

Health and Safety

The River Stour can be dangerous when in flood and generates strong currents. **Do not** take any risks and **never underestimate** the power of the river. For instruction or safety advice, please contact the canoeing governing body British Canoeing (Canoe England) and British Rowing. See **useful contacts**.

Take adequate safety measures for yourself and anyone in your care. Factors to be considered include:

Before entering and leaving the water

- Be considerate to landowners, local residents and other river users
- Park so as to avoid causing an obstruction or hazard
- Take litter home
- Get changed out of public view
- Except in emergencies stick to roads and public rights of way

On the water

- Safety is paramount. Always wear a buoyancy aid and appropriate protective gear. Take (spare) clothing appropriate for the weather, stored in a watertight container secured to your craft
- Do not attempt to shoot weirs or flumes
- Keep well clear of water control structures (Locks, Weirs and Sluices). Some give rise to very dangerous currents
- It is good practice to paddle in a group of at least three boats - one to stay with any casualty and one to seek assistance
- Take a map of the river and, ideally, a mobile phone protected from the water
- Canoeists in particular should preferably have had formal instruction, be able to swim, and adhere to the BC Code of Practice
- Keep clear of larger / less manoeuvrable craft. Wear high-visibility clothing in dull conditions, especially on busy parts of the river
- Be aware of overhanging vegetation above and submerged objects below the water line (especially under bridges and at the sites of old locks) on which craft and crew can become caught. With even a slight flow this may represent a potential capsized situation
- Avoid disturbing wildlife and habitats, particularly during the bird nesting season. Be wary of swans and minimise time spent within their territories. Be aware that the river bed may be valuable fish spawning habitat and may contain eggs
- Normally pass on the far side of the river from anyone fishing from the bank and avoid their lines
- Remember that the riverbanks are privately owned. Only use official portage points to enter/exit the river, except in an emergency, and avoid making excessive noise
- Adhere to the 4mph speed limit

Locks and Navigation Facilities

There are currently two operable locks on the River Stour: Flatford and Cornard. A successful 'co-funded' project was completed in late 2014 to refurbish Flatford lock led by the RST. It is hoped a similar project can be delivered at Dedham lock in the near future using local partners. The RST are also restoring the lock at Stratford St Mary. Please note that the locks are normally padlocked and are not open to the general public to operate. Therefore please give advanced notice of any intention to pass through any of the locks to the Environment Agency using the contacts shown on the rear of this guide. The RST may also operate the locks on request.

Please note also that some of the facilities shown in this guide may be under private ownership and not available to the general public, e.g. where associated with pubs. Permission should be sought before using such facilities as they may be made available to paying patrons only.

Health and Hygiene

The quality of the water in the Stour is generally good but, unlike tap water, it is untreated and contains natural bacteria and other micro-organisms. There can also be risk of physical injury caused by contact with debris in the river. Although the risk of contracting illness is small, follow these precautions to stay healthy:

