

South Woodham Ferrers to North Fambridge		
1 st walk check	2 nd walk check	3 rd walk check
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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: 25.7 km (16.0 mi), of which 4.36 km (2.71 mi) on tarmac or pavements.

Cumulative ascent/descent: 268m. For a shorter or longer walk or an alternative ending back in South Woodham Ferrers, see *below* **Walk options**.

Toughness: 5 out of 10

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 about 50 minutes, and 6 minutes longer on the return from North Fambridge). 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 walk offers splendid views of the Crouch Valley and some mildly undulating landscape. After winding its way out of South Woodham Ferrers through some fields, it leads across plenty of rolling hills and past the large RHS Garden at Hyde Hall, then passes through an overgrown cemetery dense with in bluebells in season and along more fields to lunch. The afternoon route passes a couple more bluebell woods as well as some vineyards and then 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:

Early Finish: take a bus from the lunch pub in East Hanningfield to Battlesbridge (infrequent service).

Alternative Ending back in South Woodham Ferrers (19.4 km/12.0 mi).

Shortcut in North Fambridge: use a more direct route to the station (22.9 km/14.2 mi).

Extension in North Fambridge: add more riverside walking (28.8 km/17.9 mi).

Lunch (details last updated 08/05/2021)

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, and 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 (details last updated 08/05/2021)

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 738 844, <https://www.ferryboatinnsex.com/>). Open all day every day, food served 12.00-22.00 Fri-Sat and 12.00-20.00 Sun-Thu. Located 2.1 km from the end of the walk. A 500-year-old riverside inn, recently completely refurbished.

Tea places in South Woodham Ferrers (details last updated 08/05/2021)

The Railway 50 Hullbridge Road, *South Woodham Ferrers, Chelmsford CM3 5NG* (01245 323 300, <https://therailwaypubsthwf.co.uk/>). Open all day every day.

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 couple of kilometers 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 2.1 km (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 and Foulness Point.

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 24 hectares 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 145 hectares 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 10.00-18.00, 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 Churchyard (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 small reserve consists of the former Stow Maries Halt on the disused Maldon to South Woodham Ferrers railway line, along with an adjoining 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 Denny) 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 the 19th century. Timber framed, clad with red brick in Flemish bond, partly painted, roof with handmade red clay tiles.

Blue House Farm Nature Reserve

This 240 hectares 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 20 hectares 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 restricts capacity.

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 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 signpost. Follow the left-hand edge of this 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°) towards a white-topped pole, 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 the pole into the next field, to continue in the same direction towards another white-topped pole (or skirt around the right-hand side).

Leave this field by the pole and through a rusty field gate to continue slightly uphill (20°) through another field (or skirt the field on its left-hand side). Exit this field through a wide gap in the boundary hedge onto a road. Continue uphill to the right **[!]** but in 70m *turn left* over a stile by a footpath signpost, 20m before reaching the farm yard. After 60m on a grassy path (fence on the left, low wall on the right), you *turn right* with fence and wall, and then turn left in 15m along a wide grassy path between fences. To the left you have views of South Woodham Ferrers and the **Crouch Valley**. In 230m, at the field boundary, you go through a wooden kissing gate by a white-topped pole with a yellow marker into the next field and continue in the same direction on a usually obvious path (275°). From the brow of the field in 250m, you can see on the half right **Woodham Ferrers** village, and a few hillocks stretching away on the left. Descend towards a wide gap in the field boundary 220m away and cross a ditch on an earth-and-gravel track to *veer right* and uphill through the next field (300°).

Exit this field in the far corner and **[!]** *turn left* by a tall footpath marker post along a path between 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 past a redundant stile into a grassy area. *Veer left* with the hedge on the left and in 40m *turn right* to cross a ditch over a two-railed plank bridge. Keep the field edge on your left, and in 30m – at the hedge corner – continue in the same direction across the field on a usually obvious path towards several adjacent trees just this side of the brow of the rise (260°). In 220m pass a large tree and continue towards the furthest right of a line of trees another 50m away. At the tree turn hard right (350°) to continue on the level, aiming just to the left of a couple of trees on the top of this rise. In 200m, just after passing those trees, *turn left* downhill and in 170m exit the field 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 with footpath signpost and marker post, towards the left of a solitary oak tree (260°). Keep on this wide grassy field margin, with young trees on your right, demarcating the grounds of **RHS Garden Hyde Hall**. At the brow of the hill, keep ahead and downhill across grass with a marker post, broadly towards the red farm buildings in the distance, ignoring a gravel track veering right into the (ticketed) grounds of Hyde Hall. In 140m, by some newly planted trees on the left, you pass a marker post and in 80m exit the grounds across a ditch. *Turn left* on a gravel bridleway **[!]** but in 15m *turn right* with a footpath signpost to cross another ditch over a two-railed wooden plank bridge and a stile into a pasture. Head towards the left-hand fence corner 80m away and then continue along a grass path along the fence to pass **Willow Tree Farm** to its left, in

90m going through a wooden gate en route. In 100m, in the corner of the following field, you go over a stile onto a road (**Buckhatch Road**) and *turn right* along it.

