

Re-skilling the Valley

*sharing the past
for a better future*

brought to you by

the **apricot** centre

for sustainable living



and



DEDHAM VALE

AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY
& STOUR VALLEY PROJECT


Written by The Apricot Centre Team;
Marina and Mark O'Connell, Aidan Barty and Barry Hammick.
The details of the project and complete interviews for every skill
are also presented on www.apricotcentre.co.uk/reskilling.html

All the Contributors

The Apricot Centre Team would like to say thank you to everyone who contributed their time to be interviewed, without you this project wouldn't have happened.

We do recognise though that whilst we've covered a lot there are many more people and skills out there so please keep sharing the past for a better future.

1. The Apricot Centre
www.apricotcentre.co.uk
Phone 01206 230425
2. Frances Barker - Felt Maker
3. Richard Bates - Green Woodworking
www.greenwoodcreations.co.uk
4. Birchwood Farm Shop
Phone 01206 323797
5. Miriam Burns - Cheese Making
www.oldhall.org.uk
6. Carters Vineyard
Renewable Energy and Wine Making
www.cartersvineyard.co.uk
Phone 01206 271136
7. Graeme Clarke - Ferreting
8. Roger Clarke - Farrier
9. Lynne Dorey - Gardener and Knitter
10. Helen Durrant - Book Binder
Email helen@photonimage.co.uk
11. Chris Elliott - Animal Husbandry
12. Flatford Mill
Renewable Energy
www.field-studies-council.org
13. Mrs Gladys Coleman - Womens Own
Knitting, sewing etc
Phone 01206 393156 (Jean Cook, Secretary)
14. Jonathan Gordon - Basket Maker
www.willowbaskets.co.uk
15. Hall Farm Shop and Cafe
www.hallfarmshop.co.uk
16. Anne Holden - Assington Mill
Renewable Energy and Sustainable Building
www.assingtonmill.com
17. Richard King - Sustainable Building
Email oldhallrdk@live.co.uk
18. Chris and Ian Learmonth
Stocks Farm at Wissington
Fruit Growing, Livestock and Butchery
Phone 01206 262070
19. Jack and Kevin Lucas - Punts and Fishing
20. Terry Mansell - Thatcher
Phone 01473 822457
21. Lorna McGain - Knitting and Sewing
www.oldhall.org.uk
22. Rodney Moss - Blacksmith (retired)
23. John Norton
The White Horse at Edwardstone
Renewable Energy and Beer Brewer
www.edwardstonewhitehorse.co.uk
24. Jack Norwood - Tool Repairer
www.twam.co.uk
25. Alex Parry - Felt Maker and Vintage Clothes Restorer
26. Dylan Pym - Furniture Maker
www.dylanpym.co.uk
27. Sarah and Selwyn Pryor - Foraging
28. Herman Ramsey - Charcoal Maker
29. Celia Richardson - Milking and Livestock
www.oldhall.org.uk
30. Matthew and William Rooney
Wild Mushrooms
www.mushroomtable.com
31. Josh Starling and Joe - Ferreting
32. Julia Smith - Rag Bags
33. Peter Suckling - Renewable Energy
www.oldhall.org.uk
34. Frank and Rosemary Tetley - Bee Keeping
35. Transition (Stour) Valley
www.transitionvalley.com - bartering
36. Sonia Upton - Jam Making and Bottling
37. Jackie Waters and Brian Page - grafting.
38. Colin West - Brewing
39. Lynn West - Poultry
40. Paul White - Bee Keeping



Hand-made candle produced at
Old Hall from sheep fat.

An Introduction to the Re-skilling the Valley project

Over the next 20 years we need to cut back on the amount of oil we use, because of climate change and because we are approaching "peak oil". The point at which production of oil starts to decline. How are we going to live rich and fulfilling lifestyles with less oil? We can look back 60 or more years to ask people how they lived with less oil, and we can look forward to see how coupling these skills with modern technology and new ideas can create a vision of a resilient future to look forward to.

This is the thinking behind the Transition Town movement that started in Totnes Devon in 2006. The Transition (Stour) Valley started in 2009 - with the question "how can the communities living around the Stour valley make a transition to the post peak oil world?"

