

**6 Coggeshall** has a rich textiles heritage dating from 1140 when monks developed fine wool skills that gave rise to the prosperous cloth industry. A picturesque Town with 200 listed buildings. A breath-taking example of elaborate decorative architecture is Paycocke's House and Garden, showing the status of a Tudor wool merchant's home. Gifts from the family built the grand medieval 'wool' church. On the marketplace there is a distinctively pretty blue and white painted Clock Tower and there is plenty of choice of independent shops, boutiques, places to stay and eat. Coggeshall Museum tells the stories of the wool, silk, velvet and lace industries. Take a wander on the Paycocke's Tudor Coggeshall Walk to discover more.



### DID YOU KNOW?

*Speciality cloth* - towns were renowned for their own cloth - Lavenham for its blue broadcloth, Coggeshall for its fine whites, and Hadleigh for its indigo blue.

*'Broadcloth' to 'bays and says'* - earlier and later types of cloth. Production followed a 'boom and bust' cycle, with industry decline from the 17th century. The influences were many including changes in fashion and world markets, wars, new railways and the industrial revolution bringing cheaper cloth from elsewhere. As demand for cloth fluctuated there were times of great poverty. Many parishes had to 'adapt to survive', reverting to agriculture, industrialising, or innovating cloth for new markets.

*'Wool Towns'* is a slight misnomer - we really should say 'Cloth Towns'. As fashions sought finer cloth, a better quality wool than locally available was imported, made into cloth and then exported. So it was the cloth and not the wool that brought wealth to the Stour Valley.

**7 The Dedham Vale** is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty with wool villages throughout the Valley including Nayland, Stoke by Nayland, Dedham, Flatford and East Bergholt. They have preserved architecture of remarkable quality, with hundreds of pretty cottages, timber framed buildings and fine 'wool' churches that dominate the landscape in size and magnificence. Sometimes referred to as Constable Country, you can find some of Constable's works exhibited in the Valley, at Nayland and Dedham churches, also the church at East Bergholt has the heaviest set of bells in England, weighing 4.25 tons! Highlights include special places cared for by the National Trust, The Munnings Art Museum, an arts and crafts centre, RSPB wildlife garden and a variety of shops, boutiques and places to eat.

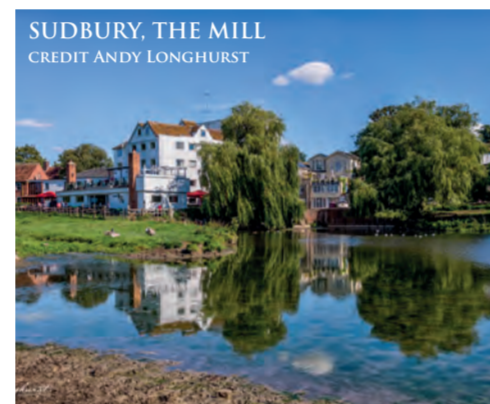


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marketplace. The magnificent parish 'wool' church welcomes hundreds of visitors from around the world. The village has over 300 listed buildings, notably Lavenham Guildhall, Little Hall, The Swan Hotel, Lavenham Priory, De Vere House and boasts a wonderful selection of independent boutique shops, galleries, and exceptional places to eat and stay.

**4 Sudbury** is an ancient Market Town in the heart of the Stour Valley and is the birthplace of Thomas Gainsborough who often painted views of the Valley. Attractions include a 'wool' church and cultural venue, a heritage centre and timber framed buildings of the wool and silk trade - there are an impressive 242 listed buildings in Sudbury, many aluding to the prosperity on the Town's industrious past and present. Today, Sudbury is proudly recognised as the



'Silk Capital' of the UK, producing much of the country's high-quality silk, with an astonishing four operational silk mills. The Town has a huge range of places to stay, eat and shop, as well as a community theatre and boat trips on the River Stour. Explore Sudbury with a variety of tranquil walks along the riverside and Sudbury Water Meadows.

**5 Hadleigh** was the centre of Viking King Guthrum's Kingdom, home to a pioneering aviator and to 'the Artist and Plantsman' of Benton End who schooled famous artists. The wealth from wool built architecture of real character such as the Guildhall, St Mary's church and Deanery Tower, amongst 250 listed buildings, the oldest medieval bridge in the county still in use for traffic. Hadleigh hosts eclectic independent shops and places to eat, its own chocolatier since 1974 and some traders established for over one hundred years. Discover more with the Town Guides or self-guided walks exploring the riverside and old railway.