In 30m *turn left* onto a car wide grassy bridleway between hedges. In 200m keep ahead on a grass path when the hedge on the right turns away to the right, initially with newly planted trees on the right. In 300m, when the field boundary swings to the right, continue in the same direction on a potentially muddy bridleway between hedges. In 85m emerge onto **East Hanningfield Road** and *turn right* along it. In 20m *turn left* by a wooden public footpath signpost with a **Saffron Trail** marker and cross a stile into a grassy field. Continue along the wooden fence and house garden on your right. In 70m – and 8m **[!]** before a wooden shed – *turn right* with yellow markers over a stile in a hedge and *turn left* along a grassy car wide field boundary, with hedges and – later – large trees and a vineyard behind them, on your left. In 540m a footpath joins from the left through the hedge. 80m further, at the brow of this rise (views left towards **Rettondon** and **Wickford**), cross a ditch over a railed wooden plank bridge and *turn right* with a footpath signpost 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 continue in the same direction, 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 car barrier and *turn right* along it. **[!]** In 20m *turn right* by a hedge corner on your right and with a footpath signpost. 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 Churchyard** on a snaking path through this small wood (dense with bluebells in season), with grave stones and long overgrown graves in every direction.

Exit the wood near its far-left corner and follow a footpath signpost diagonally left across a field towards a gap in the boundary tree line (45°). In 180m go through the gap into the next field and *turn right* along its grassy boundary. In 260m ignore a footpath turning right across a bridge and in 200m 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 110m curve to the right right with the boundary, then *turn left* in the field corner in 100m, and in 40m *turn right* across a railed plank bridge and a stile into horse paddocks. *Veer half left* across stiles and fences (20°) to a wooden pole at the other side of the paddocks and go over a stile onto a road. *Turn left* on the grassy margin. Cross the road (**The Tye**) just before a junction with a main road (**Old Church Road**) to continue along a tarmac path on the right. In 70m you pass a concrete footpath signpost on the right (the post-lunch onwards route) and then a bus stop on the left (hourly services to Battlesbridge, Mon-Sat only). In 20m cross the road to the recommended lunch stop **The Folly Bistro, East Hanningfield**.

After lunch cross the road and *veer right* towards the concrete footpath signpost and *turn left* with it to continue on an earthen path between fences. Curve to the 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. Continue in the same direction across a large arable field with a footpath signpost and in 300m *turn right* along a car wide farm track at a T-junction. In 360m, by some farmyard on the left, go over a stile to the right of a metal field gate and in 10m ignore a tree-lined track joining from the right and continue towards a road 65m away.

Cross the road with a footpath signpost but in 20m [!] *turn right* along a narrow permissive path parallel to the road. [!] In 180m, opposite **Quilter's Farm** with its white wooden fence, *turn half left* along a track, away from the road. In 40m go under an electricity line and continue in the same direction down a wide grassy corridor between trees (150°). In 250m ignore a first stile over a wire fence on the right, but in another 10m *turn right* and immediately left across a couple of stiles into a large meadow. Head down the left-hand edge of it and in 100m leave it over a stile onto a road. Cross the road and *turn left* on the grassy strip on the other side of the road which soon curves to the right.

75m before the turnoff right to **RHS Garden Hyde Hall** *turn left* across the road and cross a large arable field with a wooden footpath marker post towards a solitary tree about 250m away (55°). Pass the tree and a marker post and continue in the same direction, now with some ponds visible away on the right. In 140m, leave the field to the left of a ditch and a hedge to cross a lane leading to the ponds and continue a little to the right. Walk up the next field with a marker post between newly planted rows of vines broadly in the previous direction (70°; note: the right-of-way on the OS map is shown differently). At the top of the field, *turn right* along the boundary, in 160m pass a house and by a subsequent footpath crossing at its garden fence corner, *turn left* with the garden fence. In 20m *turn left* with the fence, pass the house on its right-hand side, and *turn right* along its gravel drive, to follow it through a few turns for 370m to a road.

Turn right along **Main Road**, Woodham Ferrers, and in 30m *turn left* along **Crows Lane** along its left-hand pavement. In 120m, by the last house on the left, the pavement discontinues and in 100m you pass **Blaircourt Veterinary Clinic**. In another 200m *turn right* with a footpath signpost into a large field and follow its left-hand boundary. In 120m *turn left* through a boundary gap by a footpath marker post, cross a two-railed footbridge and follow a left-hand field boundary. In 300m cross a two-railed footbridge and a stile and follow a left-hand field boundary. In 150m, halfway down this field and by a footpath signpost hidden away in the trees on the left, you [!] *turn right* across the field, aiming clear to the right of some farm buildings ahead ('**Brazils**' on the OS map). In 200m pass the farm buildings and continue between fences and paddocks. In 250m pass a redundant stile and *turn left* along a field boundary.

