



**I G Liddell**  
***Get out of London!***  
**East to Southend-on-Sea**



The text in this document is merely an indication of what might be possible ... or what might have been possible at the time of researching (2019) or later revision. All walking routes are subject to change, but the pace of urban change is greater than in rural areas.

Each reader must assess whether each part of the route qualifies as suitable or safe for public access. The author does not warrant any point of legality or safety in any part of the description of the route.

Thanks are due to many people who have helped me with route-finding and with intelligence local to a number of areas traversed by the route. Their contributions enrich the route and the stories along it. Clearly, any mistakes and misinterpretations remain with the author.

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Front cover photograph:  
Brannett's Wood, South Ockendon

# Trafalgar Square to Southend-on-Sea

# CARD E(N)

Start	Nelson's Column, Trafalgar Square — <b>WC2N 5DU</b>
Finish	Southend Central station — <b>SS1 1AB</b>
Distance	96.33km
Duration	19 hours 45 minutes
Ascent	325m

## Introduction

The route of the walk starts at the foot of Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square, one of the most iconic spots in London.

Trafalgar Square was laid out from 1830, on land which used to be royal mews stabling for Whitehall Palace (which is down Whitehall on the left). Work began on the National Gallery in 1832, and Nelson's Column was erected in 1843 (the Landseer lions only arrived in 1867).



The statue of King Charles I to the south of the square — the original Charing Cross — is the London zero-point for road distance measurement. Rather confusingly, the epicentre of road numbering for England and Wales is at St Paul's Cathedral, next to St Martin le Grand, which was the headquarters of the General Post Office. The days of the post coaches may have passed, but the atavistic streak maintained the GPO at the heart of the road system.

The route is divided into six sections, *viz*

- Trafalgar Square to Beckton Alps (*see* page 5)
- Beckton Alps to Ingrebourne Valley (*see* page 19)
- Ingrebourne Valley to Chadwell St Mary (*see* page 27)
- Chadwell St Mary to Mucking (*see* page 35)
- Mucking to Pitsea (*see* page 43)
- Pitsea to Southend-on-Sea (*see* page 49)

Maps are referenced in the introductions to the sections.

# Trafalgar Square to Beckton Alps

16.1km; 3hr 17min  
44m ascent

## Introduction

**1.1** This section follows the River Thames to Limehouse, then reaches Beckton Alps by the Limehouse Cut and the Greenway.

See <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/18313821/> for the map of this section.

## Route

**1.2** Start off by walking to the south side of the Square to the east of the column, and cross to the corner of the Strand and Northumberland Avenue. Turn left and walk along the right-hand footway of the Strand as far as the forecourt of Charing Cross station.

The Strand, as its name suggests, was at one time the north bank of the River Thames. It was a popular locality with the upper classes until the seventeenth century, when the drift into what we now call the West End began. Once the aristocracy had moved their residences, the Strand was still popular for its taverns, coffee-shops, and (latterly) theatres.

Charing Cross station opened in 1864 to house the services of the South Eastern Railway, whose principal route was from London to Dover via Ashford (the line to Dover via Chatham had been running out of Victoria since 1862), with branch lines to Tunbridge Wells, Hastings, Canterbury, and other locations. The connection with the London and South Western Railway's Waterloo station (now called Waterloo East) was built into the plans, with the LSWR contributing to construction costs.

Following a roof collapse in 1905, the station was rebuilt: the collapse was slow enough to evacuate trains and passengers safely. At the same time as the building of the station, the Charing Cross Hotel was built in French Renaissance style and opened in 1865. Public rooms with balconies overlooking the station concourse were

*Eleanor Cross replica*





very popular (as they still are at Glasgow Central station's hotel). In fact, the hotel was so popular that an extension was built on the east side of Villiers Street, connected to the main building by an enclosed bridge, which survives.

The station was, however, still just a new rail terminus, and the hotel needed something with a bit more history. Between 1291 and 1647, an Eleanor Cross had stood at Charing Cross (where the statue of Charles I now stands). In 1290, Eleanor of Castile, queen consort of Edward I, died at Harby, near Lincoln: her body was taken to Lincoln for embalming before being taken in funeral procession to London. At Lincoln and at Charing Cross, and at the ten overnight resting-points on the way, the King had tall, graceful monuments built and surmounted by a cross: these have become known as Eleanor Crosses. Three of these crosses survive to this day – at Geddington and Hardingstone in Northamptonshire, and at Waltham Cross, just north of the M25. Fragments of some others may be found.

The idea of a replica Eleanor Cross seemed to provide the right cachet for the hotel, and the hotel's architect (EM Barry, son of Sir Charles Barry, who designed the rebuilt Palace of Westminster following the fire of 1834) designed one. It was constructed in 1864-65 and placed on the station forecourt. The depredations of London's air and weather have served to improve the match.

Turn right down Villiers Street, passing under the bridge between the Charing Cross Hotel and its 1878 extension. At the foot of the street, just before reaching Embankment station, you should turn left to follow a path into the gardens, bearing left to reach an ornate stone gateway, then crossing its frontage and continuing on the path to exit the gardens onto the Victoria Embankment at the north-eastern corner.

*Watergate, Victoria  
Embankment Gardens*

On your way through the gardens, you will see several monuments, but the first is the stone gateway. This was a watergate to allow the Duke of Buckingham to board his river vessels: the Thames may have retreated from the Strand, but in 1626, it was still wide enough to reach this point. It was only with the creating of the Victorian sewerage system by Sir Joseph Bazalgette (it is said that Bazalgette was to sewers what Brunel was to railways, but Bazalgette was just as active in early railway development as Brunel) that the Embankments were formed (to cover the



vast sewer pipes), and the Thames ran in a narrower, more managed, channel. This had the knock-on effect that the Thames ran more quickly: along with the rebuilding of bridges with fewer arches (or, indeed, as single spans), this meant that the river would not freeze over, and the celebrated Frost Fairs were history.

At the point where three paths converge (the other two coming in from your right), two statues

bring animals to mind. At the confluence of paths is the monument to the Imperial Camel Corps, but on the left, a bigger statue recalls a smaller animal — the statue is of the poet Robert Burns (1759-96), and the animal is, of course, the mouse whose nest he turned over with his plough, his “wee sleekit, cowerin’, timorous beastie”.

Moving on, the monument on the right is an unmissable shout to posterity on behalf of the third Lord Cheylesmore (1848-1925), a society baronet and Guards officer in the Great War. He bought out the struggling Royal Indian Engineering College overlooking Runnymede Meadows, remodelling the main building (Pillar Hall) for the coming-of-age of his heir. He was the first peer to be killed in a motor accident, in 1925. The monument is by Sir Edwin Lutyens, who also designed (among many other edifices) the Cenotaph, Liverpool Cathedral, Lindisfarne Castle and (linking back to the Cheylesmore connection) the lodges on the riverside at Runnymede.

Opposite the Cheylesmore memorial is a statue of Sir Wilfrid Lawson (1829-1906), a hard-nosed Liberal politician from the town of Aspatria (in Cumbria) who was often said to be “anti-everything”. Despite having had little or no formal education save partisan lectures from a local Congregational minister, he threw himself with gusto into many social pressure-groups and campaigns against the Establishment. His chief hobby-horse was the temperance movement, and, having had a Bill to restrict alcohol sales defeated on no fewer than eight occasions between 1863 and 1878, had a Resolution passed in Parliament in 1880. The Gladstone government took no action on the Resolution. On the death of the celebrated huntsman John Peel, he bought Peel’s pack of hounds.

Next, on the right, is the memorial to Henry Fawcett (1833-84), an economist who supported Charles Darwin’s work on evolution and who was a strong believer in women’s suffrage. When he served as Postmaster General, he introduced the idea of savings stamps to allow working people to build up funds, even a penny at a time. Fawcett also introduced the concepts of parcel post and postal



*Robert Burns, Victoria Embankment Gardens*





*Sir Arthur Sullivan*

orders, and even set up the financial framework which allowed for payphone accounting.

Moving on, the next statue (at the foot of Carting Lane, whereby goods were carted up from the river to Covent Garden market) is of Robert Raikes (1735-1811), a Gloucester man who was a pioneer of the Sunday School movement. His were not the first Sunday Schools, but his eagerness in promoting the idea ensured his primacy as pioneer. Raikes is descended from the same stock which produced William Wilberforce, the founder of the Anti-Slavery Society.

The final memorial on the walk through the gardens has been described as “the sexiest statue in London”. It is to Sir Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900), the composer who worked with WS Gilbert on the Savoy Operas (such as *Iolanthe*, *The Mikado*, and *The Pirates of Penzance*). It is on the right-hand side of the path, so that Sullivan is looking towards the Savoy Theatre. One might say that the memorial contains two busts, the one of Sullivan and that of the

weeping muse of music, who is so distraught by her loss that her clothes are falling off. Gilbert has his own memorial nearby, but not in the gardens: his memorial is on the river wall on the Embankment.

Cross the Embankment at the traffic lights to the red telephone box, and turn left to walk beneath Waterloo Bridge to the waterside frontage of Somerset House.

You are now on the Thames Path National Trail’s north bank option, whose signposting should be of assistance to you all the way to Wapping.

The first Waterloo Bridge was designed by John Rennie, the Scots engineer of canals, docks and bridges, and was opened in 1817. By 1920, however, there were severe structural problems (partly caused by increased water flow following the building of his New London Bridge), and a new bridge was built to the designs of Sir Giles Gilbert Scott (who also designed the telephone box). Scott was the grandson of Sir George Gilbert Scott, whose signature building is the iconic hotel frontage of St Pancras station.

The current Waterloo Bridge was opened in 1942, but was not completed until 1945: it has Grade II\* listed status.

Somerset House is the second such building on the site. Old Somerset House was built in the sixteenth century, but on his execution, the Duke of Somerset’s properties were sequestered by the Crown. It later became the home of Anne of Denmark, wife of James I (James VI of Scotland). Oliver Cromwell’s body lay in



state in Somerset House. Despite renovations by Sir Christopher Wren, the building fell out of favour, and demolition began in 1775.

Almost immediately, Sir William Chambers embarked on a new Somerset House. Since the Thames was not yet constrained by the Embankment, the design included an arch at river level so that boats could enter within the structure. Somerset House has served as Government offices, notably for the Inland Revenue, the Register of Births, Marriages and Deaths, and a laboratory to detect adulteration of tobacco products. Today stands, in front of the arch (but above at the Terrace level), the memorial to members of the Civil Service Rifles who fell in the Great War.

Beyond Somerset House (and King's College), there is a statue of Joseph Bazalgette's supporter, Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

Continue along the Embankment to reach the dragon which delineates the boundary of the City of London.

**1.3** Pass the Temple buildings fill the other side of the road, followed by Unilever House, as it takes the sweep of the junction at Blackfriars Bridge.

