

The South Easterly Walk

Main Features of the Walk

- Employs particularly attractive paths, many of which offer impressive views across Dedham Vale.
- A chance to see historic Lawford Church
- Passes Flatford Mill, Willy Lott's cottage and the Fen Bridge.
- Includes a section along the tidal section of the River Stour, which is rich in birdlife and offers fine views of the estuary

Outline Route

This circular walk starts in the centre of Dedham and progresses southwards to the southern edge of Dedham Vale. It then swings eastwards, giving frequent fine views across the valley, and passes Lawford Church. After this there is a descent to the valley floor (near Manningtree railway station). The walk then takes visitors to the semi-tidal section of the River Stour (which is rich in birdlife) and it progresses up the south bank of the river back to Dedham village. 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.

Approximate Distance

About 7 1/2 miles.

Approx. Completion Time

About 4 hours

Toilet Provisions

There are public toilets in Dedham and close to the hump back bridge at Flatford.

Suggested Car Parking

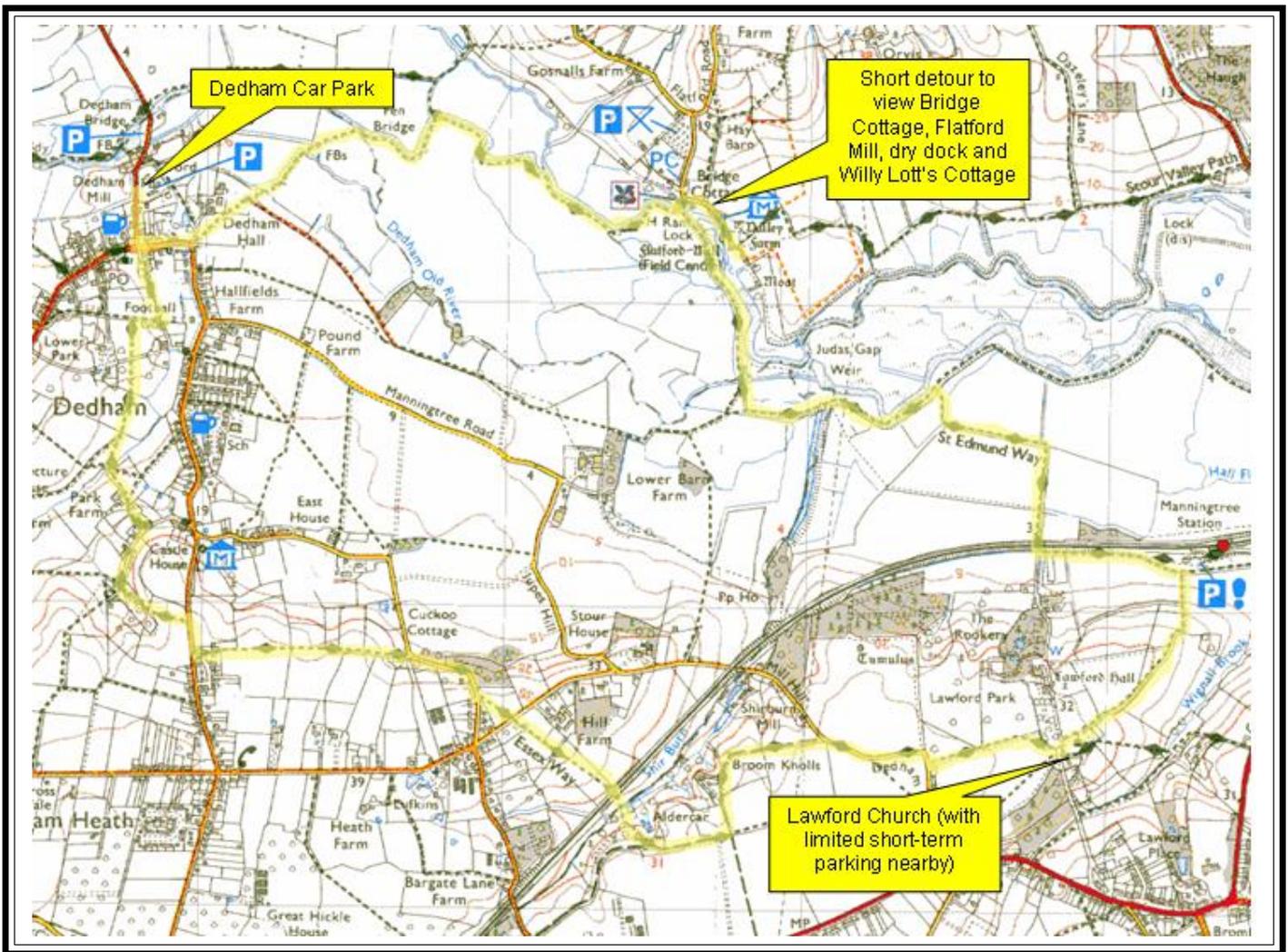
At the public car park in Mill Lane, Dedham or close to Lawford Church (which is just north of the A137 Colchester to Harwich road)

