

South Woodham Ferrers to North Fambridge		
1 st walk check	2 nd walk check	3 rd walk check
07 th July 2012	04 th October 2015	
Current status	Document last updated Tuesday, 17 th July 2018	
<p>This document and information herein are copyrighted to Saturday Walkers' Club. If you are interested in printing or displaying any of this material, Saturday Walkers' Club grants permission to use, copy, and distribute this document delivered from this World Wide Web server with the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The document will not be edited or abridged, and the material will be produced exactly as it appears. Modification of the material or use of it for any other purpose is a violation of our copyright and other proprietary rights. • Reproduction of this document is for free distribution and will not be sold. • This permission is granted for a one-time distribution. • All copies, links, or pages of the documents must carry the following copyright notice and this permission notice: <p>Saturday Walkers' Club, Copyright © 2012-2018, used with permission. All rights reserved. www.walkingclub.org.uk</p>		
This walk has been checked as noted above, however the publisher cannot accept responsibility for any problems encountered by readers.		

South Woodham Ferrers to North Fambridge

Start: South Woodham Ferrers station

Finish: North Fambridge station

South Woodham Ferrers Station, map reference TQ 804977, 14km south east of Chelmsford, 7m above sea level. North Fambridge Station, map reference TQ 855977, 5km east of South Woodham Ferrers, 7m above sea level; both are in **Essex**.

Length: 25.5 km (15.9 mi), of which 4.36 km (2.71 mi) on tarmac or pavements.

Cumulative ascent/descent: 305m. For a shorter or longer walk or an alternative ending back in South Woodham Ferrers, see *below* **Walk options**.

Toughness: 6 out of 10 (7 out of 10 in summer due to some challenging field crossings)

Time: 5 hours 30 minutes walking time.

For the whole outing, including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 8 ½ hours.

Transport: South Woodham Ferrers and North Fambridge are on the single track Crouch Valley Line from Wickford to Southminster, with at least one train an hour Mon-Fri, one every 40 minutes Sat, and hourly trains Sun (journey time from 49 to 66 minutes). Trains to Wickford depart from Liverpool Street.

Saturday Walkers' Club: Take the train closest to 10.00 hours.

OS Landranger Map: 167 (Chelmsford) and 168 (Colchester)

OS Explorer Map: 175 (Southend-on-Sea & Basildon) and 183 (Chelmsford & The Rodings)

Walk Notes:

This varied and fairly hilly walk (for a flat County) offers splendid views of the Crouch Valley and some undulating landscape. After winding its way out of South Woodham Ferrers through some fields, it leads across plenty of rolling hills and past a RHS Garden, then passes through an overgrown cemetery and along more fields to lunch. The afternoon route features an extended stretch between trees on a long disused railway line and finishes very serenely after tea, along the tidal River Crouch and through the grassy salt marshes of Blue House Farm Nature Reserve.

Walk options:

Shortcut: It is possible to shorten the walk by taking a bus from the lunch pub in East Hanningfield to Battlesbridge (hourly Mon-Sat, every two hours Sun).

You can also take an **Alternative Ending** back in South Woodham Ferrers for a circular walk (19.2 km/11.9 mi, rated **4/10**), or cut the North Fambridge ending short by using a more direct route to the station (22.7 km/14.1 mi, rated **5/10**).

Extension: You can extend the walk to add more riverside walking at the end (28.6 km/17.8 mi, **7/10**).

Lunch:

The Folly Bistro The Tye, *East Hanningfield, Chelmsford, Essex, CM3 8AA* (01245 400 315, <http://www.thefollybistro.co.uk/>). Open: Mon-Sat 11.00-23.30, Sun 12.00-22.00.

Food served: Mon-Fri 12.00-14.30 and 18.00-21.30, Sat 12.00-21.30 and Sun 12.00-19.30.

The Folly, a bistro pub formerly known as The Windmill Tavern, is located 9.0 km from the start of the walk and stands in the centre of the village. Built towards the end of the 17th century, with outside seating at the front and on the large terracing at the back.