The Temple is one of the chief legal districts of the City of London, clustering around the Temple church (that is, of the Knights Templar), today containing legal offices, residences and gardens. Next to the Temple is the former home of the City of London School, now occupied by a financial agency.

Unilever House (as it was called when it was built) is an impressive example of Art Deco Neoclassicism, and was built as the London headquarters of the Lever soap business (the soap was made in his employees' village of Port Sunlight on the bank of the River Mersey on the Wirral peninsula), which had merged with the Dutch Margarine Unie to become Unilever: the lease was arranged in 1930 by Lord Leverhulme (as William Hesketh Lever became on the death of his father in 1925), and the construction was completed in 1933. The building is now a luxury hotel.

The present Blackfriars road bridge was opened by Queen Victoria in 1869, and the whole bridge is, like London Bridge, part of the City of London, which thus has toeholds on the south bank which do not



*Isambard Kingdom Brunel,  
Temple Embankment  
Gardense*



*Blackfriars bridges*





*Millennium Bridge, with Southwark Bridge and Tower Bridge behind*

form part of the Borough of Southwark. The current rail bridge was built in 1886, with Henry Marc Brunel (son of Isambard Kingdom Brunel) one of the engineers. It is now celebrated as the first Thames bridge to contain a station along its full length, with access from both banks of the river: the roof above the platforms is covered with solar panels. The pillars of

an earlier rail bridge may be seen between the two current bridges.

Pass beneath Blackfriars road and rail bridges (follow the Thames Path signs round any diversions), and advance to pass beneath the Millennium Bridge, which links St Paul's with the Tate Modern Gallery at Bankside, with access from both river banks.

At Broken Wharf, you must turn left to come up to the service road adjoining Upper Thames Street. Turn right here, and cross Gardner's Lane and Stew Lane (neither has access to the riverside path). Next, turn right down Queenhithe and turn left to rejoin the riverside path. Pass beneath Southwark Bridge, then beneath the Cannon Street rail bridge, to arrive at London Bridge.

*Tower Tunnel relic*



The first bridge across the Thames at this point (to be precise, 30m downstream) was built by the Romans, and there was a succession of timber bridges until a stone bridge was built in 1209. This bridge, famed for its buildings alongside the crossing-way, is the "London Bridge" of the nursery rhyme.

This bridge lasted until John Rennie's bridge was built alongside: it was opened by William IV and Queen Adelaide. By 1924, though, the bridge was sinking under the weight of traffic, the downstream side more quickly than the upstream side. It would take half a century, though, to construct its replacement, which was opened in 1973 by HM Queen Elizabeth II.

The Rennie bridge was sold and has been reconstructed in Lake Havasu City, Arizona.

**1.4** Beyond London Bridge, the riverside walk continues to Sugar Quay and on to the Tower of London (follow the signage for the Thames Path to go round any diversions which may be in place).

The Tower of London was founded as soon as William the Conqueror overcame Harold at the Battle of Hastings in 1066: the White



Tower dates from 1078. It has served as a prison, right up to the detention of Rudolf Hess during the Second World War, and of the Kray twins in 1951; it was a favoured place of incarceration during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. The Crown Jewels are kept in the Tower.

At the south-western corner of the Tower, there was the northern entrance to the Tower Subway (1870-98): the southern entrance was on Vine Lane, off Tooley Street. This carried passengers on a narrow-gauge railway beneath the river. When business faltered, the train was withdrawn and it became a pedestrian tunnel, but the abolition of tolls on Tower Bridge sealed the tunnel's fate. It now carries pipes and cables.

On your way along the riverside curtain wall of the Tower, you will pass Traitors' Gate, a watergate in Tudor times, before passing beneath Tower Bridge.

The iconic structure of Tower Bridge (a Grade I listed structure) was built between 1886 and 1894. It is a combined bascule/suspension bridge, and is still opened around 400 times per year to allow ships to pass. Aeroplanes have been flown between the road and the overhead walkway (which is an engineering necessity to stabilise the structure), and in 1952, a London bus accelerated to leap the gap (safely) after the bridge started to open.

Beyond Tower Bridge, the route takes you along the riverside to the entry to St Katharine's Dock.

**1.5** Cross the lifting bridge and follow the Thames Path signs to visit the dock before returning to the riverside via St Katharine's Way: turn right at the path *beyond* Alderman's Stairs.

Note that St Katharine's Dock is often taken over by commercial and other activities. The organisers of these spectacles may not be particularly assiduous in marking diversions, and the attendees rarely have the sense of maintaining a through passage, so you may need to rely on your own navigation.

Once back on the riverside, there is a short stretch of path before you return to St Katharine's Way to avoid an inlet. You return to the riverside at the Hermitage Riverside



*Tower Bridge*

*Historic ships berthed in the Pool of London, seen from Hermitage Riverside Memorial Garden*





*Top — house-numbering sign at Pier Head*

*Above — Old meets new, Wapping High Street*

Memorial Garden, with its striking memorial to the London Blitz.

Beware, though, of the lax attitude of the keyholders, for whom the time of opening of this stretch of riverside path can be a matter of imprecision. You may need to continue along St Katharine's Way if they are not doing their duty in an adequate manner.

Rejoin the road, now Wapping High Street, to pass the historic Town of Ramsgate pub, Waterside Gardens, and the museum of the River Police to arrive at Wapping station.

Wapping station is now on the Windrush Line of the Overground, but for many years, it was on the East London Line (allied to the Metropolitan Line). The rail tunnel was designed by Marc Brunel and his son Isambard Kingdom Brunel. When it opened (for horse carriages) in 1843, it was the first tunnel to be successfully dug under a navigable river. It was used mainly by pedestrians until it was taken over for the East London Line in 1869. This line ran as an adjunct to the Metropolitan Railway (later the Metropolitan Line) until Overground services took over the line in 2010.

**1.6** Continue eastwards along Wapping High Street (that is, turning right if you are exiting the station). After 40m, turn right to reach the riverside, where turn left. Follow the riverside to New Crane Place, where

turn left. Go ahead on Wapping High Street and turn right into Wapping Wall, following the street as far as the Prospect of Whitby, a venerable riverside inn.

The inn has stood here on the riverside for over four hundred years: it was frequented at various times by Judge Jeffreys, Samuel Pepys, Charles Dickens, JMW Turner, and James McNeill Whistler, plus a large cast of cut-throats, smugglers, and other disreputable characters. Originally called the Pelican Inn, it was renamed about two hundred years ago after a Tyne collier which used to berth nearby. In a different vein altogether, the Prospect of Whitby was the site of the first sale of a fuchsia plant in the United Kingdom.

Just beyond the inn, turn right to regain the riverside. Turn left and follow the riverside path as far as the entrance to Shadwell Basin, where turn left along the cut to return to the road at Wapping Wall.

Turn right, cross the massive lifting bridge, and follow the road out to the junction with The Highway. Turn right and follow the right-hand footway of The Highway. After passing the massive



(modern) Free Trade Wharf building on your right, and then passing bus stop *LT*, turn right down a flight of steps onto Jardine Road to reach the riverside once again at the original Free Trade Wharf.

**1.7** Turn left along the riverside path, with the water on your right. The path holds to the river until it comes up against a brick residential building, blocking the way.

Turn left, then right to reach Narrow Street (and learn that the obstructive block of flats is called Keeper Wharf). Continue ahead on Narrow Street until, just before a speed-bump, turn right down an alleyway to the river, then left along the riverside to regain the road at The Narrow Inn.

Note the hectoring notice opposite the entrance to the inn, warning all and sundry how to behave on the riverside footpath (and doing so using a ridiculous jumble of capitalisation in the process).

**1.8** Turn right and cross the swing bridge, then turn left to cross the road and pick up the towpath on the east side of Limehouse Basin. You will follow the towpath for some way, keeping the water on your left all the time.

Pass the river-locks and bend round to your right to follow the Limehouse Cut, which begins by taking a left-hand bend. Pass under the Docklands Light Railway to reach a road bridge: it is the A13, here Commercial Road, which thunders above your head.

The Limehouse cut is a broad canal, opened in 1770, which runs from the Thames at Limehouse Basin to the River Lea Navigation at Bow Locks, providing a shorter route for traffic between the Lea and London. The Regent's Canal also enters the Thames via Limehouse Basin, over to the left from the Limehouse Cut's corner.

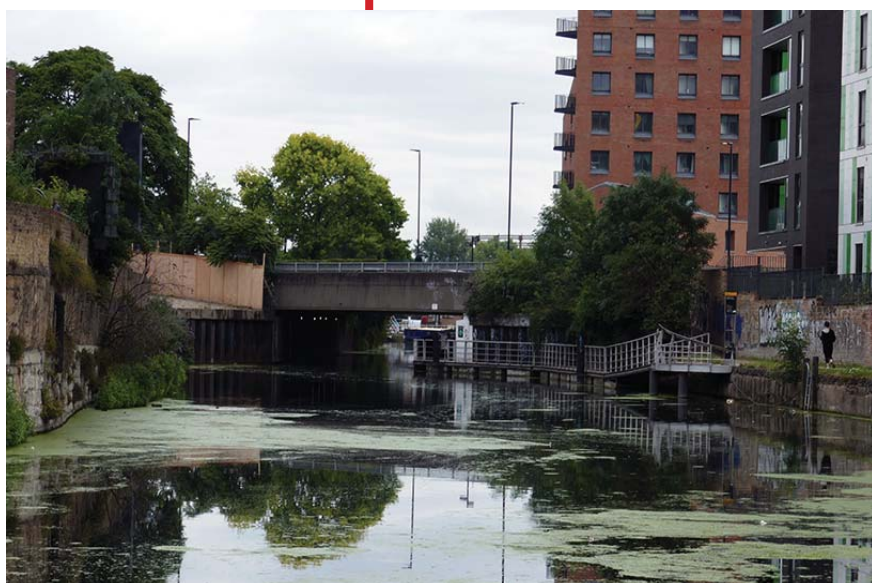
Continue by passing beneath Commercial Road, and begin a long straight stretch of the Cut.

After about 800m, there is an egress point from the towpath which leads up to an open area. By turning back to the building adjoining the canal at the other end of the open area, you will reach a community café which is part of a new arts centre.



*Top — Prospect of Whitby*

*Above — Shadwell Basin  
lifting bridge*



*Top — Winter afternoon on the river from the swing bridge at Limehouse Basin's riverside entrance*

*Above — the Limehouse Cut loses its towpath, so you continue along the pontoon*

There is also a restaurant (which is open in the evenings and from 1130 on Saturdays and Sundays) just ahead on Upper North Street.

Continue along the towpath under Bow Common Lane, then under Morris Road.

**1.9** Pass beneath another DLR branch. Beyond the railway, you will come to the end of the long straight stretch, and the canal bends slightly left as it comes up to another major road bridge: this carries the A12, here the Blackwall Tunnel approach.

