

Sutton and Hollesley Heaths Walk Guide



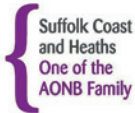
Explore the unique and rare landscape of the Sandlings heath and its diversity of wildlife and history.



The Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



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 then north to Kessingland. The AONB was designated in 1970 and covers 403 square kilometres. It is a diverse and ever changing landscape which includes low-lying coast of shingle and sand, ancient woodland, forest, lowland heaths, farmland, valley meadowlands, estuaries with saltmarsh and intertidal flats, marshes with reedbeds and wooded fens, and historic towns and villages.

The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB is a partnership of organisations which works to conserve and enhance the area's natural beauty by encouraging sympathetic, sustainable use. AONBs are part of the UK's "family" of protected areas that includes National Parks and Heritage Coasts. All receive special protection because of their quality and importance.



Sutton and Hollesley Heaths Highlights

This Outstanding Landscape and its wildlife is part of a network of habitats that are considered rare and significant, and are the reason for the **Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)** designation. Within the AONB are many site-specific conservation designations, helping this remain an Outstanding Landscape, for now and future generations. These lowland heathland areas include two of these designations:

-  **Special Protection Area (SPA)** – strictly protected sites classified for rare and vulnerable birds.
-  **Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)** – represent the country's best wildlife and geological sites, supporting plants and animals that are rarely found elsewhere. All SSSIs are legally protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

You can help to protect these habitats and their wildlife by remaining on Public



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Rights of Way and clearly signed permissive paths and by not allowing you or any dogs to cause disturbance at any time of the year. Keep dogs on short fixed leads when livestock are present and during bird nesting season - 1st March-31st July. Please follow the countryside code and any information signs displayed.

1 The Sandlings. Once an extensive heathland stretching from Southwold to Ipswich, it was created by early farmers, who cleared trees from the light sandy soils. The nutrients in the acid soil were quickly exhausted and as the farmers moved on the heathland plants that we see today colonised this area. Intensive sheep grazing began around 1,000 years ago and heathland plants were used for fodder, fuel and animal bedding. Turf and peat were cut for fuel and all of these activities maintained the open heath. In the last 100 years, before the true habitat value of heathland was realised, over 90% of the Sandlings heath was lost to forestry plantation, military use, housing and intensive farming. Much of the heathland is now fragmented and some is lost to invasive trees and bracken but landowners and conservationists are working hard to restore, maintain and reconnect what remains of this rare and special habitat.

2 Sutton Heath. The area of acid grassland near to the car park is a great place to see pied and yellow Wagtails,



as well as numerous rabbits which keep the grass short. Dartford Warblers and Stonechat can be seen sitting on the heather and Woodlark heard singing overhead. Sheep graze in the fenced off enclosures during the spring and summer months to help maintain the heathland and prevent the growth of invasive trees. Sutton Heath is typical lowland heathland which comprises of short acid grassland, heather, gorse, and scattered birch, pine and oak trees. It is a known area for Nightjar, a rare ground nesting heathland bird that hunts for moths and insects at dusk and dawn and the male makes a very distinct churring



noise. Bats, including pipistrelle, long-eared and noctule enjoy the woodland areas. It is a great place to look for fungi.

3 The Mound. Within this fenced area is an abnormally large rabbit warren, the Ancient Monument, sometimes called a pillow mound, is set within a circular earthwork enclosure. Rabbits were introduced to England after the Norman Conquest in 1066 and were farmed in warrens for their fur and meat.

4 Sutton Common. This spacious area of heathland is favoured by the rare heathland birds; Nightjar, Woodlark and Dartford Warbler and reptiles such as the common lizard and adder. Numerous fallow deer can be seen grazing here. Exmoor ponies and sheep are used to help maintain the heathland and prevent the overgrowth of invasive plants.

5 Upper Hollesley Common. This area of heathland has a different feel to Sutton. It is boarded by Forestry Commission plantation, self-seeded pines and the airbase. An archaeological survey in 2006 indicated the presence of many rare

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Sutton and Hollesley Heaths walks



earthworks on the Common. The earth banks and ditches may relate to activities such as rabbit warrening or from a division of the common land into shares or parcels. Later features relate to military activity from the first and second world wars.

