

Benfleet Circular (via Canvey Island)		
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Benfleet Circular (via Canvey Island)

Start: Benfleet Station

Finish: Benfleet Station

Benfleet Station, map reference TQ 777 859, is 48 km east of Charing Cross, 6m above sea level and in **Essex**.

Length: 23.2 km (14.5 mi), of which 5.6 km (3.5 mi) on tarmac or concrete.

Cumulative ascent/descent: 40m.

For a shorter walk, *see below* **Walk Options**.

Toughness: 2 out of 10

Time: 4 hours 45 minutes walking time.

For the whole outing, including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 7 ½ hours.

Transport: Benfleet station is on the London, Tilbury and Southend Railway line from Fenchurch Street to Shoeburyness in eastern Essex, with up to four (fast) trains an hour Mon-Sat and two on Sundays, journey time is between 43 and 48 minutes. All trains stop at one or more of the following DLR, Overground or Underground Stations: Limehouse, West Ham, Barking, Upminster.

Saturday Walkers' Club: Take the train closest to 9.30 hours.

OS Explorer Map: 175 (Southend-on-Sea & Basildon)

OS Landranger Map: 178 (Thames Estuary)

Walk Notes:

A flat walk, that starts and finishes with a busy road stretch, features a fair amount of hard surface paths and some A-road noise near the end, and passes – in succession – a golf course, a static caravan park, an ex-landfill site, housing estates, another caravan park, a sewage plant, an LNG terminal, an oil product terminal, an oil refinery, the site of a never-finished oil refinery, another oil terminal and another – larger – landfill site????? And yet, and yet...

This is one not just for the Industrial Romantic, or for fans of the Pub Rock legends Dr. Feelgood, or for students of the lives of the ex-East End White Working Classes.

Without navigational challenges (as all you do is: walk to the seawall and follow it) you experience an ever-changing scenery of tidal creeks and mud flats, river marshes, salt marshes, flood barriers, sluices and sandbanks, get views of the Benfleet Downs, of Hadleigh Castle & Country Park, the Essex cliffs, Southend with its Pier, the North Sea and the busy river traffic, of ships big and small, boatyards, yacht clubs and marinas, pass sandy beaches and enclosed pools on the foreshore, jetties, extensive seawall murals telling Canvey Island stories and – post lunch – long tranquil stretches past grassy marshes with abundant birdlife. The recommended lunch options are the iconic Labworth Beach Bistro in its modernist building with panoramic views of the Thames estuary, or the legendary smugglers' inn the Lobster Smack.

A walk like no other? Most certainly.

Walk Options:

Canvey Island is linked to Benfleet station by **many regular buses**, enabling you to start or finish the walk at almost any point along the way (in the first half of the walk), as bus stops are often just a short distance from the walk route. For a route map of the bus network you should check here:

<http://www.plusbus.info/benfleet> (under 'Travel Maps - Interactive Streetmap').

The **most logical shortcut** to a bus stop, right after the late lunch stop, is described in the directions. It results in a 14.6 km/9.1 mi walk (rated 1/10).

An out-and-back Extension to Canvey Point, a narrow marshy spit in the estuary, adds 800m each way. [!] This is prone to becoming submerged at high tide, so be sure that you can get out – and back – in good time! **Do not walk during the incoming tide.** [!]

Elenvenses/Lunch (details last updated 11/11/2021)

Anita's Tearooms Canvey Island Marina, Smallgains Creek, *Canvey Island, Essex*. Anita's is located 6.9 km (4.3 mi) into the walk and has some inside and outside seating. Open 08.30-15.00 Mon-Fri & 08.00-16.00 Sat-Sun. Home cooked Sunday lunches served.

Concord Café Beach Shop Eastern Esplanade, *Canvey Island, Essex SS8 7HG (01268 510 336)*.

The Concord is located 9.3 km (5.8 mi) into the walk.

Oyster Bay Brasserie & Sports & Wine Bar Unit 4, Casino Parade, Eastern Esplanade, *Canvey Island, Essex SS8 7DN (01268 680 235, <https://www.oysterbaysportsbar.co.uk/>)*. The Oyster Bay is located 9.5 km (5.9 mi) into the walk. Open all day every day. Food served all day.