## WOOL TOWNS OF THE STOUR VALLEY:

### Places to visit

**1 Clare** is the smallest town in Suffolk, nestled on the River Stour. An historic market-town with great appeal to visitors, including a magnificent 'wool' church, a tranquil priory, a castle set in a country park and a fine Ancient House Museum. The prosperity from cloth gave rise to charming architecture, today



over 130 listed buildings show breath-taking timber frames, beautiful carvings, and ornamental pargeting. As well as Clare's heritage attractions you can find a contemporary art gallery specialising in marine art, a nine-hole golf course with fishing lake, a bustling community of independent shops, with plenty of choice of places to eat and stay. A Walkers are Welcome Town, explore with many guided and self-guided walks.

**2 Long Melford** or 'Melford' to locals, is an attractive Wool Town with a sweeping village green showcasing the turrets of Melford Hall. It boasts the longest high



street in England - three miles long with a great mix of independent shops and boutiques, an opportunity for visitors to indulge in a discerning shopping experience. There are several contemporary art galleries, and a good choice of places to eat and stay. Explore the two splendid heritage homes of Melford Hall and Kentwell Hall, a country park, water meadows and riverside walks. The Heritage Centre unveils a roman and medieval past, and a spectacular 'wool' church with medieval stained glass windows featuring a beautiful hare design.

**3 Lavenham** was once the 14th richest town in England, prospering from its Lavenham Blue broadcloth, and today is one of the country's best preserved medieval wool towns, although technically a village. Rich in hidden secrets, the village can be explored by foot: meander the narrow streets and lanes lined with stunning timber framed buildings, leading up to the impressive

## Visitor Information for the Stour Valley



Use visitor information providers to help you make the most of your stay. Check out the below links or simply ask wherever you go - you will find a warm welcome from people with local knowledge who are passionate about their communities and heritage.

- Clare**  
www.visit-clare.co.uk
- Coggeshall**  
www.lovecoggeshall.co.uk
- Dedham**  
www.dedhamartandcraftcentre.co.uk
- Flatford**  
www.nationaltrust.org.uk
- Hadleigh**  
www.visithadleighsuffolk.co.uk
- Lavenham**  
www.lovelavenham.co.uk  
www.lavenham.onesuffolk.net/hub/visitor-information
- Long Melford**  
www.lavenham.onesuffolk.net/hub/visitor-information
- Sudbury**  
www.sudburytowncouncil.co.uk  
www.seeanddosudbury.co.uk

- Suffolk Wool Towns**  
www.wooltowns.co.uk
- River Stour Festival**  
www.riverstourfestival.com
- Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**  
www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org
- Visit Suffolk**  
www.visitsuffolk.com
- Visit Essex**  
www.visitessex.com
- Babergh & Mid Suffolk**  
www.babergh.gov.uk/business/tourism/visitor-information-points
- River Stour Trust**  
www.riverstourtrust.org

## Walking in the Wool Towns of the Stour Valley

There is an abundance of opportunities to explore the valley by foot with a range of guided and self-guided walks. It is possible to explore the Wool Towns and countryside in-between using a good network of quiet country lanes and public footpaths linking them up. Consider staying a while longer to relax and enjoy the area, exploring at a slower pace, discovering special places. In addition to the Visitor Information above, see the below to help you find the perfect walking routes:

- Guided Walks:** Hadleigh Town Guides, Sudbury Town Guides, Lavenham (Town Guides and National Trust), Clare Walkers (programme of self guided, weekly health walks and volunteer-led walks)
- Discover Suffolk:** www.discoversuffolk.org.uk/walking
- Essex Walks:** www.essexwalks.com
- National Trust:** www.nationaltrust.org.uk
- Stour Valley Path and other walks in the area:** www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org
- Suffolk Threads Trails:** Walks only - www.visitsuffolk.com/blog/suffolk-threads-trails.aspx
- Complete publication - www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org
- Suffolk Walking Festival:** www.suffolkwalkingfestival.co.uk

## WOOL TOWNS OF THE STOUR VALLEY

The Stour Valley is a nationally significant area for cloth heritage, positioned on the border between Essex and Suffolk - an area sometimes referred to as the Wool Towns - and under an hour by train from London. With its quintessentially English medieval market towns and villages steeped in rich heritage and culture, and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, discovering the Wool Towns is an inspiration for all.