For Bromley-by-Bow station (about 600m away on the District Line), take the steps up to the right just before the towpath bends to the left towards the bridge, turn left on Teviot Street, then left onto the A12. Cross Devas Street, and follow the left-hand footway of the A12 to reach the station.

Here, the canal towpath disappears, and pedestrian progress beneath the road is maintained by walking on a

pontoon above the canal surface. It is probably best to avoid using the pontoon while a boat is passing, when the pontoon may be less stable.

Pass beneath the road to reach the end of the Cut, where it joins the River Lee Navigation. The route now crosses a bridge at Bow Locks onto a sliver of land with the River Lea on your left and Bow Creek on your right. The path passes beneath Twelvetreves Crescent (which seems remarkably straight for a crescent), then passes beneath the railway and the District Line, to meet Three Mill Lane.

In this area, various channels have long been cut or tapped to provide mill power, and Three Mill Lane gives you an idea of the density of mills in the area. One of the three mills at this point is a large tidal mill, and is part of the complex ahead. Of course, all the buildings at Three Mill Lane have now been granted new uses, principally in education or media.



**1.10** Turn right to follow Three Mill Lane, then turn left beyond the Custom House. At the next bridge on your left, turn right, passing to the left of a rust-encrusted park sign, to reach and cross another channel of the Lea.

Turn right beyond the bridge, and follow a path south to a point, with the elliptical geometry of the frames of old gasometers ahead across the water — though this sight will become much more muddled as a rash of new flats is constructed on the site.

Turn left and, with Abbey Creek now on your right, make your way round the bend to rise to The Greenway, beside the high-Victorian Abbey Mills pumping station (there are better views of the pumping station off to the left), where the route turns right.

Here, it is worth diverting left along the Greenway to get a better view of the pumping station. Known as the Cathedral of Sewage, this huge Victorian Byzantine edifice is the crowning glory of Joseph Bazalgette's sewerage programme. It was built between 1865 and 1868. The Greenway, a long embankment with straight sections, is thought by many first-time visitors to be a long-lost railway, but it is in fact a covering for the Northern Outfall Sewer. From Hackney Wick to Beckton, it is now a footpath and cycleway, a sharing which sometimes works.

Follow the Greenway (turning round if you have visited the pumping station viewpoint) eastwards to the bridge over the next major road, where the Greenway makes a slight bend to the left. The street beneath is Manor Road.

Here, there is access to street level for West Ham station (District, Hammersmith and City, and Jubilee Lines, Docklands Light Railway, and



*Top — approaching Three Mills*

*Middle — Abbey Mills Pumping Station*

*Above — re-used pump as sculpture, Abbey Mills*





*Access to the Greenway from Plaistow station — as seen from the Greenway*

*The immense straightness of the Greenway*



C2C train services). To reach the station, descend to the road and turn left: the station is signposted, and indeed is visible at street level.

If you are arriving onto the route from West Ham station, turn right out of the station, then turn right to follow the right-hand footway of Manor Road. Just before you reach the bridge, turn right to take the access ramp.

The Greenway is a covering over Bazalgette's Northern Outfall Sewer (it is said that

frost and snow thaw earlier on the Greenway than elsewhere in the vicinity): a walkway and cycleway share the cap of the sewer, sometimes amicably.

**1.11** Follow the Greenway in an easterly direction. The first road to be crossed at a light-controlled pedestrian crossing is Upper Road.

If you decide to break your journey here to exit towards Plaistow station (the *i* is silent), turn left to follow the left-hand footway of Upper Road to its end, then turn left along Plaistow Road, using the left-hand footway, to reach the station. There is a convenience shop at the end of Upper Road.

Continue along the Greenway to the next road, Balaam Street, and cross it using its light-controlled pedestrian crossing.

**1.12** Cross over two more roads (the first is Barking Road, then Prince Regent Lane, by their light-controlled pedestrian crossings, and then pass a hospital on your right to reach Boundary Lane (which has no need of a pedestrian crossing).

**1.13** Continue ahead on the Greenway to reach the junction of the A13 (Newham Way, overhead) and the A117, which links East Ham with Beckton. This is known as Beckton Alps Junction.

Beckton is named after Simon Beck, who headed the Gas, Light and Coke Company which operated a huge industrial complex from 1870 until 1976. The vast spoil-heaps became known



as the Beckton Alps: all but a small hillock have now been razed and the ground has been decontaminated.

Along the A117, Beckton station (Docklands Light Railway) is 800m distant to the south; East Ham station (District Line and Hammersmith and City Line) is 2.2km distant to the north. There are bus stops just to the north of the junction to help you reach either station.





# Beckton Alps to Ingrebourne Valley

15.6km; 3hr 10min;  
31m ascent

## Introduction

**2.1** This section of the route starts by crossing the North Circular Road and the River Roding to reach Barking. It then follows close to the District Line as far as Elm Park, making use of several parks (and a country park) on the way. The last part of this section passes through South Hornchurch, the last piece of London suburbia on the route, to the last TfL bus stop on the route, just before the Ingrebourne Valley Visitor Centre is reached.

See <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/18314038/> for the map of this section.

## Route

**2.2** Cross the A117 using the divided light-controlled pedestrian crossing, and continue on the path opposite, which turns right and then bends left to run parallel to the eastbound A13 slip road. The path then continues to run parallel to the busy A13 itself.

After passing some houses on the left, take a gate on the left onto Gooseley playing fields, crossing diagonally to the right of a pavilion. At the far end, turn left onto Gooseley Lane and follow its right-hand footway. At the junction with Vicarage Lane, where there is a community hall on your left, continue ahead, now on Wellstead Road. At the end of Wellstead Road, turn right onto the right-hand footway of Flanders Road and follow it to the junction with Folkestone Road. Cross the road ahead to take the footway to the left of the houses on Folkestone Road.

**2.3** At a school gate, tuck round to the right behind the houses, then turn left on a path which threads its way between the council depot on the right and a school on the left: when you reach the

*Barking Creek, with egret*





*Barking parish church*

embankment of the North Circular Road, turn left (the school is still on your left).

This path leads to a footbridge over the main road and a roundabout: the downslope path ricochets back and forth to run out onto Highbridge Road.

Continue ahead on the right-hand footway of Highbridge Road, across the River Roding (with an island in the middle). Where the road swings to the left and Highbridge Road cedes the street-name to Town Quay — the river here is still tidal — turn left to cross the road.

Barking used to be the home of a large fishing fleet, the first British fleet to fish Icelandic waters as a commercial unit, and had its own icehouse so that the fish could be packed to arrive in London in a fresh condition.

Take the path ahead, with a pillar box on your left, which leads to Abbey Road. Cross the road using the divided light-controlled pedestrian

crossing and take the tarmac path opposite into the park, bearing slightly to the right. This is Abbey Green.

At the first path junction, do not take the path which goes off sharply to the left, but take the “second exit” which sets off to the north-east. This path passes to the right of the thirteenth-century church, bending left to exit the park onto Broadway, with an arched stone tower on your left.

The tower is the curfew tower (which is Grade II\* listed) of Barking Abbey, which flourished here from the seventh century until 1539, when it was dissolved on the orders of King Henry VIII. St Margaret’s church was originally a chapel for the use of local people, set within the confines of Barking Abbey: it is now the local parish church.

Captain James Cook was married in the church in 1762, during his naval service in the Seven Years’ War (when he mapped the St Lawrence River), and six years before the first of his three great voyages to the Pacific Ocean and to Australasia.

Turn left, then cross over North Street by the pedestrian crossing. Turn right, then turn left onto East Street to follow its left-hand footway onto the pedestrian area. When the traffic returns at Ripple Road, continue ahead on the left-hand footway to Barking station.

Barking station hosts services on the District Line, the Hammersmith and City Line, the Overground and on the main C2C line between Fenchurch Street and Shoeburyness.

All facilities are available in the area of central Barking around the station.





*Barking station*

Barking station was built in 1854, and the Underground arrived in 1908, with the station being rebuilt to accommodate the extra traffic. The station was rebuilt again in 1959, with another remodelling under way in 2025. A more recent railway arrival in Barking is the “new Silk Road” weekly service from Yiwu in China. The freight journey ends at the DB Eurohub facility on the Rainham line east of Barking station, having taken (at least according to the schedule) eighteen days to traverse Asia and Europe.

**2.4** From the entrance to Barking station, use the light-controlled pedestrian crossing to cross Station Parade, and take the right-hand footway of Salisbury Avenue ahead. Bear left with the main road where Greenslade Road carries on ahead next to the railway.

Continue along Salisbury Avenue, across a crossroads with Wilmington Gardens, and on to reach Upney Lane. Turn right, and follow Upney Lane, crossing to the left-hand footway by the light-controlled pedestrian crossing, as far as the junction with The Drive on the left.

Upney station (District Line) is just ahead on the right, at the top of the slope which takes Upney Lane over the railway. There is a convenience shop on the parade ahead on the left

**2.5** Turn left onto The Drive, and follow the left-hand footway for its full length. At the end of the houses, a path leads ahead into Mayesbrook Park. Bear right within the park to pass between two lakes. Pass a canoe clubhouse and exit the park onto Lodge Avenue through a car park.



*Two views of  
Mayesbrook Park*

Over to your left ahead, there is a convenience shop on Porters Avenue.

**2.6** Cross over Lodge Avenue onto Rugby Road, and follow this for its full length as far as Gale Street.

This brings us to the vast estate of Becontree, which was built by the then London County Council between 1921 and 1937: many of the residents came from the slum areas of the East End. The population of the estate when completed was over 115000; it is the largest public housing development in the world.

However, Becontree was not filled with its original population indiscriminately — applicants were screened for the ability to pay the (modest) rent. There was a Tenants' Handbook with strict rules about behaviour and about responsibilities to the property (neat front garden, etc.) and more general social responsibilities. This document is, of course, no longer in application, and almost every dwelling on the estate is now running counter to some part



of the handbook (as probably are most of the residents).

Most of the houses have now been bought by owner-occupiers (or by absentee landlords), and a great majority of the front gardens have been concreted over. The consistency of the architecture has been destroyed by differing forms of new windows and by the application of fake stone to the walls.

One of the pubs on the estate (the Admiral Vernon on Broad Street, south of the railway) is practically unchanged since its construction, and has been listed Grade II.

Amongst local and national commemorations of the building of Becontree Estate, a centenary video was produced by the Royal Institute of British Architects in 2021 — it may be viewed at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MFGVZ3hbzjA>

Becontree station (District Line) is just off to the right, along Gale Street.

**2.7** Take the gate into Parsloes Park, and, keeping the lake on your left (it is almost entirely hidden, in complete contrast to those in Mayesbrook Park), take a left bend then a right, to pass a major sports facility on the right.

Beyond the sports centre access road, with its car park on the left, make for a large modern building to the right of some houses. On reaching the building, bear right to follow a security fence on your left. The path will then lead out onto Meadow Road, where you should turn left to meet a major road, Parsloes Avenue.

