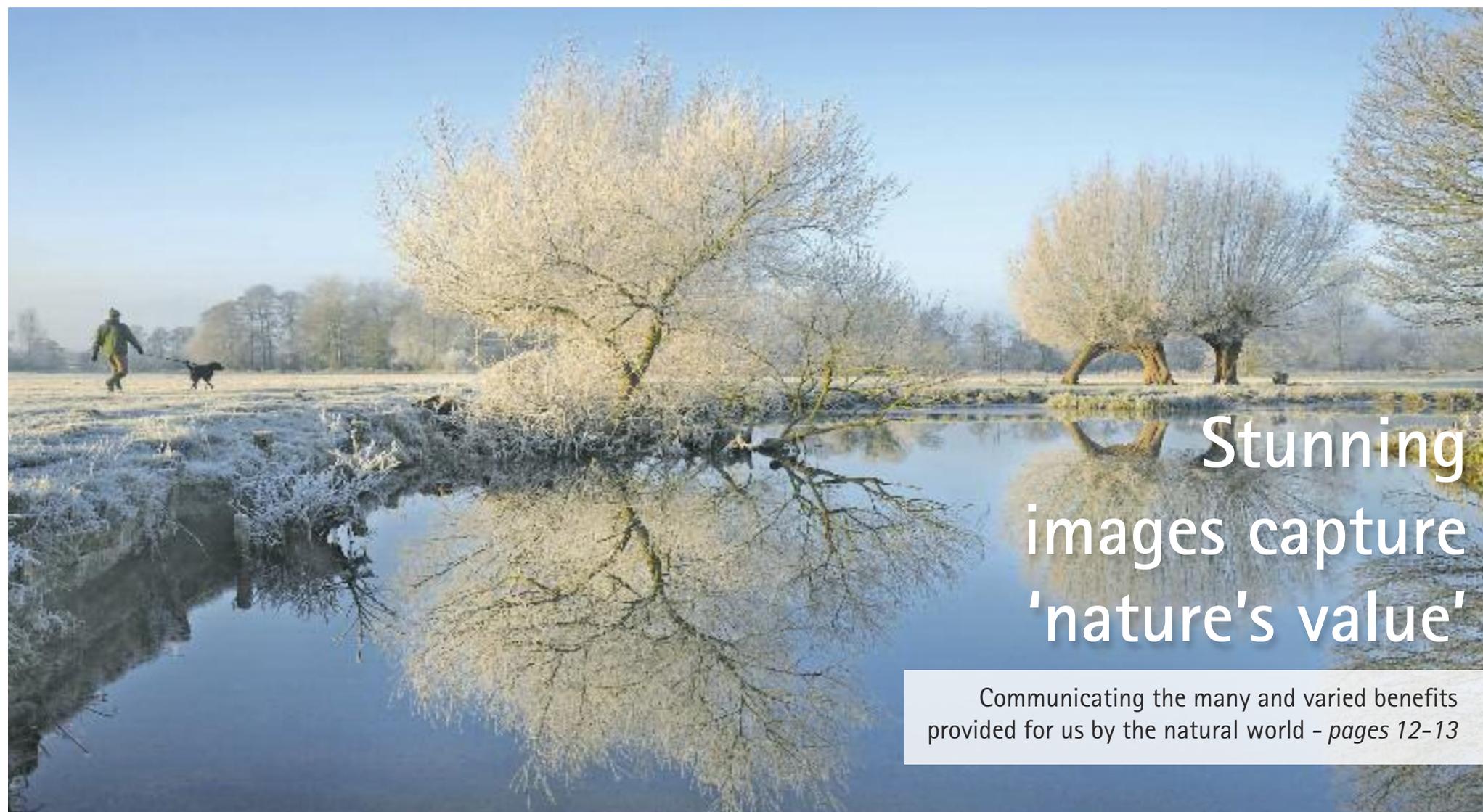
# DEDHAM VALE & STOUR VALLEY NEWS



News and Visitor Information for the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley

Free

Autumn/Winter 2019/20



Stunning images capture 'nature's value'

Communicating the many and varied benefits provided for us by the natural world - *pages 12-13*

**Also in this issue:** volunteers supporting the environment *page 17*, conservation and biodiversity successes *page 4*, Art at the Heart of the Valley *page 7* and Stour Valley visitor development schemes *page 16*



Celebrating an Outstanding Chairman *page 13*, and a sneak preview of our 50th anniversary *page 3*



The AONB Network's response to the issues of Climate Change and Biodiversity Decline *page 11*



Vice Chair walks the Stour Valley Path for Suffolk Mind and other 25th anniversary stories *page 8*

## Messages from the Chairmen



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

**2**019 has been an eventful year so far. The very successful Landscapes for Life annual conference of the National Association for AONBs, held in July at the University of Essex, topped the list. It was organised superbly by our own team, and the series of field trips to special areas in the Dedham Vale & Stour Valley and elsewhere were a stimulating way for the record number of delegates to spend the first day.



**Cllr Nigel Chapman**  
Chairman,  
Dedham Vale  
AONB and  
Stour Valley  
Joint Advisory  
Committee  
(JAC)

**2**020 will see the 50th anniversary of the designation of the Dedham Vale as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and we have several core projects and a range of special events to celebrate this milestone (page 3). The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, which created AONBs, gained royal assent in December 1949 and one of the national projects celebrating this anniversary is '70@70', page 8. This aims to show that AONBs across the country are

Top speakers included Michael Gove, then Secretary of State for DEFRA, and Dame Fiona Reynolds, formerly head of CPRE and later of the National Trust. They both gave encouraging messages, as did Julian Glover, Chairman of the Review of Protected Landscapes. The conference ended with the making of the Colchester Declaration to significantly increase the scale and pace of nature conservation in the national AONBs (page 11). It was a great pleasure to host the annual Forum, also attended by record numbers, in our Shrubs Farm Barn, Lamarsh (Page 3).

The Stour Valley Path celebrates its quarter century this year and this is being marked by James Finch, Partnership Vice-Chairman and also Chairman of Suffolk County Council, with a sponsored walk for the charity, Suffolk Mind. A big Thank You to businesses and individuals along the route for their generous support for James who does so much for Suffolk (page 8).

Two important planning decisions have encouraged our hopes

working hard to help nature through the combined efforts of landowners, conservationists and AONB teams. These projects show that with the right resources, capacity and expertise we can have a significant impact on nature recovery across our landscapes. The two examples we have highlighted from the Vale relate to Barn Owls and Black Poplar Restoration.

This idea is developed much further in the Colchester Declaration that Robert Erith mentions, and which, in turn links into the interim report of the Government's Review to consider the future of National Parks and AONBs. This is a call to action and states that 'more must be done for nature and beauty' (page 11). With most Councils declaring a Climate Emergency, AONB teams are well placed to lead by example and we look forward to the full report later this year.

The final approval has been received for the undergrounding project that will remove 6km of overhead electricity cables, 80 poles and 13 pole-mounted transformers from the Box Valley. The estimated cost of the scheme is £962k which will be recovered from Ofgem by UK Power Networks, who will be

to extend the AONB up river towards Sudbury. A proposal to build 98 houses along the Colchester road at Bures was dismissed by the Inspector on appeal. If allowed, it would have seriously jeopardised AONB criteria. A second application for conversion to housing of agricultural buildings at Ferriers House, also in Bures was withdrawn by the developer. The whole property is full of historic significance, of interest to Harvard University in the USA as well as locally.

After more than a decade as Partnership Chairman, I have decided, at the age of 81, to retire. I reflect on my association in an article on page 10. I shall remain a member of the Partnership representing the Country Land & Business Association while Nigel Chapman takes over the Chairmanship. It has been a privilege to have had this role and especially to have worked with Simon Amstutz and his enthusiastic and dedicated team in the vital work of preserving and enhancing our lovely valley. Do consider volunteer work in the valley. It is so worthwhile and great fun too.

undertaking the work (below).

We are thrilled too that the LEADER funded project is now well underway with objectives that include improving physical access and awareness of the Stour Valley Path and directly support the River Stour Festival and the Wool Towns' Association (page 16).

We have commissioned a Valued Landscape Assessment for the Project Areas. This will enhance the advice and comments we can provide on planning issues outside the AONB, which itself is supported by a Management Plan and a Landscape Character Assessment. This is due before Christmas, page 11.

I am delighted to welcome additional temporary members to our Project Team who are tasked with delivering a number of special projects in the coming months. In conclusion may I thank all those who contribute to this work - our Project Team members and our wonderful volunteers! Please join us in enjoying the Stour Valley in the coming months!

## We Couldn't Do It Without You

**A** huge 'thank you' to all the Dedham Vale landowners who have supported proposals to underground overhead electricity wires between Polstead and Stoke-by-Nayland. Their support means Dedham Vale AONB has now secured Ofgem funding to remove 6km of wires, 80 poles and 13 pole-mounted transformers - a significant enhancement to this outstanding landscape. Our project partners, UK Power Networks, will now start getting consents and other agreements in place with work on the ground expected to start in 2021.

A second big 'thank you' goes to the volunteers who helped systematically assess the impact of overhead wires on the Dedham Vale landscape. After initial training from the AONB team and under the guidance of our AONB Student Placement, Steph Poole, over a dozen volunteers surveyed a large proportion of Dedham Vale AONB. Those areas where the impact scored highest will now be looked at for feasibility to develop an application for more Ofgem funding, by the AONB staff team.

Claire Cadman, Projects Officer



Assessing the impact of overhead wires on our outstanding landscape at a volunteer training event

## Special Qualities of the Stour Valley

The theme of the 2019 Dedham Vale Forum, attended by over 100 people, was Special Qualities. In our report of the event you can read highlights of the speakers on archaeology, farming policy, outdoor education, swift conservation, and why our special qualities are important, see [www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org/about-us/annual-forum-conference](http://www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org/about-us/annual-forum-conference).

We had a special welcome from Bernard Jenkin, MP for Harwich and North Essex. Bernard discussed his personal interest in the area and

recognised the contribution that so many people make to looking after the countryside. In addition, Bernard discussed the issues around land management that are hugely important and that it is not just about preserving the environment but also improving it and creating more opportunities for human interaction, enhancing habitats and supporting biodiversity. Bernard commented: "What a great day to celebrate our beautiful landscape which was created almost as it is now, several hundred years ago."