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 in **yellow** highlight. There are no simple short cuts.



Directions

From the Dedham car park make your way into the centre of the village.

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

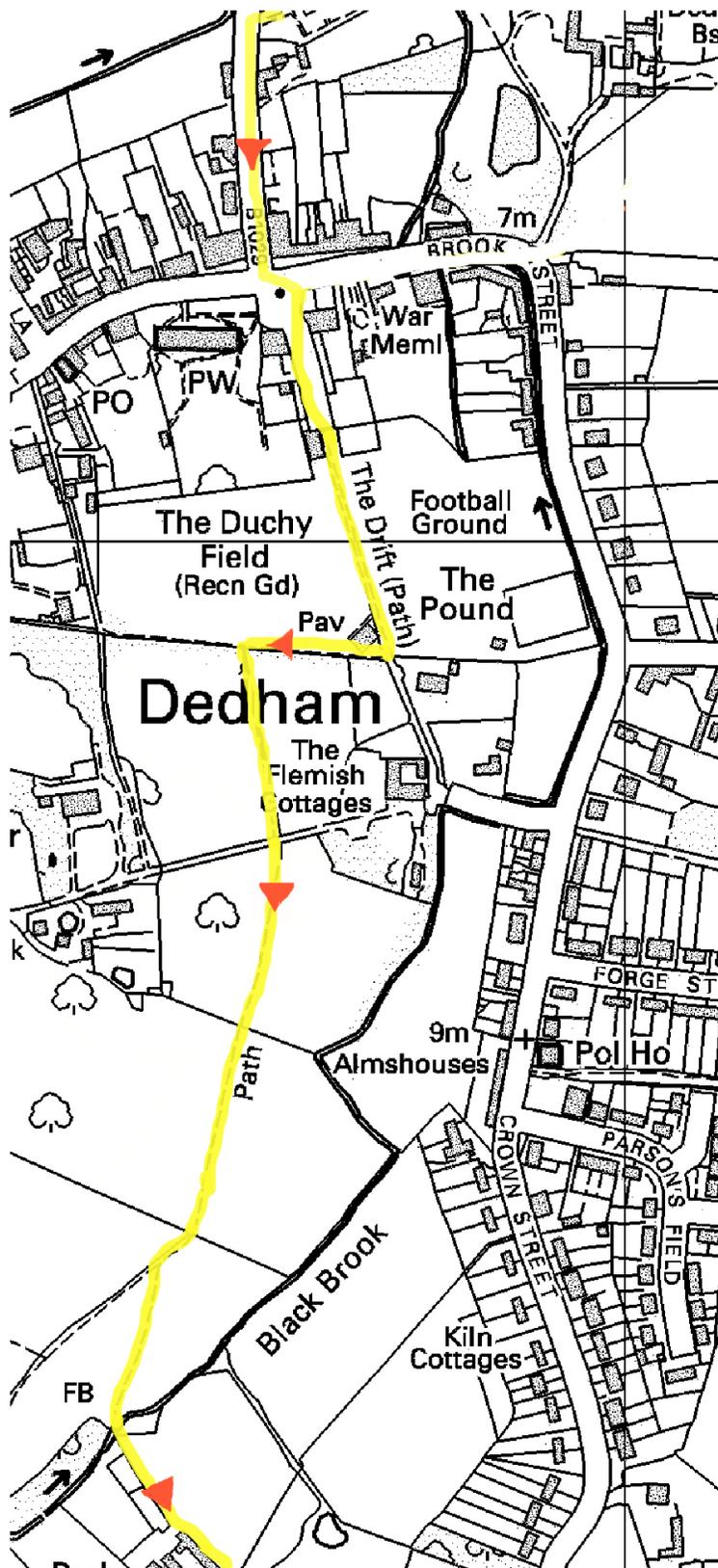
the way you will pass the pictured oak tree. It was almost certainly around when Matthew Hopkins (the "Witchfinder General") who was a Manningtree resident, practised his grim activities to rid the area of witches in the mid-seventeenth century. It is claimed (contentiously!) that the scene of the last English witch burning was in the garden of the Sun Inn, Dedham.