The modern building on your left belongs to a Pentecostal church: you may gauge the likely strength of the welcome offered to outsiders from the strictness of the fence which encircles the building.

At the junction with Parsloes Avenue, turn right along its right-hand footway to reach Heathway.

Dagenham Heathway station (District Line) is just off to the right.

Clustered around the station, there are several shops and cafés, with a small mall opposite the station.

**2.8** Cross over Heathway, and follow Reede Road eastwards as far as Rainham Road South.

Dagenham East station is up to the right.

Over to the left, there are some shops.



*Parsloes Park*





*The joys of Eastbrookend Country Park in August*

*Harrow Lodge Park*



**2.9** Cross Rainham Road South at the traffic lights: a pub is ahead. Take a path on the left of the pub (and to the right of the shops). The path passes some houses on the left, then bends right at the maximum-security entrance to some sports fields. You will pass the sports pavilion on your left, behind the fence, and then a car park. A short way beyond the far end of the car park, turn left, now heading north. There is another sports ground on your right, with access at the far end across the path from the car park on your left.

Just beyond the end of the sports ground, you will pass through a barrier to enter Eastbrookend Country Park, an area of largely unimproved land covering 76ha.

You are now walking through a Site of Metropolitan Interest for Nature Conservation: Eastbrookend Country Park and Chase Nature Reserve. This is an important wild place within the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, which manages the site. There are opportunities to fish (open to humans and herons alike) on the lakes, and there is an impressive array of wildlife.

A short distance into the park, turn right on a clear path. This soon trends to the left to reach a lake: keep it on your right. Beyond the lake, keep ahead. When the path opens out onto heathland, look to your left, where you will see a modern building (the park's administrative centre) and a wind turbine ahead.

There are toilets and a café at the visitor centre, the former accessible from the western end of the building.

**2.10** Turn right to pass a children's play area on your left, and continue on a crushed stone path. Follow this path to its end by a rustic seat. Turn left to exit the park, then turn right along a path, with the compact Eastbrookend Cemetery on your left. The path widens out into a lane as it reaches a riding centre on the left. Follow the lane (which can be busy with traffic for the riding centre) to reach Upper Rainham Road, crossing the Beam River just before you reach the main road to enter Havering, your final London borough.

**2.11** Turn right, and immediately turn left to cross the road, onto



open land. Keep to the left-hand side of the field and then dip into woodland, keeping along the house-backs for 250m. Where a path comes in from the left (giving access from the houses that you have just passed), turn right: you are now in Harrow Lodge Park, managed by the London Borough of Havering. Follow a the clear path past a lake on your left.

Continue ahead to leave the park opposite the end of St Nicholas Avenue. Follow its right-hand footway ahead, going straight ahead onto the Broadway at a roundabout, to reach Elm Park station (District Line).

There is a wide variety of shops, some of more immediate use to walkers than others — the bridal wear and motor spares establishments probably falling into the latter category — with a wide selection of cafés. There is no bank branch *per se* in the cluster of shops, but each of the two main supermarkets has an ATM, as does the post office.

**2.12** Set off southwards from Elm Park station (that is to say, turning right if you are arriving by train) following the left-hand footway — you should begin on the opposite side of the road from the station entrance. Descend (with shops at a lower level on each side of the road) to the roundabout and turn left onto Maylands Avenue. Follow this street to its end (which is blocked to vehicular traffic).

Cross South End Road, and turn right. Immediately, turn left onto Farm Way. At the end of this street, cross Elms Farm Road and take the path opposite; at its end, turn right into Rosebank Avenue. Take the first turning on the left onto Springbank Avenue; where the road does not pass straight through, bear left on a path between the houses, then bear right along the house-backs to reach Swanbourne Drive.

Turn left, then turn right onto another path. After passing some house-backs, this path leads into Hilary Close. At the end, cross Swanbourne Drive (for the second time) and follow yet another path through to Suttons Lane.

These paths which pass through the housing estate are the remnants of an old footpath across the farmland which was here for centuries before the houses were built.

**2.13** Turn right onto Suttons Lane, and follow its right-hand footway. You will pass a bus stop, then (on the other side of the road) a bus turning circle.

Buses run frequently from right to left along Suttons Lane to Hornchurch station on the District Line, and onwards to the centre of Hornchurch, and to Elm park and Romford from left to right.

Continue past another pair of bus stops (one on each side of the road), until you reach a light-controlled pedestrian crossing, and cross Suttons Lane.

Take the path into Hornchurch Country Park. This path bends round to the right to come out at a car park. Follow the way round the car park, keeping it on your left, and then strike off to the right, making for a one-storey building: this is the Ingrebourne Valley visitor centre.





*Visitor Centre at  
Ingrebourne Valley*

## **Ingrebourne Valley to Chadwell St Mary 16.9km; 3hr 30min 75m ascent**

### **Introduction**

**3.1** The tenor of the walk becomes much more rural in this section, though there are still urban sections, and there is an interlude on footway-free country lanes between Berwick Pond Farm and Cely Wood.

For the map of this section, see

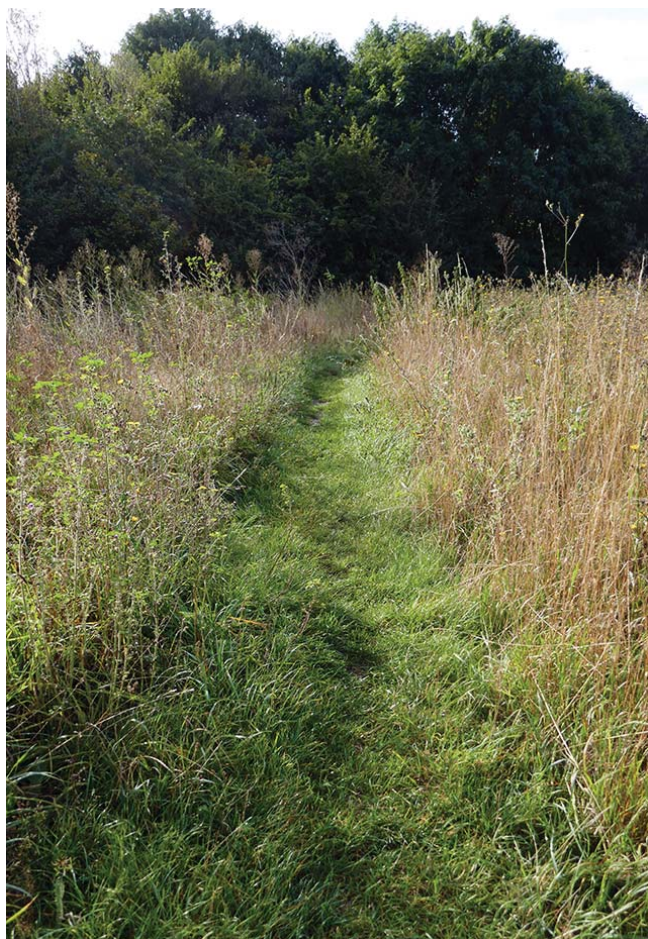
<https://explore.osmaps.com/route/18314169/>

As well as providing information about the country park and its wildlife, the visitor centre (which is managed by Essex Wildlife Trust) offers food, drink, toilet facilities, and sundry tourist items such as jam and plush animals.

### **Route**

**3.2** Follow the path past the visitor centre: soon, you will come to a fork in the path. Take the left fork to keep bushes close by on your left; follow the path past a viewing area on your left. At the next path junction, bear left (to walk in an east-south-easterly direction) towards Berwick Wood, crossing the Ingrebourne River in the process.

You will rise to a small summit; beyond this, the land on your right opens out. Take a slight bend to the left, then take a path on your right (this will be a bit short of 500m from the path junction after the viewing area), with bushes on the left at first. Where this path joins another one, bear right and follow the new path across open land to a clear path junction.



*Setting off southwards from the former Berwick Pond North car park site*

The path on your left leads to an area marked on some maps as a car park: this car park has been closed for some time and there is no parking hereabouts.

Continue south from the path crossing, making for Berwick Pond South on the rust-coloured signs. This path first bends to the left, then takes a right-hand bend: you will now have trees on your left, and open land on your right. Once this path begins to turn to the south-west, look out for a small path on the left, which leads through woodland to a lane. Turn left onto the lane, and when you reach its end, squeeze through the left-hand side of the barrier, to emerge onto Berwick Pond Road, opposite Berwick Pond Farm.

There now follows almost 2km of walking along narrow roads with no footways: this requires extra care. Break groups into small subgroups (ideally of two or three) with plenty of space between groups — a car travelling the road under normal conditions will cover 200m in ten seconds, so that is an ideal minimum distance

between the groups. Walk quickly without wearing headphones and without indulging in conversation, and note the potential re-grouping points. Children should be sandwiched between adults in the single file.

**3.3** Turn right onto Berwick Pond Road. Pass the farm on the other side of the road, and follow the road round a gentle left-hand bend: soon, there is a sharp left bend. This is the first key re-grouping point, where there is space on the right next to the field gate. Take the bend to the left, and follow the road past the Manor Hotel. The road swings to the right: follow it to a crossroads. This is the next real re-grouping point.

Turn left at the crossroads (to keep two cottages on your right: the best regrouping point for the crossroads is on the verge here), and follow Warwick Lane. After about 250m, there is a potential minor re-grouping point in an informal mini-layby, but this is not particularly safe and should only be considered in an absolute emergency.

At the junction with Gerpins Lane which branches off to the left, carry straight on ahead (eastbound) on Warwick Lane, the angle of Gerpins Lane making for an extended crossing. There is a re-grouping point 150m beyond the junction, at a blockaded gate. You will pass buildings on the left, where there are trees on your right; about 180m beyond the last building, you will find the entrance to Cely Woods on the right. This is the final re-grouping point, at the end of this road section.



The escape from the road into the woods is a moment of joy, and there is a significant length of route ahead with little or no traffic, until you reach South Ockendon.

**3.4** Take the clear path, which trends slightly left. Ignore a path to the right, but take the significant path to the left about 250m after leaving the road. Keep to the main path ahead through the woodland: on two occasions, there is a tempting grass path ahead where the main path keeps to the right: ignore both grass paths. After you pass beneath power lines, the path takes a big bend to the left, to arrive at a path junction.

Turn right (that is, in a south-easterly direction) here, and follow this path out to Romford Road. Cross the road by the crossing, and enter the car park for Belhus Woods Country Park. Cross the car park diagonally to its access road, and advance along the road to reach the visitor centre.

The otherwise rather spartan visitor centre is endowed with toilet facilities and with a cafe. Each of these is a welcome addition for through-walkers as well as locals.

The area of the country park formed part of the Belhus estate, which dates from the fourteenth century and was visited by Queen Elizabeth I in 1578, was landscaped by Capability Brown in the middle of the eighteenth century. The house, rebuilt in 1818, was demolished after the Second World War following bomb damage, and after vandalism at the hands of those serving in the military encampment which had been set up in the grounds.