The Monico Unit 1-3, Casino Parade, Eastern Esplanade, *Canvey Island, Essex SS8 7DN (01268 623 026)*.

The Monico is located 9.5 km (5.9 mi) into the walk.

The Labworth Beach Café Eastern Esplanade, *Canvey Island, Essex SS8 7DW (01268 515 648, <http://thelabworthcafe.co.uk/>)*. The Labworth is located 9.7 km (6.0 mi) into the walk. Open 09.00-15.00 Tue-Sun.

The Bay Café Western Esplanade, *Canvey Island, Essex SS8 0AY (07980 771 478, <https://www.facebook.com/the.bay.cafe.Canvey/>)*. Open Tue-Sun 09.00-15.00, longer in summer.

The Lobster Smack Haven Road, *Canvey Island, Essex SS8 0NR (01268 514 297, <https://www.classicinn.co.uk/thelobstersmackcanveyisland>)*. The Lobster Smack is located 13.2 km (8.2 mi) into the walk. Open all day every day. Food served all day every day. This is the oldest surviving building on Canvey and a classic pub which has so much history it even features in the Dickens novel 'Great Expectations'. It (and therefore the smugglers) was so out of the way behind the seawall that the inn in the 18th century was known as 'The World's End'. For the same reason, in the 19th century it became a favourite meeting place for bare-knuckle fights.

Tea (details last updated 11/11/2021)

The Lobster Smack (see above)

Bean N Gone Benfleet Station, London bound platform, *Benfleet, Essex SS7 1NF*.

Open 05.30-18.00 Mon-Fri, 07.00-14.00 Sat and 09.00-14.00 Sun.

Gambero D'Oro 41 High Street, *Benfleet, Essex SS7 1NA (01268 794 869,*

<https://www.gamberodoro.co.uk/>). Open daily to late.

The Half Crown 25-27 High Street, *Benfleet, Essex SS7 1NA (01268 754 527,*

<https://www.greatukpubs.co.uk/thehalfcrownbenfleet>). The Half Crown is located 220m beyond Benfleet station. Open all day every day. Food served to 21.00 daily.

The Hoy & Helmet 24-32 High Street, *Benfleet, Essex SS7 1NA (01268 792 307, <https://www.greeneking-pubs.co.uk/pubs/essex/hoy-helmet/>)*. The Hoy & Helmet is located 220m beyond Benfleet station. Open all day every day. Food served to 21.00 daily.

Benfleet Tandoori 7 High Street, *Benfleet, Essex SS7 1NA (01268 792 303,*

<https://www.benfleettandoori.co.uk/>). Benfleet Tandoori is located 280m beyond Benfleet station. Open 17.00-22.00 every day.

The Anchor Inn 1 Essex Way, *Benfleet, Essex SS7 1LS (01268 756 500,*

<https://www.anchorinnbenfleet.co.uk/>). The Anchor is located 300m beyond Benfleet station. Open all day every day.

Mumtaz Mahal 10 Essex Way, *Benfleet, Essex SS7 1LT (01268 792 061,*

<https://www.mumtazmahal.co.uk/>). Mumtaz Mahal is located 300m beyond Benfleet station. Open 17.00-22.30 every day.

Notes:

Benfleet

The name of the town originates from the time of the Saxon settlers in the 5th Century, when the area was largely marshland. They named the area *Beamfleote*, meaning "tree stream", being the area where the creeks from the River Thames adjoined the wooded area to the north. The Battle of Benfleet took place between the Vikings and Saxons in 894. This was towards the end of the Saxon period, and the Thames and other waterways made the area vulnerable to Viking attacks. Benfleet was used as a Viking base. However, the Vikings were defeated in the battle by the army of King Alfred under the command of his son Edward the Elder and his son-in-law Earl Aethelred of Mercia.

