

Introducing Hadleigh



Hadleigh is situated on the A13 London Road between Thundersley and Leigh-on-Sea, Essex. Our u3a name is derived from its most significant feature, the castle. Built in the 13th Century by Henry II's justiciar, Hubert de Burgh, it was later extended by King Edward III, providing a luxurious retreat from London. Now reduced to a romantic ruin, the site affords extensive views of the Thames Estuary, from where on the finest days, Canary Wharf can be seen.

In 1892 Salvation Army founder William Booth established a Farm Colony in Hadleigh, where destitute Londoners might be trained in skills such as farming, market gardening and brickmaking, which would enable them subsequently to earn a living. The farmland surrounding the town remains part of the Hadleigh Farm Estate. The adjacent Hadleigh Country Park is among the largest green spaces in Essex, covering 387 acres of open grassland, woodland, ponds, and miles of footpaths and cycling trails. It was the home of the 2012 Olympic Mountain Biking competition. The Olympic track is now adapted for free public use and has trails for different ability levels.

The jewel of the High Street is the fine 12th Century church of St James the Less, distinguished by its semi-circular east end and picturesque churchyard.