### AN EXTRA SPECIAL PLACE - VISIT THE WOOL TOWNS TO DISCOVER...

- The centre of Viking King Guthrum's Kingdom.
- The longest high street in England.
- The 14th richest Tudor town.
- The heaviest set of church bells in England, weighing 4.25 tons!
- Medieval stained glass church windows featuring beautiful symbolic hares.
- The oldest medieval bridge in the county that is still in use for traffic.
- 'Constable Country' is the birthplace and home of the world famous landscape painter, John Constable often painted the landscape and his artwork can be found in the Valley
- The birthplace of Thomas Gainsborough, who also painted landscapes of the valley.

## VISITING THE STOUR VALLEY



Please consider travelling sustainably where possible. There are good links to the Stour Valley on the Gainsborough train line (off the main London to Norwich line) between Marks Tey and Sudbury. Local bus services, operate from Colchester and Sudbury to many Stour Valley destinations. For up to date local public transport timetables, contact traveline on: www.traveline.info or 0871 200 22 33.

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

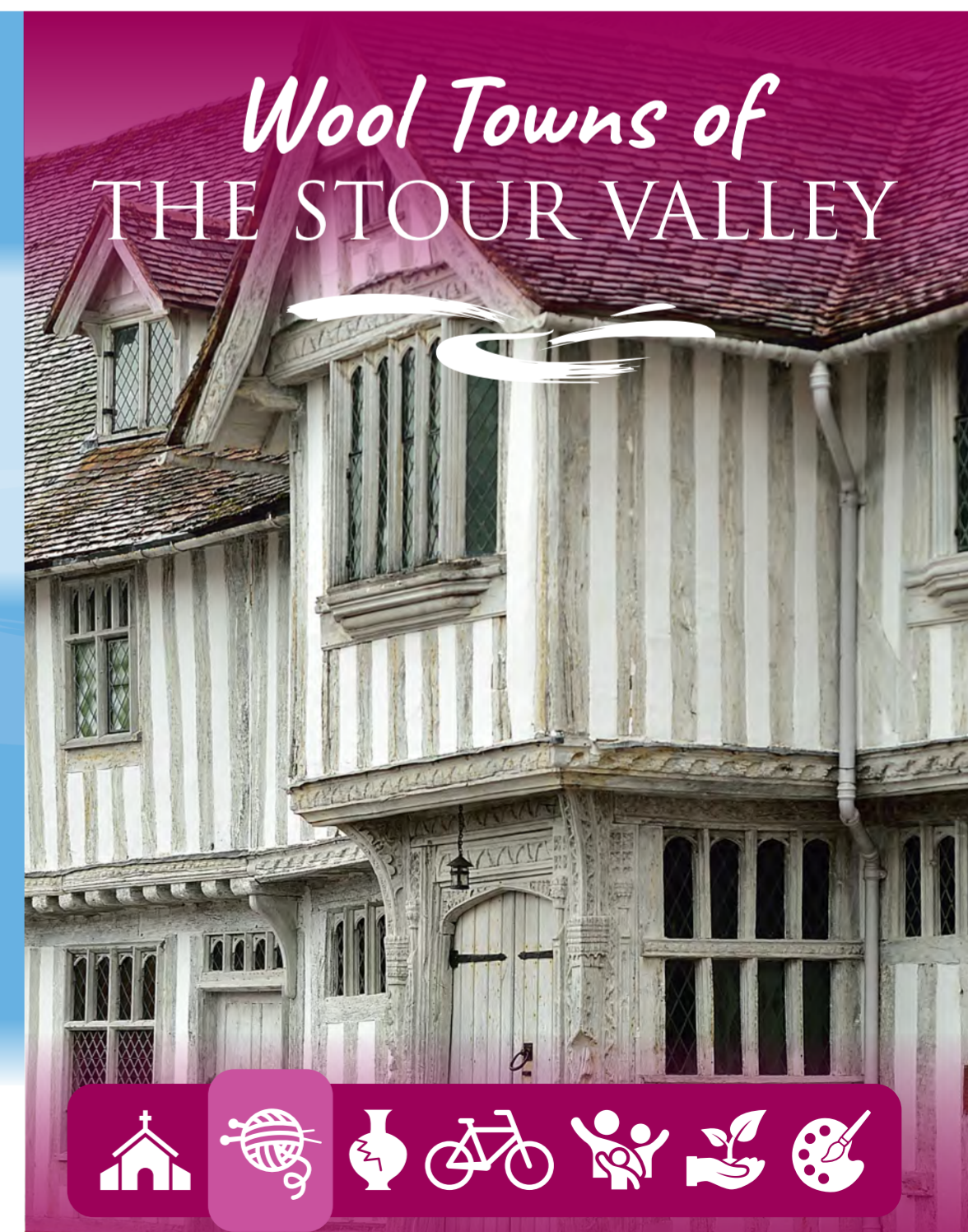
Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project  
Tel: 01394 445225  
Email: dedhamvale.project@suffolk.gov.uk  
Web: www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org

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Front cover image: Lavenham Guildhall by John Millar photograph courtesy of © National Trust Images.