Canvey Island

Canvey Island is a reclaimed island in the Thames estuary, separated from the mainland by a network of creeks. It is a unique place with an interesting history much of which can be attributed to its relationship with the changing water levels of the River Thames and the fact that the whole of the Island is below sea level. Its relationship with the surrounding sea, whilst rich in bounties, has also brought its share of tragedy: the floods of February 1, 1953 came during the night and saw 58 people lose their lives, while the whole population of 13,000 at the time was evacuated. The 'Village' is the only part above sea level and therefore escaped the flood, its 'Red Cow' pub was subsequently renamed 'The King Canute'...

Since then significant investment has been put into raising the height of the 24 km of sea walls.

Archaeological evidence shows that the island was inhabited from the late Iron Age, but that for most of its recorded history it was offshore pasture, largely given over to sheep. It was also a site for salt harvesting, cultivation of shellfish, fishing and cereal production (up to mediaeval times) with market opportunities in Chelmsford, Colchester or London. The existence of several place names using the *wick* suffix (denoting the sheds in which cheese was made) shows the influence of the early Saxons who introduced sheep-farming. 'Canvey' derives from the Anglo-Saxon *Caningaege*; meaning 'The Island of Cana's People'.

The first attempts at managing the effects of the sea with rudimentary defences were made in the early 14th century, but periodical flooding continued to blight the small population for a further 300 years. The island became home to around 200 Dutch immigrants in the early 17th century, who 'sought refuge from the Duke of Alba, the butcher of Flanders'. Two Dutch cottages are preserved on the island from this period: one is still inhabited, the other a museum. The island's Dutch links were strengthened with an agreement in 1623 between a landowner and a Dutch water engineer, Cornelius Vermuyden, to reclaim the land, wall the island and maintain the walls in exchange for a third of his land. Dutch workers also received payment in land.

At the start of the 20th century, the population of Canvey still numbered only about 300 people though.

At about that time, it was heavily promoted as a holiday destination, to escape the smog of the big city. A developer had grand plans for the Island: the 'Winter Gardens' would be no less than 10 km of glass houses containing exotic plants, fishponds and fountains and he marketed Canvey as 'Ye Old Dutch Island', giving many of the new roads Dutch sounding names. Unfortunately, the plans were curtailed by a higher than usual spring tide in 1904 which caused flooding, a fact that did not impress potential investors. The plans for a pier and a tramway, well underway by then, floundered and ultimately he had to sell up.

By the end of the First World War the population had reached 1,795 and the people still kept coming.

Crossing the creek posed a problem for animals and large vehicles, however, and cows and horses were sometimes swept away and vehicles abandoned to the incoming tide. In 1931, the first bridge to South Benfleet was built. The population of the Island has since grown significantly to over 40,000.

The current Thames Estuary 2100 flood defence plan has Canvey as one site for alleviating the flood risks to London and the Thames estuary. It proposes to develop the western side of Canvey as a site which is either temporarily flooded at times of risk, or transformed into a permanent wetland.

Since the 1930s, the west side of the Island at Hole Haven had been developed for use as oil refineries, and oil and gas storage which has met with a great deal of public opposition over the years. It was the site of the first delivery in the world of liquefied natural gas by container ship in 1959.

Canvey was also host to the Chapman Lighthouse from 1851, as briefly described in Joseph Conrad's novel 'Heart of Darkness', but it was demolished in 1957.

Canvey Heights Country Park

This 15-hectare country park occupies a mound at the eastern tip of Canvey Island, an old landfill site (operated 1954-89) previously known as Newlands, transformed into a high quality sustainable site promoting environmental education and awareness of the importance of the River Thames Estuary. It offers dramatic views from its elevated position across the saltmarshes to South Benfleet, Hadleigh Castle, Leigh-on-Sea, Southend-on-Sea and across Oyster Creek to the wide endless seascape beyond.

Dr. Feelgood

'Canvey Island's finest' band, was formed in 1971 by guitarist Wilko Johnson, singer Lee Brilleaux and bass player John B. "Sparko" Sparks, who had all been members of existing R&B (or jug) bands, and soon added drummer John "The Big Figure" Martin. They took their name from a 1962 record by the American blues musician Willie Perryman called "Dr. Feel-Good", which he recorded under the name 'Dr. Feelgood & The Interns' [the term is also slang for heroin, or for a doctor willing to over-prescribe drugs].

