as anything the r. On the Georgian high s a wide, butter-yellow g with duck breast and enu, brass beds upstairs. oathouse Restaurant er a long Sunday lunch.

me to legendary travel nd now Jamie Oliver, udor-era Spains Hall), ck pond, village green colourful examples of rwork is hand-printed ere's the Finchingfield neat and ales; indie **ines** in nearby Great ad in Little Dunmow, of Bacon, where Tim as heritage carrots h. From spring, the d Camping, run by ck and her husband, vildflower meadow.

the Central line, a g Forest rambles, nd the seriously rards. The latter is e Jahdre Hayward d wild garlic from from the hives.

n brothers Chris s for the county's lan pub in order nch-accented

....es. Tou can walk to the shore and harvest seaweed and samphire by the armful.'

ART BY THE WATER

Southend tends to be defined by its oldschool, East End-on-sea larks, but over the past few years its creative reputation has been rising. The Village Green and Estuary festivals, both returning in 2021, celebrate the region's contemporary scene, which also has a home in the Focal Point Gallery and its events venue Twenty One. 'They've changed the dynamic,' says Elsa James, an artist based at the town's Old Waterworks studios. 'I don't have to travel to London for my art fix - it feels as if there's an Essex renaissance happening.' James's identity as a Black woman living here informs her conceptual pieces alongside her activism work with the Essex Girls Liberation Front collective. Her film projects, such as Forgotten Black Essex, drawing on historic muses such as Princess Dinubolu from Senegal, who entered a Southend beauty contest in 1908, and Black Girl Essex, in which James, dressed in Carnival costume, walks around Tilbury Docks (where

Windrush landed in 1948), give a new narrative to the stereotype. (For another take, Sarah Perry's new book Essex Girls is a spirited defence of 'profane and opinionated women' who dare to speak out of turn.) 'Westcliff-on-Sea is very culturally diverse, while Leigh-on-Sea has cafés and small places such as Vino Vero for wine,' says James. 'After an art preview, most head to The Railway for drinks; there's also Craftwerk for ales. The Oyster Creek Kitchen, set in a Victorian sun shelter on the seafront, is lovely. And if friends are staying, I point them to Seven Hotel for the night.' RICK JORDAN

House for Essex in Wrabness, 'a monument to thwarted female dill at The Sun Inn in Dedham; Georgian house in Mistle