Dedham Vale and Stour Valley Forum Speakers (L-R): Graeme Willis, Edward Jackson, Robert Erith, Emma Black, Cllr Nigel Chapman, Alison Farmer, Howard Brooks, Sir Bernard Jenkin MP



Wednesday 20 May 2020 will mark the 50th anniversary of Dedham Vales designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. To mark this significant milestone the AONB will be inviting key partners, stakeholders and volunteers to promote the work that has taken place over the last 50 years to conserve and enhance our landscapes. Throughout the year we would like to invite you to join in the celebrations and we are keen to hear about:

- Anniversaries your organisation, club or group are celebrating in 2020, especially other 50th anniversaries, birthdays and milestones, within the AONB
- Projects or activities that you are organising that showcase the special qualities of the AONB, and bringing people together to explore the landscape, learn more about the environment or support an individual species
- Historic photographs or film that you have from the AONB, and about your memories of the Suffolk coast. Please share your photographs and film with us to help build picture of how the AONB has changed over the last 50 years.

Throughout 2020 we will celebrate our anniversary by showcasing the work of the AONB team, thanking all our wonderful volunteers who make an invaluable contribution and creating a legacy of the area for generations to come. We will be sharing more details about our plans in the Spring 2020 newspaper or email [DedhamVale.Project@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:DedhamVale.Project@suffolk.gov.uk). Keep an eye out to see how you can get involved.

Jacqueline French, 50th Anniversary Officer

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## Going From Strength to Strength

Since the Stour Valley Education Network (SVEN) was created seven years ago the group has become an effective outdoor learning network across the AONB and Stour Valley. With over 28 partners involved in either heritage, culture, wildlife, landscape, food or recreation, outdoor learning in the Stour valley is flourishing. We ran another successful "Wild in the Stour Valley" fun family day where over 400 people enjoyed the various activities put on by the outdoor learning providers, and the SVEN event leaflet which is full of wonderful outdoor events for families to attend, has been extremely popular.

Our biggest achievement this year has been the update of our Discovery Fact Sheets. The original set of sheets on Heritage, Wildlife, Landscape and Culture was joined by a new factsheet on River Management, plus a contacts sheet for our partners. The factsheets were funded by the AONB Sustainable Development Fund and money from Sudbury Round Table and Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust. For a free copy either contact the AONB office or download a copy from our website.

Emma Black, AONB Countryside Project Officer



## Thank You For Our SDF Grant!



The vegetation surveys undertaken by specialist Jonny Stone for the whole Tiger Hill reserve, which is mostly designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, were not possible without a grant coming from the Dedham Vale AONB Sustainable Development Fund.

The vegetation surveys confirmed the special characteristics of the reserve, describing the:

- Oakwood that supports bluebells, for which Britain has an international obligation
- Dry acid grasslands that are some of the very few remaining in the Stour catchment
- Ash-Hazel wood as transitional zones above the springs and seepages of the London clay
- Fine stands of Giant Horsetail in Gazeley Gate, which are a conservation feature recognised at the national level by Natural England and its predecessors
- Brook valley Alder woods, which are uncommon in East Anglia and very sensitive to regional drainage, and
- And the intact sequence of grasslands in the Long Meadow, which shows glimpses of the types of vegetation that rely on groundwater and regular maintenance to survive.

This report will have an important impact on the planning and running of our species diverse Local Nature Reserve, particularly writing our next Management Plan. As Chairperson I've been asked to write and thank the Dedham Vale AONB for our SDF grant.

Sue Hooton, Tiger Hill Local Nature Reserve Committee

## Melford's Magnificent Meadow

A new information board has been installed next to an area of wildflower rich grassland on Melford Green to raise awareness of its importance as a County Wildlife Site (CWS). CWSs play a key role in the conservation of biodiversity. Suffolk has over 900 CWSs and they are of county, and often regional or national, importance.

Our Magnificent Meadows project aims to help preserve wildflower rich grasslands in the AONB and Stour Valley, by highlighting their importance, surveying species and working with landowners and communities to manage them for a greater diversity of flora and fauna. Volunteers recently surveyed nine Suffolk CWSs and many Essex Wildlife Trust Local wildlife trust sites, with more being surveyed by Lavenham Natural History Group.

Located on the Green next to the conduit, this small area of damp grassland supports a large population of Southern Marsh and Early Marsh Orchids, along with Ragged Robin and other wet grassland species such as Cuckoo Flower, Greater Bird's-foot Trefoil, Agrimony and Lady's Bedstraw. The board was produced by us in partnership with local groups and businesses, and it will help local people and visitors understand why this area of grassland is left uncut for most of the year and enable them to identify some of the rarer plants found in the Stour Valley. We are so pleased that local businesses and groups were involved in the producing



© Steve Thomson

something for their local community, and everyone loves the wonderful painting by local artist Vernon Lever, showing the Green up to Melford Church.

Emma Black, AONB Countryside Project Officer

## Summer of Hedgehogs

Having lived in Steeple Bumpstead village for nine years and never seen a live hedgehog here and rarely a squashed one on the road, this has been a summer to remember. Out in my own garden late one night, my son heard snuffling and then saw a hedgehog in the garden. I borrowed a nature webcam and was rewarded with footage of one, then two, eating food I'd left out for them. So exciting.

Soon after, in the school grounds, we found a young hedgehog who we took along to a Hundon Hedgehog Rescue (HHR). I'm pleased to report he's doing well and will be released this autumn. He has been named 'Wiggle' for obvious reasons! We took delivery at my house of another struggling hedgehog, who was taken for expert care and attention by Jill

at HHR. This one, Lupin, has now fully recovered from dehydration, lung worm and liver fluke and has been collected and released back 'home'. Another baby taken to HHR sadly didn't make it, and we have had one road kill, but there have been quite a few reports of hedgehogs around the village, and only last week one was seen walking along our Riverside Walk.

We don't know why we are so lucky this year, but wouldn't it be lovely to think it was partly to do with our hedgehog project a few years ago, when we built and distributed boxes and put out lots of information out about them. Fingers crossed our little population continues to grow and thrive.

Dominique Wallace, Steeple Bumpstead Wildlife and Environment Group



## Essex Otter Survey – Volunteers Needed!



In October 2019, Essex Wildlife Trust launches the 25th Anniversary Essex Otter Survey, the last of the annual county otter surveys. From total extinction in the 1980s, otters can now be found on every Essex catchment and the River Stour and its Suffolk tributaries have been included in the survey since Essex University started it off in 1996. Over the years we have been able to track the recolonisation of this iconic species as it moved South and East from the Suffolk border, finally arriving on the Thames near Canvey island in 2019.

We are looking for both new volunteers and experienced otter surveyors, to visit the 60 survey points across the Stour catchment between October 2019 and June 2020 (there

are 256 sites across Essex in total). We will provide a free RIVERSEARCH otter survey course to any volunteers with no previous experience and you can do your survey(s) at any time during that period. Finally, in late 2020, a report will be published crediting every participant and a free copy made available to everyone who took part.

This is a great way to learn more about your River and the wildlife that lives there, so if you would like to take part in this milestone otter survey then please get in touch with Natalie Singleton, River Catchment Assistant, Essex Wildlife Trust for further details: [riverw@essexwt.org.uk](mailto:riverw@essexwt.org.uk) or 01621 862974.

Darren Tansley, Essex Wildlife Trust



© Roger Hance

## Belated Flowering, Belated Thanks

One day in September 2010 Neil Catchpole (then Landscape and Biodiversity Officer at Dedham Vale AONB) offered me some green hay from Long Melford Green, the special County Wildlife Site opposite Melford Hall managed for orchids (see more on page 4). We spread it over a damp section of one of our pastures, but nothing happened the next year or the next, and I forgot all about it.

In June 2019 I was out checking rotten fence posts and discovered to my delight, in the lush meadow grass, not just some Ragged Robin, but about 30 Southern Marsh Orchids (*Dactyloriza praetermissa*) about 20cm high, and to my amazement, one wonderful flower spike about 55cm high. Careful searching eventually revealed another tall spike about 25m away. I could not find the tall ones in my flower identification books. Local botanist Nick Miller was similarly baffled but Martin Sanford (author of A Flora of Suffolk) says they are probably a hybrid of the Southern Marsh Orchid and Common Spotted Orchids, which he knew did occur on Melford Green.

Apparently orchid seeds need to form a symbiotic relationship with a fungus in the soil in order to grow and this can take up to 10 years. Our fields used to be under commercial arable cultivation so it is not that surprising it has taken this time for the orchids to flower here. So belated thanks to Dedham Vale Project workers!

Bob Cowlin, Assington Mill



The wonderful flower spike about 55cm high that is thought to be a hybrid Southern Marsh orchid

## Ten Rivers Project



Mixed native tree species were planted at Dairy Farm in Chelsworth on the River Brett. The plastic tree guards will be removed once the trees have established.

Across the Essex and Suffolk Stour Valley the Water Environment Grant funded, Ten Rivers Project, has successfully completed a vast number of improvements and activities:

- 2,280 Riparian trees planted: 155 along the River Glem; 20 on Bildeston Brook; 445 on the River Stour; 1,100 along the River Brett; and 560 at Chilton Brook
- 625m of fencing erected alongside the River Stour and River Brett.
- 12,694 Giant Hogweed plants manually removed from 67 sites.
- 12 Himalayan Balsam Pulling Work Parties carried out on the River Box, River Stour and Lavenham Brook.
- 26 delegates attended the annual INNS LAG meeting at Shrubs Farm in Lamarsh.

Figures are from February to September 2019. The project continues until March 2021.