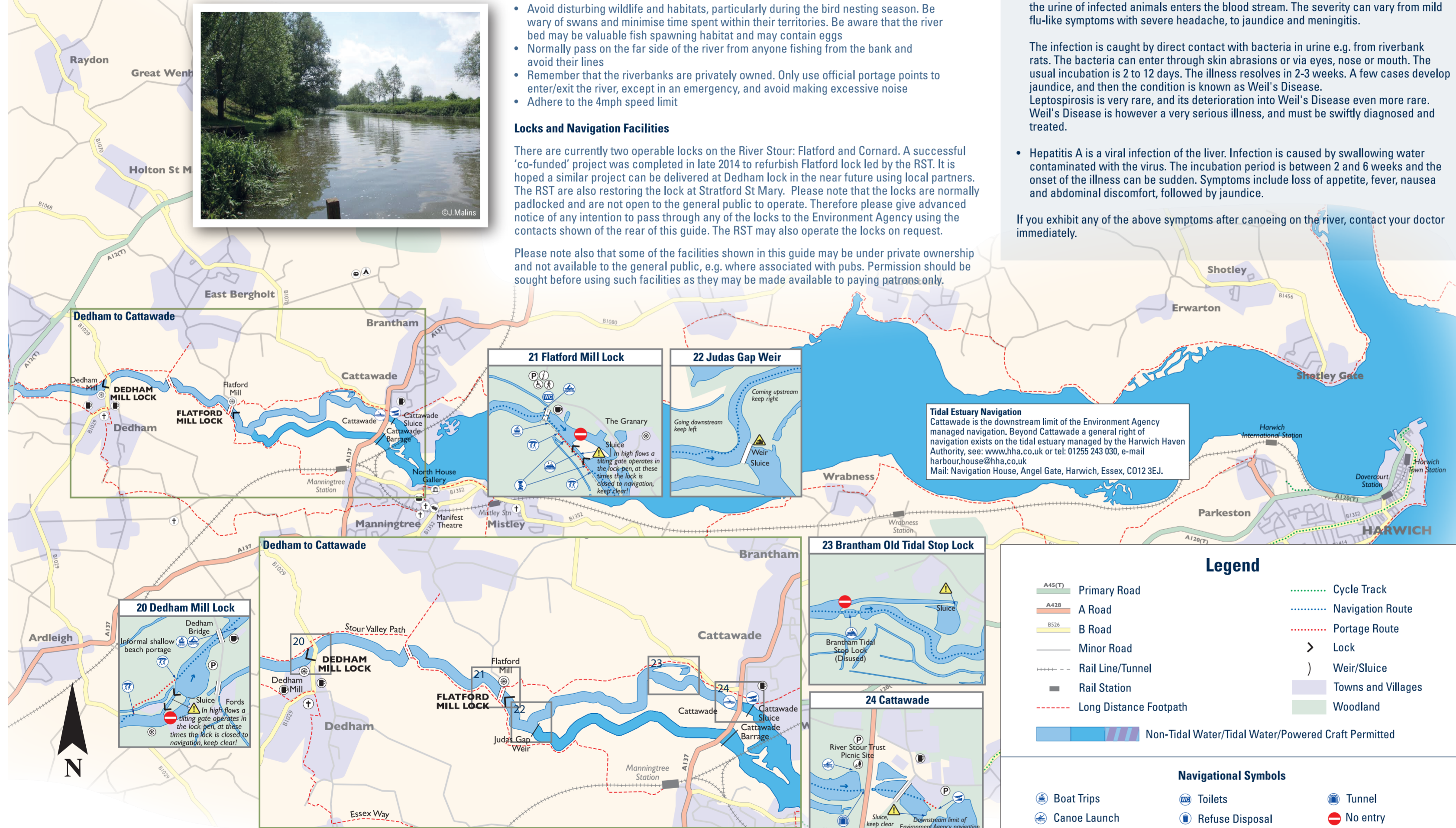
- Do not swallow river water
- Avoid rubbing your eyes, nose or mouth
- Wash your hands before eating
- Cover any cuts or scratches with waterproof plasters
- Wear footwear to protect your feet
- Avoid unnecessary immersion in the river
- Avoid capsizing drill or rolling practice in suspect waters
- Where possible shower after contact with river water

- Weil's disease/leptospirosis is a bacterial infection caused when bacteria carried in the urine of infected animals enters the blood stream. The severity can vary from mild flu-like symptoms with severe headache, to jaundice and meningitis.

The infection is caught by direct contact with bacteria in urine e.g. from riverbank rats. The bacteria can enter through skin abrasions or via eyes, nose or mouth. The usual incubation is 2 to 12 days. The illness resolves in 2-3 weeks. A few cases develop jaundice, and then the condition is known as Weil's Disease. Leptospirosis is very rare, and its deterioration into Weil's Disease even more rare. Weil's Disease is however a very serious illness, and must be swiftly diagnosed and treated.

- Hepatitis A is a viral infection of the liver. Infection is caused by swallowing water contaminated with the virus. The incubation period is between 2 and 6 weeks and the onset of the illness can be sudden. Symptoms include loss of appetite, fever, nausea and abdominal discomfort, followed by jaundice.

If you exhibit any of the above symptoms after canoeing on the river, contact your doctor immediately.



in partnership with
 Environment Agency
 River Stour Trust

The River Stour



Map and information for users of the navigation



Walking and Cycling Exploration of the Stour Valley

The Stour Valley has a unique character of riverside pasture, farmland and picturesque villages. Much of it is also within the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Enjoy the area both on and off the water. The 60 mile long Stour Valley Path (Guide books available) and the Painters Trail Cycle Route are both found within the local area.

To find out more and for places to stay please see the tourist information centres listed on the front of this guide or visit the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project website: www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org

More Information for walkers can also be found on the Ramblers Association website: www.ramblers.org.uk and the Long Distance Walkers Association site at: www.ldwa.org.uk

If you are planning to travel to and around the area by bicycle you can find more information on the National Cycle Network and routes from Sustrans, the sustainable transport charity, at: www.sustrans.org.uk

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floodline 0345 988 1188

incident hotline 0800 80 70 60 (24hrs)

OR visit our website www.gov.uk/environment-agency

email enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

03708 506 506 (Mon-Fri 8-6)

Then call the customer contact centre on

Would you like to find out more about us, or about your environment?