By late 1973, the band's driving R&B had made them one of the most popular bands on the London Pub Rock circuit, and they recorded their debut album 'Down by the Jetty' in 1974. Like many Pub Rock acts,

Dr. Feelgood were known primarily for their high energy live performances honed through constant touring, although their albums were also popular. Their 1976 (live) album 'Stupidity' reached No. 1 in the UK Chart. But after the follow-up 'Sneakin' Suspicion', Johnson left the group due to conflicts with Brilleaux. The band was never as popular again, but still enjoyed their only Top Ten single in 1979, with 'Milk and Alcohol'. Brilleaux died in 1994 of lymphoma, and Johnson was diagnosed in January 2013 with late stage pancreatic cancer. He elected not to receive any chemotherapy and went on a farewell tour. However, Johnson did not have the more common, terminal cancer of the pancreas, but a less virulent, more treatable form. So, after undergoing radical surgery, Johnson announced that he was "cancer-free". He continues to tour and record to this day as does a version of the band (w/o any original members). Dr. Feelgood have been credited as one of the founding influences of the English Punk Rock scene. In 2009 Julien Temple made a critically acclaimed film about the band: 'Oil City Confidential'. Canvey Island was also an influential destination in the 1970s for other Pub Rock artists such as Graham Parker, Elvis Costello, Eddie and the Hot Rods (also from Canvey), Nick Lowe and The Kursaal Flyers.
<http://www.drfeelgood.org/>

The Labworth Restaurant and Beach Bistro

This pioneering building was built in 1932-1933 (as the Canvey Island Café) at Labworth beach in the modernist International style, as a reinforced concrete building with unique, panoramic and uninterrupted views of the Thames Estuary from its vantage point. It came to be known as the "Labworth Cafe" due to the large "Labworth" text – in reference to the "Labworth estate" within which the building is situated – painted around the inland facing third storey (the paint is now replaced by metallic signs). It was designed and built by Ove Arup to resemble the bridge of the Queen Mary and remains the only building solely designed by him. The subsequently built flood defences now make it appear to be a two storey building, though. The decline in popularity of the English seaside holiday led to the Cafe's neglect, and the building narrowly escaped demolition, but it was awarded the status of a Grade II listing in 1996 and was then bought in 1998 by a local businessman and lottery winner, who had first seen and admired it 30 years earlier. It was restored and refurbished and the first floor now functions as a restaurant, the ground floor as a café/bistro.

The Bay Museum

The Bay Museum is situated in a Cold War relic, a degaussing *) station, a building which monitored – via a magnetic underwater wire loop – if passing ships had an operating device which would keep them from detonating magnetic underwater mines. Now it serves as a museum to both World Wars, especially in relation to events on Canvey. Open 10-16 hours Sunday/Bank Holidays.

<http://the-bay-museum.co.uk/>

*) Degaussing was originally applied to reduce ships' magnetic signatures during WWII. It is also used to reduce magnetic fields in CRT monitors and to destroy data held on magnetic data storage. It is the process of decreasing or eliminating a remnant magnetic field, named after the gauss, a unit of magnetism, as in: Carl Friedrich Gauss.

Coryton Oil Refinery

... was built in 1953 by Vacuum Oil Company (later re-named Mobil Oil) on the site of a former oil depot and the then existing village of Coryton. From 1996 it was run by BP, under a joint venture with Mobil and taken over completely by BP in 2000, after Mobil merged with Exxon. In 2007 BP sold the refinery to Petroplus. In January 2012 Petroplus filed for bankruptcy, and the refinery ceased production in June 2012. The refinery site – between Shell Haven Creek and Hole Haven Creek – covered 150 hectares and had a throughput capacity of 208,000 barrels per day. It supplied the majority of the bitumen required by the UK market. Some products such as gasoline and fuel oil were exported, and it was the last of the three major refineries on the Thames to shut. There is a 753 MW gas-fired power station on site (opened in 2002), and the rest is being turned into a distribution terminal, Thames Enterprise Park. <https://thamesenterprise.com/>

Shell Haven Refinery

Shell Haven was mentioned in Samuel Pepys Diary on 10 June 1667. The site was originally just an inlet on the north bank of the Thames, the mouth of Shell Haven Creek, which separated Corringham Marsh from Fobbing Marsh. Since 1916 though it was the site of a Shell oil refinery (but there seems to be no evidence for the company taking its name from the site, as the "Shell" Transport and Trading Company evolved out of a seashell import business). The refinery closed in 1999 and the site was sold to DP World who have built the London Gateway deep water container port there. <https://www.dpworld.com/London-gateway>
Some part was turned into an oil products terminal, specifically for Aviation Fuel.