Alex Moore da Luz, River Stour Enhancement Project Officer



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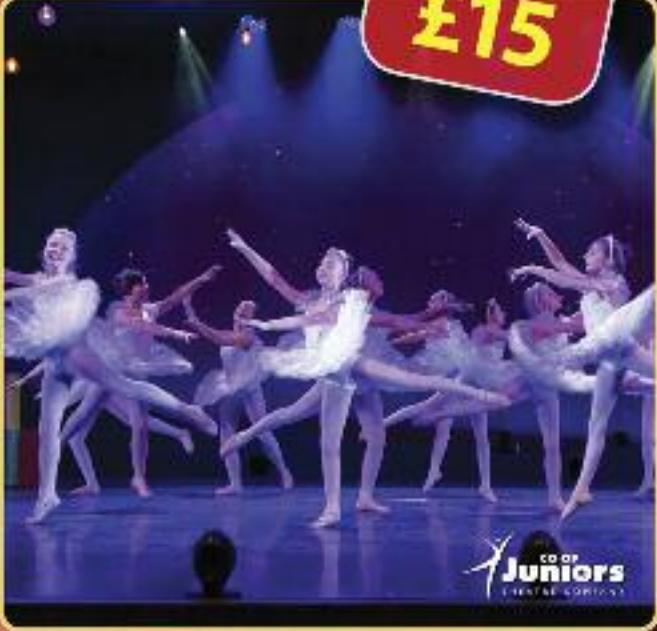
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## Sir Cedric Morris - Artist and Plantsman

We cannot separate Cedric Morris the man from the house and garden that were his home, workplace and retreat. He has been described as a post impressionist whose portraits penetrated the character of the sitter. Those who came under the spell of Benton End returned again and again. The explanation can be found in the many memories of students and visitors to the East Anglian School of Painting and Drawing, based at Benton End.

Cedric and fellow artist Arthur Lett-Haines re-established the school in Hadleigh in 1939 following a fire at their studio in Dedham. For forty years a distinctly non-academic approach attracted students destined for greatness, as well as those for whom art was a pastime. The school's prospectus stated: "The object of the school is to provide an environment where students can work together with more experienced artists, in a common endeavour to produce sincere painting."

Cedric was also a creative plantsman. Whilst he is known for the beautiful irises he propagated and painted, he grew many other plants. Life at Benton End was informal, generous, sometimes volatile but never dull. So what was it that made such a lasting impression? Why did a rundown old farmhouse generate such affection? Hadleigh's Memories of Sir Cedric Morris exhibition, can be seen at the Visit Hadleigh 'pop-up information centre', and includes extracts from the diaries of Lucy Harwood, student Glyn Morgan, Beth Chatto and award winning Iris enthusiast Sarah Cook. For more details please contact [snowdonjane@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:snowdonjane@hotmail.co.uk) or see [www.visithadleighsuffolk.co.uk](http://www.visithadleighsuffolk.co.uk).

Jane Snowdon, Visit Hadleigh



## Stour Valley Wild-Lights

Wild-Light is an art and design project that specialises in creating educational installations using lighting, photography, film and sound, by interpretation through historic buildings. After spending much of my early life discovering the Stour Valley, I returned from working internationally and living in Paris and had the opportunity to rediscover this childhood enchantment of the Stour Valley, and refamiliarising myself with the historic and natural landscape.



Over several years Wild-Light has developed concepts under various guises which are significant to a Design Concept, with the most recent being LandEscape Museum of the Landscape. The first major project for LandEscape was created in October 2018 at the historic Church of St. James, Avebury, Wiltshire. This residency worked with two schools where the children went on a photographic exploration discovering hidden secrets the ancient church. Various images were chosen and then projected on the exterior and interior of this iconic building. Each child was excited to see their images projected in large format and the church became an exciting educational space.

This was the prototype for the River Stour LandEscape. We held the first constraint tests at Flatford, with Valley Farm becoming the first canvas, and we will develop more possibilities within the community. The next tests will be in October 2019 ready for various installations using the historic river buildings as interpreters to the River Stour's hidden secrets. To find out more about this work in progress please see [wild-light-landscape.simdif.com](http://wild-light-landscape.simdif.com).

Mitch Mclean, Wild-Light

## Stronger Than Ever

Set up in 1968 as NADFAS (National Association for Decorative & Fine Arts Society), The Arts Society is an organisation bringing people together through a shared curiosity in the arts. With 385 independent societies throughout the UK and 10 international societies together with a Head Office in London, we rebranded in 2017 as The Arts Society, and some 90,000 members help to preserve our artistic heritage, see [www.theartsociety.org](http://www.theartsociety.org).



Our events provide opportunities to hear from selected lecturers about their specialist knowledge of the arts, and each society provides admission to outstanding monthly lectures on topics as diverse as Dutch Dolls Houses and Art & International Crime. Membership gives access to in-depth study days; tailored tours to places of cultural interest; and a Quarterly Arts Magazine. There are opportunities to work on projects such as documenting the heritage of our Churches, an official record kept for public viewing; or providing grants for deserving Young Arts projects so encouraging our children's interest in the arts.

I belong to The Arts Society South Suffolk (TASS) which attracts membership from around Sudbury, where we meet. We provide opportunities to meet like-minded people and attend a lecture without obligation. Details of our lectures are publicised in local publications and on our website [www.tassouthsuffolk.org.uk](http://www.tassouthsuffolk.org.uk). Friendships are forged and cultural knowledge challenged!

Carol van der Sande, Arts Society South Suffolk

## PATH Celebrates the Path

The PATH exhibition was North House Gallery's contribution to the River Stour Festival. It was inspired by the 25th Anniversary of the Stour Valley Path, organised by the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Stour Valley (AONB). As a walker who has walked the Stour Valley Path twice, I was keen to encourage others to appreciate it in small or heroic stretches. The brief to the artists though was simply PATH, however they wanted to interpret it, so the results were remarkably diverse, as you can see at [www.northhousegallery.co.uk](http://www.northhousegallery.co.uk).



Kit Leese, Watercolours from the Stour Valley Path

Melvyn King, a Harwich based artist, gave us ships in the *sea lanes* and Dina Southwell *flight paths* over the Californian desert. Closer to home Kit Leese and Sarah Milne showed watercolours and mixed media paintings of the Stour Valley around Flatford, Kit quite specifically showing the path. Ruth Philo, Jane Lewis, Oliver Soskice and Jasper Startup presented abstract pieces. May Cornet's monoprint *Path through the Wood* was, at 2 x 4.2m the largest piece ever shown at North House Gallery.

For Linda Theophilus's *Colours of the Path* series, see below, she dyed strips of linen with natural dyes from plants gathered along the Stour Valley Path on significant days and juxtaposed the strips to make path-like images. From Cattawade on Good Friday she extracted pale browns from ivy, yellow and beige, and a series of pale yellows from dandelion flowers. After Nayland on May Day, and Friars Meadow on the day of the May Full Moon, her final plants were collected in Clare Country Park at the Summer Solstice.

Penny Hughes-Stanton, Curator



Linda Theophilus, Colours of the Path, Natural dyes on silk and linen, each 30x30cm.

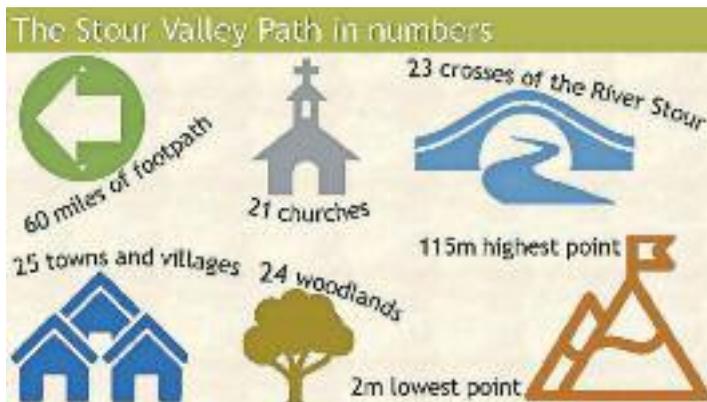
## Anniversary Roundup

As part of our 25th anniversary programme we have been undertaking footpath improvements, helping people to enjoy the path with the Stour Valley Path Passport (you can download the guide and passport for free), and looking at how we can encourage people to appreciate and access the countryside. See the various stories and updates on this page and the next.

Personally, after now walking the Stour Valley Path three times in my six months, I have particularly enjoyed Clare to Long Melford, for the tranquil scenery and small villages, as well as Stetchworth to Great Bradley due to the peaceful woodlands and landscape views. Of course, Constable Country is as magnificent as always.

There is always more work to do to encourage people to access the countryside. It is important for the health and wellbeing of people and communities; the outdoors is free and good for us. As part of this we have been working with Suffolk Refugee Support and brought a group to Constable Country for the day, using public transport from Ipswich. We had a lovely day wandering around Flatford and enjoying the walk between Flatford and Manningtree. You can get to East Bergholt from Ipswich by bus and walk to Flatford, see [www.suffolkonboard.com](http://www.suffolkonboard.com), or you can get a train from Ipswich to Manningtree and walk along the River Stour.

Alex Hewitt, Stour Valley Path 25th Anniversary Officer



## First to Receive The Passport!



through the ancient villages of Clare and Long Melford and the grounds of Kentwell Hall.

Janice, Graham, Caroline, Sarah and twelve-year old's Alice and Ella joined us at Long Melford Park and we all walked to the Lamarsh Lion for lunch. Graham said, "You never really appreciate how beautiful the Stour Valley is until you've ambled along its pathway. The ridge looking down onto the river near Henny dazzled in the bright sunshine. Only an artist as skilled as Constable could extract the essence of this green and pleasant part of our England. Thanks to Jane for the experience, it's quite possible that without her invitation we may have never been the wiser."

From Lamarsh we carried on to Nayland, for a most welcome and lovely meal at The Anchor. Our final day took us from Nayland to Cattawade, another beautiful day with fabulous views from Stoke-by-Nayland over the valley, and as we approached Dedham there were many families playing and picnicking by the river, with others rowing peacefully along the river.

We live in north Essex so walking the path over several weekends was easy. Should you not be local there are many suitable places to stay. Collecting Passport stamps from the local businesses was a bonus, and we could see our progress one stamp at a time! I'm so pleased to be the first person to officially complete a Passport in the 25th anniversary year.

We travel many miles to visit other areas but often miss what is on the doorstep; we are all so pleased that we took the time to walk the Stour Valley Path.

Jane Bennett, Stebbing near Great Dunmow

## Walking for Suffolk Mind

On the 22 June 2019 I, with my wife Jeannette and several others, left from the clock house in Newmarket to embark on a 60 mile walk for charity and to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the creation of the Stour Valley Path. Being completed in stages over several months, this walk is no easy feat, although the amazing scenery and landscape of the Stour Valley does make the journey very pleasant and stimulating.