The Re-Skilling Project is an initial step to understanding and mapping out the skills that exist in the Dedham Vale that are necessary to create a low carbon lifestyle. We designed a simple questionnaire and went to visit the people we knew had these skills, finding more people via word of mouth. We spent 4 months interviewing about 40 people and have summarized our findings in this booklet, and on our web site. We also ran 8 workshops for the public and 4 workshops in primary schools on these skills.

The Dedham Vale is an area of outstanding natural beauty where John Constable painted his famous scenes. A rural area of rolling hillside with mixed arable, pasture and woodlands, with the River Stour meandering through its centre. The population of the Dedham vale is 15,000 people and it covers 90 km². This works out at approximately 3 hectares per family of 4 - could we sustain ourselves in food, clothes, energy and homes from this much land?

We found a very rich mix of skills throughout the Dedham Vale, of old skills and new skills. Many people spoke about their love of their work. The main difficulties local food producers are facing are environmental changes bringing new diseases and pests so they were having to adapt their practice. In the craft areas it seems that the connections of similar minded people need to be re-woven, local felt makers for instance can't source local wool, and local sheep farmers throw out their wool as there is no market. Perhaps this is a little step on that path. Most we interviewed had learnt their skills at an early age, from a practitioner in a practical way, with a little help from books or groups and had honed the skill by practice and by experience - trial and error. Traditional apprenticeships such as the blacksmith took 5 years to learn their skill. Some people are passing their skills on. These skills have to be done for love it seems!

We have had a lot of fun doing this project and we hope you enjoy this book.

The Apricot Centre Team
March 2010



Wild Food

Collecting food for free from the fields, woods and rivers around us is an age old habit and is still alive and strong today.

This skill connects us to nature and the seasons and the food is free and healthy. A keen sense of observation of tiny details and knowledge of the seasons and where plants, mushrooms fish and wild animals live are key to feeding yourself from the wild. It is taught by word of mouth in the main.

4



Fishing

Jack Lucas and his family have worked on the River Stour for generations. Due to their connection with Punts, a flat bottomed boat unique to Manningtree, the Lucas family is well known. Punts were used in the shallows of the creeks for hunting wildfowl with a punt gun in the early hours of the morning in the winter months. In the summer months eels were caught using long poles to hook them out of the mud; they were then stored alive in baskets to keep them fresh before sending to Billingsgate Market. However due to the protected status of the river, hunting wildfowl is now not possible.



Hunting

Using ferrets to hunt wild rabbits is a skill that Graeme Clarke uses to control the population of rabbits but also to eat. Working the ferrets is highly skilled in itself, they are set down the warren and the rabbits are caught in nets as they run out, their neck is cleanly broken. They then can be skinned and gutted before eating. There is an unwritten rule that the rabbits are out of season between March and September.

To read the full interviews regarding these skills visit The Apricot Centre web site...



Foraging

Whilst out walking Selwyn and Sarah Pryor collect wild plants to eat, cook or kindling for the fire. The hedgerows offer many fruits for jams, teas, gins; bullace, sloes, hawthorn "haws" and rosehips. At the foot of the hedge many salad leaves; purslane, fennel, dandelion are found and the trees themselves in the spring can be eaten such as lime or hawthorn. Nettle soup is healthy delicious in spring.



Mushrooming

William and Mathew Rooney collect wild mushrooms in woodlands and fields of the Dedham Vale in the autumn months when the weather is damp. Mushrooms come and go in a very short time span so you must learn to be in the right place at the right time. Mushrooms come in 4 categories; edible, non-edible, poisonous and unknown. Some look very similar so you must be very sure before eating.

Recipe for Rabbit Stew

- 1 x jointed rabbit soaked in salt water for 45 minutes
 - 1 onion
 - ½ pint chicken stock
 - ½ glass white wine
 - Chilli flakes
- Simmer on the hob for 30 minutes or in the oven for longer at 170°c.

Recipe for Nettle Soup

Collect a carrier bag full of nettle tops in April / May time, after this the nettle becomes too fibrous and bitter to eat.

Chop 2 onions and 3 potatoes, you can add carrot and celery too if you like, and cook gently in oil for about 5 minutes.

Add the nettle (washed) and a litre of water with some bouillon or vegetable stock.

Cook for 20 minutes and then blend.
Delicious!

Find out more...

Fungi forays take place in the autumn, visit the events page of their web site for listings at

www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org

5

www.apricotcentre.co.uk/reskilling.html



Growing Vegetables

Many people grow their own vegetables in the back garden, on allotments or as a part of a mixed small holding with livestock for sale. Home grown food is undergoing a massive revival with many more allotments being created even in this rural area.

