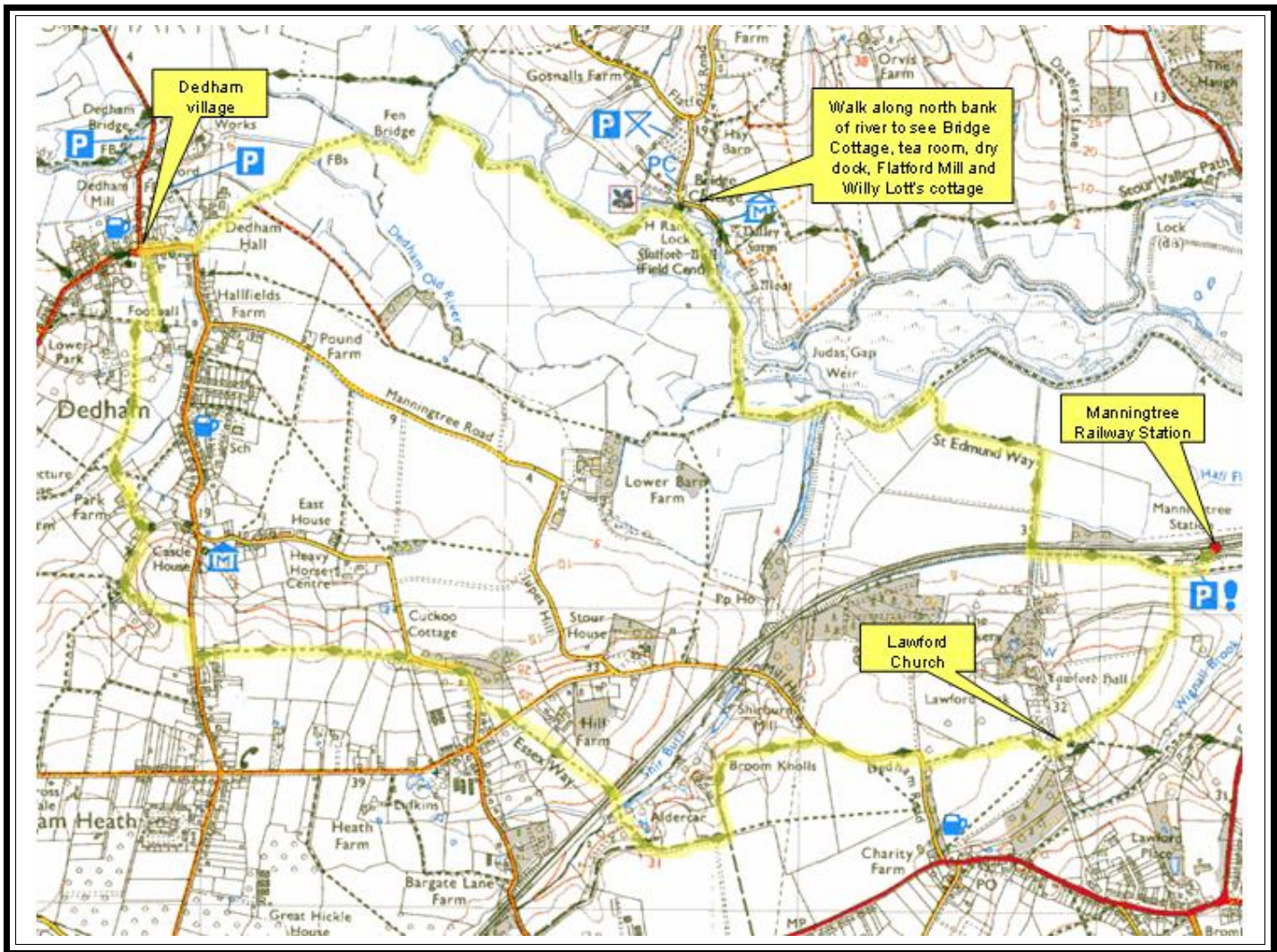


Arriving by Train

Main Features of the Walk	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employs particularly attractive paths, many of which offer impressive views across Dedham Vale.• Includes a section along the tidal section of the River Stour, which is rich in birdlife and offers fine views of the estuary• Passes Flatford Mill, Willy Lott's cottage and the Fen Bridge.• A chance to see historic Lawford Church• Scope for exploring Dedham village
Outline Route	This circular walk starts at Manningtree Station, which has a frequent train service from London (Liverpool Street), journey time about 60 minutes. The walk takes visitors to the semi-tidal section of the River Stour and progresses up the south bank of the river to Dedham village. On the way, at Flatford, scope exists for walkers to make a short detour to visit Bridge Cottage (with a small, free Constable exhibition) and view the dry dock together with Flatford Mill and Willie Lott's Cottage. From Dedham village the route progresses southwards to the southern edge of Dedham Vale. It then swings eastwards, giving frequent fine views across the valley, and passing Lawford Church. After this there is a descent to the valley floor (near Manningtree railway station).
Approximate Distance	About 7 1/2 miles.
Approx. Completion Time	About 4 hours
Toilet Provisions	There are toilets at Manningtree Station, Flatford (close to the hump back bridge) and in Dedham.
Eating and Drinking	In Dedham and/or at Flatford tea room (summer months only).
Shortcuts	The "Directions" listed below relate to the route that is shown on the map below in yellow highlight. There are no simple short cuts.