Tea places on the Full Walk:

The Prince of Wales Stow Maries, Woodham Road, *Chelmsford, Essex CM3 6SA* (01621 828 971, <http://www.prince-stowmaries.net/>). Open 11.00-late every day, food served 12.00-14.30 and 18.00-

21.00. Located 8.3 km from the end of the full walk, The Prince of Wales was opened in 1990 by Rob Walster, an expat from Hull who had co-founded the nearby Crouch Vale Brewery in South Woodham Ferrers. There had been a pub on the site for many years, but it had fallen into disrepair before extensive refurbishment. It has been voted South Essex CAMRA's 'Pub of the Year' on several occasions.

The Ferry Boat Inn Ferry Road, North Fambridge, *Chelmsford, Essex, CM3 6LR* (01621 740 208). Open daily, food served 12.00-14.00 and 19.00-21.30. Located 2.1 km from the end of the walk. A 500 year old riverside pub.

Tea places in South Woodham Ferrers:

Shaw Farm Old Wickford Road, *South Woodham Ferrers, Chelmsford CM3 5QS* (01245 320 916, <https://www.vintageinn.co.uk/restaurants/east/shawfarmchelmsford/>). Open 11.00-23.00 daily. Food served all day. The original listed building used to be a farm dating back to the 17th Century. There is a large back garden and a lake at the back.

The Whalebone Inn/Scrimshaw's Restaurant Old Wickford Road, *South Woodham Ferrers, Chelmsford CM3 5QU* (01245 320 231). Open 12.00-23.00 daily.

The Railway 50 Hullbridge Road, *South Woodham Ferrers, Chelmsford CM3 5NG* (01245 320 262, <http://www.swftherailwaypub.co.uk/>).

Notes:

South Woodham Ferrers

The town of South Woodham Ferrers grew up around the railway station, which had been built in the early 20th century to serve the small village of Woodham Ferrers, which lies a mile or so to the north of South Woodham Ferrers, above the valley where the railway runs. It underwent dramatic growth as part of a planned development in the late 1970s. The final phase of the town's development has only occurred in the last years with a new area of building near Fenn Creek.

River Crouch/Crouch Valley

The Crouch rises in Little Burstead. It runs parallel with the A176 (Noak Hill Road) for approximately 2.1km (1.3 mi) and then follows a generally easterly course, passing by, near or through: Crays Hill, Ramsden Bellhouse, the centre of Wickford (where it flows along a concrete culvert), Runwell, Battlesbridge (the head of the 17½ mile 'River Crouch Navigation'), South Woodham Ferrers, Althorne and Burnham-on-Crouch. The river flows into the North Sea between Holliwell Point (grid reference TR026963) and Foulness Point (TR048954).

Woodham Ferrers

Named after Henry de Ferrers (also known as Henri de Ferrières), who was a Norman soldier from a noble family and is believed to have fought at the Battle of Hastings of 1066 and, in consequence, was granted 210 manors throughout England and Wales. The name Woodham was adopted in 1175 when the manor became a priory, including 60 acres of forest stretching towards Danbury. At the turn of the 16th century, the convent was used as a hospital until being returned to the church in 1540. The village was the centre of national media attention in July 2011 when some 4,000 gypsies arrived here for the Christian Light and Life Festival nearby.

Mary the Virgin, Woodham Ferrers and Bicknacre

Although originally built by Robert de Ferrers (the Earl of Derby) in the 12th century, the surviving church building dates to various phases between about 1250 and 1330, it was then restored in 1884. Inside the church the font is late 14th/early 15th century, with an attractive cover. There are several old (15th Century) poppy head bench finials, portions of a 14th century rood-screen and 14th century painted glass shields in one of the windows. The painting over the 13th century chancel arch is also interesting, it is a so-called Doom Painting of the 15th century with Christ seated in the centre (on a rainbow), angels on the left and right and souls below. The mouth of Hell is in the right hand corner. The churchyard has a commanding view across the Crouch valley

RHS Garden Hyde Hall

A 360-acre estate, in an area of Essex that has very low rainfall, which, combined with the soil conditions and exposed nature of the site, makes it a challenging area for gardening. A visit shows that by choosing the right plants for the right places and by working with the prevailing conditions, it is possible to create a garden of beauty.

