

Norfolk and Suffolk Broads

This resource is about the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads. We will take a look at the people who lived there; what they ate, how they tried to tame the landscape with new inventions and how it shaped their understanding of the world around them, possibly best exemplified by the many folklores linked to the region.

The Broads are a network of **waterways** that run through Norfolk and Suffolk. The waterways of the Broads are manmade, accidentally created by the flooding of peat channels that were dug for fuel during the medieval period. Despite the Broads' waterways being manmade, the Broads and its ancient marshland preserve some of Britain's best biodiversity, including water voles, eels, porpoise, Chinese water deer, muntjacs, and hares. The Broads are also a haven for common waterbirds and endangered birds such as cuckoos and bitterns. Nature is a vital part of the landscape's identity and history.

The Broads Timeline:

Ancient History

2600 years ago

Norfolk coastline was a mile further out east

Broads were peaty marshlands at the Bure, Yare, and Waveney

2300 years ago

Sea levels rise

Yare Estuary forms as sea breaks the mouth

2100 years ago

Forests and fens replaced by saltmarshes

The estuary became an expanse of seawater pools and mudflats

1800 years ago

The Romans sailed on what is now Halvergate marshes

The Great Estuary was an important traffic route, and was defended by Burgh Castle and Caister Roman Fort.

1500 years ago

Sea levels fall and the waterways are silted

The Great Estuary at the mouth of the River Yare split in two, and the sandbank is where Great Yarmouth sits today.



**Young
Archaeologists'
Club**

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Medieval–Present

13th century

Sea levels were lower and the Broads were used largely for grazing sheep

16th century

Rising water levels and a desire for grazing pasture led to improvements to flood banks.

18th century

Most of the grazing marshes of today had been drained by the 18th century. Poor quality drainage did little to stop the flooding

19th century

Land enclosure incentivised drainage infrastructure; flooding became rare.



1

Bake Your Own Suffolk Buns

Time Required: 35 mins | Age Range: 8+ | This recipe makes about 10-12.

Background:

Traditionally made for the harvest, where caraway seeds were used to sweeten the breath of farmers out in the fields till dusk, sowing the wheat for harvest. They were made with readily accessible ingredients for farmers to reward their labourers. Caraway seed buns are traditional eaten mainly to the south-east, but seed cakes and buns were also given to labourers across the country, with one of the oldest recipes surviving in Mary Hookes' manuscript of recipes from c.1680.

In this activity, you will be able to make your own Suffolk Buns. This activity is a great way to experience for yourself how East Anglian farmers found an affordable substitute for sugar to enjoy something sweet during the long hours of the harvest.



Ingredients:

- 350g plain flour
- 115g semolina
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 115g butter
- 75g sugar (optional)
- 2 tbsp caraway seeds
- 2 eggs
- 75ml whole milk

Equipment:

- Mixing bowl
- Fork & Knife (to cube the butter)
- Weighing scales
- Baking parchment
- Cookie/scone cutter (about 2.5 diameter)
- Rolling pin

Safety Considerations:

Be careful when cubing the butter as the knife can slide—an adult can do this part.
If needed, make sure you have an adult to supervise the use of the oven.



Method:



Step 1:

Preheat the oven to 200C. Line a baking tray with baking parchment. Combine the flour, semolina, salt, and baking powder with a whisk.



Step 2:

Cube the butter into small pieces and rub it into the flour mixture until it resembles fine breadcrumbs.



Step 3:

Mix sugar and caraway seeds to the breadcrumb mix.



Step 4:

Whisk the eggs and milk together using a fork and mix into the breadcrumb mixture. Bring together into a rough dough. Place dough onto a lightly floured surface and roll the dough out to about 1 inch thickness (2.5cm). Add milk by the spoonful if the dough is too dry, and flour by the spoonful if it's too wet.

Step 5:

Using a 2-inch cookie cutter (or the rim of a coffee cup), cut into circles. Arrange on your lined baking tray. Place the buns close together so they can help each other rise. Bake for 15-20 minutes until risen and lightly golden-brown.

Top tip! Try adding some salty butter to your buns to bring out the sweetness in the caraway seeds.