Canvey Wick Nature Reserve (SSSI)

Described as "a brownfield rainforest" by Natural England, this 93-hectare site is Britain's first Bug Reserve, and the only brownfield bug reserve in the UK. It has more rare wildlife than any other part of the country per sqm, as many as a rainforest in fact. Originally coastal grazing marsh, in the late 1960s/early 1970s Canvey Wick was developed as an oil refinery site for Occidental Petroleum. Much of the site had previously been used to dump sediments dredged from the Thames. This resulted in silty, sandy and gravelly areas rich in shell fragments. The oil refinery was never finished though, due to the effects of the 1973 Oil Crisis, and later decommissioned. This left a varied site, with wet reedy areas, marshy floods, ditches, ponds, sallow carr, bramble patches, sparsely vegetated gravels, sandy banks, dry grassland, wet grassland and bare concrete. It can be explored along a 1.1 km long 'bug trail'.

WALK DIRECTIONS

Alight from the train in **Benfleet** on platform 2, walk down some steps and **[!]** ignore the exit right in front of you (which is often shut outside of rush hour anyway), but rather *turn right* along an underpass under the tracks and leave the station through the main exit in the ticket hall. Continue eastbound with a footpath signpost, parallel to the tracks along a main road on the right, pass a series of bus stops and then cross the road at some pedestrian lights. *Turn left* to continue in the previous direction along the opposite tarmac pavement, with **Benfleet Creek** on the right behind a concrete wall and **Canvey Island** beyond it. In 80m *keep right* along a narrow tarmac path to the right of some bike sheds. In 125m *turn right* along the pavement of **Canvey Road** with an **England Coast Path – Canvey Island Loop** (ECP) signpost on the left.

You cross the road bridge over the creek onto the island (i.e.: ignore Ferry Road in the same direction), with a **flood protection barrier** 50m to the left. 60m from the end of the bridge – opposite a driveway leading to the flood barrier – cross the road and *fork left* along an earthen, then gravel path through **Canvey Gateway Park**, which is commemorating the historic fording route through the creek along stepping stones (the three stones used here are in fact some of the original ones). In 150m cross a tarmac lane leading to **Benfleet Yacht Club** on the left and *curve left* with the path, now with a low concrete wall on the left. In 60m a footpath joins from the right along a raised grassy dyke. You now *turn left* with the dyke – flanked on the left by the concrete wall – around the island in a clock-wise direction, and in **21.6 km** *turn left* along **Canvey Road** and re-trace your route to **Benfleet Station**.

But in more detail:

You have the Yacht Club's boats on the left and **Castle Point Golf Club** – and the **Winter Gardens** settlement beyond it – on the right. In 300m the fence around the yacht club discontinues and you have shrubland on the left. In 600m this gives way to mudflats as well as scattered marshy islets, with Benfleet Creek behind it, and – beyond the water – the **Benfleet Downs**, a **Water Tower** on a hill and **Hadleigh Country Park** (SWC Short Walk 14 – Hadleigh Castle Country Park). After a total of 2.2 km along the dyke you *turn right* with it towards some houses but in 340m *turn left* with the dyke *before* reaching the houses, to cross **Tewkes Creek Sluice** in 25m. In 140m *turn left* with the concrete wall with an ECP marker post, now with **Sunken Marsh** on your right. In 250m pass **Knightswick Pumping Station** (draining the low-lying **Sunken Marsh** settlement – a clue is in the name) and in 170m *veer right* with wall and path.