The local pronunciation of the estate appears to be BELL-us.

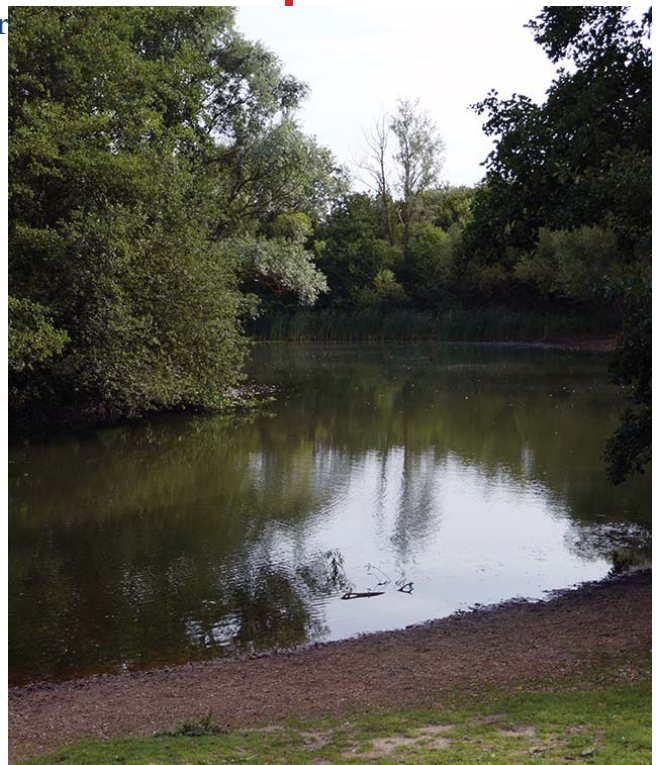
**3.5** Turn left, passing the toilet facility on your right. Follow the main path, signposted to the Lakes, through the wood. Bend to the right with the main path where another path goes off to the left. Immediately beyond this point, at a path junction, bear left to keep a play area on your right: this keeps a generally easterly bearing.

After passing the end of the field which contains the play area, the path passes between the lake on the left and some trees on the right. At a



*The route through Belhus Country Park east of the visitor centre*

*Lake, Belhus Country Park*





*The M25, and its road-sign gantry, looking north from the footbridge*

gate, turn right on a path which starts with a field on the left. It makes its way, first south, and then to the south-south-east.

Where there is a significant right bend, you will be close to the M25, and there is a pond on the left. Here, start looking out for a path on the left. Take this path to the edge of the motorway, climbing to its level (with the traffic coming towards you) on a stony path to reach a footbridge.

*If you can see the bridge far above you, backtrack to find the path: the only alternative is*

*scaling the bank, which is ill-advised.*

**3.6** Cross the footbridge over the M25, turning left to descend on the eastern side of the motorway. Just beyond the barrier at the end of the descent, turn right, and turn back on yourself. After passing the bridge, the land opens out: here, take a path off to the left. This takes you through the Oak and Ash Plantation, with the Long Pond on your left.

The Long Pond was incorporated into the work by Capability Brown. The Long Pond and the Oak and Ash plantations have been severed from the rest of the Belhus estate by the construction of the M25, and today are not managed as part of the Belhus Woods Country Park.

Keep to the main path: your direction of travel will gradually move towards the south. At the end of the path, you will come out onto Humber Avenue opposite a school.

Cross Humber Avenue and turn left to follow the right-hand footway to the first crossroads, where turn right. Follow the left-hand footway of Hamble Lane to the junction with Garron Lane, where cross the road and turn left to follow the right-hand footway. Turn right onto Foyle Drive, keeping to its right-hand footway. At the mini-roundabout, cross Foyle Drive by the pedestrian crossing and enter Darenth Lane.

*If you are now in need of sustenance, follow Darenth Lane for 350m to Derry Avenue, where there are shops up to the left.*

Turn right to cross Darenth Lane and enter Dilkes Park by a gate. Turn left and take a right-curving path to the left of some play equipment to reach to a small circle with a “mini-Stonehenge” set in the middle. Walk southwards. Take the left exit from the circle, and follow the path as it bends to the right, to take up a southerly



bearing. Exit the park at its far left corner, onto Fairham Way.

Cross Fairham Way and turn left to follow the right-hand footway, to the junction with Fortin Way. Turn right and follow the right-hand footway, taking the left-hand bend with the road, to exit onto Daiglen Drive.

Turn right, and keep to the right-hand footway, out onto Stifford Road. Cross Stifford Road just to the right of the junction by a divided light-controlled pedestrian crossing.

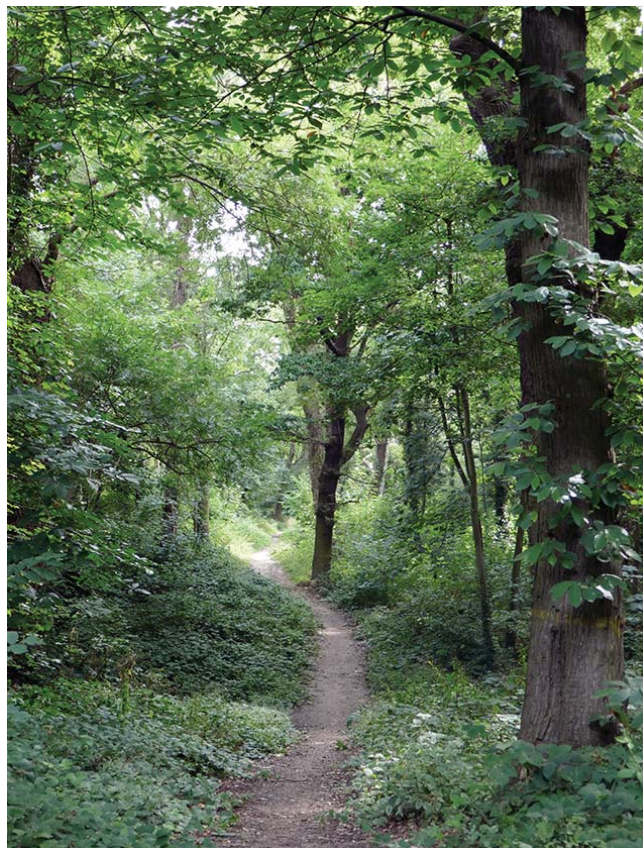
**3.7** From the crossing, walk straight ahead on a path into the Mardyke Woods area: keep to the left of a play area, and continue downwards to reach the bottom left-hand corner, where the path enters woodland.

At a path junction, take the clear path which leads off to the left through Brannett's Wood. This path is a delight as it makes its way through the woodland: after about 400m, it bends to the right and descends, eventually coming out at the corner of a field. Ignore the path on the right which borders Brannett's Wood, but continue southwards, soon bending left.

Pass beneath the Mar Dyke railway viaduct (which carries the single-track railway line between Grays and Upminster) to reach a footbridge on the right.

The footbridge spans the Mar Dyke — literally, the *boundary ditch*. It was at one time the eastern boundary of the parish of Upminster. The stream rises on the south side of Brentwood and runs its 18km course through the borough of Thurrock to reach the River Thames on the west side of Purfleet, adjoining Rainham Marshes.

Cross the bridge, and follow the path ahead, away from the river. You are now in Davy Down. Do not rise towards a fine industrial building on



Above — Brannett's Wood

Below — Mar Dyke viaduct

Bottom — Davy Down pumping station







Top — converted water tower, Guardian Avenue

Above — former Clockhouse Lane south of the pub

the left, but keep to the valley floor, past the building, to reach a car park.

The building is a water pumping station, which still draws water from beneath the ground to serve the taps of 45000 local customers. The original diesel engines were superseded by an electric motor, but have been preserved and are in a visitor centre nearby.

Go to the far end of the car park and follow the access road as it turns to the left, with the embankment of Pilgrims Lane on the right. Rise to road level onto Pilgrims Lane.

Buses link this point with Upminster (travelling from right to left) and Lakeside (left to right): the 370 service is Oyster-valid, and it also connects with Chafford Hundred and Ockendon stations.

**3.8** On leaving the east side of Pilgrims Lane (on the left-hand footway when facing the *Roundabout* sign), take a path which goes off left, to the left of a rusty gate. This path leads to the edge of a modern housing estate, on Guardian Avenue. Follow the right-hand footway ahead: you will soon come to a striking edifice which was once a water tower, but is now residential. Opposite the tower is a war memorial dedicated to “Stepney boys”.

The area to the north of Guardian Avenue, now covered in modern housing, is the site of the Stepney Children’s Home, where poor or orphaned boys were sent into the countryside: the capacity was 140 boys between their fifteenth and seventeenth birthdays. Here, they learned agricultural skills (it was assumed that farm labouring was the pinnacle of their capabilities). The home was opened in 1902 and had its own infirmary. After 1935, it became an approved school, and later a community home.

The water tower and two cottages make up the sole remnants of the school today, though there are still occasional commemorations at the war memorial.

Continue along Guardian Avenue (named after the legal guardians of the boys, not after a local newspaper!), and at the end, turn right to follow the right-hand footway of Clockhouse Lane. This old through route was severed by the new alignment of the A13 as an express road: cross the A13 by the footbridge. On the south side of the A13, the path leads out onto a parallel arterial road beside a large pub.



There is a walking link to Chafford Hundred station from this point — turn right alongside the arterial road, turn left at the first roundabout onto Burghley Road, go straight ahead at the next two roundabouts, now in Fleming Road, and continue until you reach the station. The distance is 1.8km.

Cross the arterial road and continue ahead on what was once Clockhouse Lane, but is now simply a path for pedestrians and cyclists. When a street-end appears on the left, go through the traffic barrier onto the street (Daniel Close) and follow it round to the right to meet Drake Road. Turn to the left, and follow the left-hand footway of Drake Road for about 500m to reach Bark Burr Road, where turn left.

**3.9** Follow the right-hand footway of Bark Burr Road past a school; cross over Clifford Road to reach a point where a cycle-path crosses. Take this path up to the right to reach Elizabeth Road. Turn right along the right-hand footway to reach a light-controlled pedestrian crossing.

Cross Elizabeth Road here, and continue ahead on a path which leads to Hogg Lane. Cross the road and turn left along the right-hand footway, then turn right onto the right-hand footway of Lenthall Avenue.

There is a row of shops on Lenthall Avenue, including a fish and chip shop and a convenience shop.

Continue along Lenthall Avenue, and take the right-hand bend. When you reach 159 Lenthall Avenue, turn left onto a path. This path runs out onto Lodge Lane. The route now follows the right-hand footway of Lodge Lane to Hathaway Road.

**3.10** Cross Hathaway Road and continue along the right-hand footway of Lodge Avenue to reach the shops at Sockett's Heath.