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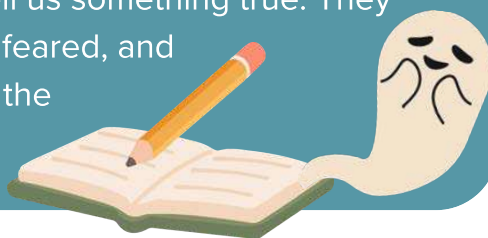
Write Your Own Ghost Story

Time Required: 1 hour | Age Range: 8+

Background:

Ghost stories can tell us a lot about history. When we hear eerie tales of Norfolk's headless horsemen, dead Saxons, shadowy black dogs, and vengeful witches, we step into the shoes of people whose fears made these stories.

Through ghost stories, we can learn about religious changes, fears of outsiders, and the treatment of women. Even though ghost stories are not facts we can prove, they still tell us something true. They show us what people feared, and how they understood the world around them.



About:

In this activity you will try writing your own ghost story, using the natural world you see in your everyday life to help make it much like many of the traditional folklore stories from the Broads.

On the following pages are a couple of examples to help inspire you. They demonstrate how the nature of the Broads is threaded throughout.



A Strange.

and terrible Wunder wrought
very late in the parish Church
of Bungay, a Town of no great dis-
tance from the citie of Norwich, name-
ly the fourth of this August, in y^e yere of
our Lord 1577. In a great tempest of vis-
cous raine, lightning, and thunder, the
like wherof hath bene felt
some tyme.

With the apperance of an horrible shap-
ped thing, sensibly perceived of the
people then and there
assembled.

Drawen into a plain method ac-
cording to the written copie.
by Abraham Fleming.



Title page of the account of
Abraham Fleming's account of
the appearance of the ghostly
black dog "Black Shuck" at the
church of Bungay, Suffolk in
1577.



The ruin of St Mary's church, East
Somerton by Evelyn Simak

The Black Shuck



In August of 1577, in a small village tucked away in a quiet corner of Suffolk, a strange and terrible wonder paid a damning visit. The village sat on the edge of the Waveney Valley where summer had stewed the boggy wetlands. The heat was disrupted when a terrible storm struck on the first Sunday of August. Storm clouds billowed, rain flooded the streets, and sharp winds howled down chimney stacks. The villagers were huddled together in their church of St. Mary's when a violent clap of thunder boomed through the church, echoing off the walls and rattling the windows. Just as the thunder rumbled, the door to the church burst open with a crash. Through the door stalked a terrible beast. The village folk screamed and scattered, but there was nowhere to run. The creature had matted black hair and eyes that glowed red as madder dye. The defenceless villagers could see its sharp and crooked teeth as it snarled. The hound bound up the stairs to where the bells rang, killing two bellringers. When the beast then ran from the church, it was covered in blood and the bells fell silent.



Those who survived saw the beast in their dreams, or rather, their nightmares. The hound is now known as the Black Shuck. To this day, it continues to appear through the mist, prowl the lonely coastline, and lurk in the dark corners of churchyards. Though we might never know where it came from, all we can do is hope we never see it ourselves.



The Witch of East Somerton



East Somerton is a small village that is surrounded on all sides by the Norfolk Broads. It is most famous for its church, and the witch who haunts its ruins. Nature overruns the crumbling flint remains. Though it seems very peaceful, the church carries a wicked history. An enormous oak grows where the heart of the church nave once was. This is supposedly the finger of a witch who was executed in the village, pointing accusatorily up at the heavens.



According to some retellings, the witch was buried alive in the woods, with the church built around her to contain her evil. Others say she was taken to the abandoned church by villagers who believed she should be buried in blessed ground. Supposedly at twilight, if you circle the church three times and say her name, you can speak to the witch. But perhaps it is better to let a tortured soul rest...



Did You Know?

In the present day, East Somerton sits on the edge of a wetland nature reserve, and is a stone's throw away from the popular beach town of Winterton. But in the 16th century, East Somerton was a deeply isolated part of England. In the 16th century, it would've been a swampy, boggy land, with unsteady ground and low-lying mist, somewhere that likely flooded.