[**Dr. Feelgood Factoid 1:** Lee Brilleaux and band manager Chris Fenwick grew up in Sunken Marsh and often paddled across these waters. Brilleaux's ashes were scattered on Long Horse Island, the large mudbank in the creek, here called Hadleigh Ray.]

On the mainland you now can see the remains of **Hadleigh Castle**, **Hadleigh Marshes** and **Two Tree Island**, and **Leigh-on-Sea** beyond it. In 500m an unmarked footpath joins from the right where path and wall *veer left*, now with **Newlands Caravan Park** on the right behind a fence. In another 500m – at a fence corner, marking the end of the caravan park – ignore a footpath turning right down some steps, and continue in the same direction. In 60m a wire fence on the right surrounds **Canvey Heights Country Park** (an ex-landfill site) and in 40m you step over the concrete wall – which turns into the flank of the Country Park – and continue in the same direction. Follow a concrete track around the Country Park, now with views out to **Leigh National Nature Reserve**, consisting of **Leigh Marsh** and **Leigh Sand**, and along the coastal cliffs to the pier in **Southend-on-Sea** (the world's longest pleasure pier, so that it reached out to the shipping lane for boarding passing ships).

After a couple of right-turns in 150m and in 400m, **Oyster Creek** (with its Smallgains Marina) and **Canvey Point** (a small marsh islet just off **Leighbeck Marsh** on the other side of Oyster Creek) come into view. Follow the creek (here called **Smallgains Creek**) inland and in 520m, at the end of it, *turn left* along another flood protection wall. In 110m *turn left* with an ECP and 'Public Footpath 3'-signpost, with **Leigh Beck** settlement now on your right and Smallgains Creek on the left behind a wall. In 250m the path *turns left* and in 240m it crosses an access lane to the **Smallgains Boatyard** (with **Anita's Tearooms**, a café in a container with indoor and outdoor seating, recommended for elevenses). In 190m you reach a concrete footpath signpost pointing ahead towards a yacht club.

Here you have a choice:

For a highly recommended diversion, try this: The footpath leads along an initially somewhat hidden trail (to the right of the fenced boatyard and to the left of the clubhouse of the **Island Yacht Club**) in about 800m through **Leigh Beck Marsh** to the most easterly point of the island, **Canvey Point**: as much 'out in the estuary' as you can be while – hopefully – staying dry. **[!] Parts of this trail are prone to becoming submerged at high tide, so be sure that you can get out – and back – in good time! Do not attempt during the incoming tide. [!]**

Else, turn right. Soon you have the Thames mud flats on your left and the **Isle of Grain** opposite on the southerly bank of the river (formerly home to an oil refinery, then manufacturing site for the concrete elements for the Channel Tunnel, now home to **London Thamesport** – a container port, an oil-fired power station and an LNG import terminal). In 360m – by an info panel at a corner of the seawall on the **B17-G aircraft collision** on 19 June 1944, and after admiring the views out along the **Thames Estuary** towards the **North Sea**, you *turn right*, now heading upriver towards London. In 20m **[!] turn left** through a gap in the concrete flood protection wall, go down a few steps and **continue walking riverside**, past mud flats, jetties, groynes, some sandy or pebbly beaches, with lots of seawall murals to look at and sheltered benches to sit on (you can also continue on the higher level, **landside** of the wall, and there are plenty more gates along this stretch where you can change sides).

The first mural (topic: the aircraft collision) *is to the left* as you come down the steps. Continue with the river on your left, in 800m pass murals about a **Thames Barge**, the **Chapman Lighthouse** and the **MS Waverley**, just before walking under a jetty. Along the next stretch there are more pertinent murals (**Covid-19, The History of Mural Painting**) and in 725m you pass a bench and mural dedicated to 'Canvey Island's finest' band, **Dr. Feelgood**, just before the first of two **Public Paddling Pools** (with the **Concord Café Beach Shop** between them) and a string of murals, including a 50m spanning story of the devastating 1953 floods, while on the landside of the wall there is the beginning of a **shopping/ entertainment mall** on the other side of the road. Here you'll find the **Oyster Bay Sports & Wine Bar** and **The Monico** bar/pub (and ex-hotel, nightclub and casino), as well as a bandstand and a permanent fairground. Soon after this you pass the (ground level) entrance to **The Labworth Beach Café** (the entrance to the – evening only – restaurant is on the upper level, landside).