The shopping parade at Sockett's Heath contains a wide variety of shops, including a supermarket (which has an ATM) and a choice of units selling prepared foods.

At the far end of the shopping parade, keep to the footway as it takes the bend at Daneholes Roundabout: there is a car park to your right. Cross Rectory Road — be careful, since it is on a bend — and turn left along the right-hand footway towards the roundabout. Make use of the underpass to cross Wood View, and come up on the left at the far end of the tunnel to reach a filling station on the roundabout. Keep to the right-hand footway beside the roundabout until you have passed the filling station, then take a path on your right which starts close to

*Path to the east of  
Daneholes Roundabout*



the filling station's access road and continues along the right-hand side of a grassed area, with a fence on your right.

This path is clearly of some antiquity, though now it has been urbanised.

Follow the obvious route across the green area, known as Hangman's Wood, keeping fairly close to house-backs on the right, to come out onto King Edward Drive.

There is a convenience shop over to the left.

**3.11** Cross King Edward Drive, and continue along the footpath, with back gardens (Grangewood Avenue) on your left flank. Beyond the houses, the path borders a school on the left, and then crosses a major road (the A1089 connecting Tilbury Docks to the primary road network) by a footbridge.

Beyond the bridge the path runs out onto a large green expanse of playing fields. Continue ahead to reach Orsett Heath Crescent at a basic changing-block; follow the right-hand footway almost as far as a junction with a road coming in from the left.

Here, turn right on a path, and keep going southwards onto an enclosed path, with a cemetery on the left. A left-and-right turn brings allotments onto the right-hand side: follow the path out to a road: this is called River View. Turn left along the left-hand footway to a row of shops.

The shops here include a convenience shop.

Continue ahead to pass a school on the left, and reach the crossroads at the centre of Chadwell St Mary. Use two light-controlled pedestrian crossings to reach the corner of the junction by the church.

The church is on the site of a Saxon church, and has received renovations down to the early twentieth century. There is a fine thatched cottage opposite.



# Chadwell St Mary to Mucking

## 16.3km; 3hr 18min

## 23m ascent

### Introduction

**4.1** This section of the route begins with urban walking as far as Tilbury Ferry Terminal, after which it follows the Thames Estuary Path through Corringham and Fobbing to Mucking, where there is an escape route to the station and shops of Stanford-le-Hope. Lightweight walking boots will have the advantage over trainers on this section, for there may be some mud beyond Coalhouse Fort.

Beyond Tilbury Fort the route is isolated: any decisions on pausing or continuing are to be made there and at Corringham.

See <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/18314176/> for the map of this section.

### Route

**4.2** Turn right and descend the hill on the left-hand footway to a major roundabout: follow the footway round to the left (signposted to Tilbury — but do not take the road to Tilbury Docks), crossing Biggin Lane on your left.

**4.3** Advancing to another roundabout, which serves to ease access to and egress from a school over to your right: keep on the left-hand footway, now on St Chad's Road. Pass a caravan encampment on your left, and continue until you reach a fork in the road. Turn right and cross Feenan Highway by the refuge to continue along the left-hand footway of St Chad's Road as far as Calcutta Road.

There are shops, including two small supermarkets, to the right along Calcutta Road. These are actually the last convenience shops or supermarkets on or

*Chadwell St Mary*

*Below — church*

*Bottom — thatched cottage*



adjacent to the route until you reach Southend-on-Sea, though there are shops off-route at Benfleet and Pitsea.

**4.4** Cross Calcutta Road using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing and follow the left-hand footway of Montreal Road ahead to Dock Road. Cross the road ahead and turn right to follow the left-hand footway for 100m to reach a path on the left.

Tilbury Town station is 650m ahead on Dock Road on the left, and is served by trains to Grays, Upminster, Barking and London Fenchurch Street (and towards Pitsea and Southend-on-Sea in the other direction).

Turn left onto the path, and follow it round to the right. Cross the railway by the footbridge and follow the path out to meet and cross St Andrew's Road. Turn left to follow the right-hand footway in a south-easterly direction. After about 800m, the footway leaves the roadside for a short period, then returns to the kerbside. At a roundabout, cross the dock entrance and continue ahead; soon (at another roundabout) crossing the entrance to the cruise terminal.

Turn left with the road, past the cruise terminal building, and then pass the entrance to the Gravesend ferry at a bus lay-by. Beyond the lay-by, follow the path up onto the dike.

The ferry between Tilbury and Gravesend operates on Mondays to Saturdays (there is no service on Sundays or on Bank Holidays), roughly on a half-hourly basis, but with gaps, presumably to give the crew their breaks. Full details of the ferry fares and timetable are to be found at

[https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/ferry-services/  
tilbury-to-gravesend-ferry-service](https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/ferry-services/tilbury-to-gravesend-ferry-service)

on the internet. Services are sometimes suspended if a large cruise ship docks with no room for the ferry's manoeuvrings at some or all states of the tide, and at times of fog.

*Note* — the service was closed in 2024 by the then operator, and discussions on its resumption are being held between Kent County Council and Thurrock Borough Council, with local enterprise boards at the table.

following the closure of Tilbury Ferry station in 1992 (it had opened in 1854), there is a bus link between Tilbury Town station and the ferry terminal.

You will notice circular waymarks for the evolving Thames Estuary Path: this

*The Worlds End pub,  
Tilbury Fort*





path follows the coast all the way to Leigh-on-Sea: it will be our companion (and, with the help of its signage, our guiding light) for most of the journey there. Clearly, you may follow the waymarks all the way to Leigh-on-Sea as an alternative to the route described below.

Details of the route of the Thames Estuary Path may be found at

<http://www.thamesestuarypath.co.uk/>

**4.5** Follow the dike straight ahead. At its first corner, where it bends to the right, the Worlds End pub is ahead of you, lacking the requisite apostrophe (which suggests plural worlds, rather than the genitive of our own), down a slope to the left.

Walkers should note that there are no facilities *en route* for the rest of this section. At the end of the section, there is a further 2km to reach Stanford-le-Hope (bear in mind that that will be more than 14km from this point), with its shops, buses and trains. Everything must be carried in and out.

Careful planning is essential for the remainder of this section of the route.

Keep to the sea wall to reach a vantage-point which looks down upon the gatehouse of Tilbury Fort.

Tilbury Fort was first constructed on the orders of King Henry VIII as part of the defence against the French, and was reinforced as part of the plan to repel the Spanish Armada in 1588.

It was at Tilbury Fort that Queen Elizabeth I gave her famous speech to her troops on 9 August in that year: this is the speech which includes the following well-known words:

*I know I have the body of a weak, feeble woman;  
but I have the heart and stomach of a king,  
and of a king of England too[.]*

In 1670, during the Anglo-Dutch Wars, the fort was extended according to the latest European military thinking, and the star-shaped arrangement that we see today was created. The main gate was added during these works.

The fort formed part of London's defences during the Napoleonic Wars, but the advances in military technology meant that it had become obsolete in the form it had been by the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Tilbury Fort was used as a transit point during the twentieth century, and guns were mounted on the curtain wall in 1903. By the time of the Second World War, the fort was all but obsolete, and the site was handed over to the Ministry of Works in 1950, and thereafter came down the

Gatehouse, Tilbury Fort



line of governmental conservation bodies to English Heritage, the current curators.

Full details of the fort's opening times, entrance fees, accessibility, etc., may be found at

<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/tilbury-fort/>

The site is certainly worth a visit, but you may prefer to return on another occasion to do so, given the likely need to press ahead.

Keep to the sea wall, snaking round an inlet and passing between Tilbury Power Station and the river.

Beyond the power station, you will need to take particular care, watching out for lorry traffic as you cross the access to a wharf from a landfill site.

**4.6** Continue along the riverside path, crossing a stream by a footbridge to enter East Tilbury Marshes.

When you reach the approach to Coalhouse Point, with its blocky watchtower, the path bears slightly inland. This is the time to take a final glance back upstream for the last clear view of Gravesend and the North Downs behind. Follow the path northwards to reach Coalhouse Fort.

Coalhouse Fort dates back to the early fifteenth century, but was reinforced, along with Tilbury, on the orders of King Henry VIII.

It seems to have played no significant part in Armada preparations, but was a battery during the Napoleonic Wars, and was brought back into use during the 1860s as a defence against the French. As at Tilbury, guns were mounted at Coalhouse Fort in 1903; modern artillery was placed here during the Second World War, after which it was released

*Below — Coalhouse Point*

*Bottom — view of Gravesend from Coalhouse Point*





from military service. The area is managed by Thurrock Council, and the fort is maintained by volunteers. It is only opened on one Sunday per month: full details may be found at

<https://www.coalhousefort.co.uk/>

**4.8** Pass the fort on your right and continue past the car park on your left. Just beyond a gate barrier, take a path on your right (waymarked with the *Thames Estuary Path* logo) which rises to the level of the seaboard berm.

*At the point where the path leaves the road, if you continue for 300m along the road, you will reach a pub.*

Turn left to pass the end of the moat, then bear right to join the path which runs along the sea wall. Round the first bend, you will see a signpost for East Tilbury, pointing left: ignore this, even if you are planning to break the journey at East Tilbury station, and continue ahead.

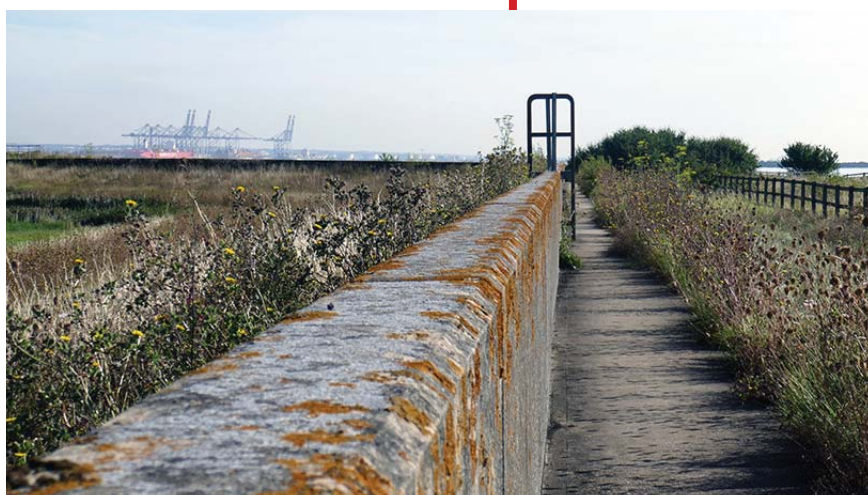
Soon, you will be able to look over to your left to see the former Bata shoe factory. Tomáš Baťa was an entrepreneur from Zlín (which was at the time in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and is now in Czechia) who founded the Bata shoe company. In 1932, he built a factory and an adjoining town (which was influenced by the Garden City movement) at East Tilbury. As in many other company towns (such as Bournville and Port Sunlight), all social needs were met through the company. The level of production declined in the final quarter of the twentieth century, and closed in 2005.