The witch hunts took place because people were taught to be distrustful and suspicious. Those trialled for witchcraft were unfortunate victims who could be blamed for bad weather, crop failures, or simply for having moles or scars. But in a landscape like the Broads, is it any wonder why there were so many witch hunts there?



You will need:

- Paper
- Pen
- A camera to take some photos (optional)

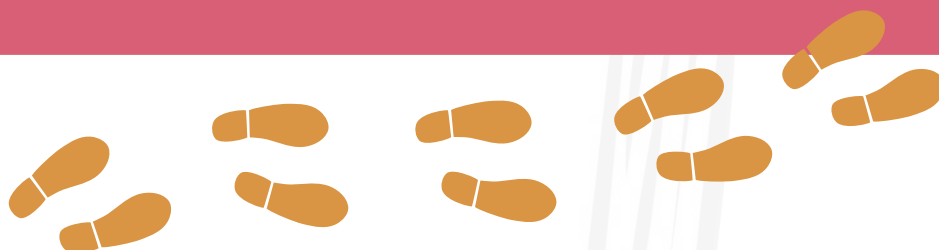


Safety considerations:



- When you go on your walk, make sure your parents know where you are and what you are doing.
- Make sure you are not trespassing on any private property.
- Always make sure to practice road safety when you're out and about.

Method:



1. On a walk you frequently do, note down five things in nature that you find interesting – a tree, a strange leaf, an unusual cloud, a pond, etc.
2. Create a mystery around one or two of these things. Maybe the tree looks like it has fingers from the corner of your eye. Maybe your character is the only one who can see a certain plant.
3. Try writing about this mystery. When you write, consider the environment around you. What does it smell like? Is it quiet or loud? What else can you hear? How does what you can see and smell and feel in the nature around you change your story?



Tips on writing a ghost story:

The best way to approach writing your ghost story is to think about everyday objects and sights, and how you can make them scary. Do they behave in a way they aren't supposed to? Are they maybe not what they seem at all?



Example:

I did the same walk I always do; moving from Heslington Road in York and moving towards the university down a small footpath.

On my walk I saw a few things that caught my attention that I thought could make for a good ghost story:

- Flooded plain
- A lone horse at Wentworth Way
- Overcast sky
- Muddy ground



The Haunted Horse of Wentworth Way

(My own ghost story)



In a field by Wentworth Way in York, something very strange happens when it rains and it floods. When the earth turns marshy and swampy from the storm, it becomes impossible to walk over the ground without slipping and sliding through the mud. Your breath hovers in the cold. The horizon is a streak of cold mist. There is a sense of uncertainty. Then, if you are very unlucky, out in the rain and flooded field, a mysterious horse might appear to you.

It will not be like any other horse you've ever seen. It doesn't neigh or toss its mane or stamp the ground with its hooves. It stands completely still, not even blinking. Many people who pass by the unsettling creature might try to approach the horse, but little do they know that is the worst thing you could do. It is said that if you hop the fence and get too close to the horse, you too might be suddenly still, unable to move, stuck in the swamp, not even able to blink. Then, when the mist dissolves and the rain clears, the field will appear empty again, with no trace of the horse or any person who was foolish enough to approach it. Every time the police ask the farmer who owns the field for answers, he always has the same reply: there is no record of a horse ever having been in this field.



3

Tame the Landscape: Marsh Diorama and Windmill Model

Time Required: 2.5 hours | Age Range: 8+ (with supervision)

Background:

Norfolk's windmills are their most iconic feature, with around 63 drainage mills of all types still remaining. They were introduced to help combat the floods that swept the Broads after peat cutting stopped in the 14th century, which left the empty peat channels to flood.

Combined with rising sea levels, the need to drain the land was urgent. The solution was simple: drainage mills, which were used to pump water away from the flooded areas. By the 17th century, drainage mills popped up across the Broads and they're now famous across the region.