Open all year except Christmas Day: Mar-Oct 10-18, Nov-Feb: 10-16, last entry one hour before closing.
<https://www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/hyde-hall>

Saffron Trail

The Saffron Trail is a linear waymarked 113 km (70 mi) Long Distance Path in Essex running in a north-westerly direction from Southend-on-Sea to Saffron Walden. The waymark used is a crocus.

The Old Church Yard (All Saints' Church, East Hanningfield)

A church was built here in the 7th Century by the Saxon Chief who lived where East Hanningfield Hall stands today, when he was converted to Christianity. The last church burnt down by a fire that is thought to have started in a heating stove, in 1883. A new church was built more central to the village.

Stow Maries Aerodrome

Stow Maries Aerodrome is probably the best-preserved WWI airfield in the UK with over 20 of the original buildings still standing. Established in September 1916, it was home to 37 (Home Defence) Squadron, Royal Flying Corps and then after 1 April 1918 home to 37 Squadron, Royal Air Force. The buildings were then used to store grain and farm vehicles until 2008. New owners, aviation and history enthusiasts Russell Savory and Steve Wilson, are managing a sympathetic restoration of the whole site, returning it to as near as is possible its original state.
<http://www.stowmaries.org.uk/>

Stow Maries

Stow Maries derives its name, as did its feudal lords (de Marisco, de Mareys), from the marsh. Stow/Stowe probably refers to an ancient holy place of great significance in Anglo-Saxon times.

Stow Maries Halt Nature Reserve

This 5.5-acre reserve consists of the former Stow Maries Halt on the disused Maldon to South Woodham Ferrers railway line, along with an adjoining four-acre meadow acquired later. The remains of the platform are still visible by the reserve entrance and four species of fern – Wall-rue, Maidenhair Spleenwort, Black Spleenwort and Hartstongue – grow in the mortar of the bridge. A pond has been excavated in marshy ground in the NW corner. In late spring there are many Common Spotted Orchids and a number of Adderstongue Ferns, followed in summer by Common Fleabane, Wild Carrot and St John's Wort. The reserve has a good selection of butterflies, including Purple and White-letter Hairstreaks.

Maldon to South Woodham Ferrers Railway

Once Great Eastern Railways opened the Crouch Valley Line, from Wickford to Southminster, a plan was approved to extend the Witham to Maldon line as far as Woodham Ferrers to join up with the Crouch Valley Line. The line was rapidly completed and opened in October 1889 just four months after the Crouch Valley Line. Small stations were completed at Stow Maries, Cold Norton, Barons Lane and Maldon West before the trains reached Maldon Station. The line closed to passenger traffic at the outbreak of WWII. After the war the line was in poor condition following heavy use and little or no maintenance and it was decided not to resume passenger traffic as the new bus service was adequate. The line was used up to 1953 for freight services, though, and remained as a carriage store until 1959 when the track was finally lifted and most of the buildings demolished.

North Fambridge

A village on the Dengie peninsula in Essex, on the north bank of the River Crouch opposite South Fambridge.

Dengie Peninsula

The peninsula is formed by the River Crouch to the south, the Blackwater to the north, both of which are tidal, and the North Sea to the east. The eastern part of the peninsula is marshy and forms the Dengie Marshes. Dengie (sometimes spelled Dengy) once formed a hundred of the same name, and its western boundary ran from North Fambridge to west of Maldon.

North Fambridge Hall

Mainly 16th century, possibly of medieval origin, altered in C19. Timber framed, clad with red brick in Flemish bond, partly painted, roof with handmade red clay tiles.

Blue House Farm Nature Reserve

This 600-acre farm is situated on the north bank of the River Crouch and notified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. It has been managed by Essex Wildlife Trust since 1998. The Flat Fields have been grassland for the last 100 years and are used as a feeding ground for Brent Geese. Around 2,000 geese come to the area during the winter. The remainder of the farm comprises of coastal grazing marsh with ancient creeks and hollows betraying its salt marsh origins. The farm has been improved substantially to allow the Water Vole to thrive, as the creeks and ditches offer an ideal habitat for it. A fifty acre field is surface-flooded during the winter months bringing in huge numbers of wildfowl and wading birds. A permissive path passes around the farm, giving access to the three bird hides – this links up with the sea wall footpath which can then be taken back to the farm entrance and car park creating a 4 km circular route around the farm.