With additional support from:



Explore the Stour Valley with a series of guides



# THINGS TO SEE AND DO IN THE WOOL TOWNS of The Stour Valley

Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)  
 Stour Valley and surrounding Wool Towns  
 Stour Valley Path  
 Trainline  
 Wool Towns  
i Visitor information available  
1 2 Wool Towns to visit - information on reverse  
P Parking available - on street, on site or car park very nearby  
☕ Refreshments available  
🛒 Shopping available

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**P MELFORD HALL NATIONAL TRUST**  
 Long Melford, Sudbury, CO10 9AA  
 An eclectic home that tells stories of medieval monks, the Hyde Parker Family, Beatrix Potter and much more.  
[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/melford-hall](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/melford-hall)  
 01787 379228

**P LONG MELFORD COUNTRY PARK**  
 Borely Road, Long Melford, CO10 9HH  
 The perfect place for a picnic and wander around this 8 hectare site, along the riverside getting in touch with nature.  
[www.longmelfordopenspaces.org.uk](http://www.longmelfordopenspaces.org.uk)

**P KENTWELL HALL**  
 Long Melford, Sudbury, CO10 9AA  
 A beautiful moated Tudor House filled with wonderful architecture, artwork and tapestries. Kentwell stands in over 30 acres of stunning gardens, woodlands and parkland and is home to a flock of Rare Breed Norfolk Horn Sheep. Kentwell runs family events throughout the year including Children's Weekends and Historical Re-creations.  
[www.kentwell.co.uk](http://www.kentwell.co.uk)  
 01787 310207

**P LONG MELFORD HERITAGE CENTRE**  
 Chemist's Lane, Long Melford, CO10 9JQ  
 This volunteer-run centre celebrates the history of Long Melford and unveils a Roman and medieval past.  
[www.facebook.com/pg/LongMelfordHeritageCentre](http://www.facebook.com/pg/LongMelfordHeritageCentre)  
 07792 357039

**P NETHERGATE BREWERY**  
 Rodbridge Corner, Long Melford, CO10 9HJ  
 A "Stour Valley Brewery", offering tours as well as a shop and tap room for sampling the freshly brewed and their own locally produced beers and ales.  
[www.nethergate.co.uk](http://www.nethergate.co.uk)  
 01787 377087

**P LAVENHAM GUILDHALL NATIONAL TRUST**  
 Market Place, Lavenham, Sudbury, CO10 9QZ  
 One of the most spectacular timber framed buildings of medieval England at the heart of village life.  
[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lavenham-guildhall](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lavenham-guildhall)  
 01787 247646

**P LITTLE HALL**  
 Market Place, Lavenham, CO10 9QZ  
 One of the oldest timber framed buildings in Lavenham. A museum run by volunteers - its history mirrors the changing fortunes of Lavenham. It holds the Gayer-Anderson collection of art and artefacts.  
[www.littlehall.org.uk](http://www.littlehall.org.uk)  
 01787 247019

**DYEHOUSEFIELD WOOD AND THE LAVENHAM WALK**  
 Bury Road, Lavenham, CO10 9QG  
 This beautiful and tranquil woodland, managed by Lavenham Woodland Project. The Lavenham Walk and nature reserve were established along a disused railway line, that continues all the way to Long Melford  
 01787 247728

**ST MARY'S CHURCH**  
 Church Street, Stoke by Nayland, CO6 4QU  
 Its tower dominates the landscape of Dedham Vale, and can be seen for miles around. Unique in Suffolk, it has 15th century carved oak doors in the south porch.  
<https://naylandchurches.wordpress.com/stoke-by-nayland/>  
 01206 262150