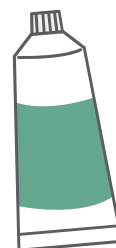
Turf Fen Windpump

About:

In this activity, the aim is to create a small model of the marsh landscape of the Norfolk Broads, complete with a windpump with sails that can spin. This activity is a great way to visualise the landscape, and how the windpumps of the Broads fit in with the natural landscape. We'll also be making some marsh reeds out of twine: Norfolk reeds line the waterways and are an important habitat for birds and small water creatures. Even now, the reeds are harvested by hand, and are used in heritage crafts such as roof thatching.

You will need:

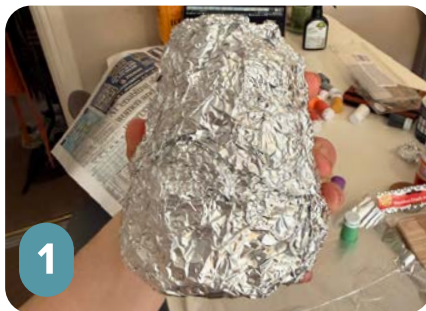
- Shoebox/cardboard
- Tinfoil
- Newspaper
- Acrylic paints
- Black/dark card stock
- Wooden kebab skewers
- Paintbrushes
- Scissors
- Clear PVA glue
- Green tissue paper (hedges)
- Twine (for marsh reeds)



Safety considerations:

- The kebab skewers can be hard to cut, so use a strong pair of scissors. Be careful of splinters from the kebab skewers too.
- Take care when piercing the card.

Method:



Making the Marsh

1. Using the lid of your shoebox as the base, trace out where you want your waterways to run, making sure you leave enough space for your windmill (which will be about 8 cm in diameter). Remember that alongside the natural rivers are the straight channels that are man made – can you include some straight waterways in your design?

2. Time to decorate the marsh! This includes:

- Painting in the sky, grass, and water
- Use some crumpled tissue paper to create the effect of hedges.
- Making the marsh reeds: cut small one inch pieces of twine and unravel one end, dip the unravelled piece in glue and stick in the tissue paper.

3. Once your paint has dried, paint a thick layer of clear PVA glue over the waterways – this will dry clear and make it look like water.



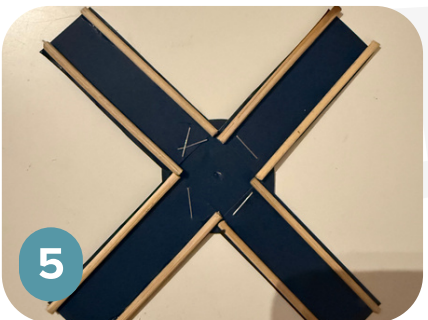
Making the Windmill

1. Use your tinfoil and scrunch it up into a cone shape, it should be around 8 cm in diameter at the base. Take the pointed end of the cone and press down on a table/flat surface until both the top and bottom have a flat end, with the bottom wider than the top.

2. Make a small semi-sphere cap from tinfoil to make the mill cap that goes on top.



Method:



3. Using PVA glue and newspaper, papier mache both tinfoil pieces to create a smooth surface that you can paint on when it's dried.

4. When the papier mache is dried, paint it black. Once the black has dried, paint the top white, with a white band about an inch thick around the top of the sides. You also can paint on windows and doors here.

5. Now we need to make the sails.

- Take your black card stock and cut out rectangles that are 2.5 cm wide and 9 cm tall. You will need to make 4 rectangles for the sails.
- Cut 8 wooden kebab skewers into 9 cm lengths. (You might need an adult to help with this part).
- Glue the kebab skewers to the edge of each sail – this will give your sails some structure and stability, but you can leave them out if you can't find any.

6. Cut out two circles of card (approx. 5 cm in diameter) and poke a hole through the middle using a kebab skewer. (If the kebab skewer won't pierce the card, try using the nib of a pen/pencil instead)

7. Glue/staple your card sails around one of the circular pieces of card, making sure they're evenly spaced so they look like windmill fans. Here, you can paint on the sail fan lines.

8. Take your assembled fan and slide the kebab skewer through the circle in the middle, through the hole pierced earlier.

9. Push the sharp end of the kebab skewer into the top inch of the mill and trim the excess skewer.

10. Glue your mill cap on top.