Melanie Barret, Joanna Spicer (with Holly), Simon Barret, Jeannette Finch (with Digby), James Finch and Simon Amstutz, at Brundon Mill bridge, Sudbury, with the largest gathering of swans James ever saw on the Stour at Sudbury – circa 60!

As you leave Newmarket, you encounter the beautiful Devils Dyke, which has been standing guard since the Anglo-Saxon era, and the long walk to Cattawade truly begins. I have been promising to walk this path in full for several years as it is named the same as my County Council Division – The Stour Valley. The path is now accessible by all – able and not so able – now that most of the stiles have been replaced by "kissing gates" (page 9). My thanks go to all in the AONB team and their volunteers, who have made this walk possible, to Alex Hewitt and Roger & Stella Wolfe and all our minibus drivers, kindly loaned by Thomas Gainsborough School, who transferred us back to our cars at each stage.

The excellent health benefits of walking, both physical and mental, are a basic recommendation from my chosen charity, Suffolk Mind. This organisation creates strong support networks for people with mental health problems and aids in the recovery of individuals going through such challenges.

The Stour Valley really is the place to support mental wellbeing and the walk has been a real connection with nature, identifying over 18 species of wildflower in Great Thurlow park alone. Furthermore, passing by the numerous historic churches – Great Bradley, Kedington and Clare to name but a few – on the route has been a delight.

If you would like to support me and my chosen charity, then please go to [www.suffolkmind.org.uk](http://www.suffolkmind.org.uk) and give generously.

James Finch, Chairman of Suffolk County Council, AONB Vice Chair

## Further Reflections on How it Began

What to leave out? That was the biggest problem of devising the Stour Valley Path. There was so much that visitors ought to see and enjoy as they tramped, ambled or ran the 60 miles along the picturesque borderlands of Suffolk, Essex and Cambridgeshire. Some hard decisions had to be made.

The main consideration was reasonable directness, taking in as many of the principal sightseeing attractions, refreshment stops and accommodation places as possible. A minimal amount of road walking was essential, especially avoiding sections where traffic might endanger pedestrians. We considered using the trackbed of the Stour Valley branch railway after its closure in 1967, but this was sold off piecemeal, mostly to adjacent landowners and only a few relatively short sections were obtained by local authorities for public access. Similarly, the canal tow path depicted by Constable was never claimed for public use after the navigation declined. Our route was therefore based on footpaths, bridleways and 'green lanes' already in the public domain. See the Spring-Summer 2019 newspaper for more stories about the early days of the route.

The outcome is a varied mix of riverside walks alternating with stunning viewpoints across the



First edition of the Stour Valley Path guide

valley and close-ups of picture-postcard 'village-scapes'. Plus there is much more to see of this special landscape off-route.

The tributary valleys of the Rivers Brett, Box and Glem and the Belchamp Brook are just as attractive as the main Stour Valley. Indeed some people prefer them. To meet this interest the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project produced a series of 'Walks off the SVP', leaflets featuring routes along each of these valleys, as well as exploring mysterious 'Dragon Country' near Bures and the remote 'Headwaters of the Stour' upstream of Haverhill. Explorers can download the leaflets free from [www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org/publications](http://www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org/publications).

Roger Wolfe, Stour Valley Path creator and consultant

## Traffic Free to Constable Country?

Thanks to excellent work by Essex Highways and Dedham Vale AONB volunteers it is now possible to walk to the epicentre of Constable Country without crossing a road! Nor is there any need to add to the ever increasing volume of motor traffic clogging the country lanes threading the landscape that inspired such famous paintings as 'The Hay Wain', 'Flatford Mill', 'The White Horse', 'Boat Building', and many others of international repute.



The public footpath from the main line rail station at Manningtree has been upgraded with an 'all-weather' surface and now provides an easy stroll of just under two miles to Bridge Cottage Flatford, from where other well marked paths can be followed to East Bergholt, Dedham, Stratford St Mary and Lawford, as well as exploring local walks provided by the National Trust. Long distance walkers can use the path as an essential link to plan walks along the waymarked Stour Valley Path, Essex Way and St Edmund Way.

Manningtree station has a cafe-bar and is served by regular mainline trains to Colchester and London, Ipswich and Norwich, as well as by local services to Harwich International, see [www.greateranglia.co.uk](http://www.greateranglia.co.uk).

Whether you are a two mile or twenty-two mile walker it's now possible to enjoy exploring Constable Country, have a refreshing drink at one of the many pubs in the Vale and experience a relaxing, traffic-free journey home.

Roger Wolfe

## New Gates for Iconic Route

Over 200,000 visitors come to the AONB and the wider Stour Valley to follow in the footsteps of the artists Constable and Gainsborough and to immerse themselves in our beautiful scenery. Access into the area has taken strides, wheels and walking sticks forward! A major project was completed late summer 2019 to improve the accessibility of the Stour Valley Path by removing existing stiles (where landowner consent could be obtained) and replacing these with 'access' gates. The work was funded by LEADER and by the AONB itself as a 25th Anniversary celebration (page 16).



The 30 new gates (made from metal or wood) are a wonderful enhancement of the Stour Valley Path and will add to the enjoyment of everyone. The amazing marshes, farmland, grazing meadows, woodland and the lovely banks of the River Stour accessed by those artists is now available to everyone, regardless of ability.

Making the Stour Valley Path easier for everyone to use will bring benefits to the local economy. Evidence shows that walking is the most popular activity in the area and if we spend more time when we visit, we generally spend more money. We recognise that the population of the area will continue to increase, and some of those people will want to enjoy, exercise and relax in the AONB and the wider valley. The new gates are part of the efforts to be ready and welcoming.

Neil Lister, AONB Countryside Projects Officer

## Guidance for the Way Ahead

When walking the Stour Valley Path, or any footpath for that matter, you will come across waymarker posts and the waymarker discs that reside upon them. These signs offer guidance to walkers and are a much sought after improvement to many sections of the path. The placement of a waymarker post is not small matter however, and it takes a great deal of lifting and digging to securely place one in our landscape.

With a dedicated team of volunteers, and no small amount of elbow grease, nine new waymarker posts have been placed along the long distance walking route at the time of writing, with locations for many more being surveyed every week by the amazing footpath wardens of the Stour Valley Path. The placement of each one has a similar set of requirements. The appropriate waymarker discs are placed on the post first, for it is easier to attach them when the post is horizontal. Meanwhile, a two foot deep hole is dug, which through hard or stony soil is no mean feat, the post is then placed and slowly the hole is back-filled with a mixture of stones, soil and other aggregates, all the while being tempered to give it stability. We will co-ordinate the installation of many more waymarker posts, so that the footpath may be more easily navigable for the years to come, and we are thankful to all the volunteers who have helped so far.

Alex Hewitt, SVP 25th Anniversary Officer



Stour Valley Footpath Wardens help install a new waymarker



## Passport Places (Part 1)

**Platform One Café – Clare:** This café is a converted train station and is rich in the history of the area. Set in the beautiful Clare Castle Country Park, the food and drink are enhanced by the grace of this natural and cultural hotspot.

**The Lamarsh Lion – Lamarsh:** Overlooking fields and woodlands, the Lamarsh Lion is a historical ale house that has been saved from dereliction by its community. The open space inside and children's place area outside make for a relaxing and fun combination.

**The George – Cavendish:** Set in the quaint village of Cavendish, The George has recently been given a new coat of paint and a new lease of life. It is well set along the Stour Valley Path as a pitstop for weary travellers and its comfortable and relaxed atmosphere rest your mind easily.

**The Essex Rose – Dedham:** This quiet and peaceful tearoom is linked to the Tiptree jam factory and thusly has some of the country's most delicious jams and preserves at its disposal. Stop by for afternoon tea, enjoying the views of Dedham as you do.

**Bull Hotel – Long Melford:** With a history of welcoming guests that stretches back to 1570, the Bull Hotel is more than capable of catering for your needs. This charming and comforting building is a well-known stop in Long Melford and deservedly so.

**National Trust Flatford Shop – Flatford:** A prime National Trust location, Flatford Mill also hosts a picturesque shop with a variety of items for sale. From garden and house plants, to books and postcards, your Stour Valley Path journey is not complete without a wander around this splendid shop.

## Reflections on My Decade as Chair

After five years on the Partnership representing the Country Land & Business Association (CLA), I was elected Chairman of the AONB Partnership in 2008, on the retirement of Cllr Tony Clover. It was the first time the Partnership chairmanship had been separated from that of the Joint Advisory Committee, the body that controls finances and staffing, chaired by Cllr Nigel Chapman. Nigel and I have worked together happily by making sure we keep each other in touch on all the issues and he will now take on the Partnership chairman's role.

I have been fortunate throughout all this time to have been the President of The Dedham Vale Society, Vice-President of CPRE Essex and on the Colne Stour Countryside Association committee. I have tried to ensure that the AONB Partnership works with these amenity societies which all carry weight with the local authorities. Working together is a real force for protecting and enhancing our beautiful valley.

I have hosted three of the four Government ministers responsible for AONBs in my time: Richard Benyon MP, Lord de Mauley and Lord Gardiner. They have seen for themselves the beauty of Dedham Vale. I have also spent time to ensure that our three local MPs, Sir Bernard Jenkin, James Cleverly and James Cartlidge, together with County, District and Parish Councillors, are aware of the importance of our AONB and of the merits of our proposed extension towards Sudbury. As a result, this proposal has the support of all the local authorities and Members of Parliament.

My involvement is helped by spending all my life in the district, growing up on my father's farm at Ardleigh and going to Littlegarth school during the war when it was in Dedham. And, since my marriage to Sara, living for over 50 years at Shrubs Farm in Lamarsh, where we have been able to restore the farm by planting woods and hedgerows on what was formerly a prairie. Erith's have lived on the Essex/Suffolk border for over 400 years and I have recently discovered that I am also descended from the Cressener family which 600 years ago owned the land we now farm. It is not surprising that I feel passionately about conserving and enhancing the Dedham Vale & Stour Valley whilst recognising the inevitability of evolutionary change. For example,

there are now far more trees in the valley than there were in my youth and there is not a single house which has not had alterations, additions and improvements.