6 Rock Barracks. In 1943 during World War II the base was constructed as an emergency landing for damaged military aircraft. Over one million trees needed to be felled and cleared away before construction could begin. During the Cold War it was

Front Cover) Path across the heath; **A)** Volunteer Ray Oliff helping to restore the heathland **B)** The Mound; **C)** Sutton Heath; **D)** Sutton Common; **E)** Enjoying the Bell and Ling Heather on Upper Hollesley Common; **F)** Weapon storage areas or “bomb dumps” at Rock Barracks.

used by United States Air Force between 1952 -1993 for fighter bombers. The base is now home to 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment and is used as a training base for the Army Air Corps regiments based at Wattisham Airfield.



▶ Start: Car Park south of Sutton Heath, Woodbridge Road, B1083, nearest postcode IP12 3TG. TM306475. Dog exercise area available for off lead time.

🧠 Walking distances and times: 6.4 miles/10.3km. Allow 3 hrs to enjoy the walk.

🏔️ Terrain: Mostly flat. Route follows Public Rights of Way including, footpaths, bridleways and byways and also permissive paths.

⚠️ Caution: Crosses a busy road twice. Routes can be muddy in places.

Start from the car park south of Sutton Heath. Head North East along the restricted byway which is the widest track between two information boards.

At the first crossroads of tracks turn left and head along the bridleway for approximately 125m then pass through



a kissing gate on your right onto a well-worn permissive path within an enclosed fence area. **Sheep graze in the fenced off enclosures during the spring and summer months so please keep dogs on a short fixed lead and shut gates behind you.**

Follow this path for approx. 320m until you reach another gate, pass through the gate and then turn left along a track, almost immediately turn right and enter another fenced area through another gate.

Follow this well-worn path **past World War II anti-glider ditches which were created in 1939-40 to stop enemy aircraft from landing**, until you reach a kissing gate. Pass through the gate and turn right, on reaching a junction of tracks turn left along a wide track with areas of woodland on each side. **At the next cross roads of tracks with a bench on your left you can take a detour into the fenced area on your right which is an ancient monument site.**



On reaching a sandy byway turn left towards the barracks. Pass through a kissing gate on

your right just before reaching the road; follow a well-worn path through the heather. On reaching a broad cross track turn left, go through a kissing gate and turn immediately right to follow the fence line on your right. Cross over the next byway and head towards Red Lodge.



On reaching the red brick cottage carefully cross over the busy road to take the bridleway opposite the house which leads onto Upper Hollesley Common via a gate.

Here you are joining the Sandlings Walk, a long distance path from Ipswich to Southwold which is signed by a silver plaque embossed with the outline of a Nightjar.

Follow the bridleway until you reach a cross road of tracks with the Forestry Commission plantation ahead. Leave the Sandlings Walk and the bridleway and turn right down a track which winds through the trees with glimpse of open heathland to your right. Approximately 75m before

a large gate turn right, after 50m bear right then left. At a junction of five tracks/paths take the second track on your left and proceed west along the broad track. Return to the bridleway, through the gate and cross the road back to Red Lodge. Turn right and head across the grassy area to Gobblecock Cottage. **This is the sole surviving intact example of an early 19th century gamekeeper's cottage on the Broxtead estate.**



On the reaching the byway turn left. After approximately 340m go through a kissing gate on your right. Head towards the trees on your left and follow a grass track which runs parallel to a fence on your left. At a crossroads of tracks and the corner of fenced area turn left, and follow the grass track which runs parallel to fence line. At the end of the plantation on your left the track and fence bears right, go through the kissing gate and then turn right onto bridleway that leads to the sewage works.

At the crossroad of tracks by the sewage works turn left on to the byway. Follow this sandy track, which is muddy in places, past the plantation on your right.



At the next staggered crossroad of byways turn right. This sandy track leads past expansive views of heathland on your right, where the Exmoor ponies graze, and scattered trees. This byway takes you back to the picnic area, dog exercise area and the car park.

G) Sheep grazing helps maintain the open heathland; **H)** Adder warming itself in the sun; **I)** Nightjar logo of Sandlings Walk; **J)** Exmoor ponies grazing on the heath to reduce invasive trees; **K)** Fallow Deer; **L)** Gorse along a path.




