

## The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB

The Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is one of Britain's finest landscapes. It extends from the Stour Estuary in the south to the eastern fringe of Ipswich and, in the north, to Kessingland. It covers 403 square kilometres, including wildlife-rich wetlands, ancient heaths, windswept shingle beaches and historic towns and villages.

### Visiting Wherstead

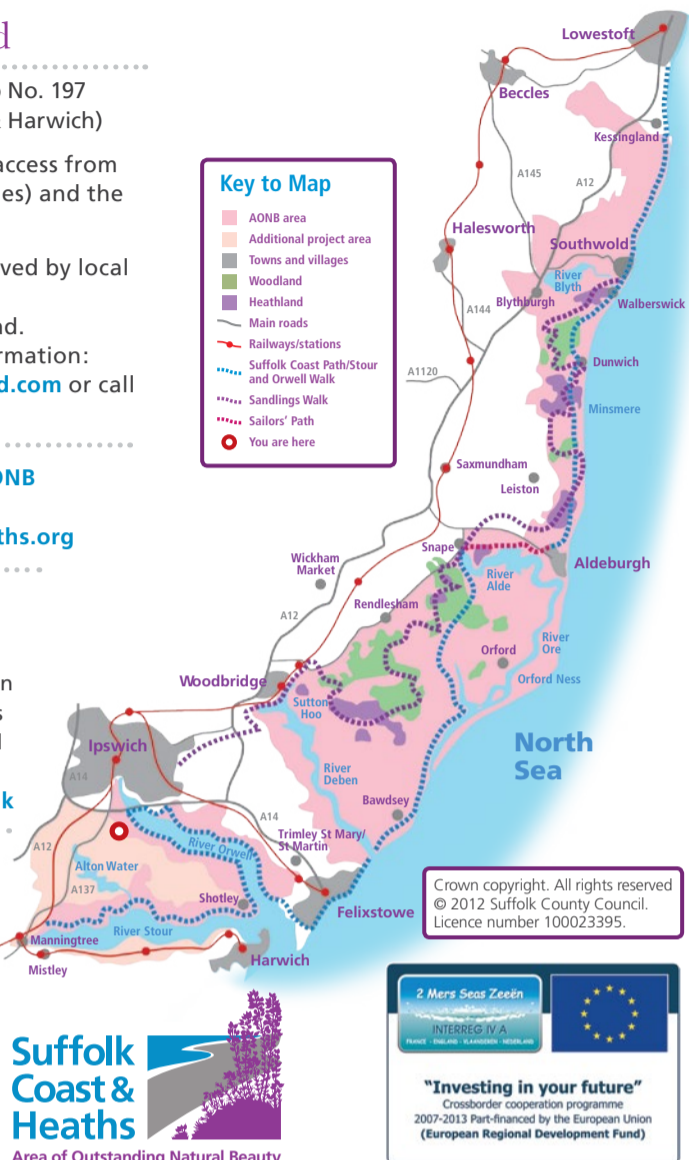
-  Ordnance Survey Map No. 197 (Ipswich, Felixstowe & Harwich)
-  Wherstead has easy access from Ipswich (approx 3 miles) and the A12/A14
- Wherstead is also served by local buses: Stop name: Red House, Wherstead.
-  Public transport information: [www.suffolkonboard.com](http://www.suffolkonboard.com) or call 0845 606 6171

Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB  
01394 384948  
[www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org](http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org)



Wherstead Explorer has been produced with the generous support of Suffolk Food Hall  
01473 786610  
[www.suffolkfoodhall.co.uk](http://www.suffolkfoodhall.co.uk)

Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB is a partner of the BALANCE project, part-financed by the European Union through the Interreg IV A 2 Seas Cross-border Programme.



Research, text and some images by Simon Peachey. Printed on Recycled, FSC, ECF, Carbon Balanced paper.

# Wherstead *Explorer Guide*



Discover wonderful woodland, farmland and the Orwell riverbank on two walks from the Suffolk Food Hall



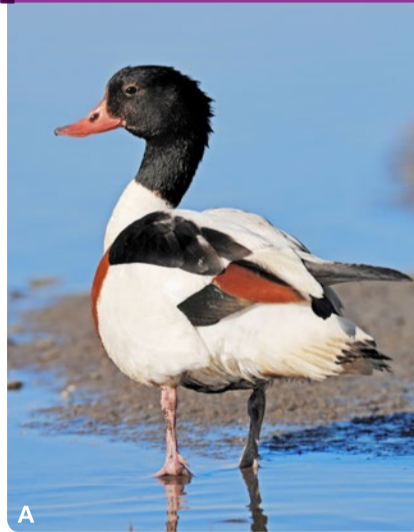
# Wherstead

Suffolk Coast & Heaths *Explorer Guide*

The Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) has one of the finest concentrations of birds, plants and animals to be found anywhere in eastern England. The Orwell estuary is an ideal location from which to enjoy these natural wonders.

## Highlights of Wherstead

- 1 The Orwell Bridge** opened in 1982 after taking three years to build. Marvel at the main span of 190 metres, which at the time of its construction, was the longest pre-stressed concrete span in the world. The very first English settlers to colonise America left Ipswich aboard the 'Godspeed' and the 'Discovery' with Captain Bartholomew Gosnold in 1607, saying farewell to Suffolk from the river Orwell.
- 2 Freston Wood** Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) has 'typical light sandy soil with spring-fed valleys, of broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland. There is a long history of management which includes the creation of a deer park and the medieval introduction of Sweet Chestnut. It supports distinctive ground vegetation, including wild garlic and is among the best Bluebell woods in Suffolk. A number of medieval boundary banks are found in the wood and there are some extremely large pollard trees on these banks.' (SSSI citation).