Over the last decade, the Partnership has passed several resolutions which have been incorporated in the five-year Management Plans. The Plans are endorsed by all the local authorities and carry weight in planning decisions. The most important resolution was in 2009 to begin the formal process of seeking to extend the AONB. Much work has been done since then, but the snail's pace of boundary review means we still wait, unless the Glover Review recommends a speeding up of the process.

Other examples of Partnership successes include persuading National Grid that when the time comes the new 400kV wires should be undergrounded through the AONB and Stour Valley. Other resolutions dealt with restricting lanterns and balloon releases, obtrusive lighting and dark sky recognition, renewable energy production, when to consult the AONB team on planning, and development in the setting of the AONB.

As important, is the growing appreciation by the many local authorities and countryside groups of the work others are doing in the valley. Councillors, civil servants and volunteers, farmers, business people and amenity societies can all learn from each other. Partnership members are constantly changing, but knowledge gained from meeting and working together can be passed on and is invaluable.

Of course, the Chairman does not run anything. That is the job of the Manager and team. I have been fortunate in working first with Katherine Potts and since 2011 with Simon Amstutz who, with their very dedicated teams have made such a huge contribution to conserving and enhancing the AONB and wider valley area. It has been a real pleasure to be involved with such a talented group of people and I have done my best to offer occasional introductions, some ideas, encouragement and advice. We have made a lot of progress in the last ten years but there is still much more to be done.

**Robert Erith, September 2019**

## An Outstanding Chairman Steps Down

After Robert Erith TD DL was elected to be chairman of the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Partnership in June 2008, I have learnt more about Robert (and what the TD DL stands for) and his amazing passion, energy and commitment to the Dedham Vale. [Editor: TD stands for Territorial Decoration, and DL for Deputy Lieutenant]

Having a family that can trace itself back over 600 years living in and near the Stour Valley helps understand this connection. His renovation and enhancement of both the land and house at Shrubs Farm is testament to the commitment Robert has for conserving and enhancing the natural beauty and special qualities of the area.

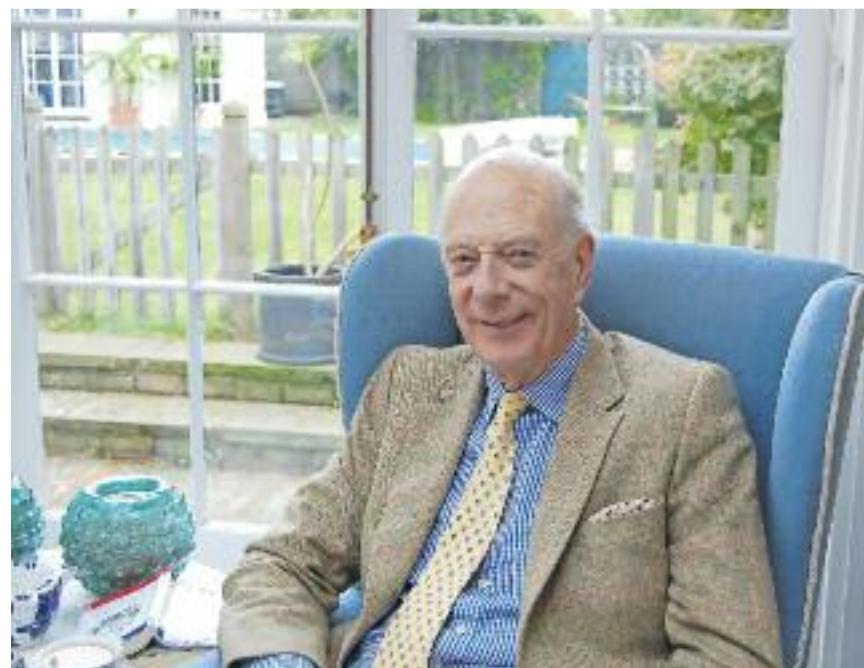
It is an education to hear Robert talk about his life: being one of the first pupils at Littlegarth school, his national service in Jordan followed by a stint as a regimental reserve (retiring as Major in 1979), his political career, his work in the United States, his role of High Sheriff, as founder-chairman of Essex Community Foundation, as a FWAG Farming Conservation winner. I could go on.

Underpinning it all is his passion for the Dedham Vale. Along with his wife Sara, whom he married in 1966, Shrubs Farm has hosted the annual Dedham Vale Forum with great generosity for many years. I have encouraged Robert to stay on the Partnership and hope that he will. His knowledge of the key issues in the AONB, his connections to decision makers and his passion for delivering the AONB purposes is too important to lose. Robert has taught me a great deal and I learn something from him every time we meet.

**Simon Amstutz, AONB Manager**



Robert Erith chairing the 2015 Dedham Vale Forum, hosted at Shrubs Farm





## The Colchester Declaration

### The AONB Network's Response to the Issues of Climate Crisis and Biodiversity Decline

Using its unique network and partnership model the national AONB Network has set out its offer to meet the challenges of the Climate Crisis and Biodiversity Decline. The collective pledge – known as the Colchester Declaration – was drawn up at the July 2019 Landscapes for Life Conference and is set to be ratified at the AONB Chairman's Conference in November 2019.

Set against a backdrop of unprecedented concern for the future of the natural world, and intergovernmental reports that the current global response to the effects of human impact on nature is insufficient, the AONB Network will significantly increase the scale and pace of nature conservation activity in the 46 AONBs.

With many AONB host authorities having taken the step of declaring a Climate Emergency we are demonstrating our readiness to act to redress declines in species and habitats within the context of a wider response to climate change.

### The AONB Network believes:

- Natural Beauty has intrinsic value and means so much to people
- AONBs should be places of rich, diverse and abundant wildlife
- Nature recovery is central to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty
- Climate change is the biggest threat to humanity and one of the greatest threats to biodiversity. Designated landscapes offer some of the most powerful solutions to the challenges of climate change
- The network of AONBs and National Parks, their teams, partnerships, authorities and stakeholders offer a unique solution to tackling environmental challenges

### The AONB Network pledges:

#### By July 2020

- To enable an approach that creates opportunities within AONBs for people to make an emotional connection with nature
- To prepare a Nature Recovery Plan for each AONB

#### By 2024

- To embed an ecosystems services approach into all AONB Management Plans
- To ensure all AONB Management Plans include meaningful measures around climate change mitigation and adaptation, including clear, measurable targets to support Net Zero

#### By 2030

- That at least 200,000 ha of SSSIs in AONBs will be in favourable condition
- That at least 100,000 ha of wildlife-rich habitat outside of protected sites will have been created/ restored in AONBs to further support the natural movement of plants and animals
- That at least 36,000 ha of new woodland will have been planted or allowed to regenerate in AONBs following the principle of the right tree in the right place
- That, by each AONB immediately adopting a species on the threatened list and by preparing and delivering a Species Action Plan, at least thirty species relevant to AONBs will be taken off the list by 2030

The AONB Network calls on the Westminster and Welsh Governments to provide the power and resources to make these targets achievable. Updates at [landscapesforlife.org.uk/news/latest-news](http://landscapesforlife.org.uk/news/latest-news).

**Simon Amstutz, AONB Manager (providing the introductory paragraph)**

## 70@70: AONB Nature Recovery Solutions

2019 is the 70th anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (NPACA), and in recognition of this significant milestone the National Association for AONBs has collected together 70 examples of nature recovery from across England and Wales. See all the projects at [landscapesforlife.org.uk/about-aonbs/nature-recovery-solutions](http://landscapesforlife.org.uk/about-aonbs/nature-recovery-solutions).



Over 100 delegates at the Landscapes for Life Conference creating a heart for the landscapes they represent

These achievements are the combined effort of thousands of farmers, landowners, conservation charities and volunteers, as well as the AONB teams themselves. These projects show that, with the right tools, capacity, expertise and resources, we can have significant impact on nature recovery across our landscapes and beyond.

**Howard Davies, National Association for AONBs**

## Glover Review of Designated Landscapes

As part of Defra's 25 Year Environment Plan the Government, in this 70th anniversary year since the NPACA, is holding a Designated Landscapes Review chaired by Julian Glover, to ensure that AONBs and National Parks are relevant for the next 70 years. This review is one of many (including the Agriculture Bill) and will result in changes to the working practices of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

In July 2019, soon after his attendance at the Landscapes for Life Conference, Julian Glover and the then Secretary of State, Michael Gove, exchanged letters about the interim findings of the landscapes review, see [www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org/about-us/the-national-association-for-aonbs](http://www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org/about-us/the-national-association-for-aonbs). We await the full report and official response, and will provide an update on the expected changes in our next newspaper.

## Valued Landscape Assessment

As part of AONB planning support we have commissioned Valued Landscape Assessments for the Project Areas to the Dedham Vale and the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The Project Areas are those that extend beyond the designated landscapes, into adjacent district and borough council areas, who we work closely with and who provide financial support. We do much the same activity within those areas as we do within the designated AONBs, where funding allows. The Dedham Vale Project Area covers 302 sq kms from east of Bures up to the Cambridgeshire border where the River Stour begins, while the Suffolk Coast & Heaths additional area is much smaller at 44 sq kms and includes the Shotley peninsula and the southern banks of the Stour estuary in north Essex. While the Project Areas broadly share similar characteristics as the AONBs they do not benefit from the same level of statutory protection as the AONBs they abut. These Assessments will develop our knowledge and understanding about why the Project Areas should be considered Valued Landscapes. In July 2019 the project got underway with the appointment of Alison Farmer Associates and is scheduled to be completed by the end of October 2019.

Once completed, the two studies will provide invaluable evidence for responding to planning applications and appeals, informing emerging Local Plan policies and future AONB Management Plan reviews. As part of the project, existing baseline evidence will be reviewed and Alison will also be out in the field assessing various landscape, ecological and heritage qualities.

I'm really pleased that this work is underway as we are aware that Project Areas present some planning challenges. While they might not be designated like the AONBs, large parts of the Project Areas are high quality in landscape terms. The assessments will provide us with important evidence to support this, which in turn, will protect them against unsuitable development.

**Beverley McClean, AONB Planning Officer**

## Photographing Nature's Value

In spring 2019 the Marine Pioneer invited the people of East Anglia to capture 'nature's value' through photography. The competition was intended to communicate the many and varied benefits provided for us by the natural world. Illustrating the value of nature to a wider audience is critical if we are to turn the tide on environmental decline that has been witnessed over the past 70 years.