Directions

	<i>Dis. from start (miles)</i>
The walk starts at Manningtree railway station.	0

Walk straight ahead outside the station exit, and almost immediately bear right down the slope to the lower car park. At the bottom of the slope turn left down the footpath.

This path soon reaches a T-junction with a cart track where you should turn right (west).



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Follow this track for about 1/4 mile, and at the T-junction turn right (north, under the railway bridge)	0.4
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Follow this track until you emerge on the path that runs along the southern bank of the River Stour.	0.9
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Turn left (west) and follow the path. After about 1/2 mile Judas Gap is reached, and you should bear right. At the "56 Gates" (concrete sluice gates built in 1947 to prevent flooding) cross a bridge over the original course of the River Stour, and follow the path straight on towards Flatford.	1.4
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On arrival at Flatford consider a short deviation to see some of the sights. Cross over the hump-back bridge and turn right to see a small Constable exhibition in Bridge Cottage, the dry dock (which was capable of being drained into the old course of the river on the other side of the flood plain), Flatford Mill and also a familiar view of Willy Lott's Cottage. Return to the hump back bridge.

1.8



Willy Lott's Cottage as Constable saw it in "The Hay Wain"

John Constable, 1821. Photo © The National Gallery, London



Willy Lott's Cottage as you will see it



The dry dock as Constable saw it in "Boatbuilding near Flatford Mill"

John Constable, 1815. Photo © The Victoria & Albert Museum, London



The dry dock as you will see it

Cross back over the hump-back bridge, and turn right (westwards) to follow the river bank path to Dedham Village. Otters are sometimes seen here (reputedly!).

2.1



The hump back bridge, with Bridge Cottage in the background

On the way you will pass the Fen Bridge. (This is a replica of the one that would have been used by John Constable on his way to and from school, and was lifted into place by a Chinook helicopter in 1985.)

2.7



The Fen Bridge

On reaching the village of Dedham you have probably earned a break!

3.5



Dedham High Street

From Royal Square (where the War Memorial is located) head southwards into "The Drift". (This is opposite the Marlborough Head public house.)

Pass the Duchy Barn (a remnant of the farm that once occupied this site) and the public toilets. When you reach the cricket pavilion turn right (westwards) along the southern boundary of the cricket pitch.

After about 75 yards turn left (south) on to the footpath that leads through paddocks that often contain livestock. On the way



you will pass the pictured oak tree. It was almost certainly around when Matthew Hopkins (the "Witchfinder General") who was a

Manningtree resident, practised his grim activities to rid the area of witches in the mid-seventeenth century. It is claimed (contentiously!) that the scene of the last English witch burning was in the garden of the Sun Inn, Dedham.

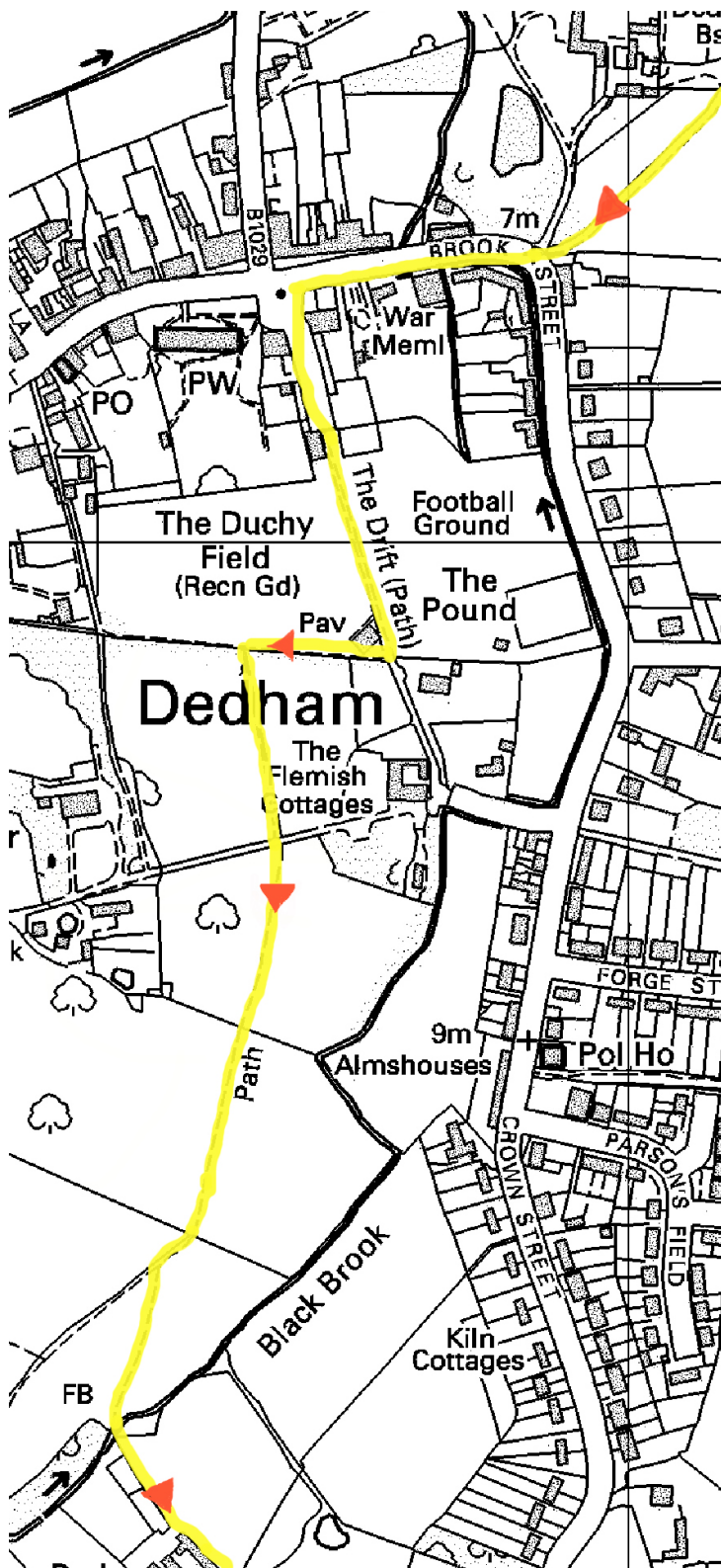
The path leads into another field (look for the gap in the high hedge, featuring an elaborate stile with a bridge over a ditch).