**P ST MARY'S CHURCH (& ADJACENT DEANERY TOWER)**  
 The Deanery, Church Street, Hadleigh, IP7 5DT  
 A large medieval church, with probably the earliest surviving spire in Suffolk, set beside the grand Deanery Tower.  
[www.stmaryshadleigh.co.uk/index.php/st-mary-s](http://www.stmaryshadleigh.co.uk/index.php/st-mary-s)  
 07704 778325

**P RSPB WOLVES WOOD**  
 Off the A1071, Hadleigh, IP7 6BG  
 An ancient woodland where a wide range of birds can be seen and heard, including nightingales nesting in the hedgerows and great spotted woodpeckers foraging high in the trees.  
[www.rspb.org.uk/reserves-and-events/reserves-a-z/wolves-wood](http://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves-and-events/reserves-a-z/wolves-wood)  
 01206 391153

**CLARE ANCIENT HOUSE MUSEUM**  
 26 High Street, Clare, CO10 8NY  
 A Museum featuring local history and genealogy in a 14th-century timbered building of national importance.  
[www.clare-ancient-house-museum.co.uk](http://www.clare-ancient-house-museum.co.uk)  
 01787 277249

**P CLARE PARK LAKE GOLF COURSE**  
 Clare Ancient House Museum  
 26 High Street, Clare, CO10 8NY  
 A picturesque lakeside golf course with fishing lake, and a 'Tee Room', open to all.  
[www.clare-ancient-house-museum.co.uk](http://www.clare-ancient-house-museum.co.uk)  
 01787 277249

**P CLARE CASTLE COUNTRY PARK**  
 Malting Lane, Clare, CO10 8NW  
 Clare Castle Country Park is a beautiful quiet area to relax, play, get close to nature and learn about Clare's fascinating history and heritage.  
[www.clarecastlecountrypark.co.uk](http://www.clarecastlecountrypark.co.uk)  
 01787 277902

**P ST PETER'S SUDBURY**  
 St Peter's, Market Hill, Sudbury, CO10 2EA  
 A medieval church being developed into an enriching cultural and social venue, running a broad range of events.  
[www.stpetersudbury.co.uk](http://www.stpetersudbury.co.uk)  
 07597 020427

**SUDBURY WATER MEADOWS**  
 Melford Road, Sudbury, CO10 1JT  
 Beautiful scenery and riverside trails. The tranquil landscape includes the River Stour, wildlife, mill cottages and a weir.  
[www.sudburycommonlandcharity.org](http://www.sudburycommonlandcharity.org)  
 07971 665870

**P PAYCOCKE'S HOUSE AND GARDEN, NATIONAL TRUST**  
 25 West Street, Coggeshall, Colchester, CO6 1NS  
 A stunning Tudor Woollen Merchant's family house whose walls have more than a few stories to tell.  
[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/paycockes-house-and-garden](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/paycockes-house-and-garden)  
 01376 561305

**P GRANGE BARN, NATIONAL TRUST**  
 Grange Hill, Coggeshall, Colchester, Essex, CO6 1RE  
 One of Europe's oldest timber-framed buildings, Grange Barn stands as a lasting reminder of the once-powerful Coggeshall Abbey.  
[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/grange-barn](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/grange-barn)  
 01376 562226

**P COGGESHALL MUSEUM**  
 The Village Hall, Stoneham Street, Coggeshall, CO6 1UH  
 Part of the East of England Textile Trail curated by The Warner Textile Archive. The museum has a working wool loom and a fine collection of Coggeshall lace.  
[www.coggeshallmuseum.org.uk](http://www.coggeshallmuseum.org.uk)  
[coggeshallmuseum@btinternet.com](mailto:coggeshallmuseum@btinternet.com)

**P ST PETER AD VINCULA CHURCH**  
 4 Church Green, Coggeshall, Colchester, CO6 1UD  
 One of the largest churches in Essex built the main part being built in the 15th-century, with support from the Paycockes, a successful wool merchant family.  
[www.st-peter-ad-vincula.org.uk](http://www.st-peter-ad-vincula.org.uk)  
 01376 561234

**ST JAMES'S CHURCH**  
 High Street, Nayland, Colchester CO6 4JE  
 A village centre church c1400. Altarpiece is a painting of "Christ Blessing the Elements of Bread and Wine" by John Constable R.A. The only religious picture by the artist remaining in the place for which it was commissioned.  
[www.achurchnearyou.com/church/1967](http://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/1967)  
 01206 262453