The food that we eat makes up to 30% of our carbon emissions so growing our own provides us with fresh, healthy, cheap food and exercise, plus it dramatically cuts down on our carbon emissions. The carbon emissions come from transport of food, or food miles and the use of tractors on the farm. Nitrogen fertilisers and pesticides used also require huge amounts of energy to make.

6



Feeding the Family

Lynne Dorey grows vegetables in her back garden for the family, she finds that growing vegetables requires knowledge of the soil and local conditions in your garden or farm, what grows well, where and when. Vegetables can be grown all year round with careful planning with perhaps a tunnel or glasshouse.



Storage of Vegetables

Vegetables can be stored using a clamp, a mound of soil in which root crops are stored in a cool place. Sonia Upton bottles tomatoes and makes chutneys and pickles.



Extending the Season

On the edge of the Dedham Vale there is the Foxash estate of about 100 small holdings built in 1932 in response to the depression and offered to unemployed miners. In the 80 years of market gardening on the estate high levels of expertise in extending the growing season of vegetables were developed with the use of mobile glasshouses. The market for these has gone now as they are replaced with imports from abroad.

sharing the past for a better future



Working Horses

Working horses were used for some farm work even 60 years ago, now replaced by the tractor. The Bunting family breed and work Suffolk punch in the kitchen gardens at The Anchor Inn at Stoke by Nayland and Carter's Vineyard in Boxted.

Find out more...

Courses on fruit and vegetable growing are run at The Apricot Centre. Visit their web site at

www.apricotcentre.co.uk

7



Growing Fruit

The soil and climate in the Dedham Vale is ideal for fruit growing and is rich with orchards and soft fruit grown on both a domestic scale and a commercial scale. Overall Suffolk has lost around 80% of its orchards since 1950 and 70% of fruit is now imported. Importing fruit from overseas has a huge carbon footprint. Local varieties of fruit bred in or near the Dedham Vale suited to its soils and climate are; Discovery Apple from Langham 1949, Maxton Apple from Assington 1939, Polstead Cherry 1900, Red Millar Apple from Sudbury 1948, Sturmer Pippin from Haverhill 1831. They are available from the East of England Apple and Pear Project.

8



Growing Fruit

Local growers produce fruit all year round beginning with Rhubarb in April, followed by Strawberries in June, Raspberries Blackcurrants, Gooseberries in July, Peaches, Apricots and Plums in August, Apples, Pears and Plums through to October. The Apples and Pears can be stored until the following April. Chris Learmonth grows 10 varieties of apples without pesticides or herbicides grazing the orchard with sheep and chickens. The apples are sold locally. This adds to the resilience of the orchard, if one variety fails there is always one that does well.



Preserving Fruit

Soft fruit can be frozen, however it can be made into jam or bottled to keep it through the winter without the use of electricity. Sonia Upton makes jams, jellies, chutneys and bottled fruit. It is the sugar and heat that seals the jars and preserves the fruit for up to a year. You must wash and sterilise the equipment, select good quality fruit and pack into the jars, cover with syrup and then heat treat in the oven or water bath for 20 minutes until a vacuum has formed.

To read the full interviews regarding these skills visit The Apricot Centre web site...



Bees

Bees are crucial for pollinating fruit trees and produce honey and wax. Paul White extracts up to 100kg of honey a year from his hives. The bees need frequent checking. There have been a big increase in bee diseases in the last few years. Frank Tetley uses very natural techniques and keeps his bees not for honey but just for themselves in a Warre Hive, they do not suffer at all from the modern diseases of bees but the yield of honey is lower.



Vineyard

Carter's Vineyard in Boxted grows grapes that it then ferments into wine using renewable sources of energy. This is sold on site and also in its sister pub The Anchor Inn at Stoke by Nayland. The grapes are harvested using Suffolk Punch horses. The horses are also used at The Anchor in the neighbouring kitchen garden where they grow their vegetables for use in the restaurant.



Propagating and Grafting

To grow an apple, pear or plum tree a rootstock is grafted with the variety of tree that has been chosen so that they come true to type. Jackie Page worked her mature Bramley orchard with 9 other varieties to create an organic dessert apple orchard.



