The Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is one of Britain’s finest landscapes. Located on the coast of East Anglia and covering 403 square kilometres, the AONB extends from the Stour estuary in the south to the eastern fringe of Ipswich and to Kessingland in the north. www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org

Route length – 4.9 miles / 7.9 km

Turn right out of the Eel’s Foot Inn car park and follow lane northwards across the marsh, crossing the bridge over Minsmere New Cut.

Just before this bridge, the course of the Minsmere Old River joins the New Cut from the left, then winds away to the right after the bridge, eventually to fizzle out in branching channels, lagoons and marsh cut off from the sea behind the shingle beach.

The marsh is criss-crossed with old water courses and drainage ditches. In the 19th century, the marshes were used for grazing, and the Minsmere River was straightened and embanked to improve drainage. The New Cut, constructed approx. 1812, carries most of the river water clear of the marshes, along the southern edge, to discharge into the sea at The Sluice, which also serves a cut from Leiston.

Today the area is the RSPB’s Minsmere Nature Reserve and is especially renowned for its freshwater habitats.

Sizewell is a primary site under consideration for a possible new power station. There are two here already, Sizewell A (square blocked building, commissioned in 1966; de-commissioning from 2006), and Sizewell B, with white dome, commissioned 1985.

Westleton Walls are on your left. The name derives from the medieval ‘sheepwalks’, grazing areas on the dry heath and acid grassland. Stone Curlews, rare wading birds that like dry land, can sometimes be seen here in summer.

To the right is Scott’s Hall – allegedly a smuggler’s haunt, with extensive vaults for storage of goods.

Cross a farm lane, and continue on the bridgeway through a wood – turn right onto a footpath just before a wooden gate.

Continue through the woods. The path reaches a descending section, down some rough steps, and crosses a ditch with unusually steep sides.

The ditch was one of several dug here during the Second World War as tank traps. This part of our coast was considered a particularly attractive point of entry for the enemy, and this and other fragments of the defence structures still remain.

Carry straight on through the gate up Bunker Hill onto Dunwich Heath.

Dunwich Heath is a beautiful new heath habitat, with wonderful flowering heather from July to September. Species for which it is renowned include Dartford Warbler, Nightjar, Woodlark, Ant-lion, and Adders.

The Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (ACBN) is one of Britain’s finest landscapes. Located on the coast of East Anglia and covering 403 square kilometres, the ACBN extends from the Stone estuary in the south to the eastern fringe of Trunch and to Kessingland in the north. www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org

Local Adnams pub

THE EEL’S FOOT INN
176 Leiston Road, Eastbridge, Leiston, IP16 4SN
Tel: 01728 830154
Location: Village
Restaurant/dining room: Yes
Garden/courtyard: Yes
Bar meals: Yes
Children welcome: Yes
Accommodation: Yes
Disabled access: Yes
Dogs welcome: Yes
Parking available: Yes
Credit cards welcome: Yes
Coastguard Cottages. The shingle beach has been overtopped or breached by the sea, and Eastbridge may be muddy after rain. In the unlikely event that the well-marked and dry, though the route back from the beach to experience of crossing a river mouth on foot.

Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB. You also have the intriguing woodland, heath, beach and marshland in a beautiful part of the marshes. It’s a flat or gently undulating walk, taking in mainly on the slightly higher ground of the heath and the edge of Eastbridge falls, at low tide. A rise in sea level would make this less effective. The Minsmere Sluice helps to control this, but can become obstructed by beach shingle. It opens to allow water to flow out when the sea level falls, at low tide. A rise in sea level would make this less effective.

Bird enthusiasts flock to Minsmere RSPB Reserve, for the wide range of coast, heath and wetland birds. Little Tern are a feature of the beach. Marsh Harriers are often hunting over these wetlands.

The area to the right, Minsmere Nature Reserve, is vulnerable to flooding from the sea, and with storm surges, dunes are washed away. Sea flooding can damage special features of the reed bed and contaminate freshwater habitats. Fresh water flooding is also a risk here. The Minsmere Sluice helps to control this, but can become obstructed by beach shingle. It opens to allow water to flow out when the sea level falls, at low tide. A rise in sea level would make this less effective.

Birds such as Whooper Swans and Greylags are a feature of the beach. Marsh Harriers are often hunting over these wetlands.

At the Minsmere Sluice (1) turn right onto the public footpath, which is on the south side of the Minsmere New Cut.

The ruined chapel, on the small hill just to your left, is a relic, probably late 12th century, of a religious community that founded an abbey here, moving on to build Leiston Abbey 200 years later.

Just after a pair of wooden gateposts (1) bear left away from the Cut.

Follow the wide path to another pair of posts – bear right here. Pass through a wooden kissing gate, turn right onto, a farm track, turn left to cross dyke (2) then immediately right through a small gate into a field.

Cross field on this path, back into Eastbridge village, turning right at the village lane to reach The Eel’s Foot Inn.

The Eel’s Foot Inn played its part in the smuggling trade, apparently both serving the free-traders and acting as a bar for the dragoons. An Old Bailey trial of 1764 indicates that tea and brandy were the favourite tipple of the soldiers.

You can follow us on twitter.com/adnams

The Sylvia Plath pub walk

More Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB pub walks

Further information:
Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB
Tel: 01728 648501 www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org

Public Transport
Tel: 01394 384948 www.suffolkonboard.com, 0845 606 6171 www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org

RSPB Minsmere
Tel: 01728 648501 www.rspb.org.uk

www.adnams.com

EEL’S FOOT INN
EASTBRIDGE

Tel: 01728 648501 www.rspb.org.uk

National Trust Dunwich Heath
Tel: 01728 648501 www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Public House
Walk
Car Park/Layby
Footpath/other road
Path, track or public footpath
other road
Walks
Biteren relic

Starting from Dunwich

(Makers starting from Dunwich Heath (Coastguard Cottages – join in here…)

Make your way down to the beach, and walk southwards – either on the beach, or on path running parallel, behind dunes.

Walkers starting from Dunwich – go back to pub later. Alternatively you can park at National Trust Dunwich Heath and follow the public footpath to the beach.

The walk starts from The Eel’s Foot Inn. The pub has a car park, but check before leaving your car there, especially if you plan to walk from the beach to Eastbridge. Be aware that after rain it can be a little tricky event that the shingle beach has been overtopped or breached by the sea, and Pershore Road cannot be walked, this should appear from the Coastguard Cottages.

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