At the end of the lane turn right into the farmyard, then immediately left onto a cinder track. When this bears right, keep straight ahead, now on grass, until the track goes right, through a hedge gap by a signpost. Turn left here and follow the field-edge path with a ditch on the right. Stay on this path until it goes through a gap in the hedge. Cross a track and continue ahead again along a field-edge path by a ditch. As you reach the top of the rise you can see Hadleigh spread out below. Walk downhill, aiming for a gap in the hedge ahead, and pass through. The footpath continues ahead through the garden of Durrant's Farm, keeping close to the hedge on the right. Turn right onto an unmade road which then becomes tarmacked.

The houses on the left (Tower Lodge) as you crest the rise are on the site of a tower windmill which ceased working in 1905.

At a crossroads continue ahead down George Street, passing The Row Chapel and numerous very old houses.

Hadleigh is 10 miles west of Ipswich (A1074), 12 miles east of Sudbury (A1071), 14 miles south of Stowmarket (B1115/A1141) and 15 miles north of Colchester (A12/B1070).

Parking in Hadleigh is free, but short stay car parks are limited to 3 hours’ stay and a ticket must be displayed. Long stay car parks are in Magdalen Road (Angel Street end) and Stonehouse Road off George Street. There is a small car park at the start of the Railway Walk.

Buses run from Ipswich and Sudbury regularly during the day, less frequently in the evening and on Sundays. There are also services from Colchester, Manningtree, Bury St Edmunds, and surrounding villages. The nearest rail station is at Ipswich. Check with traveline on 0871 200 22 33 or visit www.traveline.info

For details of accommodation and guides and leaflets about the town and surrounding areas, as well as information about local events, visit Hadleigh Library and Tourist Information Point, 29 High Street (open Tuesday-Sunday). There are also leaflets available on local flora and fauna, and where to eat and drink in the town.

The Row Chapel

When a T-junction is reached you are back at Magdalen Road. Turn right for the starting point at the main car park, or carry on ahead along the pedestrianised area to the High Street and historic town centre for sightseeing and refreshments.

Produced in association with Hadleigh Town Council

Text & photos © Geoff Ross 2008
Length of walk: 4½ miles
Time taken: 2 – 2½ hours
Start: Magdalen Road main car park
Parking: Magdalen Road, Stonehouse Road, Toppesfield Hall, Railway Walk (Station Road)
Terrain: Railway track-bed, roads, meadows, field-edge paths; 3 stiles; 3 uphill sections. Can be muddy in places.
Refreshments: Lots of cafes, pubs and take-aways in Hadleigh.

Turn left out of Magdalen Road car park and walk to the end of the road. At the junction turn left then cross the road at the zebra crossing. Continue uphill, and turn right at a sign “P – Railway Walk”.

The Hadleigh Branch of the Eastern Union Railway was opened in 1847 with the intention of continuing to Bury St Edmunds via Lavenham, but this never happened and Hadleigh remained the end of the line. Passenger traffic ceased in 1932 and the line was finally closed in 1965. The original station, now a private house surrounded by modern development, can be seen on the left.

Pass alongside a metal barrier onto a tarmac path which joins the former railway track-bed by a National Cycle Route sign. Walk for about one mile, sometimes in a cutting and sometimes on an embankment with wide views on both sides, until you reach a four-way signpost.

Go left here through the hedge and turn right along a field-edge path. At the end of the field pass through a gap in a fence and follow an obvious winding path through an area of scrub.

A Romano-British building with a hypocaust was excavated here in 1954.

Cross a sleeper bridge over a stream and climb a stile into a marshy meadow. Follow the well-used route to drier ground and aim for a gate at the far side of the field. Climb a stile into the next meadow and walk across it to another gate and stile giving onto a track between hedges. Follow the track until you reach an electricity pylon. Turn left at the pylon and walk along a field edge path with a ditch on the right. Pass behind some industrial units and at a footpath sign turn right and walk along a garden hedge and fence to Pond Hall Road. Cross with care, turn left and in a few metres turn right at a post box into Valley Farm Lane.