

# Hadleigh

The flint and freestone parish church of St Mary's houses the oldest bell in Suffolk that still marks the time, and is home to the Hadleigh Choral Society, which performs a host of fantastic concerts throughout the year.

Hadleigh has a fascinating history reflected in over 250 listed buildings, from its fabulous rise to fortune during the Middle Ages due to the burgeoning wool and silk trade, through to the establishment of The East Anglian School of Painting and Drawing in the 1930s at Benton End, a rambling farmhouse on the edge of the town, whose students included Lucian Freud and Maggi Hambling.

The Hadleigh Show, first held in 1840 and also known as 'The May Show', is one of the oldest and most popular events of its kind in Suffolk; the perfect day out for all the family.

## The walk:

Records kept by the Stewards of the manor identify that, by the early 1300s, around 37% of the population of Hadleigh was involved in the production of woollen cloth.

Hadleigh was run by the clothiers who, on making their fortunes, moved out either to landed estates, or to trade in the City of London. With the demise of the market for the heavy woollen cloth produced in Hadleigh, the town declined by the early 18th century into severe poverty.

This is a very gentle walk around Hadleigh. The Guildhall complex in the heart of the town is visually impressive, but do not miss the real hidden gem of this walk – the mural in Viscount Bayning's House showing Joseph being thrown down a well! The walk includes a stroll alongside the peaceful and pretty River Brett – the more adventurous can walk up the hill behind the river for views of the town or seek out the Hadleigh Railway Walk, a two mile walk to Raydon and back.

### 1 The Row Chapel, George Street

William Pykenham left money for the building of Almshouses in George Street, including a chapel already on the site, dedicated to the Blessed Mary Magdalen and to St Catherine. This chapel was refurbished in the late 19th century.

### 2 Toppesfield Bridge

Built in the 14th century and widened in 1812, said to be the oldest working bridge in the county.

The next three buildings all lie in the centre of the town in the churchyard:

### 3 The Guildhall complex

This comprises the Market House, Guilds Halls and the Victorian New Town Hall. The building fronting the churchyard is the Market House, probably built in the 1430s and either incorporating or replacing the original

Market House. In the 1450s, part of the market lands were purchased for the building of the Guilds Halls. Following the reformation, these Halls were purchased for the town and joined to the Market House. In 1851 part of the complex was pulled down to build the New Town Hall, incorporating the Grand Hall and a police station.

### 4 Deanery Tower

The brick Deanery Tower was built by the Rector, William Pykenham, in the late 15th century as a gatehouse to the mediaeval rectory.

### 5 St Mary's Church

One of the largest parish churches in Suffolk, the first stone church was built in around 1250, the tower being the last obvious part. The flint and stone church was enlarged in the 14th and 15th centuries. During the Commonwealth period the church was stripped of its ornamentation, and in the 19th century the exterior and interior of the church were restored. The church clock, with its exterior bell, has been in position since at least 1584.

### 6 Viscount Bayning's House (now Abbott's Estate Agents, 46-48 High Street)

The core of this house is an early hall house, the exterior being pargeted and also having a leather faced one-handed clock, probably from the building's role as a clockmaker's in the 18th century. One of the rooms inside this house has a heavily moulded ceiling and a wall painting depicting Potifer's wife rescuing Joseph from the well (open to the public when the estate agents is open).

## Trail Details

**Distance:** 3½ km / 2 miles

**Duration:** 1-2 hours

**Parking:** Magdalen Road Car Park

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