Crouch Valley Railway Line

The 26.6 km (16.5 mi) branch line from Wickford to Southminster was first opened to goods traffic on 1 June, 1889, and to passengers on 1 July, 1889 by the Great Eastern Railway. It was reduced to single track in the 1960s as part of the Beeching Axe railway closures, with a passing loop at North Fambridge station (the mid-point of the line) to allow trains travelling in opposite directions to pass. This normally restricts capacity to two trains per hour (one train in each direction), with additional trains during the rush-hour.

Bushy Hill

Lying to the North of South Woodham Ferrers, Bushy Hill houses a radar testing site, which was operated by a number of the former Marconi companies, and more recently by BAE Systems, in the process of developing various radar technologies, some of which were for military orientated projects.

WALK DIRECTIONS

Alighting from the train in **South Woodham Ferrers** on the single platform, leave the station to the right into a car park and *turn right* towards a main road. Cross Hullbridge Road and *turn left* along the pavement. In 350m, at a T-junction with the main Woodham Bypass Road (**Burnham Road**), *turn right* on a wide grass/tarmac pavement. **[!]** In 440m, immediately after passing a white house on the left, cross the road carefully to enter a field through a wooden gate by a wooden footpath sign.

Follow the left-hand edge of this grassy field to its far corner and in 180m enter the next field over a stile. Stay in the same direction along the left-hand edge and leave the field in 150m through a wide gap in the boundary hedge. Follow a footpath marker half right across the next field (25°), broadly in the direction of the farm buildings in the distance on a hill (if too overgrown, skirt the field on its left-hand side). Leave the field through a gap by a footpath marker into the next field, to continue in the same direction (or skirt around the right-hand side).

Leave this field by a wooden footpath marker near a rusty field gate to continue on a usually clear path, slightly uphill (20°) through another field. Exit this field onto a road through a wide gap in the boundary hedge by a redundant stile with wooden footpath marker. Continue uphill to the right **[!]** but in 65m *turn left* over a stile by a footpath marker, 20m before reaching the farm yard. After 60m on a grassy path (fence left, low wall right), *turn right* with fence and wall, and then left in 15m onto a wide grassy path between fences. To the left you have views of South Woodham Ferrers and the **Crouch Valley**.

At a field boundary pass through a wooden kissing gate by a white-topped pole with yellow marker into the next field and continue on a usually obvious and wide path (275°). In the distance half right is **Woodham Ferrers** village, while on the left a few hillocks are stretching away to the West. From the brow descend towards a wide gap in the field boundary and cross a ditch on an earth-and-gravel track to *veer right* and uphill (300°). Exit this field in the far corner, where you **[!]** *turn left* along a path into hedges and soon emerge in the garden of **The Bell Freehouse**.

Continue through the pub car park, cross a road and enter a churchyard through a metal gate. Pass **St. Mary the Virgin, Woodham Ferrers and Bicknacre** to its left, initially on gravel, then on grass and walk down a concrete stepped path to exit the churchyard in its far-left corner over a stile into a grassy strip. *Veer left* with the hedge but *turn right* just before the hedge's end to cross a ditch over a stile and wooden railed plank bridge. Keep the field edge on your left, but in 35m – at the hedge corner – *veer half right* across the field on a usually obvious path towards two adjacent trees just beyond the brow of the hill (300°).

Continue between the trees down the field and exit it on a wide grassy path over a ditch and continue towards a road. In 120m cross **Creephedge Lane** and continue in the same direction uphill, towards the left of a solitary oak tree (260°). Keep on this wide grassy field margin, with newly planted trees, demarcating the grounds of **RHS Garden Hyde Hall**, on your right. At the brow of the hill, *keep ahead and downhill in the direction of a yellow marker*, broadly towards the red farm buildings in the distance, and with a pond half right.