- 3 Lodge Farm** is often home to Red Poll cattle, a local native breed. Originally a dual purpose animal (prized for both beef and milk) these cattle are part of a modern agrarian renaissance. They fare well on an extensive farming system for slow matured beef and are compatible with the environment. Suffolk Sheep and Suffolk Punch Horses are the other native breeds that make up the 'Suffolk Trinity'.

- 4 Wherstead Park** was largely ploughed up in the WWII 'Dig for Victory' campaign. In WWI the Park was used as a staging depot for horses before their export to 'the Front'. The main house (built on the site of an earlier residence) has a foundation stone dated 1792. The original house was designed for Sir Robert Harland who, in 1813, exchanged the estate with Mr. John Vernon of Orwell Park on the other side of the river. It was rented for a short time by the parents of Edward FitzGerald.
- 5 The Hard** at the end of Redgate Lane is said by some to be part of a Roman causeway across the Orwell. The crossing was possibly still in use until at least 1352 as the Downham Bridge, marking the boundary of the Liberties of Ipswich.
- 6 Cutler's Wood**, like Freston Wood, is wonderful in spring for Bluebells and is part of the ancient woodland SSSI in this area. Stalls Valley has remained almost unchanged for centuries, and early maps give it the same name. Victorian naturalists knew it for its flora, especially its ferns.



- 7 Suffolk Food Hall** supports the rural economy. As Suffolk farmers, the Paul Family want consumers to have access to fantastic food produced locally. Since opening in May 2007, the Suffolk Food Hall has quickly established itself as a centre of excellence for local food. It has brought together the best possible food and drink specialists under one roof. It also hosts the Cookhouse Restaurant, children's play area and café. Please buy your supplies here and support local shops.

Images: Front cover: Looking towards Wherstead and Suffolk Food Hall from the Orwell Bridge - Rolando Ugolini. A. Shelduck - Imagebroker/FLPA. B. Skylark - Phil McLean/FLPA. C. Red Poll cattle. D. Bluebells



Some walks take you onto or across public highways. Please be aware of traffic.

## 'Into the Valley'

Distance 3.5 miles (5.5 km)

**Time:** 2 hours

**Terrain:** Easy – Ground under foot fairly flat, one stile. This walk takes you onto public roads. Please be aware of traffic. We recommend high visibility clothing.

Start the walk at the Suffolk Food Hall. Head south-east across the paddocks in front of the Food Hall, taking in the stunning view down the River Orwell. Cross the middle of the field towards the main road, taking care as you cross Freston Brook along a narrow verge.

After a bit of birdwatching at the bottom of Freston Hill, you enter Freston Wood SSSI, woodland typical of this part of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB.

Leave the wood at St Peter's Church, Freston, largely restored by local architect R.T.Orr in 1874.



It includes an Arts & Crafts styled octagonal vestry and a sensitive rescue of the C15th tower and the C14th east window.

Right on to the lane around to the village (taking care on the road). On leaving the village take the footpath on your right, to Freston Lodge Farm. At end of lane go straight, down through the meadow valley, across Freston Brook and along the line of poplar trees, to the Orwell Nursing Home.

Turn right onto Redgate Lane and turn left at Redgate Farm. Walk back across the paddocks for lunch or tea back at the Suffolk Food Hall.

## 'Wherstead Woodlands'

Distance 4 miles (7 km)

**Time:** 2 hours 30 mins

**Terrain:** Easy – Ground under foot fairly flat. This walk takes you onto public roads. Please be aware of traffic. We recommend high visibility clothing.

On the 'Wherstead Woodlands' walk you can see more ancient woodland, the Stalls Valley, farmland and the villages of Wherstead and Freston.

Start the walk at the Suffolk Food Hall. Head south-east across the paddocks in front of the Food Hall, taking in the stunning view down the River Orwell. Cross the middle of the field towards the main road, taking care as you cross Freston Brook along a narrow verge.

After a bit of birdwatching at the bottom of Freston Hill, you enter Freston Wood SSSI, woodland typical of this part of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB.

Leave Freston Wood. Follow the lane right. Continue on the lane to 'T' junction at Freston Village, turning right through village centre. Turn right after Bond Hall taking Bridleway to Broom Knoll. The lane narrows. After Broom Knoll, continue on farm track to Stall's Valley and Cutler's Wood, both designated as SSSI ancient woodlands.



Between Valley Farm and Wherstead village walk along a farm track and see examples of good wildlife habitat created by the Paul family. New hedgerows and trees have been planted, to benefit birds such as Yellowhammer and mammals such as vole and hedgehog.

From Wherstead village turn right at the 'crossroads'. The walk back down to Suffolk Food Hall gives you a good view of the river Orwell and bridge. By looking right, across rolling farmland to the hedges and trees, you view an English landscape that helped make an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Also in the area are Orwell Country Park and two Suffolk Wildlife Trust sites at Levington and Trimley.

Images: A. Looking towards Wherstead and Suffolk Food Hall from the Orwell Bridge - Rolando Ugolini. B. Freston Church. C. View down the River Orwell - Malcolm Watson. D. Grey Partridge