The modernist factory building is listed Grade II. For a time, a certain Czech gentleman called Jan Tuša, whose son Sir John Tusa became a leading BBC journalist and an arts administrator, was managing director of the East Tilbury factory. The noted playwright Sir Tom Stoppard was born in Zlín, where his father was a Bata company doctor.

As you walk along the sea wall, the cranes of London Gateway Port become visible ahead. Approximately 1.2km after you leave the road at Coalhouse Fort, you will cross a stream which empties into the River Thames at a reach called Lower Hope — this name is not to be considered indicative of the prospects for the coming walk.

*Below — Bata, East Tilbury*

*Bottom — the sea wall, with London Gateway Port's cranes in the distance*



**4.9** Keep to the sea wall for a further 1.4km until a Thames Estuary Path signpost points you down to the left. Do not be tempted to continue along the sea wall beyond this point — the path there comes to a dead end.

On the sea wall, you will also see sloping ramps on the side of the concrete wall, with the legend *Duck ramp* on the vertical face. This does what it says on the concrete: it allows ducks and other waterfowl to cross the sea wall to reach the mating grounds.

**4.10** Follow the signage to pick up a narrow path with a chain-link fence on your right. There is a lake on your right at first, but it is very hard to tell. Continue with the fence on your right through various bends until you are heading in a north-westerly direction.

About 1.4km after leaving the sea wall, you will come to a signpost, the finger to the left pointing to East Tilbury station.

It is about 1km to the station: just follow the clear path, soon with housing on your left. When you reach the main road, the station is up to the right.

**4.11** From the signpost, continue ahead (now travelling in a north-north-westerly direction). The path swings to the right, then round to the left at a nature reserve gate, then bends right to pass between two lakes. At the railway, the path turns right to run parallel to the tracks.

**4.12** It drifts away from the railway at one point, but is soon back alongside. After this second section, the path turns right to leave the tracks, and comes to a road with a gateway to your left. Go out to meet the public road through (or squeezing past) the gateway. You are now at the western edge of the tiny village of Mucking.

This is the point of decision. You are about half-way between Tilbury and Pitsea, which is about 15km away (the onward journey is described in the next section of this guide). There are two pubs, just short of 6km and 7km away respectively: that is all. Stanford-le-Hope station is 2km from this point.

If you have come from Tilbury, then unless you are a fit and dedicated walker, you should make for Stanford-le-Hope. The section ahead is slightly more taxing, both mentally and physically, than the section from Tilbury.

#### **Your choice.**

If you decide to make for Stanford-le-Hope, you should turn left along the road, go across the level crossing, and reach a road junction. Do not turn onto the major road, but turn right just before the junction to take a refuge path along the left edge of the field. This brings you out at the corner of a fence which surrounds a school.



Turn right here, and follow the path with the school playing fields on your left. Cross the railway by a bridge; on the far side of the bridge, turn left then right to come out onto St Margaret's Avenue. Turn left and follow St Margaret's Avenue, taking its right-hand bend, to reach Ryde Drive on your left. Here, take the footpath ahead which passes the gable end of 2 Ryde Drive: this will bring you out onto Fairview Avenue.

Turn left along Fairview Avenue: where Rectory Road goes off to the right, continue ahead on Chantry Crescent. Follow this street round a left and a right bend. Do not go through another bend where 35 Chantry Crescent is on the left, but continue ahead on a footpath. At the end of the footpath, you will reach London Road. Turn left for the station. Along London Road to the right, you will find the main shopping street of Stanford-le-Hope.





# Mucking to Pitsea

## 15.1km

### Introduction

**5.1** This is a long section whose sole facilities are pubs at Corringham and Fobbing: essentially, the only easy breakpoint before Pitsea is at Corringham.

See <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/3870735/> for the map of this section.

The nearest transport-friendly entry point to the start of this section is Stanford-le-Hope, which has shops.

If you are coming from Stanford-le-Hope station, make your way east on London Road towards the town centre. After 80m, take a footpath on the right. This passes some houses and comes out onto Chantry Crescent. Continue ahead as far as Rectory Road which comes in from the left.

Carry on ahead along the right-hand footway of Fairview Avenue. Just beyond 32 Fairview Avenue, turn right onto a footpath.

At the far end, continue ahead on St Margaret's Avenue, bending left with the road, and following its right-hand footway, almost to its far end. Just beyond 108 St Margaret's Avenue, turn right along a footpath. This turns left, then right, to cross the railway by a footbridge. The path continues with school playing fields on the right. Just before you reach the road at the far end, turn left onto a refuge path which keeps to the right-hand edge of the field, all the way to a road junction. Turn left along the road, cross a level crossing, and advance to the entrance to a Cory site on your right. This is the start of the section.

*Bifurcation of the path east of Mucking: the route to the visitor centre not taken*

### Route

**5.2** Start off eastwards on Mucking Wharf Road, passing the church on your left. Beyond some buildings on the right, take a path on the left. Follow the road for 500m round its bends to a signpost on the left, which carries the Thames Estuary Path logo.



Follow this path for 380m to a splitting of the ways. The path to the right passes a park bench and makes its way to the visitor centre in the distance, but turn left to reach a sluice gate.

Cross Mucking Creek at the gate, and follow the path round to the right. Pass a berm on the left; the path then twists right, left and left again to leave you above the foreshore. Swing to the right, then turn back to drop to the lower level.

There is a link route to Stanford-le-Hope here, easier to describe but less interesting than the link described earlier. Simply put, you should go over to the fingerpost, turn right, walk along Wharf Road to the church, and turn left to reach the station. The distance is 2km, the same as the other link road. Clearly, the link from the station is just as simple: set off to the east, turn right at the church, and walk along Wharf Road until it runs out at the fingerpost. Corringham is another, probably easier, break option which involves a bus, possibly to a rail link (*see below*).

**5.3** Turn back on yourself again, and follow the path (now almost in a north-easterly direction), and follow it for 1km, when it curls left, then right, to reach a level crossing over the freight railway which serves London Gateway Port.

This may be a freight-only railway but it is surprisingly busy with frequent traffic — take care!

**5.4** Bear right after crossing the railway, then turn left and then turn right to follow a path towards the main road. Cross the road by the new footbridge, and come down on the other side.

Here, the “official” Thames Estuary Path route runs north-west alongside the road to High Road, where it turns right. After turning left onto Springhouse Lane and crossing the Manorway, it turns right to take the quieter Thames Haven Road, rejoining the Manorway briefly before turning left on Rookery Hill to reach Corringham. There is (2019) a signed alternative to the closed route which may well establish itself as the main Thames Estuary Path route, and this is described below.

**5.5** From the bottom of the exit ramp from the bridge, turn left and follow the signage: there are Thames Estuary Path signs, and there are yellow signs from DP World (the company which operates the port) hectoring walkers to keep to the bridleway.

These signs, however indiscreet, will help you through the twists and turns, since they are so obtrusively visible from far away.

Pick up a path along the right edge of a field, taking you in a generally northerly direction. The path, as signposted, takes you round the field edges. On two occasions, you will reach a point where there seems to be an option to approach a building up on your left, but in each case, the path avoids that option. You will be travelling generally in a north-easterly direction (but with many



twists and turns), and will eventually bring you out onto Manorway just to the left of a road junction opposite, with a timber business across the road.

Cross the two carriages of Manorway and turn right along the left-hand footway. Turn left at the junction onto Rookery Hill, passing the entrance to the timber business on your left. Take this road to a T-junction, cross the road ahead, and turn right to enter the village of Corringham. Follow the left-hand footway to pass the church on the right, and cross the road to take a path ahead through the churchyard (to the left of the church signboard), at the other side of which is the Bull Inn.

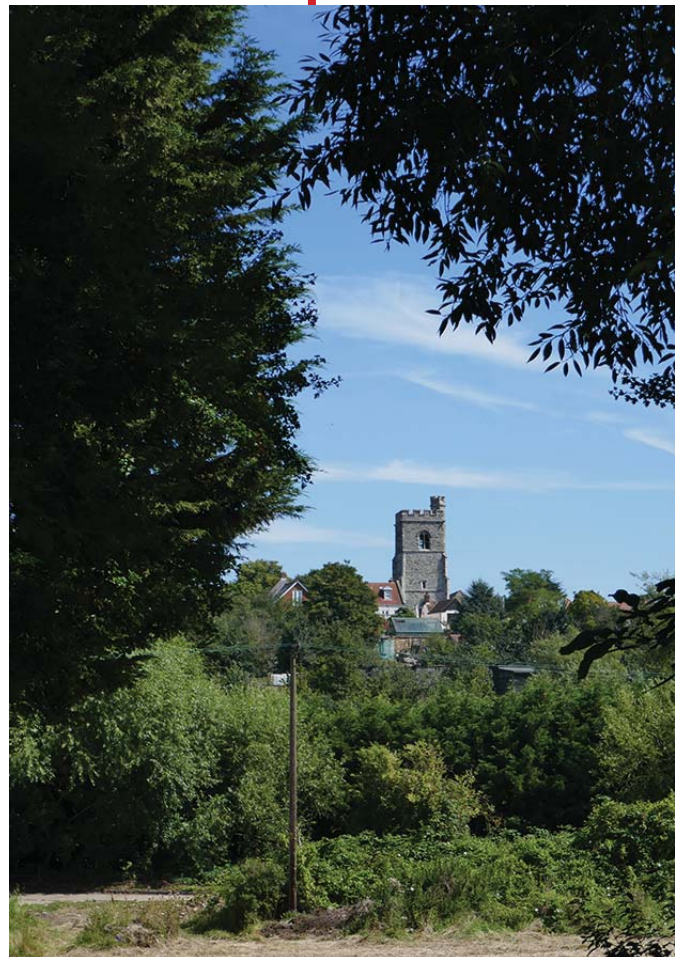
The church is eleventh-century, probably pre-Conquest, and is listed Grade I. Sir Nikolaus Pevsner described it as “one of the most important Early Norman monuments in the county”.

The inn serves food and drink during normal hours. The shops of Corringham all lie off-route, so may not be relied upon for replenishment of supplies.

Off to the left from the Bull Inn, you may follow Church Road to its junction with Gifford’s Cross Road (passing bus stops for local routes). Continue ahead to the southbound bus stop at the Social Club for the frequent 100 bus service, which runs between Chelmsford and the huge Lakeside shopping centre, calling at railway stations at Billericay, Basildon, Stanford-le-Hope and Grays (amongst others) — the corresponding northbound stop is at

*Left — path from  
Corringham to Fobbing*

*Right — Fobbing church  
takes its place in  
the local landscape*







White Horse Inn, Fobbing

the junction. Corringham is a viable option to break this long stage.