Exit across a ditch and *turn left* on a gravel bridleway **[!]** but in 10m *turn right* to cross another ditch on your right over a two-plank railed wooden plank bridge and a stile into a grassy field. Head towards the left of some red farm buildings towards a fence corner between two large trees 200m ahead, to the left of the buildings (due W).

From there follow the fence, then a hedge, towards the far-right corner of the field. Exit across a stile onto a road (**Buckhatch Road**) and *turn right* along it.

In 35m *turn left* onto a car wide grassy bridleway between hedges. Keep ahead on a grassy path when the hedge on the right turns away to the right. In 300m, when the field boundary swings right, stay in the same direction on a potentially muddy bridleway between hedges. In 85m exit onto **East Hanningfield Road** and *turn right*. In 20m you *turn left* by a wooden public footpath sign with a **Saffron Trail** marker and cross a stile and a ditch into a grassy field. Keep the wooden fence and house garden on your right.

In 60m – and 8m **[!]** before a wooden shed – *follow yellow markers right* over a stile in a hedge gap and *turn left* along a grassy car wide field boundary, with hedges and – later – large trees on your left. In 540m a footpath joins from left through the hedge. 90m further, at the brow of this rise (views left towards **Rettendon** and **Wickford**), cross a ditch over a railed wooden plank bridge and *turn right* by a footpath marker pole with a Saffron Trail marker. Descend on a field margin with trees to your right (or to the right of the trees on a farm track, if too overgrown). In 150m cross a farm track and *veer slightly right*, first between trees, then between hedges, and finally with a field on the left and a ditch and a low hedge on the right. Join a concrete farm track over a stile to the right of a metal gate and *turn right*.

[!] In 20m *turn right* by a wooden footpath marker, with a hedge on your right and a garden fence on the left. Cross a ditch in 10m over a wooden plank bridge and a stile to continue between fences and through a couple of gates around the house garden. Cross a ditch and *turn right* to immediately cross another ditch over planks and a stile. Follow a yellow marker half left across a field, towards a white-topped wooden pole at the right-hand end of the red brick garden wall of **East Hanningfield Hall** 85m away (40°).

At the wall, by a junction of paths, *turn right* across a stile, following signs for **The Old Church Yard** on a snaking path through this small wood, with grave stones and long overgrown graves in every direction. Exit the wood near its far left corner and follow a yellow footpath marker diagonally left across a field towards a gap in the boundary tree line (45°).

Cross through the gap into the next field and *turn right* along its grassy boundary. In 260m ignore a footpath turning right across a bridge with a reservoir on the other side of it, and exit the field in its far right corner through a wide gap (with the houses of **East Hanningfield** now visible ahead). *Turn right* along the field boundary. In 120m swing right with the boundary, then *turn left* in the field corner in 100m, and in 40m cross a railed plank bridge and a stile on the right into horse paddocks.

Veer half left across stiles and fences (20°) to a white topped wooden pole at the other side of the paddocks. Go over a stile in a hedge and across a ditch onto a road. *Turn left* on the grassy margin. Cross the road (**The Tye**) just before a Give Way-sign at a junction with a main road (**Old Church Road**) to continue on the grassy margin on the right. You pass a concrete footpath marker on the right (the post-lunch onwards route) and then a bus stop (hourly services to Battlesbridge, Mon-Sat only). In 20m cross the road at the recommended lunch stop **The Folly Bistro, East Hanningfield**.

After lunch cross the road and *veer right* towards a concrete footpath marker pointing left away from the road, to continue on an earthen path between fences. Swing right with the path to cross a stile into a grassy field. Follow half left *diagonally* in the direction of a yellow arrow on an obvious path towards a gap in the boundary hedge. Go over a stile and a wooden plank bridge into a field to continue in the same direction (95°). Exit this field through the stumps of two old trees, on a wooden plank bridge.

Skirt the next field on the wide grassy margin around the right-hand side, passing a couple of ponds and in 230m *turning left* in a field corner. In 105m *turn right* with the field boundary to exit the field in another 220m through a gap in trees and onto a car wide footpath at a T-junction. *Turn left* between trees. In 450m, at a T-junction of paths *turn right* towards a road 65m away. **[!]** *Turn right* on the road, ignoring a footpath opposite into trees.