Apple Juice

Pressing the windfall apples to make apple juice is a way of using up the whole crop of apples. Jackie Page sends 50% of her organic apples for juicing. The juice can be frozen or pasteurized so that it keeps or is drunk fresh. Chris Learmonth ferments his apple juice to make cider.

Find out more...

Courses on fruit growing and preserving are run at The Apricot Centre.

www.apricotcentre.co.uk

The East of England Apple and Pear project can supply heritage fruit trees.

www.applesandorchards.org.uk

Find out more about natural bee keeping from the Natural Bee Keeping Trust.

www.naturalbeekeepingtrust.org

9

www.apricotcentre.co.uk/reskilling.html



Livestock; meat, eggs & milk

Pigs

Chris Elliot keeps a range of livestock. His pigs are Gloucester Old Spot and they are free range and allowed to root for food, clearing and fertilizing his vegetable patch as they go.

Piglets are looked after by the sow and then at 9 months they are sent to the abattoir. Chris reckons that one pig can keep a family of 5 in roast joints for a year.

The Dairy

The cows are milked twice a day at Old Hall by hand. The milk is cooled but not pasteurized before use. The surplus is used for butter and cheese making. The equipment is sterilized and rennet is added which begins the setting process. The milk separates out into curds and whey. The curds are wrapped in a muslin cloth and pressed for 2 days – this is called the “grommet”. This is then removed from the press and left to mature in a cloth for a few months. The Whey is fed to the pigs. The Cheese is delicious.

Chickens and Poultry

Lynn West collects fertilized eggs from her flock and incubates them for 21 days. Once hatched they are kept warm under a lamp for 4 weeks. At 10 – 12 weeks the hens and cocks are split up and the hens start to lay at 19-21 weeks. The cockerels are ready to eat at 4-5 months depending upon the breed. The chickens eat the scrap food from the garden and kitchen and provide manure for the vegetables. Poultry can be for home consumption by breaking the neck before plucking and gutting.



Cattle

At Old Hall in East Bergholt they raise Red Poll cattle, a dual purpose breed suitable for East Anglian pastures. The female calf's (Heifers) are kept for milk production and the male calf's (bullocks) are raised for beef production. The cattle are put out to pasture with their feed supplemented with hay and oats grown on the farm. The fat content of the Red Poll cows is low so it is supplemented with a Jersey cow whose milk is has a higher fat content.

Butchery

Slaughtering of other livestock now has to be done in certified abattoirs for humane reasons. Ian Learmonth butchers the carcass's of pigs, cattle, sheep and chickens. He divides them into cuts, some of which is minced or diced then made into sausages and bacon is cured then smoked. It is sold in Farmers Markets.

Find out more...

Courses on livestock production are run at Assington Mill. Visit their web site at www.assingtonmill.com



Sheep & Wool

Much of the original wealth of the Dedham Vale was built on the value of wool. Sheep are still found in large numbers in the valley. Wool was valuable as woven cloth and for knitted clothing. This has been replaced now with fabrics such as "fleece" which is made directly from oil. Most of our clothing is manufactured in the Far East to keep the cost down, but this produces carbon emissions through transport. Clothes are also made from cotton, which in many countries requires huge inputs of pesticides and herbicides that require lots of oil in their manufacture.

12



Sheep

Chris Elliot raises Rylands. They keep the sheep for meat and for their grazing. The wool has little value these days and is in many cases just composted. In the UK we import most of our wool from New Zealand and Argentina. The sheep graze mature orchards and pastures, fertilizing as they go.



Shearing

The sheep are shorn annually in May as the temperature rises. Most small holders or farmers have to learn this skill themselves.



Carding and Spinning

The Learmonth's send their fleeces to Cornwall to be carded and spun in to wool. At Old Hall they still retain the skills of carding (brushing the fibres out) and spinning by hand but only on a small scale.

To read the full interviews regarding these skills visit [The Apricot Centre web site...](http://TheApricotCentre.co.uk)



Felt Making

Frances Baker makes felt by rubbing raw fleece with soap and water then friction turns it into felt. It is used for clothing, home insulation, food insulation, and beautiful hats!



Knitting and Crochet

Knitting is undergoing a revival and is now a very fashionable pastime with knitting circles in Dedham and Manningtree. Lorna from Old Hall and Lynne Dorey agreed that to knit or crochet is quite easy but to follow a pattern or making socks for instance requires a lot of skill and patience, but they find it relaxing. The Womens Own group make clothes, blankets, toys and nativity scenes but have noticed that keeping up styles is important, no-one for instance wants knitted baby clothes anymore. First Site in Colchester will be holding an exhibition of a crochet coral reef in 2010!



