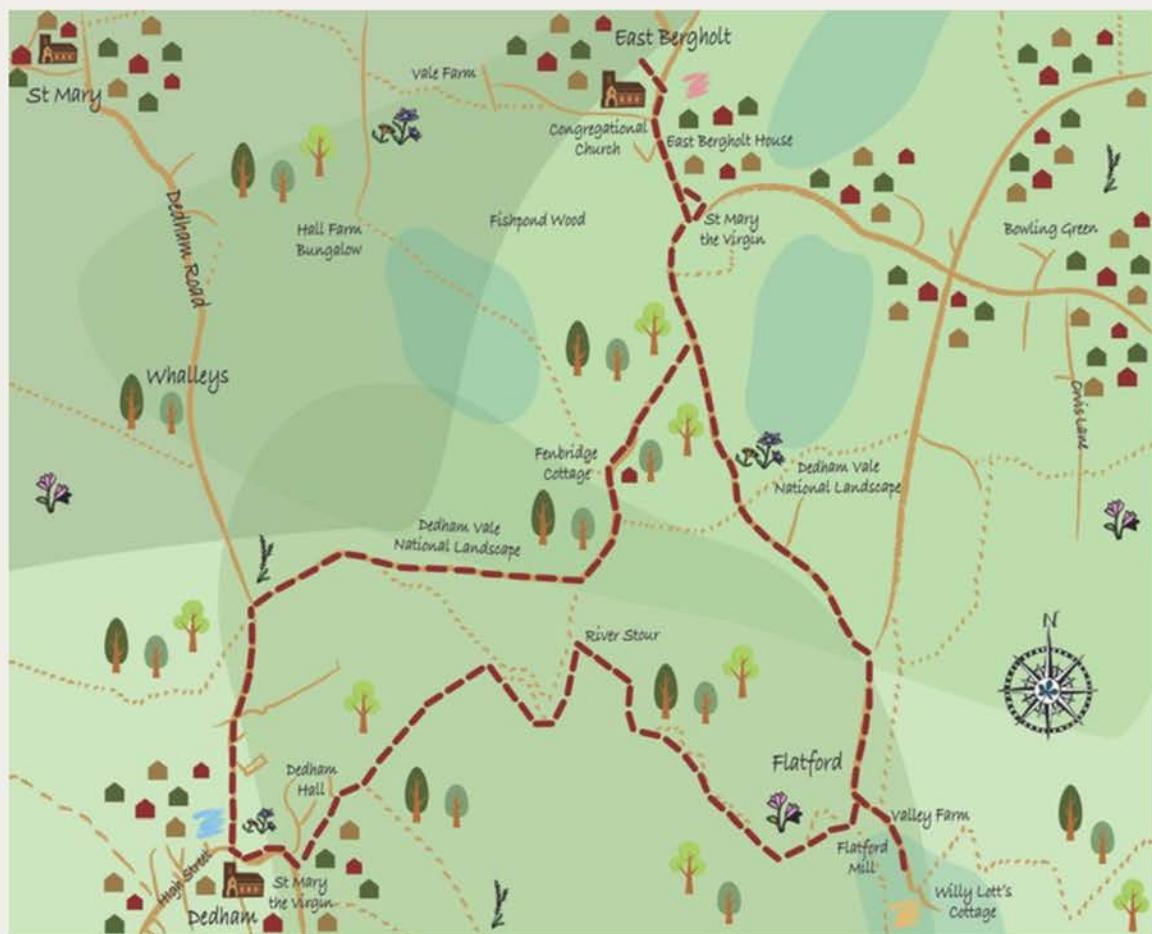


Constable 250

"I should paint my own places best - painting is but another word for feeling." - John Constable



Using the front door, head out of The Red Lion. Carefully cross the road and turn right. Walk along the pavement down "The Street". On your left, look out for a plaque on a black metal fence marking John Constable's former childhood home.

Continue past St Mary's Church. At the war memorial, turn right onto Flatford Road. Follow the road until you reach a narrow lane on the right, opposite a bench. Turn right onto Fen Bridge Lane.

Follow Fen Bridge Lane to the cottages. When the road bends, follow it left. Shortly after, turn right and cross the paved bridge over the River Stour onto the tree-lined path. Continue ahead. At the wooden directional sign, cross the small wooden footbridge and head along the pathway.