It would be a challenge to show all the wonders nature provides in a single photograph, so we chose four competition categories based on the types of benefits the natural world offers. These benefits are known as 'ecosystem services' and some are trickier to comprehend and photograph because they don't necessarily give a benefit that can be seen or felt. It is this very reason that mankind has degraded the natural environment, only recognising that we have done so when we feel the knock on effects.

More than 65 photographers picked up their cameras to take over 220 images of 'nature's value' as part of the 2019 competition. Here are some of our favourite photos, accompanied by a brief explanation of how we thought each demonstrated the value of nature. More about the competition can be found online at [www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/marine-pioneer/communicating-nature-s-value](http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/marine-pioneer/communicating-nature-s-value).

If we are to reach the aim of improving the environment within 25 years, as set by the Government in 2018, then we need to look closer to home and see the value on our doorstep. We hope these wonderful pictures from the AONBs do just this!



### Rob Coleman: Nature's Recycling Centre

Category – Supporting Services

Supporting Services are perhaps the hardest of all the ecosystem services to relate to. This is because they don't offer direct benefits to humans, but instead underpin other types of natural service. When walking through the woods, our attention is often drawn upwards by the trees that physically define a woodland. Yet the fungi beneath our feet are the real stars that we should focus on.

Rob Coleman captioned his photograph 'Nature's Recycling Centre' which sums up the tireless work fungi do in balancing woodland ecosystem by processing nutrients so that they can be used again by other organisms. Being at ground level refocuses our attention to understand that the trees and everything else in the wood is built from the ground up. At a time when plastic pollution is hitting the headlines, we are reminded that nature has been recycling for many years.

### Supporting Services



© Trevor Boyd

Supporting ecosystem services underpin all of the goods and services we get from the natural world. They are hard to recognise in day-to-day life but include:

- Biodiversity
- Nutrient Recycling
- Primary production
- Soil formation

### Cultural Services



© Natacha Bines

Cultural services can be considered as the non-material benefits we get from nature, things like;

- Wellbeing
- Heritage
- Sense of place
- Ecotourism

### Regulatory Services



© Liz Inwards

Regulatory ecosystem services are the processes that help bring stability and predictability to our lives;

- Flood prevention
- Climate regulation
- Erosion control
- Pest Control

### Provisional Services



© Robyn Bartlett

Provisional services are the physical goods we get from the natural world;

- Building and clothing materials
- Food and water
- Transport (rivers)
- Herbs and medicines



### Adam Billiald: Mighty Oak

Category – Supporting Services

A sturdy tree trunk is a cliched metaphor for support. This isn't the imagery that defines this 'Mighty Oak' though. It is the vibrant green of the chloroplasts – the tiny cellular engines of green plants – that so brilliantly illustrates supporting ecosystem services. As we peer skywards, out of the dense woodland, we are reminded that we are just a small component of the wider ecosystem in which we inhabit.



## Andrew Bailey: Gamekeeper's Dog

Category – Provisional Services

Nature photography is often universally appealing. This might not be the case with Andrew's image 'Gamekeeper's Dog'. Despite the grisly image, the photo brilliantly conveys provisioning services. The innocence expressed through the eyes of this young spaniel is juxtaposed with the game bird hanging from his mouth. However, it isn't the provision of the game bird we should focus on, it is the relationship between humans and dogs that is important in ecosystem services terms, demonstrating that working together has a greater gain for our planet. N.B. The bird was roadkill that the dog picked up whilst out on a family walk.



## Natacha Bines: Enjoy it Your Way

Category – Cultural Services

The silhouetted figures in Natacha's 'Enjoy it your way!' photo each focus on different elements of the same landscape. This scene beautifully illustrates the diversity of the natural world. The fact that each of us relates to our environment in different ways is one factor that makes any attempt to value nature so difficult. This image brilliantly shows us that it is important to consider everyone's perspective when asking the question "What is the value of the natural world?"



## Rob Coleman: Mason Bee

Category – Supporting Services

Rob's photo of a mason bee making a home in a man-made habitat was the overall competition winner. It appealed to the judges because it illustrates the importance of making small concessions to give nature a home. It works on many levels and acts to prompt a conversation, not least because at first glance the background is dominated by the brick wall which is about as far from natural as you can get! It's exactly this ability to start discussion, accompanied by a take-home message of working with nature that made this a winner!

With so many different perspectives on what nature's value is, it was incredibly difficult to judge what the best images were. The judges primarily looked for photos which could be used to start a conversation about nature's value.

## Judging is a difficult job!

Take a minute to consider for yourself which ecosystem services (if any!) these pictures convey.



© James Hadley



© Jessica Fleming



© Jennifer Foulger



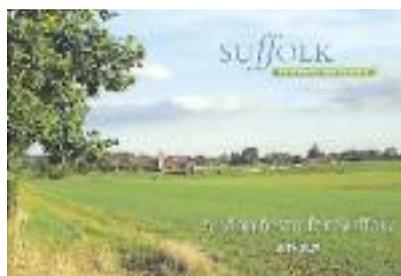
© Trevor Boyd

## Manifesto for Local Distinctiveness

To mark our 90th anniversary the Suffolk Preservation Society launched a 10-year Manifesto to help direct our activities – and those of others – to ensure the longer-term future of the county’s iconic landscapes, towns and villages. The Society is not against change – far from it. However, we do believe that Suffolk faces unprecedented pressure which, unless directed and moderated, will result in a county that is no longer the one residents love, nor the one tourists come to see. The Manifesto highlights the key issue of the explosion of housing to accommodate population growth and the government’s housing targets. While good growth is something to be embraced, the Society focuses on combatting the tide of monotonous and insipid housing often delivered by the big housebuilders; housing that fails to respond to local distinctiveness. The Manifesto also raises the huge challenges for the Suffolk coast from the damaging impacts of future nationally important energy projects in the renewables and nuclear sectors. But the Manifesto is not a defeatist response to these massive challenges.



Suffolk Preservation Society board and guests launching the Manifesto at Lavenham



SPS President Geoffrey Probert explains: “The worst excesses can be avoided if we and the local communities fight to enhance Suffolk’s villages, towns and landscapes for decades to come.”

Details on the SPS website [www.suffolksociety.org](http://www.suffolksociety.org).

**Bethany Philbidge, Suffolk Preservation Society**

## Green Light Trust at 30

What has changed since Nigel Hughes and Ric Edelman were inspired to set up the Green Light Trust? The trust began after seeing Brazilian rainforest being cut down at a rate of one football pitch a minute, as reported in a 1987 newspaper article that sat alongside an announcement of a footballer signing of £250k. 30 years later a recent footballer exchange was for over £100million. As I clumsily reach for changes in football as an analogy, why does it feel like groundhog day for the world’s rainforest?



The desire then as now was to assist those who not only required the most support, but in many cases had the least access to the natural environment. Today we support those marginalised or disadvantaged in society. This includes adults and children with mental health issues, specific educational needs, are in recovery from substance misuse, are under probation services, at the point of exclusion or have already been excluded from education, or are just struggling to engage in education. See [www.greenlighttrust.org](http://www.greenlighttrust.org) to find out how we use nature to re-engage these people.

**Tom Brown, Green Light Trust**

## Bee Kind

One third of the UK bee population has disappeared in the last decade. Given that bees are responsible for pollinating a third of the world’s food crops, their decline is not only sad, it has serious consequences for the global food chain. Initiatives like the AONBs Pollinator Patches are important and the good news is, you can do your bit at home too.

Gardens and allotments can be 'pollinator hotspots', sometimes attracting more than 10 times the number of bees found in parks or nature reserves. Even weedy corners of the garden, with everyday buttercups and dandelions, can be attractive.



Make your garden bee-friendly to appeal to a broad variety of the c270 bee species in the UK, by planting different shapes of flower in your garden, and vary their flowering period so that there’s always something in bloom.

Be the host with the most with a shallow dish of water, always a welcome sight for thirsty bees, as are places to shelter from the wind such as bug hotels.

Finally, avoid using pesticides in your garden and try to buy organic seeds, bulbs and plants where possible.

Britain’s bees face tough conditions. We can make our back gardens bee-friendly without having to spend too much time or money, and involving children helps teach them about conservation. It would be wonderful if every garden could be a little kinder to the great British bee.

**Karoline Gore, freelance writer**

## Active County is Good for Your Health

The AONBs provide the perfect environment to improve your health and wellbeing. From walks in the countryside to cycling through the forest, to taking part in a local Parkrun or Great Run Local, there are plenty of ways to get active that don’t cost a penny. What’s more, while structured gym classes can be challenging for beginners, these free activities in the great outdoors allow you to workout at your own pace, ease into new exercises and find what suits you best.

Benefits of being active outside: improved mood; you burn more calories, because varied terrains and weather put different demands on your body than indoors; you stay in shape and improve the health of your heart more; energy levels are boosted; you sleep better; you get more vitamin D, helping to prevent osteoporosis, or thinning of the bones; and you to enjoy different scenery and get to know your local area.

It’s a fact that people who exercise regularly also have a lower risk of developing many long-term conditions, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers, as well as reducing your risk of stress, depression, dementia and Alzheimer’s disease. Parkruns, see [www.greatrunlocal.org](http://www.greatrunlocal.org), are a great way to increase your fitness, your general health and to make friends. If your community is interested in establishing a run please contact: [colin.grogan@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:colin.grogan@suffolk.gov.uk).



**Colin Grogan, Most Active County, Suffolk County Council**

## What Goes in your Recycling Bin?

Suffolk will soon have a state-of-the-art facility as part of a new contract for kerbside recycling services. The Materials Recycling Facility (MRF), where recycling from Suffolk’s household bins is sorted, is undergoing a major refurbishment to provide the latest mechanical and optical sorting equipment, producing better quality sorting and recycling. During the renovation period, your kerbside recycling will be delivered to other UK sorting facilities.