Countryside Code

Please follow the Countryside Code www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code



Respect other people:

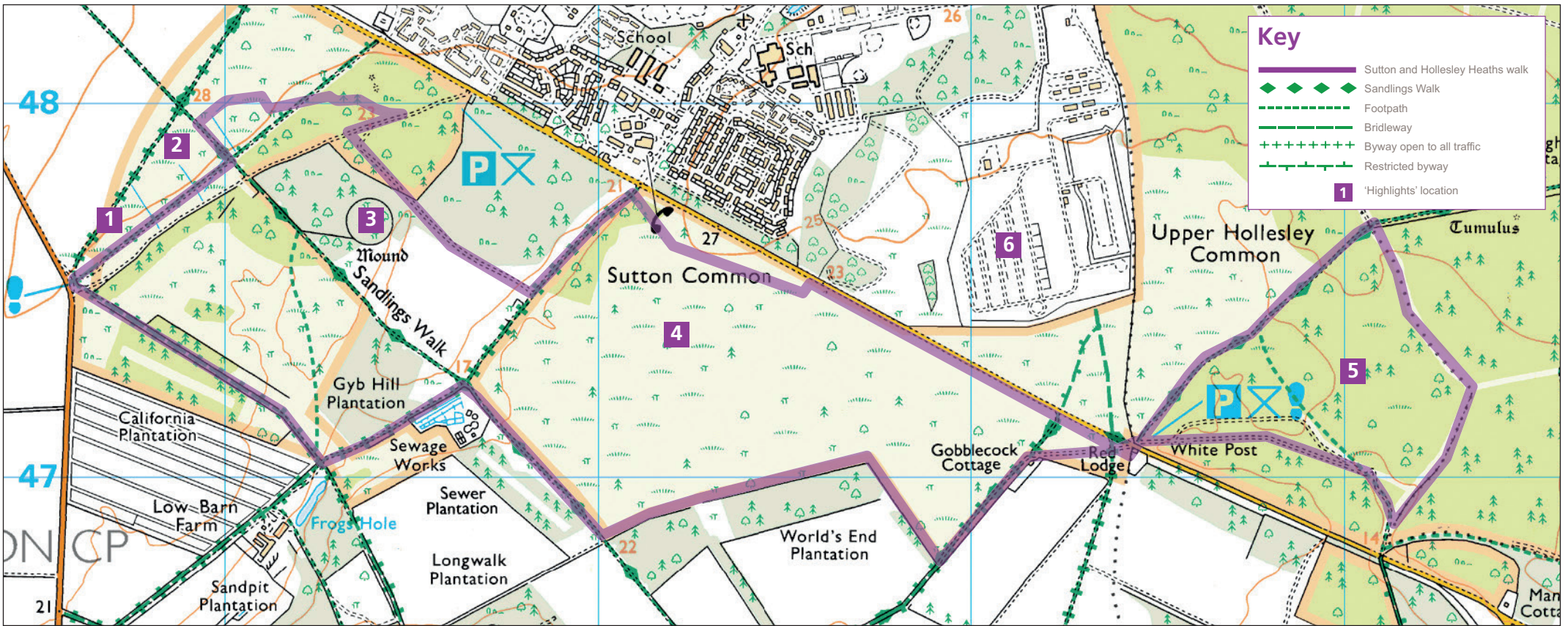
-  consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors
-  leave gates and property as you find them and follow paths.

Protect the natural environment:

-  leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home
-  fires can devastate wildlife, habitats and property – so be careful with naked flames and cigarettes at any time of the year
-  keep dogs under close control at all times, especially when amongst livestock and during bird nesting season. Release your dog if chased by cattle. Wherever you are, clean up after your dog.

Enjoy the outdoors:

-  plan ahead and be prepared
-  follow advice and local signs.



Visiting Sutton and Hollesley



Ordnance Survey

Explorer Map No. 212 (Woodbridge and Saxmundham).



Accessed via the B1083.

Approximately 3.5 miles (5.6km) from the A12.



Car Park south of Sutton Heath, Woodbridge Road, B1083.

Nearest Postcode IP12 3TG.



Public transport information:

www.suffolkonboard.com or call **0345 606 6171**.



Connecting communities: This is a local book in advance travel service which

links to public transport **01728 635938**.



Nearest train station Melton.

www.nationalrail.co.uk Tel: **08457 484950**



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Disclaimer: Whilst the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of maps and information within this publication, they are provided as guidance only and we cannot accept any liability for their interpretation and use.

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All photos by Lynda and Robin Gilbert

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