Continue until the path ends at a metal kissing gate. Go through the gate and walk along the left side of the field beside the River Stour. Keep following the river until you reach Dedham Bridge.

Leave the field via the steps and cross the bridge into Dedham village. As you near the High Street, Dedham Parish Church will come into view. When you reach the High Street, turn left (away from the church) and down Brook Street.

On reaching the corner of the street, take the second left, avoiding the entrance to Dedham Hall. Follow the often muddy, tree-lined path leading back towards the River Stour. Go through the wooden gate at the end of the pathway for a lovely view of the river. Cross the small footbridge and continue straight through the kissing gate.

Follow the grassy track as it winds alongside the river. When you reach Fen Bridge (the long wooden bridge over the River Stour), do not cross. Instead, turn right, keeping the river on your side.

Continue along the river until you reach a second bridge crossing the Stour. Cross the bridge and immediately turn right by the National Trust-owned Flatford Bridge Cottage.

From here, take a short detour to the viewpoint of Willy Lott's Cottage that inspired one of Constable's most famous paintings, The Hay Wain.

Return to Bridge Cottage and turn right, heading uphill along the road with the footpath on your left. Leave the path by turning left past the car park entrance, then continue down Flatford Road (tree-lined), passing Gosnalls Farm on your left. Continue along Flatford Road. If you prefer to walk away from traffic, there is a parallel footpath on the right further along that you can join.

Rejoin the road opposite St Mary's Church in East Bergholt, then turn left and continue back towards the Red Lion pub.

Early Life

John Constable was born on 11th June 1776 into a wealthy and supportive family. By then, the Constables had moved from Flatford Mill to East Bergholt House, a mansion built by his father, Golding, and it was there that John was born. He later described his childhood with his two brothers, Golding and Abram, and his three sisters, Ann, Martha and Mary, as a “careless boyhood.” Although East Bergholt House was demolished in the 1840s, the site is still marked today with a plaque and the surviving coach house and stable block, now called The Court.

East Bergholt became the inspiration for many of his landscape paintings. The area around East Bergholt is now known as Constable Country.

Dedham

Constable walked from East Bergholt to Dedham Grammar School, a route still used by walkers today. Dedham Church appears often in his art, its tower a well-known landmark in the Stour Valley. The River Stour between Dedham and Flatford was busy with barges and mills in Constable's youth, scenes he sketched many times. His paintings of “Dedham Vale” showed the valley's meadows, fields, and skies and helped shape his reputation as a major landscape painter.

St Mary's Church - Dedham

“The Ascension” is one of only three religious paintings by John Constable. It was painted in 1821 for St Michael's Church in Manningtree, close to his home in the Stour Valley. The subject has been debated as either the Resurrection or the Ascension, showing Constable's interest in religious themes as well as his famous sky studies. Although the original patron withdrew, Constable finished the work. It spent many years in local churches before being saved from sale by the Constable Trust. After being shown in a major Paris exhibition in 2002, the painting was moved to Dedham Church, close to where it was first intended to hang.

Flatford

Flatford was central to John Constable's childhood, as his father owned Flatford Mill on the busy River Stour. The working barges, mill buildings, and surrounding fields became some of his first outdoor “studios,” where he learnt to sketch from life and observe changing skies and weather. Willy Lott's Cottage and the millpond later appeared in major paintings, including The Hay Wain. Constable often returned to Flatford as an adult, crediting the Stour Valley as the landscape that shaped his art and legacy.

The Hay Wain: The track and meadow at Flatford, looking toward Willy Lott's Cottage, became the setting for Constable's celebrated painting The Hay Wain (1821). The scene shows a horse-drawn cart crossing the millpond on the River Stour in midsummer. Constable based the composition on careful outdoor sketches made around Flatford Mill, capturing real local buildings, trees, and the working life of the Stour Valley. Although painted later in London, it reflects Constable's deep attachment to the landscapes of his East Bergholt childhood.



Visit Our Locals

The Red Lion, East Bergholt | The Angel Inn, Stoke-By-Nayland | The Anchor, Nayland
The Crown, Stoke-By-Nayland | The Black Lion, Long Melford

Discover More

Chestnut pubs with rooms and Big House hotels

www.chestnutgroup.co.uk