After about 100 yards the path that you should follow forks off to the left (this may not be well defined, see direction map to the right).

This path soon crosses the Black Brook (a tributary of the Stour) by means of a small footbridge, and passes up the side of a paddock that often contains horses.

3.7

4.0



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The path passes through the garden of a private residence and then emerges at a T-junction with Coopers Lane.

4.2

Turn right (west) into Coopers Lane, and continue almost to the end of the road. Look out on the left hand side for a house called "Hunters Moon". (If you reach the end of the road, retrace your steps for about 100 yards.) At the side of Hunters Moon runs a gravel drive. Go down this drive, and at the end turn left (east) across the block-paved yard in front of a house. The footpath runs from the corner of this yard.

4.3

Follow this path and when you reach Castle Hill turn right (south). After 100 yards turn left (east) into Anchor Lane. Where the road bends sharply to the right, carry straight on along the footpath.

4.5

At the end of this path East Lane is reached. Turn right (south eastwards) on to East Lane, and after about 300 yards take the footpath that branches off to the left.

5.0

5.2

The route of this path is not very clear, but it runs diagonally across the field in a south easterly direction, and there is an exit to the road about half way down the south-easterly side of the field.

Emerge on to Long Road East, turn right and almost immediately turn left into a further footpath. This progresses through a stud farm and then down hill to a point where it crosses the railway at a level crossing.

5.3

5.5

The path makes its way through woodland up the valley side, and then reaches a T-junction with a bridle path. Turn left (eastwards) on to this track and (ignoring the turning to the right) follow it through the yard of a house called "Broom Knolls", and two gates, after the first of which you should turn sharp right down the

5.7



Be prepared for inquisitive locals!

side of the field.

The path eventually comes to a T-junction with Dedham Road, where you should turn right (south eastwards) for about 1/4 mile. When you reach the small gatehouse turn left (eastwards), through the gate.

6.2

6.5

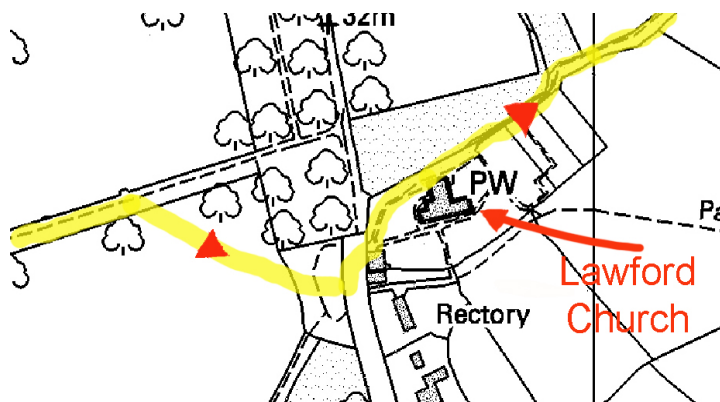
Walk down this track, and about 200 yards before you reach the T-junction at the end, the footpath bears right diagonally across a meadow, towards Lawford church.



St. Mary's Church, Lawford, which dates back to the 14th century.

Enter the church grounds through the gate (by the notice board), and keep to the left in the grounds. The footpath to Manningtree station runs from the far left hand (north east) corner of the church yard, and is accessed via a wrought iron gate.

6.8



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Follow this path and you will soon see a panoramic view of the Stour estuary, with the cranes of Felixstowe harbour in the distance, and Manningtree station in the foreground.

7.1

Return to the station by the same route as you left it earlier in the day.

Total mileage for this walk

7.5