In 170m, in the field corner and with a pond to the left, *turn briefly right* and in 15m *turn left* over a railed plank bridge and a stile into a grassy strip, where you *turn right*. Exit in 90m across a stile and *turn left* on a tarmac lane. In 240m cross a road (**Crows Lane** again), signed for '**Charity Farm**', and in 280m pass the farm with its ponds. In 420m, where the lane turns left, [!] you *turn right* along an earth-and-gravel bridlepath between trees and bushes. Foliage permitting, you can glimpse an airstrip (**Stow Maries Aerodrome**) on the left through the trees. In 600m *turn left* with a bridleway marker post (a farm track joins from the right) and in 50m *turn right*, soon downhill with ditches left and right, trees on the left and **Hawe's Wood** on the right (both sides are rich in bluebells in season). In 300m, at the corner of the wood on the right, you reach a marked bridleway/footpath-junction.

Here 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 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 through more rows of vines towards the brow of the hill, passing a few trees to the left. At the top of the rise, walk

through a line of trees and over a stile and *veer right* across an arable field (95°). In 50m, at the brow, your views stretch across the **Crouch Valley** towards the marina at **Fambridge** and some hillocks on the other side of the river. In 100m, at the opposite field boundary, *turn left* with the edge.

In 230m, at a marked 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 trees, then wooden fences, to reach **Woodham Road** and the pub in 240m. From there *turn right* along the road and in 215m, by Scarr Cottage, *turn left* along a field margin with a footpath signpost, with a wood (**Poorhouse Wood**, rich in bluebells in season) 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 double metal field gate onto a road. *Turn left* and in 100m, by Scarr Cottage, *turn right* along a field margin with a footpath signpost, with a wood (**Poorhouse Wood**, rich in bluebells in season) on the right and **Stow Maries** village and **St. Mary & St. Margaret church** up on the left.

At the field corner enter a wooded strip over a three-plank wooden bridge to ascend a bank and **[!]** *turn left*, ignoring a signed public footpath ahead. 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 to the right 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, **[!]** *turn right* through metal barriers by a footpath marker post and *turn sharp right* on a dog leg to walk along a grassy field edge towards a gap in a field boundary hedge. In 60m pass through the gap and *turn left* 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, uphill. At the field boundary, by a solitary tree, *turn right* downhill with a line of mini-pylons along a grassy field margin. Exit the field in 350m through a gap and follow a yellow marker bearing right (205°) across the next field (skirt left around it if overgrown). Pass through a gap into the next field by a footpath marker post and continue along its left-hand edge on a wide grassy margin.

In 180m exit onto a road through a metal kissing gate left of a double metal field gate and by a footpath signpost. Cross the road and *turn right* along its grassy pavement. In 40m *turn left* into a grassy field by a concrete footpath signpost to head for the left edge of a large clump of bushes and trees 250m away (170°). Pass the clump on the left and in 20m follow yellow marker posts to the right into and through the trees, over two wooden plank bridges across ditches, to come out on a field boundary. *Turn right* to soon *turn left* towards **Yondah Farm** (on the OS map) 200m away. Pass the farm house on its left and continue in the same direction, with the houses of **North Fambridge** now on the left and ahead.

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

For a Shortcut, heading directly to **North Fambridge Station** (cut 2.9 km distance and 1.0 km tarmac, but avoid the recommended tea stop and the river walk finish), *turn left* here to reach a T-junction with a main road in 550m. Cross the road and *turn right* along it to immediately cross the railway track on the lane. *Turn left* down some steps onto Platform 1 of **North Fambridge Station** for London bound trains.

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 footpath marker post along a grassy path between garden fence and hedge. In 175m reach **Ferry Road** and *turn right* along it.

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 marker post. 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* along **Station Approach**. In 100m you reach Platform 1 of **North Fambridge Station** for London bound trains.

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

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 signpost, 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 a 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 signpost. 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 110m to a road junction by a concrete bridleway signpost. *Turn right* along the road and in 40m *turn left* into **Chadwick Road**. In 60m, by **Black Gables**, *turn right* along a tarmac track between hedges and garden fences. In 50m stay ahead (ignore fork right). In 70m stay ahead (ignore two paths on the right) and in 110m *fork left*. In 120m 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**. *Turn left* and in 110m by **The Railway** pub *turn right* into the station car park of **South Woodham Ferrers Station**.

Extension in North Fambridge (add 3.0 km near the end of the walk)

Stay on the raised sea wall and in 1.5 km get to a wooden gate with a 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.