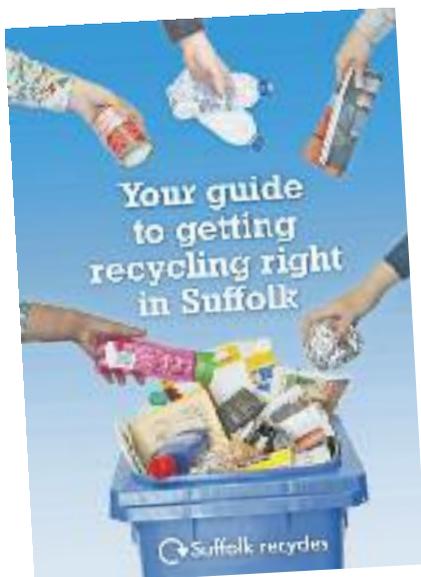
Residents will continue to be able to place a wide range of materials in a household recycling bin: paper, card and books, plastic bottles, pots, tubs and trays, steel and aluminium cans, empty aerosols and clean aluminium foil. You can no longer recycle food and drink cartons (e.g. Tetra Pak) or metal pots, pans and trays, because there is no mechanical way to separate cartons from the other recycled material at the MRF and it is no longer cost effective to

selectively sort by hand. Pots, pans and trays can cause blockages at the MRF, causing further problems. Please use the eleven Suffolk Recycling Centres for these items.

The Markets that take household recycling for further use are demanding better and better quality, so please make sure that your recycling is clean, dry and loose and only put in the items listed as acceptable. Contamination levels are around 12% which costs us all and can spoil good recycling.

Explore [www.suffolkrecycling.org.uk](http://www.suffolkrecycling.org.uk), especially My Bins and Recycling Centres for more information, or if in Essex see [www.lovessex.org](http://www.lovessex.org).

**Caroline Fish, Suffolk Waste Partnership**



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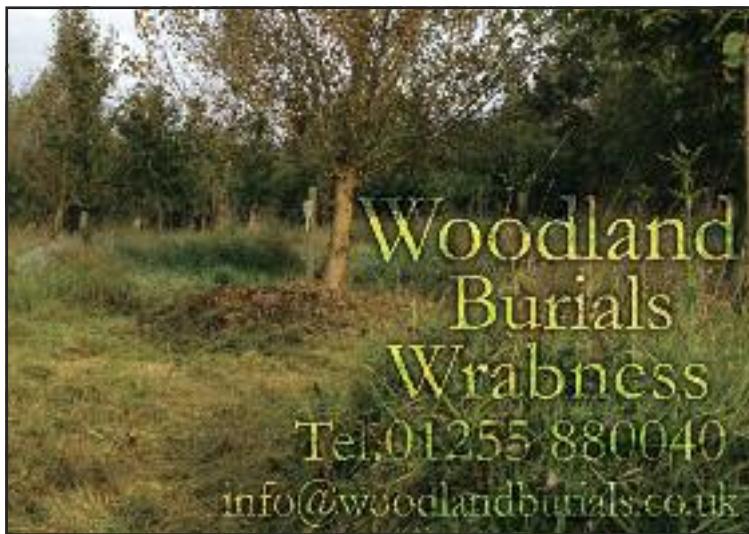
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## Improving the Stour Valley for Visitors



The 'Improving the Stour Valley for Visitors' project is now underway, with two Visitor Development Officers being in post since late April. The project is funded by LEADER, which is part of the European Agricultural

Fund for Rural Development that gives grants to support improvement to the rural economy.

The overall aim of the project is to broaden and increase awareness of the Stour Valley as a visitor destination. The project hopes to encourage more overnight visitors, throughout the whole year and not just in the peak tourism season, to boost the local economy. This will be achieved with a whole range of activities, including online marketing and promotion, the production of a film about the art culture within the valley, a series of podcasts, some special events, some new publications like food trails and short stay itineraries, and some improvements to the Stour Valley Path (page 9). We are also working closely

with the Wool Towns Association and the River Stour Festival, as well as a network of businesses across the valley, to develop a quality offer for visitors and potential visitors to the area. Contact us at [visitstourvalley@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:visitstourvalley@suffolk.gov.uk).

**Katherine Davies & Oka Last**, Stour Valley Visitor Development Officers



The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas

## Art and Culture from Source to Sea

The River Stour Festival (RSF) promotes a wide range of events which celebrate the Stour Valley, its culture, the surrounding landscape and people throughout the year. In 2019 the programme has featured talks, walks, swims and art exhibitions, all taking place throughout the long valley.

[riverstourfestival@gmail.com](mailto:riverstourfestival@gmail.com) - events can be added to the website all year if you miss the print deadline. Sponsors are also required!



**Katherine Davies**, Stour Valley Visitor Development Officer

A couple of events specially run by the RSF were particularly popular this summer. Jules Pretty, the festival's Patron, who is an author and Professor of Environment & Society and Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Essex, did a talk about nature and health, and internationally acclaimed Suffolk artist Maggie Hambling, did a talk about her book 'A Suffolk Eye'.

The festival programme publicises events held by many organisations throughout the valley - such as boat trips by the River Stour Trust, and the summer family activities at Clare Castle Country Park. It promotes everyone's news and information on [www.riverstourfestival.com](http://www.riverstourfestival.com), plus does regular blogs and social media. Autumn will see the planning of the 2020 programme, so send in your events to



## Shining a Light on Wool & Silk Heritage

The Wool Towns area includes five of the most picturesque places in the Stour Valley - Clare, Hadleigh, Lavenham, Long Melford and Sudbury - as well as shining a light on the beauty of the surrounding towns and villages. Together the Wool Towns share a locally distinctive cultural and built heritage of cloth weaving, including wool and silk which historically generated wealth and facilitated the beautiful heritage buildings which are, today, so popular with visitors.

The Wool Towns Association (WTA) is a not for profit organisation which aims to promote the Wool Towns area to a wider audience and to attract visitors. This can be achieved by promoting not only the heritage of the area but also the rich variety of local providers and activities such as accommodation, food and drink and things to see and do. The WTA is working in partnership with the



LEADER funded project, Improving the Stour Valley for Visitors, hosted by the Dedham Vale AONB, to broaden awareness of the Wool Towns area as a visitor destination, by working to attract visitors to the area and encourage longer stays. Find out more at [www.wooltowns.co.uk](http://www.wooltowns.co.uk).

**Oka Last**, Stour Valley Visitor Development Officer

## Calling for Constable Country Volunteer Rangers!

**D**o you enjoy walking in our iconic landscape and want to keep it looking outstanding and accessible to everyone to enjoy? We are looking for Constable Country Volunteer Rangers! Read Roger's article (below) for an insight into what the role involves. We provide training and equipment. To find out more please contact Emma Black.

## A Sense of Belonging

**W**hen I first became a Constable Country Volunteer Ranger I thought I'd just be walking the footpaths between Flatford and Dedham. I soon found out how wrong I was. From Langham and Higham, through Stratford St Mary to Dedham, East Bergholt, Flatford, Lawford and Manningtree, a myriad of footpaths opened up before my eyes. I found myself exploring different landscapes and ever changing views from all sides of the Stour Valley.

As volunteers we are asked to offer two hours per fortnight and we choose our own routes. It is relatively easy to log each walk via a website, even for a computer challenged individual like myself, and reporting problems to the appropriate authority is rewarding when the resolution is made. Naturally the changing seasons hold their own recompense and giving a helping hand to visitors leaves you feeling good too. I often ask visitors where they have come from and what their interests are, so I can steer them to some overlooked gem.

This year we were asked to take part in studying and reporting on the visual impact of overhead cabling within the area (page 2). I did not realise that power companies are obligated to give substantial funding to remove unsightly power lines and replace them with underground cabling in AONBs. This project increased my interest and understanding of the complete landscape, and a sense of belonging develops.

A downside is seeing the way that a very small number of almost certainly locals to Dedham misuse the area when exercising their dogs. Many dog owners have said to me that they cannot see the point of clearing up when there are sheep and cattle for most of the year in the walking meadows. The reply is that whilst sheep and cattle 'indiscretions' are no doubt messy and unpleasant, these animals are not meat eaters and therefore do not carry the extremely harmful bacteria that our pets waste does. By not clearing up, or just leaving plastic bags for the farm animals to consume, they are condemning these creatures to an unpleasant future and spoiling the area for the many thousands of visitors that bring prosperity to these very same residents. I urge all these individuals to collect the 'problem' and plead they carry it the short distance to the appropriate disposal point.

I enjoy the abundant wildlife, seeing the flash of blue as a kingfisher darts over the water, the elegant and slow beat of a herons wings as they share the skies with cormorants, egrets and visiting geese of so many denominations. It is refreshing to realise they are here because the valley is healthy and provides for their young. The resident ducks provide year round entertainment for our children and the swans continue to return bringing their own elegance and grace.

Further afield the Stour provides for the myths and legends of old which are entwined with fact as the Bures Dragon still lives on. Closer to our own immediate area, landowners are returning large pieces of land back to nature which has already encouraged the likes of owls and other creatures to proliferate. One such enterprising owner has carved a life sized wooden crocodile and has anchored it in a pond that sits immediately to the side of a public footpath.

Where is it? Stop me and chat a while. I'm the old boy in the green tabard and faded green cap.

**Roger Leeks**, Constable Country Volunteer Ranger



## Dog Poo Bags: 'Bag It & Bin It'

**P**lastic dog poo bags left discarded in the countryside and on footpaths have increased. The Constable Country Volunteer Rangers (CCVRs) noticed that along with more litter there are more dog poo filled plastic bags left on the footpaths in Constable Country. They not only look ugly for the people who picnic along the river, but the plastic is a danger to the cows that graze the meadows and other animals. Plastic bags left in the environment can take 500 years to biodegrade.



The CCVRs walk and check the footpaths, pick up litter and speak to visitors. To raise awareness and hopefully influence a change in dog owner behaviour, the AONB team asked the volunteers to undertake a six week survey in Summer 2019 of the number of dog poo bags discarded, in particular on the path between Dedham and Fen Bridge.

During the first two weeks the rangers picked up 55 discarded bags. In the middle two weeks they sprayed 35 bags with biodegradable spray and left them in situ, highlighting the discarded bags. In the last two weeks they picked up the sprayed bags but also counted 10 new bags. The



*Young Constable Country Volunteer Rangers doing the dog poo survey*

spraying certainly highlighted the problem, and this has influenced (somewhat) those regular dog owners who walked their dogs during this period. We really need everyone to 'Bag It and then Bin It'. Our 'I'm a Good Dog' signage will hopefully act as a reminder.

So where should you "Bin It"? It is best to take the bags home! Dog poo can be put in your usual domestic black waste sack (local authority waste guidelines can vary from place to place, so please check), or in one of the many dog waste bins which can be found in the area. Around Dedham you can use the road side waste bins.