13

www.apricotcentre.co.uk/reskilling.html



Woodland & Its Uses

The woods of Dedham Vale are managed for timber and wildlife. Woodlands also absorb and store carbon dioxide which helps in some way towards climate change. The timber is used locally for many things. Pollarded willow is seen along the river banks of the Stour, this keeps the re-growth of the willow out of the way of the grazing sheep beneath. Traditionally this was used for basket making.

Coppiced Hazel, Willow and Chestnut is grown and cut on a regular basis to produce wood on a renewable cycle. Although burning wood produces carbon emissions it is carbon that has been locked up in the recent past.



Fuel

Coppiced woodland and timber is used as a renewable energy source for heating homes and businesses.



Furniture Making

Dylan Pym collects 70% of the wood he requires from a 40 mile radius of his workshop. He stores and planks it up, and then uses the uniqueness of the wood to suggest the shape of the furniture. He also shapes the wood using a steam box. The wood is in a steamer for 30 minutes then in the few seconds when it comes out it can be bent around a pre-fabricated former to the required shape.



Charcoal Burning

Herman Ramsey fells timber in the winter months and then leaves it for a year before burning in a kiln. The kiln is filled with wood and the burn is controlled through the opening and closing of vents and the lid for 6-18 hours. When the white smoke turns to a blue haze the lid is sealed with wet sand and the vents closed. It is then left for 36 hours. One tonne of wood can make 200kg of charcoal. Charcoal is used as a filter and it burns 3 x the temperature of wood so is good for cooking.



Green Wood Working

Richard Bates harvests green or fresh coppiced wood such as hazel and chestnut. From this he makes simple furniture, stools and chairs, fences, tool handles and bowls turned on a pole lathe and using other tools. This is called the art of Bodging.



Find out more...

Richard Bates runs green wood working courses at Monks Farm in Stratford St Mary. Visit his web site at www.greenwoodcreations.co.uk



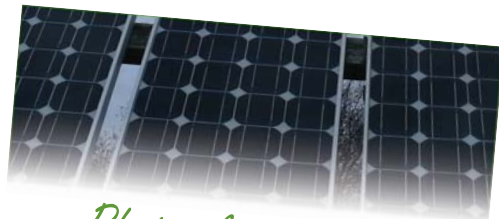
Local Energy Production

There are many examples in the Dedham Vale of how energy was generated in the past using wind and water power, for mills in particular. Many places in the Dedham Vale are now producing their own energy again, in some cases just updating the old technology with new. This is in the form of heat or electricity. This increases resilience to local homes, communities and businesses to energy shortages or fluctuations in price. It also makes a huge contribution to cutting down on carbon emissions and they offer examples to others of how this can be done.



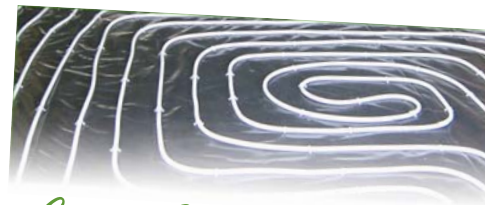
Wood or Biomass Burners

Many homes in this rural area have wood burning stoves, Rayburns or open fires heated by wood. At Old Hall The Dragon is a huge wood burning boiler that uses wood chips or cordwood to run a central heating and hot water system. The Apricot Centre is home to a ceramic stove, an eastern European invention. It burns 13kg of wood at a time, this should be coppice wood rather than logs. The stove then heats up a thermal mass that radiates the heat into the room for the following 10-12 hours.



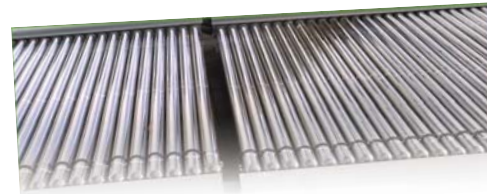
Photovoltaic Panels

Carter's Vineyard are completely off grid and they generate electricity from sunlight via the panels on the roof, these charge batteries that will last for 3-4 days at a time.



