

Level		Days		Shared occupancy cost		
FM	W1	25-27 Jul	Fri- Sun	£260	£240	£187
Centre		Date		Sole occupancy cost		Non-Residential cost

## Navigable River: An Entertaining History of the River Stour



The location of many of John Constable's paintings, Flatford Mill runs over 120 Natural History and Arts courses in a unique and tranquil learning environment.

### Course Overview



The classic lowland river-valley of the Stour has a colourful history, as captured by John Constable and Thomas Gainsborough. This new course will explore its hidden heritage, visiting the historic market town of Sudbury at the head of the navigation, with a short trip on a recently restored river lighter and a visit to one of the remaining water mills in the area. Discover more about the ever-changing wildlife habitats and discuss how we now manage them. The whole weekend will be interspersed with local tales and folk songs, illustrating the evolving fortunes of this enchanting landscape and the people who live and work here.

### Course Description

#### Friday

After a warm welcome and supper, there will be an illustrated introduction to the course, with a brief history of the River Stour Navigation, from the original 1705 Act of Parliament, through the glory days of a thriving waterway, to the eventual decline of trade with the coming of the railways, and the present popular leisure use of this beautiful river valley.

#### Saturday

The day will start after breakfast with an exploration of the Flatford Mill complex. We will investigate the original dry dock and discuss the historic and continuing problems of the control and exploitation of water levels, both for milling and for transport.

At mid-morning we will leave in the mini-bus to travel through this iconic landscape to the historic market town of Sudbury at the head of the navigation and the birth-place of Thomas Gainsborough. After a pub lunch on the way at Bures St. Mary, at Sudbury we will visit the Granary Basin, the original operating head-quarters of the River Stour Navigation Company, followed by a leisurely 1-hour trip on The John Constable, a restored Lighter (a unique style of river Barge). We will be able to spend some time in the Visitor and Education Centre at Great Cornard, the present day headquarters of the River Stour Trust.

Return to Flatford FSC for evening meal.

In the evening there will be an entertaining and light-hearted look at the ever-evolving lives and fortunes of the people who lived and worked in this Valley, with songs, stories and artefacts collected by your tutor over many years.

### **Sunday**

After breakfast we will once again leave in the mini-bus, seeking out some of the hidden clues to the farming and industry that shaped the character of this landscape. A gentle walk to one of the remaining model Victorian farms, perched on the valley side, above one of the Stour's tributaries, will allow students to see and discuss some of the work that is being carried out to protect and enhance the landscape and biodiversity of this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (ANOB), from Barn-owl and Otter to native Black Poplar.

Following a pub-lunch or picnic according to the wishes of the group, the highlight of this final day will be a rare chance to visit one of the last surviving private water mills to have retained its original working machinery. Although sadly no longer in commercial operation, this estate mill should serve to illustrate the struggle for survival that these small enterprises faced, in competition with the larger companies and steam roller- mills that took away their centuries-old trade.

We will return to Flatford by mini-bus to bid our farewells.

### **What the Fees Include?**

Residential course fee includes:

- Full board accommodation including cooked breakfast, picnic lunch, homemade cakes and an evening meal. Vegetarian and other dietary option available.
- Up to 8 hours teaching time a day, plus relaxing breaks for meals and refreshments.
- Tea and coffee making facilities available throughout the day.
- Use of resources including library, workrooms, studios and the Centre grounds.
- Transport during the courses.
- Insurance to cover cancellation, personal belongings, personal accident, legal liability and medical emergency.

If you choose to be a non-resident on a residential course, the fee will include all the above except accommodation and breakfast.

## About the Tutor

Neil Catchpole comes from a long line of countrymen who have lived and worked in the fields, woods and brickyards of East Anglia for over two centuries. After many years as a contract shepherd, tree surgeon and forester, he now works as Project Officer for the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project, with particular responsibility for landscape and biodiversity matters. Neil has a passionate interest in the history and folklore of this remarkable part of the Essex/Suffolk border.

## What to Bring

- Appropriate clothing for all-weather walking
- Rucksack for carrying water, spare clothing, etc
- Comfortable walking shoes or boots; make sure that new boots and shoes are worn in
- Walking sticks (optional)
- A notebook, for recording any impressions (optional)
- Binoculars, camera (optional)

## Start and finish times

Afternoon tea is available from **1530** on Friday, but the first formal activity is dinner at **1900** (with the bar open from 1845!).

Residents: Please aim to arrive between **1500 and 1800** on Friday to allow us sufficient time to show you to your accommodation and around the communal areas.

Non-residents: You do not need to arrive quite so early but please can you be here by **1730** as we need to show you the communal areas as well.

The course will end at **1600** on Sunday.

## How to book

Bookings can be made by telephoning the Centre; we are open 0930 – 1700 weekdays and most weekends. Alternatively, bookings can be made via our website: [www.field-studies-council.org](http://www.field-studies-council.org).