[!] In 180m, opposite **Quilter's Farm** with its white wooden fence, *turn half left* along a lane. In 40m go under an electricity line and continue in the same direction down a wide grassy corridor between new trees and with a wire fence on the left (150°). In 250m ignore a stile over a wire fence into a narrow strip of mature trees where the grassy path turns left, but in 10m *turn right* and immediately left across a couple of stiles into a large meadow. Head down the left-hand edge of it and leave it in the far left corner over a stile onto a road. *Turn left* on the grassy strip on the other side of the road which soon swings right.

75m before the turnoff right to **RHS Garden Hyde Hall** *turn left* off the road by a concrete footpath marker to cross a field. On a narrow path, head towards a solitary tree about 250m away (55°). Pass the tree and continue in the same direction, now with ponds visible on the right. Leave the field left of a ditch and a hedge to cross a lane leading to the ponds. *Veer right* across the next field, slightly uphill (85°). At the top of the field, by a footpath crossing at a garden fence, stay ahead for 20m with the garden fence. Cross a field in the direction of a yellow marker (60°) [or skirt around its left-hand side if too overgrown]. On the other side of the field continue in your earlier direction with hedges left and a wire fence right between some gardens.

Reach a main road and *turn right* along its tarmac pavement for 480m. 65m after passing **Woodham Ferrers Congregational Church** on the left, *turn left* at a concrete footpath marker through a gap in the hedge into a grassy field to follow its left hand edge (soon you get views on the right towards **South Woodham Ferrers**). In 360m – and 30m before the field corner – *turn left* through a hedge gap up a low bank. *Turn right* along a field boundary and stay in the same direction for another 670m, along several fields, always on the grassy margin.

In a field corner, with a pond to the left, *turn briefly right* and in 20m *turn left* over a railed plank bridge and a stile into a narrow grassy plantation, where you *turn right*. Exit in 90m across a stile and *turn left* on a lane. Cross a road (**Crows Lane**) in 240m. Pass a farm with ponds in 280m. In 420m, where the lane turns left, **[!]** *turn right* onto an earth-and-gravel path between trees and bushes. You can glimpse an airstrip (**Stow Maries Aerodrome**) on the left through the trees.

In 600m *turn left* with the path (a farm track joins from the right). In 50m *turn right* by a bridleway marker, soon downhill with ditches left and right, trees on the left and **Hawe's Wood** on the right. **After 300m** on this bridleway, at the corner of the wood on the right, and at a marked footpath-junction, **you have a choice:**

For the Alternative Ending, finishing in South Woodham Ferrers *turn right* here (for details see the end of the main walk directions).

For the full walk, ending in North Fambridge, *turn left* downhill through a newly planted vineyard (100°), towards a wooden kissing gate with a yellow footpath marker in a row of trees at the bottom of this valley. From the gate you head uphill to the left of an older vineyard towards the brow of the hill, passing a few trees to the left. Walk through a line of trees over a stile and *veer right* across an arable field. Views from the brow across the **Crouch Valley** include the marina at **Fambridge** and hillocks on the

other side of the river. At the opposite end of the field *turn left* with the edge by a yellow marker.

At a three-way footpath junction **you have a choice:**

- Take a diversion to reach the early tea stop **The Prince of Wales**. Stay ahead on a grassy path between trees and in 210m *turn half right* across a stile between bushes, then young trees, then wooden fences, to reach **Woodham Road** and the pub in 240m. From there *turn right* along the road and in 215m *turn left* along a field margin, with a wood (**Poorhouse Wood**) on the right and **Stow Maries** village and **St. Mary & St. Margaret church** up on the left.
- Continue with the main walk. *Turn right* along a wide grassy field margin to exit over a metal stile left of a metal field gate onto a road. *Turn left* and in 100m *turn right* along a field margin by a footpath marker, with a wood (**Poorhouse Wood**) on the right and **Stow Maries** village and **St. Mary & St. Margaret church** up on the left.