Ground Source Heat Pump

Assington Mill and Old Hall have ground source heat pumps. These water-filled pipes run beneath the ground and are heated up to a small temperature differential. The water passes through a heat pump that extracts the heat and uses it to heat hot water for the central heating system.



Solar Panels - Hot Water

Solar panels on a south facing roof will heat hot water to around 30-35c reducing the need of heating water with electricity, gas or oil. The White Horse Pub in Edwardstone grows it own organic barley then uses solar heated water and biomass burners on site for brewing beer and for its camp site.



Wind Power

The White Horse Pub and Carter's Vineyard have free standing wind turbines generating 6kw of electricity on a windy day.



Hydroelectric Power

Flatford mill and Assington mill produce hydroelectric power. Flatford is updating its water wheel with an Archimedean screw turbine fitted into the original water channel that housed a water wheel – it will produce 11kw of electricity/hr instead of the 6kw/hr of the old wheel. Nayland was one of the first places in the country to install a hydroelectric turbine to power some street lights the village in the early 1900's.

Reducing Energy Use

All those interviewed stated that as a first step they started to measure their energy use and made cuts and improved efficiencies. Flatford Mill managed to reduce their carbon emissions by 7.4% in 2009, and Old Hall have reduced their electricity usage by 50% over a few years. One of the best web sites for calculating your carbon foot print is www.carbonaccount.com

Find out more...

Energy Savings Trust have lots of information about reducing energy use and renewable energy. Visit their web site at www.energysavingstrust.org.uk



Buildings & Dwellings

The energy used in a home is not only that used to run it but also the “embedded” energy in building materials for the home. The Modern materials a house is made from often require huge amounts of energy to make them, such as cement, or may be made directly from oil such as PVC window frames, or be transported a long way. All have a carbon footprint. The design of the building will affect how efficient it is to run, such as large windows to the south will increase passive solar radiation, and how comfortable it is to live in.



Historic Homes

Local historic homes were made of local materials – oak framed, so the dimensions of the house were the dimensions of the local oak trees available. They were then in-filled with hazel hurdles, made out of coppiced hazel, plastered with Daub made out of mainly mud, and finally lime plastered to keep it water tight. These homes made from very local materials have stood the test of time but with the numbers of buildings now required and the lack of oak forests this is obviously no longer possible.



Straw Bale Houses

Assington Mill is home to buildings made out of straw. The bales are piled up in the same fashion as bricks and then a hazel pole is driven through them to hold them fast. They are then rendered inside and out with lime render to water proof them. The straw has a high insulating value and is a local, cheap building material with a low carbon footprint.

To read the full interviews regarding these skills visit [The Apricot Centre web site...](http://TheApricotCentre.com)



Blacksmith

The Blacksmith Rodney Moss made many things for timber framed houses, the tie rods and door furniture hinges and latches. Blacksmiths were found in most villages until the last few decades and provided tools, repairs and building materials for a whole community.



A-Frame Timber Buildings

Using fresh green wood, A-frames can be used to create dwellings, that are then in-filled with straw bales. They are weather boarded outside and lime plastered inside. Although none of these have been built in the valley Richard Bates has worked with Ben Law of Channel 4's Grand Designs fame.



Thatching

Terry Mansell uses Suffolk long straw or Norfolk reed for thatching. The straw used to be obtained locally but now has to be grown and harvested specially near Woodbridge. This is pegged on to the roof using hazel thatching spars and all the work is carried out by hand.



Creative Use of Containers

Not far from the Dedham Vale is Felixstowe, where there is a mountain of redundant shipping containers. They are cheap, and easy to use and install. They are found on farms for storage, out buildings, cold stores and the Apricot Centre! Insulated inside and out, with the ends replaced with glass doors, it makes for a very effective training space.



Hurdles

Richard King at Old Hall grows willow and hazel coppice and make hurdles for oak framed buildings. The coppice hazel uprights are driven into a frame, then split hazel or willow is woven between the uprights and beaten down hard. A hurdle or fencing panel can be made to any size and used as fencing or as a part of a timber framed building.

Find out more...

Assington Mill run a wide range of courses covering most of these skills and more, visit their web site at

www.assingtonmill.com

www.apricotcentre.co.uk/reskilling.html



Repairs

Making do and mending is a key part of a sustainable lifestyle, cutting down on the need for making new products with the embedded energy and transport that is required. The skills of repairing clothes and tools are not really necessary today as it is often easier and cheaper to buy new. Re-using materials to make something new is another innovative way to cut down on raw materials and cheaper too.