Dis. from start (miles)

0

0.1

0.3



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

0.6

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

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.

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

0.8

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.

Follow this path, and it comes to a T-junction with Castle Hill. From this point it is usually possible to see the cranes at the Port of Felixstowe, some 12 miles away as the crow flies.

1.1



Be prepared for inquisitive locals!

Turn right (south) into Castle Hill, and after 100 yards turn left (east) into Anchor Lane. Where the road bends sharply to the right, carry straight on along the footpath.

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. 1.6

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 (west) and almost immediately turn left (south) 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. 1.9
2.1

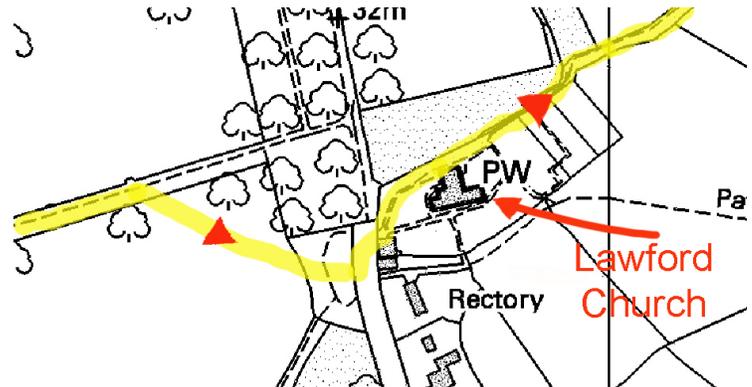
The path makes its way through woodland up the valley side, and then reaches a T-junction with a bridle path. Turn left (eastwards) on to this track and (ignoring the turning to the right) follow it through the yard of a house called "Broom Knolls", and two gates, after the first of which you should turn sharp right down the side of the field. 2.3



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

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.

Walk down this track, and about 100 yards before you reach the T-junction at the end, the footpath bears right, diagonally across a meadow, towards Lawford church.



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Enter the church yard through the gate (by the noticeboard), 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

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

Descend to the valley floor, and turn left (west) at the T-junction with a cart track.

Follow this track for about 1/4 mile, and at the T-junction turn right (under the railway bridge)

4.1



Follow this track until you emerge on the path that runs along the southern bank of the River Stour.

4.6

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.

5.1

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.

5.5



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

6.0



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!).



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.)

6.5



The Fen Bridge

On returning to the village of Dedham you have earned a rest!



Dedham High Street

Total mileage for this walk (including sightseeing deviation at Flatford)

7.5