At the field corner enter a wooden strip over a three-plank wooden bridge to ascend a bank and **[!]** *turn left*. This car wide semi-wild track between trees is the disused **Maldon to South Woodham Ferrers Railway**. Follow bridleway signs along this track for 2.1 km (!), passing through **Stow Maries Halt Nature Reserve** in 600m, then under a road bridge and later through a golf course, mainly staying on the disused railway track, but once having to navigate around a dismantled bridge.

Just before getting to a red brick road bridge with the path heading left up a steep bank onto the road, **[!]** *veer slightly right through metal barriers* and *turn sharp right* on a dog leg by a yellow marker to walk along a grassy field edge towards a gap in a field boundary hedge. Pass through the gap and *turn left* by a yellow marker along a wide grassy field boundary, with a hedge on the left. In 260m pass through a gap in a hedge and *turn left* along the next field boundary, slightly uphill. At the field boundary, by a solitary tree, *turn right* downhill with a line of mini-pylons on a grassy field margin. Exit the field in 350m through a gap and follow a yellow marker diagonally right (210°) across the next field (skirt left around it if overgrown). Pass through a gap into the next field to follow yellow markers along its left-hand edge on a wide grassy margin.

Exit onto a road through a metal kissing gate left of a double metal field gate and by a wooden footpath marker. Cross the road and *turn right* along its grassy pavement. In 35m *turn left* into a grassy field by a concrete footpath marker to head for the left edge of a clump of trees 300m away (170°). Pass those trees on the left and follow yellow markers through the trees, over two wooden plank bridges across ditches, to come out on a field. *Turn right* to follow the field margin which soon turns left towards **Yondah Farm** (on the OS map) 200m away. Stay in the same direction past the farm house, with the houses of **North Fambridge** now on the left and ahead.

In 330m by a four-way footpath junction **you have a choice:**

For a Shortcut, heading directly to **North Fambridge Station**, but avoiding the recommended tea stop and the river walk finish, *turn left* here (for details see the end of the main walk directions).

For the full walk, continue in the same direction and in 50m cross the railway line through wooden kissing gates either side. Continue ahead on the right hand grassy margin of a field. Stay in this direction, with sailing ship masts visible to the right, until you come out on the tarmac lane in 600m. *Turn left*. In 65m *turn right* by a T-junction with a road at a concrete footpath marker and with **North Fambridge Hall** and **Holy Trinity Church** on the right. In 90m *turn left* through a gate by a wooden footpath sign and head right towards the rear entrance to the redbrick church (usually open).

50m along the hedge, near the far-right corner of the church yard, you get good views of the **Crouch River** and the marina through the hedge and a deer fence. Retrace your steps for 25m and *turn right* along the hedge. In 25m exit the church yard in the south east corner by a yellow footpath marker on a wooden pole into a grassy path between garden fence and hedge. In 175m reach **Ferry Road** and *turn right*. In 300m you have the recommended tea stop **The Ferry Boat Inn** on the left.

From the pub *turn left* along the road or on the raised sea wall beside it. Pass the approach lane to Fambridge Yacht Haven's Yacht Station. Reach the **River Crouch** and a slipway, with the houses of **South Fambridge** visible across the water, to *turn left* by a yellow marker. The path swings right in 150m and in 50m passes through a metal gate by a sign for **Blue House Farm Nature Reserve**.

In a further 230m on the sea wall you have a choice:

For an Extension of the full walk, leading further along the tidal river and then through its salt marshes and past three bird hides, head straight on (for details see the end of the main walk directions).

For the full walk you *turn left* down some steps with metal railings by a yellow marker. Cross a creek on a grassy bank to enter a grassy field through a wooden gate with a yellow marker pointing your way ahead, to the right of the field boundary hedge 200m ahead. Leave the field in 315m through a wooden field gate to *veer left* with a yellow arrow. In 50m a path joins from the left across a four-plank wooden bridge.

Continue in the same direction with a barbed wire fence left to pass between the fence and a grey corrugated iron barn in 140m. Pass through a wooden gate by a smaller wooden barn onto a farm yard and *veer left* to pass through another wooden gate in 20m onto an earth-gravel lane. In 20m pass the car park of **Blue House Farm Nature Reserve** on the right (the walk extension joins from the right).