**Emma Black**, AONB Countryside Project Officer

## Dickensian Christmas at Kentwell...

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## Canoe Group Alters Course

River Stour Boating CIC (RSB) has been running guided canoe trips from Sudbury to Cattawade for the past 12 years in order to promote the area. Volunteer based, this Community Interest Company has successfully introduced people of all ages and abilities to the beauty of the Stour Valley from the best viewpoint possible – in a canoe.



The river is established as a popular destination for canoeists and kayakers so we no longer run guided tours. We now focus our efforts on river maintenance, making

journeys easier for all paddlers. This involves clearing overhanging branches, collecting floating litter and reporting major problems to the Environment Agency, who are responsible for keeping the navigation open along the river. RSB have some small grants available: for improving access points such as jetties; encouraging newcomers to canoeing; or for general community projects linked to the river. If you

know of any projects or if you live locally and want to join in with our river maintenance efforts, please contact me at [info@riverstourboating.com](mailto:info@riverstourboating.com).

**Steve Mann, River Stour Boating**

## Little Woodland Tribe

Clare Castle Country Park has an expanding programme for exploring and connecting with nature. A new Forest School called Little Woodland Tribe engages children with the natural environment, increasing curiosity, independence and confidence, and leading to child-centred learning and holistic development. When we spoke with parents and grandparents, as their children got their hands dirty at a bush craft taster session, they said how this kind of play is far less common today than it was 'in our day'.

exploring the surrounding landscapes whilst getting their hearts pumping and chins wagging. On Friday mornings you can hear the tapping of our Nordic Walkers as they teeter along the pathway.



Our Trim Trail has ignited a competitive fire among fitness fanatics: we often see pairs of runners spurring one another on to do 'just one more pull-up.' Parkrun invites runners of all capabilities to the 5km route and guarantees a motivating cheer from our supportive spectators. Our walking community includes the Tuesday group of grinning walkers venturing into Clare and

Our aim is to create a space where spending time outdoors not only boosts physical and mental benefits but provides opportunities to socialise, pick up a new hobby and reconnect with nature: visit [www.clarecastlecountrypark.co.uk](http://www.clarecastlecountrypark.co.uk).

**Natalie Tarling, Clare Castle Country Park**

## Stepping Forward

The Sudbury & District Ramblers Group has the honour of being the first group to be inaugurated in Suffolk in May 1970, and in 2020, like the AONB, we will be celebrating our 50th Anniversary. My wife and I moved to Suffolk 10 years ago so I have no first-hand experience of the early days, but I understand that in 1970 the state of the footpaths in the Suffolk area was a far cry from those of today. The following is from memories of Roger Wolfe: 'In many parts of west Suffolk, village populations were still in post-war decline, farms were being amalgamated and hedges removed at alarming speed to accommodate mechanisation, taking with them the last vestiges of the old footpath network.' [Editor: Roger writes about the Stour Valley Path on pages 8-9].

the finest footpath networks England has to offer. The Sudbury Group is still going strong and has many celebratory events planned for 2020, one of which is to trial a 50 mile circular long distance path joining all of the Wool Towns. Without a doubt, the best way to ensure our paths are kept in good condition is to get your boots on and walk them. See [www.sudburyramblers.org.uk](http://www.sudburyramblers.org.uk) for more information.



Thankfully after 50 years of effort by hundreds of past and present members of Ramblers, Suffolk can now boast one of

**Keith Brown, Sudbury Ramblers**

## Suffolk Farm Secretaries

More than 100 Institute of Agricultural Secretaries and Administrators (IAgSA) members gathered in March 2019 for a three-day event at Stoke by Nayland Hotel for their 50th national conference entitled "Seeing the Bigger Picture". Sponsorship and support from local organisations included the Dedham Vale AONB.

Over the weekend the conference looked at how a farm business can grow, adapt or diversify, and included a presentation on high yielding farming with exceptional levels of biodiversity co-existing. The NFU's Guy Smith said, "Despite political uncertainty and lower production standards elsewhere in the world, farmers need to remain confident and continue to invest in farming to maintain the UK's high standards". He stressed that farm administrators perform a vital role at the "coal face" of the industry.



*Kier Hall of Suffolk IAgSA, with Amanda Runciman and Bev Marsh from the Scottish Borders*

Simon Amstutz welcomed delegates to the Dedham Vale, introducing them to the Stour Valley's rich cultural and artistic history, and to the work carried out to conserve the beautiful landscape and encourage economic development. The area was new to many delegates and the conference included a walk around the hotel to see the achievements of the Peake family. It was a pleasure to show off the history and beautiful scenery and I'm sure that many delegates will be returning to the area. Details of our work can be seen at [www.IAgSA.co.uk](http://www.IAgSA.co.uk).

**Jenny Pine, IAgSA Suffolk Branch Chairman**

## CHRISTMAS FROST FAIRS

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## Sudbury Defibrillator

A defibrillator has been installed in the Quay Lane Trust car park opposite the Quay Theatre in Sudbury, beside the Granary on the Scout building wall, with thanks to the combined efforts of sports and leisure groups that use the River Stour and the area around Quay Lane. Sudbury Scouts did a sponsored 'walk and paddle', and generous donations came from: River Stour Boating, River Stour Trust, Quay Theatre, Sudbury Bowls, Canoeing, Cricket, Rowing and Tennis Clubs, and the Friar Street Sports Association which includes Hockey and Art clubs. Martin Richards of Gryphon First Aid Unit, a charity based in Sudbury, gave valuable advice, organised the purchase of the machine and kindly supplied the cabinet to hold the machine. The Quay Lane Trust committee coordinated the project.

The machine gives clear instructions to the user. If anyone wants further information or to organise first aid training with Martin, see the Gryphon website [www.gryphonfirstaid.btck.co.uk](http://www.gryphonfirstaid.btck.co.uk) for details. I suggest everyone makes a point of checking the location of the defibrillator and see how easy it is to use.

Sarah White, Quay Lane Trust committee member



## South Stour Churches Festival



Fifteen rural churches on the Essex side of the Stour are hosting a variety of events under the umbrella of our South Stour Churches Festival, as an encouragement (if you need it) to visit our beautiful and historic churches.

The Festival is the brainchild of Reverend Margaret King (also an accomplished iconographer, artist and craftswoman), and was inspired by the words "Craftsman's art and music's measure for Thy pleasure all combine", from the hymn "Angel voices ever singing" by Francis Pott (d. 1909). Each parish is hosting at least one event during October 2019, including art and craft exhibitions, talks, classical and modern concerts, a talent competition, poetry, and demonstrations of spinning and woodturning. Entry is free for most events, donations are welcome to the individual churches. We hope to make the Festival a regular event.

The festival website [www.southstourchurchesfestival.org](http://www.southstourchurchesfestival.org) has further information about exploring these iconic churches all year round, in their setting of the stunning countryside of the South Stour Valley, so well loved by its many visitors.

Helen Morgan, Lamarsh Et Festival Committee



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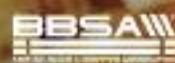
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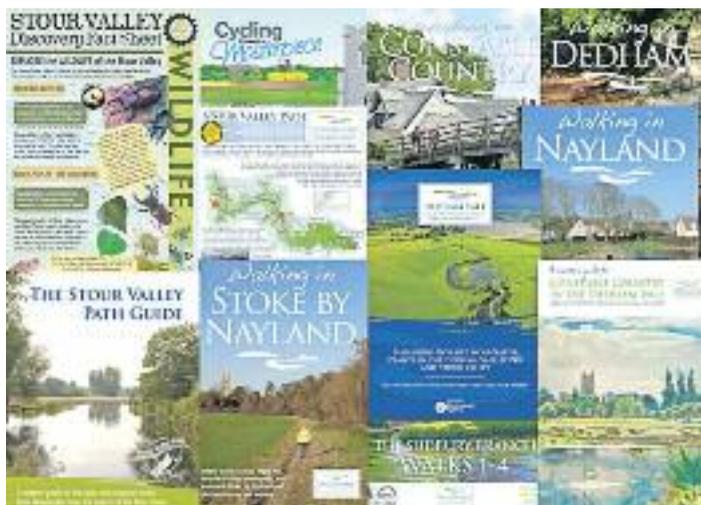
## Exploring Constable Country and the Stour Valley

The Stour Valley is fantastic at all times of year and experiencing the changing seasons and discovering different landscapes and villages are more than enough reasons to return again and again.

The AONB guides are free to download from the AONB website and include four walking guides for exploring Constable Country and all along the Stour Valley!

If cycling is your preferred outdoor experience, then we also have seven Cycling Through a Masterpiece guides exploring the full length of the Stour Valley. They range in distance from 10 to 20 miles, some with short cuts for a more leisurely ride or they can be joined together to take you further.

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## Contacting the Team



**Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley**  
 Dock Lane, Melton, Woodbridge IP12 1PE  
 Telephone: 01394 445225  
 Email: [dedhamvale.project@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:dedhamvale.project@suffolk.gov.uk)  
 Website: [www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org](http://www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org)  
 Twitter: @DedhamValeSVP

### The AONB team:

- Simon Amstutz - AONB Manager
- Alex Hewitt - Stour Valley Path 25th Anniversary Officer (temporary)
- Alex Moore da Luz - River Stour Project Officer
- Beverley McClean - Planning Officer
- Cathy Smith - Communications, Funding and Development Officer
- Claire Cadman - Projects Officer
- Deborah Sage - AONB Officer
- Eleanor Redgrave - Green Action Project Officer (temporary)
- Emma Black - Countryside Project Officer Dedham Vale
- Jacqueline French - 50th Anniversary Project Officer (temporary)
- Katherine Davies - Stour Valley Visitor Development Officer
- Lucy Oldham - Partnership Officer
- Lynn Allen - Countryside Project Officer Suffolk Coast & Heaths
- Neil Lister - Countryside Project Officer Dedham Vale/Suffolk Coast & Heaths
- Nick Dickson - AONB Officer (temporary)
- Oka Last - Stour Valley Visitor Development Officer
- Paula Booth - AONB Officer
- Pete Cosgrove - Marine Pioneer Manager
- Stephen Winsor - River Stour Project Voluntary Officer