Continue in the same direction with the river on your left and in 400m *turn right* with the seawall around a large inlet (**Thorney Bay**, also known as **Deadman's Bay**) with a sandy beach at its end. In 300m you find **The Bay Museum** on the right in an ex-Degaussing Station (see the 'Notes'), with **The Bay Café** next to it in an ex-toilet block. In 50m you *turn left*, either along the beach or along the tarmac path behind the flood protection wall. In 200m you *turn left* again (for the next kilometre or so: preferably along the riverside lower path rather than along the landside higher path, this may be prone to squalls or spray from the river though, depending on tide, river traffic and

wind) to head back towards the river and in 220m *veer right* with the wall to pass a pumping station in 40m. There's now **Thorney Bay Village** (caravan park) on the right.

In 300m you reach **Deadman's Point** (on the OS map) and *veer right* along the seawall. In 250m you pass some **Sewage Works** (about 150m inland) and in 120m you go through a gap in a crash barrier to then pass **Calor Gas's LNG** (Liquified Natural Gas) **terminal** on the right. You then have to *veer down right* along a fenced path under the depot's pipelines, which run out to a jetty and then walk back up to the seawall to continue. In 400m you walk up some steps over more pipelines to another jetty. This the first of three jetties linked to the **Oikos Oil Product Terminal**, and the third one has to be circumvented by *veering down right* underneath the pipelines again.

[**Dr. Feelgood Factoid 2:** one of the large white (Aviation Fuel) tanks, with broad vertical blue stripes along it, was used for projections of Feelgood scenes against its hull in the Oil City Confidential movie. Getting permission for filming proved to be no problem as the Terminal Safety Manager was a Feelgood fan.]

In 100m past the third jetty and at the corner of the fence around the Oil Terminal there is a small settlement, which includes a row of Grade II-listed 19th century wooden **Coastguard cottages**. In 120m you reach **Holehaven Point**, where **Holehaven Creek** meets the Thames. In the middle of the creek mouth you have the surreal picture of a mile-long jetty (high on stilts to enable ships to pass underneath) – surreal as the oil refinery this was meant to supply (**Occidental Petroleum's**), was never finished due to the 1973 Oil Crisis and all other parts were later dismantled. On the opposite side of the creek on **Shellhaven Point**, you have **Coryton Oil Refinery**. This went into receivership in 2012 and has been partially dismantled and converted to an oil terminal (it will eventually be the UK's largest oil products terminal). Behind Coryton Refinery lies **Shell Haven** (creek) and the former site of **Shell Haven Refinery**, some of whose tanks now form another **Oil Terminal**, but most of which has been turned into the **London Gateway**, a new deepwater container terminal. Half right in the distance you have **One Tree Hill** and the **Langdon Hills** (SWC Walk Laindon Circular).

[**Dr. Feelgood Factoid 3:** the cover for the debut album 'Down by the Jetty' was shot from this corner, with the band on the foreshore to the left, and the jetty beyond them.]

Turn right to **The Lobster Smack** in 50m (food is served in the ground level restaurant and bar, drinks only in the upstairs **Drifter's Bar**).

Here you have a choice:

For a Shortcut to a bus stop for frequent services to **Benfleet station** (tarmac all the way) you follow the road from the pub (**Haven Road**) towards the centre of the island, ignoring all ways off, and in 1.3 km – just after one of the remaining two **Dutch Cottages** (from 1621) – *turn left* in the (**Dutch**) **Village** settlement at a T-junction with Canvey Road/Long Road (opposite the **King Canute** ex-pub) to find a bus stop in 50m.