[*] Continue on **Blue House Farm Chase** to meet **Fambridge Road** in 170m where you continue in the same direction, but a little to the right. In 460m *turn right* into **Station Approach**. In 100m reach Platform 1 of **North Fambridge Station** for London bound trains.

Alternative Ending in South Woodham Ferrers
(cut afternoon route by 6.3 km and 48m ascent/descent, but add 540m to the tarmac count)

Turn right along the field margin with **Hawe's Wood** to your right. In 290m reach a tarmac lane (**Crows Lane**) by a wooden footpath marker pointing back and *turn left* downhill. In 660m at a T-junction with a more major road *turn right* by a wooden bridleway sign, on a field margin with trees on your right. In 240m *bear left* with the boundary and in another 95m *turn right* through trees at a white-topped wooden pole with bridleway marker. Follow this grassy path for 600m, initially with a fence on the

right and trees on the left, first towards **Bushy Hill** with its Research Station masts atop, then along the flank of the hill. Bear left to descend along a grassy path between hedges towards the main Woodham Bypass Road (**Burnham Road**).

Exit through a metal gate by a concrete bridleway sign. Cross the road and, by a wooden bridleway sign, continue through metal barriers in the same direction downhill on a car wide grassy path between houses for 120m to a road junction by a concrete bridleway sign. *Turn right* along the road and in 50m *turn left* into **Chadwick Road**. In 60m, opposite **Black Gables**, *turn right* along a tarmac track between hedges and garden fences. In 50m stay ahead (ignore fork right). In 75m stay ahead (ignore two paths on the right) and in 110m *fork left*. In 115m a track joins from the right. In 70m *turn left* between wooden fences to exit in 50m onto a road through metal barriers. Follow a cycle path sign (Rail Station 3 mins) right along **King Edwards Road**. In 300m you get to a T-junction with **Hullbridge Road**.

Here you have a choice:

- For the recommended tea stops (700m away) *turn right* and in 60m *turn left* into **The Chase**. In 275m *turn right* up **Elm Road**. In 170m *turn left* into **Old Wickford Road** to reach **The Whalebone Inn/Scrimshaw's Restaurant** in 140m. **Shaw Farm** pub and restaurant is a further 70m on the right.
- Else you *turn left* and in 110m by **The Railway** pub *turn right* into the station car park. Reach the single platform of **South Woodham Ferrers Station** in 80m.

Shortcut direct to North Fambridge station (cut afternoon route by 2.9 km, lower tarmac count by 1km)

Turn left to reach a T-junction with a main road in 550m. Cross the road and *veer right* along a tarmac lane towards Platform 2 of **North Fambridge Station**. Cross over the footbridge to Platform 1 for London bound trains.

Extension in North Fambridge (add 3.0 km to afternoon route)

Stay on the raised sea wall and in 1.5 km get to a wooden gate with a yellow footpath marker pointing ahead. **[!]** *Turn left* down wooden steps with a metal railing and cross a creek on a wide grassy path towards a wooden gate 25m away. At the gate follow a permissive footpath sign towards **The Fleets** and **Blue House Farm**, heading on grassy ground towards a metal field gate. In 150m, at another wooden gate, *turn left* with the fence, while a path turns right through the field gate towards a bird hide 50m away. In 260m bear right with the flood wall and head for a wooden gate 70m away. Pass through two gates either side of a wide farm track.

In 280m pass a second bird hide and *veer left* with the path. In 280m pass through yet another wooden gate, and in 120m *turn right* at a permissive footpath sign onto the sea wall. A sign points ahead to the third bird hide but *turn left* along the raised bank. In 530m, at the end of the raised bank, continue in the same direction through a wooden gate into a grassy field (due W) towards a wooden gate. In 250m walk through the gate and *veer left* through the next grassy field (250°). In 100m enter the car park of **Blue House Farm Nature Reserve** by a display panel. Stay on the right-hand side on a grassy path to reach an earth and gravel lane, where you *turn right*.

Re-join the main route directions at the asterisk **[*]** in the main text.