**5.6** Take the narrow footpath which runs down the right-hand side of the inn. This passes two schools, one on either side of a crossing road. The path continues in the same direction, then descends to cross a field. The tower of the church at Fobbing is now visible ahead. The path then turns left to come out onto a road.

Turn right onto the road, and climb the right-hand footway of Lion Hill to a road junction in Fobbing, with the White Horse Inn on your left.

You will see the date of 1381 on the pub sign: a plaque explains the connection to the Peasants' Revolt of that year.

The church dates from the fourteenth century. It is largely unaltered, and it is said that the local clergy had close links to the smuggling trade, especially when the sea came right up to the village.

The pub serves food and drink during normal opening hours.

There are bus stops nearby, with local services. However, a breakpoint at Corringham is generally to be preferred (*see above*).

Walkers should note that there are no facilities whatsoever for refreshment between Fobbing and Pitsea station, and only the most basic options when you reach the station. The distance is almost 8.5km. However, there is a large supermarket 600m distant from the end of the section.

Pasture on exit from Fobbing



**5.7** Turn right at the junction and walk past the church. Follow the street round three bends, right to its end, ignoring footpaths which go off to the right.

At the end of the street, go through a gate and cross the pasture. Beyond the gate on the far side of the pasture, follow a path ahead across a field, making for a stile on the left into the next field. When you reach that field, turn right along its right-hand edge, through a slight left bend.



Where the hedge on the right bends slightly to the right, strike out diagonally left across the field. At the far side, follow a path to the end of Marsh Lane on the left.

**5.8** Do not follow Marsh Lane, but keep ahead for a few metres, until the Thames Estuary Path signpost directs you to the right. Follow the path ahead, round the left side of the field, until another signpost directs you to the left. Take the path eastwards, passing beneath one power line and reaching a second, where turn left on the path beneath that power line.

This path will lead you to a section of sea-dike, with Parting Gut (it is the name of an inlet) on your right. When you reach the signpost, turn left to come down off the dike.

Here, there is a path diversion from that shown on earlier maps: newer maps show the route ahead as the King Charles III England Coast Path. The Thames Estuary Path signs will lead you in the right direction.

**5.9** Turn to the right to pass beneath two sets of power lines and follow the sea wall round three sides of a large area for about 1.6km: there is a ditch on your left all the way. Cross a footbridge at Vange Creek.

**5.10** Continue ahead with the creek on your right. Look out for a fingerpost which directs you to the left over the ditch — do not cross the ditch before you reach the fingerpost.

After you have crossed the ditch and gone into the next field, follow the path near the right-hand side of the field, bearing left at the far end to keep the hedge on your right. When you come up to a gravel track, follow it to the right until you reach a crossing track. Marsh Farm is over to your left.

**5.11** Carry on ahead, keeping a hedge on your left, to reach the railway. Turn right to keep the railway on your left; at the end of the second field, turn right, then left, with a hedge on your left. Pass some farm buildings on the left, then turn left down a narrow path to return to the side of the railway. Turn right to keep between the railway and industrial buildings. Do not take the level crossing on the left, but at the end of the buildings, turn right to reach Vange Wharf.

*Looking westwards towards  
Langdon Hills from the path  
south-east of Marsh Farm*





*Railway crossing near Pitsea*

**5.12** Turn left (as signposted) to follow a path with the sea wall on your right. This leads to a short return to the railway, where turn right to cross a stream, then right and left to keep a field between you and the railway. In the next field, the path gradually returns to the railway at a level crossing.

This is the passenger railway between Tilbury and Pitsea: it also carries freight. Cross in groups of one or two, having scanned and listened in both directions to ensure that there is no train nearby. Always remember that “one train may hide another”.

On the other side of the crossing, turn right just before you reach the main road, and pick up a rough road with industry on your right. At the far end, continue straight ahead through the entrance to the site to reach Pitsea Hall Lane. Cross the road and turn left: the entrance to Pitsea station is on the right.

Pitsea is served by trains to and from Southend-on-Sea and London Fenchurch Street. Westbound, some trains go via Basildon, while others go via Tilbury. Check the station displays to make sure that you board the correct train.

If you are in urgent need of sustenance, you may find what you need in the basic facilities at the station. However, there is a large supermarket 600m away on the left beyond the railway bridge. That’s another 1.2km on the end of your day, though.



# Pitsea to Southend-on-Sea

## 16.5km; 3hr 27min; 99m ascent

### Introduction

**6.1** The final section follows a route broadly parallel to the railway as far as Leigh-on-Sea, then follows the shoreline as far as Southend Pier. Finally, it turns inland to end at Southend Central station.

See <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/18314296/> for the map of this section.

*Below — path across scrubland east of Pitsea*

*Bottom — Bowers Gifford church*

### Route

**6.2** Cross the bridge from the entrance to the station forecourt (that is to say, turning right if arriving at the station by train). At the end of the bridge, turn right onto a footpath which starts with lawn on the left, and with the hedge-ridden railway fence on the right.

If you need to find the supermarket, continue on Pitsea Hall Lane, turn left at the first roundabout, pass beneath the A13 flyover, and turn right just beyond: the supermarket's signs will guide you in from there.

The footpath soon dives into the bushes, keeping close to the railway fence on the right, and for a time, there are house-backs on the left, after which the path enters scrubland.

Simply keep close to the railway fence and follow the parallel path. It is almost 2km before the path arrives at Church Road. Across and to the left, you will see Bowers Gifford church.

The church is Grade II\* listed, and dates from the fourteenth



century: the suffix Gifford is the surname of the then Lords of the Manor.

**6.3** Continue parallel to the railway. Turn left onto Jotmans Lane and pass beneath the main access road to Canvey Island, Turn right to return to the railside, and follow the path to reach the end of Watlington Road, your first taste of Benfleet.

Continue ahead and, keeping close to the railway fence, follow a narrow path past house-backs on the left, emerging at the corner of a large recreation area, where a path joins from the left.

**6.4** Continue ahead on this path (still with the railway on your right), taking a left-and-right zigzag as you go.

The path reaches a footbridge on the left: you may cross it and continue eastwards, but if the underfoot conditions permit, you may prefer to continue past the bridge and take a direct line across the next field to the field corner adjacent to the railway bridge. Follow the path out onto Ferry Road, and turn left.

For the centre of Benfleet, with shops and pubs, continue to the left of the mini-roundabout and climb High Street.

There is a longer alternative between Bowers Gifford church and Benfleet which follows the King Charles III England Coast Path. This adds 700m to the route, and has trickier navigation. All in all, this alternative would probably be better only for a "coast-completist".

Turn right at the mini-roundabout to cross Ferry Road using the minuscule refuge. Continue ahead past the *No Entry* signs, and join the right-hand footway of High Street to reach Benfleet station.

Benfleet station is served by trains to and from Southend-on-Sea and London Fenchurch Street. Eastbound, some trains arrive via Basildon, while others arrive via Tilbury (trains on the Tilbury route connect with London taking slightly more time than those via Basildon).

*Benfleet village sign*



The Battle of Benfleet was fought between the Saxons and Danish Vikings in 894, when the Thames estuary was vulnerable to such incursions. The Saxons, under Edward the Elder and Æthelred of Mercia, the son and son-in-law respectively of King Alfred, ran out the victors on this occasion.

**6.5** Turn right if you are arriving by train, and pass the station taxi-stand. Take the right-hand footway of Station Road, following the road round to the left, and



climb to the top, where the street-name changes to School Lane.

Here, turn right and pass through a gate onto open land: this is Hadleigh Country Park. Soon, at a left-hand bend, follow a path descends towards the railway: turn left to press ahead parallel to the railway. Just beyond *Barge Gladys*, the nameplate of which you will see on the far side of the railway (it is a pub), the path drifts away from the railway, keeping to the left-hand side of the field, with the wooded hillside of Benfleet Downs on your left .

**6.6** Continue ahead: about 1.8km after leaving the station, the path has to bear slightly right to keep beneath the hill: the promontory which causes this is Sandpit Hill.

Here, a footpath leads off to the left into the main area of Hadleigh Country Park.

Keep on ahead for about 1.1km to reach another footpath on the left, this time on the eastern flank of Sandpit Hill.

This path is waymarked as the Saffron Trail: this waymarked route links Southend-on-Sea with Saffron Walden in the north-western corner of Essex.

**6.7** Soon, after crossing a simple footbridge on Hadleigh Marsh, another path leads back up to the left towards Hadleigh Castle.

This path is taken by the Saffron Trail.

If you decide to detour to the castle ruin, simply turn right at the castle and follow the track back down to the foot of the hill.

Continue ahead and cross a small stream by a footbridge.

**6.8** Where more woodland appears on the left, take the path which runs close to the woodland edge, dropping to the right at the end of the field and then bearing left to follow the track out to Belton Way West. Turn right, and follow the right-hand footway to reach Leigh-on-Sea station.

**6.9** Turn right at the end of the station building and cross the railway. Take a set of steps down on the left, and follow the narrow road (it is actually Leigh High Street) which runs parallel to the railway, soon squeezing past fishmongers' huts.



*Hadleigh Castle from the foot of Sandpit Hill*



*Leigh Marina at low tide*



Southend Pier

At the end of the line of huts, do not pass beneath the road flyover, but break to the right to pick up the promenade. Keep to the promenade as far as Alley Dock, then drop to the left below the sea wall, and drift left to regain High Street. Pass the heritage centre and two pubs to reach the end of

the road.

Leigh-on-Sea offers many opportunities for refuelling and refreshment, but there is no convenience shop.

**6.10** Keep ahead on the promenade all the way along to Southend Pier. After about 1.3km, you will reach Chalkwell.

Here, there is a prominent café across the road on the left: by taking the steps, and the path which leads behind and above the café, you will reach Chalkwell station.

The route continues along the promenade path to Seaforth Road.

There is a link to Westcliff-on-Sea station along Seaforth Road.

**6.12** Continue ahead, now on the right-hand footway of the road, to reach the pier.

There are numerous cafés and ice-cream stalls along the way.

**6.13** Pass beneath the walkway, then turn left up Pier Hill (or take the lift). From the Royal Hotel, follow the left-hand footway of High Street to Clifftown Road, and turn left to reach Southend Central station, the end of the route.

All manner of facilities are available in and around High Street.

The Saffron Trail starts at the top of the lift at the pier — this is the major waymarked path in this part of Essex. It wends its way through a wide variety of Essex scenery to Saffron Walden, a distance of about 114km.

However, it should be noted that the standard of waymarking on the Saffron Trail is poor in many places — the original waymarkers were not adept in playing Devil's advocate and kept forgetting that they already knew the route without waymarks (unlike other walkers, in particular those visitors to the area), and the line of the route itself could be improved in places, following changes in practice and maintenance, and changing some frankly baffling choices of path for more sensible options.

Of course, the path along the coast from Leigh-on-Sea to Southend-on-Sea is now part of the King Charles III England Coast Path, so there may be variations in the line of other named paths once the implications of the coast path designation become clearer.