Tool Repair

Jack Norwood fixes tools. He fits new handles to metal tools such as forks, spades and hammers that can be made from Ash by "bodging" or turning on a pole lathe, as Richard Bates does. They have to be whittled into shape and then pegged into place.



Quilts and Blankets

The Womens Own group use old clothes and fabric that might be worn in places. They cut it up and sew them together into intricate patterns to create quilts. They also make aprons, peg bags and other household items. Old jumpers can become hot water bottle covers or children's clothes. Julia Smith uses old curtains to make re-usable shopping bags. Rag rugs are made from strips of old fabric knotted into intricate patterns to make beautiful rugs.



Darning and Alterations

Mending socks with a darn, and repairing old jumpers with patches all adds to their uniqueness as clothing. Julia Smith can alter clothes so that they can change shape with us! Vintage clothes from second hand shops can be altered and repaired instead of buying new.



Book Repair

Books often break on the spine and can be repaired simply using flour and water glue and card – older books and maps are highly specialized repairs. Helen Durrant repairs books in East Bergholt.





Local Markets

Re-localising food, clothes, drinks and building materials needs market places and shops. In the past marketing would have been local due to the difficulties in transporting heavy materials a long way and the lack of refrigeration. Many of these local marketing methods have been replaced with driving to towns and supermarkets and the long distance travel of food in particular – a typical meal will have travelled 3,000 food miles to your plate. Local, seasonal shopping is having a revival and a mixture of the old and new methods can be found in the Vale.



Transport

When asked, all of the interviewees transported goods and materials to and from their work places by car or truck. Up until the 1930's barges used the river up to Dedham to transport many products too and from the Dedham Vale. The Lucas family piloted barges around the difficult sand banks in the Stour estuary – these pilots were called "Huffers". The river is not navigable from the sea beyond Manningtree anymore and so this is not likely to be used in this way in the future. The infrastructure of roads and footpaths suggests bikes, public transport and foot to minimise car use. Car Clubs also exist to minimise car usage.



Carrying Shopping

Plastic is made from oil! Shopping bags are already being phased out in many supermarkets because of the damage they do in the environment. The ultimate re-usable shopping carrier is the basket. Jonathon Gordon makes beautiful ones that will last a lifetime, although there is no willow production in the Dedham Vale any longer.

To read the full interviews regarding these skills visit [The Apricot Centre web site...](http://TheApricotCentre.co.uk)



Roadside Stalls

Lynne Dorey, Lynn West and Old Hall all put their surplus produce on a roadside stall with a hand written sign and an honesty box. It is very particular to this part of the world and is the ultimate in local marketing and minimal packaging!



Farmers Markets

There are monthly farmers markets for local producers in Dedham, Lawford, Colchester, and Sudbury where local people can come along and meet the food producers and do their shopping.



Farm Shops

Many farms have diversified to create a shop to sell their own produce as well as that of other local farmers and growers. Hall Farm and Birchwood Farm specialise in sourcing and selling local seasonal fruit, vegetables, meat, drinks, ice cream, cakes and much more.



The Internet

Connects the producer and the market place without travelling – the product or produce can be sent by post. Jonathon Gordon sells his willow baskets online.



Bartering

Food swaps run by the Transition Valley group allow keen gardeners to meet up and swap their excess produce. Chris Elliot and many others simply stated they shared their surplus with friends.

Find out more...

A national car club with a branch in Manningtree operates to help minimise car use. For more details go to

www.visit-manningtree.co.uk

The shopping bag pattern can be found by visiting

www.morsbgs.com

Basket making courses can be found by visiting the Flatford Mill web site at

www.field-studies-council.org

www.apricotcentre.co.uk/reskilling.html

Written By The Apricot Centre Team;
Marina and Mark O'Connell, Aidan Barty and Barry Hammick



The Apricot Centre
83 Hungerdown Lane
Lawford, Manningtree
Essex. CO11 2LY
Phone 01206 230425
www.apricotcentre.co.uk

The details of the project and complete interviews for every skill are also presented on www.apricotcentre.co.uk/reskilling.html

We are very grateful to the Dedham Vale AONB and Tendring District Council for funding this project and for the Transition (Stour) Valley group for informing this project.



For more information about the Transition (Stour) Valley group please visit www.transitionvalley.com