For the main walk, continue along **Holehaven Causeway**, in 70m pass a **Lookout Station**, in 150m go through a metal kissing gate, in another 310m ignore a footpath veering right across a stile in the fence at the bottom of the seawall (the continuation of this path is too overgrown to be a consideration for a shortcut to a bus stop), in 250m walk through a squeeze gate to the right of a metal field gate and in 65m go under the surplus pipelines-on-stilts to a refinery that was never fully built. In 500m *curve right* around a redundant large jetty (for the same unfinished refinery) and in 50m there is a squeeze gate in a metal fence by **Canvey Wick Nature Reserve (SSSI)**. This is the start of a 'bee and orchid trail' through this 'brownfield rainforest' (Natural England).

You now have full sight of all the remaining units of the oil refinery beyond the creek, with the marshy islet of **Lower Horse** on the near left. In 900m the path *curves right*, you pass **Upper Horse** marshland on the left in the creek, and can spot a very large landfill site (still growing at time of writing) ahead of you in the distance, as well as the **Vange** and **Pitsea** parts of **Basildon** and an imposing concrete structure half left (a movable flood barrier on **Vange Creek**), as you leave the refinery behind. Go through a metal kissing gate, where the concrete flood protection wall ends and continue atop a grassy dyke, with some wild orchards on the right that have grown on the site formerly earmarked for the **Occidental Refinery**. You pass another ruined jetty and in 250m walk past a warning sign to boat traffic indicating the working of another – smaller – movable flood barrier on **East Haven Creek** that is now just in front of you. In 75m the dyke curves to the right and in 150m it crosses over the driveway from **Northwick Road** to the flood barrier on your left. You now follow the dyke along East Haven Creek, with the landfill site across on the other side, for another 10 minutes or so.

In 210m you *turn left* with the dyke at a footpath signpost (but for a change of perspective you can descend and follow the other – indistinct – footpath through the low-lying marshes, to the right of a reed-filled ditch, and after about 700m *veer left* across an earth bridge over the ditch to re-join the seawall just before a metal kissing gate), and in 30m *turn right* with it. On this stretch, over your shoulder on the right, you get the best views of the full width of the refinery/oil terminal/deepwater seaport agglomeration passed earlier. In 650m you walk through a metal kissing gate into **West Canvey Marsh Nature Reserve** and through another one in 800m. In 320m a permissive footpath *turns right* through a metal kissing gate by a three-way signpost into the Nature Reserve ('Twelve Acres Viewpoint 1.1 km, Car Park 1.7 km'). You now

- **either** ignore the turning footpath and continue along the dyke,
- **or** *turn right* along it for a very short detour through the Nature Reserve and to a viewpoint over the marshes, *turn left* in 230m (signposted 'Pantile 350m') and follow that path past the viewpoint back to the seawall 270m further along through another metal kissing gate by a three-way signpost.

40m after the *second* footpath junction, you walk through a metal kissing gate, in 340m go through another and then in another 700m through a third one to then go under the raised **A130** and continue along the dyke on the other side. In 200m this *turns right*, now with **Benfleet Creek** on your left. In 300m the outflow on the left belongs to **Benfleet's Sewage Works**. In 180m the path *turns right* back towards the A-road to circumvent a large marshy inlet, and in 300m it *turns left* just before the road. In 900m you walk through a metal kissing gate (no sign on the ground of the left-turning footpath shown on the OS map) and in 20m pass a concrete footpath signpost, descend from the dyke, cross **Canvey Road** carefully and *turn left* along the pavement on the other side ('Benfleet ¼ m'; **Caution**: this is a **shared cycle-/footpath!**). In 800m you reach **Benfleet Station**. London bound trains depart from the near platform, where there is also **Bean N Gone** (p.m. openings: weekdays only).

For **other tea options** though *turn right* just before the station building to go along a subway and in 30m *turn left* on the station forecourt past the other station entrance along **High Street**. In 65m *turn right* at a roundabout with the High Street. [Note the **memorial and plaque** on the other side of the roundabout, commemorating the **Battle of Benfleet AD 894** (the Saxons beat the Vikings, for once)]. In the next 100m you have **Gambero D'Oro** and **The Hoy & Helmet** on the left, and **The Half Crown** on the right. In another 50m pass **Benfleet Tandoori** on the right, just before a roundabout. You have **The Anchor Inn** on the left, and **Mumtaz Mahal** tandoori on the right.