**P MUNNINGS ART MUSEUM**  
 Castle Hill, Dedham, CO7 6AZ  
 Former home of Sir Alfred Munnings (1878-1959), past president of the Royal Academy. The museum presents the largest single collection of paintings and drawings by this prolific East Anglian artist. Events and art workshops throughout the year.  
[www.munningsmuseum.org.uk](http://www.munningsmuseum.org.uk)  
 01206 322127

**P FLATFORD NATIONAL TRUST**  
 Bridge Cottage, Flatford, East Bergholt, CO7 6UL  
 Discover the views that John Constable painted and learn more about the people who lived at Flatford by visiting Bridge Cottage. Events and activities run all year round.  
[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/flatford](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/flatford)  
 01206 298260

**P THE FIELD STUDIES COUNCIL**  
 FSC Flatford Mill, East Bergholt, CO7 6UL  
 The FSC Centre of Constable Country, is an education centre set in the internationally important heritage buildings of Flatford Mill. It provides a wide range of residential and short courses on natural history and art.  
[www.field-studies-council.org/locations/flatfordmill](http://www.field-studies-council.org/locations/flatfordmill)  
 01206 297110

**P RSPB FLATFORD WILDLIFE GARDEN**  
 Flatford Rd, East Bergholt, CO7 6UL  
 A family-friendly wildlife garden designed to pass on ideas that visitors can incorporate into their own gardens to help wildlife thrive.  
[www.rspb.org.uk/reserves-and-events/reserves-a-z/flatford-wildlife-garden](http://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves-and-events/reserves-a-z/flatford-wildlife-garden)  
 01206 391153

*Textiles - Just beyond the Stour Valley*

**THE WARNER TEXTILE ARCHIVE AND THE BRAINTREE TEXTILES FAIR**  
[www.warnertextilearchive.co.uk](http://www.warnertextilearchive.co.uk)  
**THE BRAINTREE MUSEUM**  
[www.braintreemuseum.co.uk](http://www.braintreemuseum.co.uk)  
**THE MUSEUM OF NORWICH AT THE BRIDEWELL**  
[www.norwichlanes.co.uk/culture/the-museum-of-norwich-at-the-bridewell](http://www.norwichlanes.co.uk/culture/the-museum-of-norwich-at-the-bridewell)



**The National Trust**

The National Trust protects and cares for special places in the Stour Valley which are intrinsically linked to the woollen cloth industry, celebrating and telling stories of the people and heritage. Come rain or shine, there are activities for all including events, demonstrations by the Guild of Spinners, Weavers and Dyers, and guided or self-guided walks to the area.

To find out more: [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk) - look out for these special 'woolly' highlights on your visit to the Stour Valley:

- Lavenham**  
 Guildhall and 'Discover Lavenham's Hidden Secrets' guided walk
- Coggeshall**  
 Paycocke's House and Garden, Grange Barn and Tudor walk
- Flatford**  
 Flatfordmelle, or Flatford Mill and rambles around Flatford

Flatford Bridge and Bridge Cottage, Copyright National Trust, Image by Justin Minns

**VISIT THE WOOL TOWNS OF THE STOUR VALLEY AT ANY TIME OF YEAR, stay a while and you will discover...**

- 600 YEARS OF COLOURFUL HISTORY REVEALED**  
 The woollen cloth industry flourished and there are many fascinating stories to tell.
- THE RICHEST MEDIEVAL AND TUDOR TOWNS**  
 At its peak (1550s) the cloth industry made the Stour Valley one of the wealthiest places in all of England.
- A LEGACY OF CROOKED TIMBER FRAMED BUILDINGS**  
 Some of the finest historic guildhalls, merchants houses and weavers cottages often with intricate décor both inside and out in the form of wood carvings and 'pargeting' a highly skilled decorative plastering.

- SOARING 'WOOL' CHURCHES**  
 Strong faith and great prosperity built exceptionally large and magnificent churches with lavish architecture, such as spectacular flintwork, intricate carvings and beautiful stained glass.
- MARKETPLACES**  
 Ancient wool and cloth markets, today still thriving with artisan food and local produce.
- WOOL CRAFT**  
 Traditional weaving, spinning and dyeing is kept alive today demonstrating the fine art of wool skills, once practiced in many homes and workhouses throughout the Valley.
- AN OUTSTANDINGLY BEAUTIFUL RIVER VALLEY**  
 The textile industry was concentrated along the River Stour and its tributaries. Once, riverside mills processed the wool and working barges, known locally as Stour Lighters, navigated the Stour. The beauty of this valley has been celebrated for centuries by artists.