

Wickford to Battlesbridge			Wickford to South Woodham Ferrers		
1 <sup>st</sup> walk check	2 <sup>nd</sup> walk check	3 <sup>rd</sup> walk check	1 <sup>st</sup> walk check	2 <sup>nd</sup> walk check	3 <sup>rd</sup> walk check
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## Wickford to Battlesbridge or South Woodham Ferrers

**Start:** Wickford Station

**Finish:** Battlesbridge station

Wickford Station, map reference TQ 745936, is 14 km south east of Chelmsford and 13m above sea level. Battlesbridge Station, map reference TQ 776948, is 3 km north east of Wickford and 9m above sea level. Both are in **Essex**.

**Length:** 21.0 km (13.1 mi), of which 4.0 km (2.5 mi) on tarmac or pavement.

**Cumulative ascent/descent:** 205/209m.

For a shorter walk and an alternative finish in South Woodham Ferrers, *see below* **Walk options**.

**Toughness:** 3 out of 10

**Time:** 4 hours 40 minutes walking time.

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

**Transport:** Trains to Wickford leave from Liverpool Street station via Stratford every 20 minutes (journey time from 35 minutes), half-hourly on Sundays (journey time 38 minutes). Wickford is on the Shenfield to Southend Main Line, which diverges at Shenfield from the Great Eastern Main Line. South Woodham Ferrers and Battlesbridge are on the single-track Crouch Valley Branch Line from Wickford to Southminster, with one train every 40 minutes Mon-Sat, and hourly trains Sun (journey time from Battlesbridge between 48 and 60 minutes, 4 mins longer from South Woodham Ferrers).

**Saturday Walkers' Club:** Take the train closest to 10.15 hours (9.45 if walking the full South Woodham Ferrers walk).

**OS Landranger Map:** 167 (Chelmsford), 168 (Colchester) and 178 (Thames Estuary)

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

### Walk Notes:

This surprisingly diverse and rural walk avoids industrial and suburban features often associated with walking in Essex, but instead leads through plenty of rolling grassy fields, along quiet lanes and through a smattering of woods, before heading through the enchanting – Essex Wildlife Trust run – Hanningfield Reservoir Nature Reserve. After a short stretch along the reservoir itself it then heads for the lunch pub: The Old Windmill in South Hanningfield. The afternoon route leads through more pastures, valleys and wooded strips, before descending into the Crouch Valley and following the tidal River Crouch for a short stretch into Battlesbridge past its famous Antiques Centre.

An Alternative Finish in South Woodham Ferrers loops around the town through a fenland nature reserve, some saltmarshes and along the tidal River Crouch with its mudflats, sailing boats and plenty of birdlife. It is especially attractive at low tide.

### Walk options:

**Shortcut:** You can return by bus from the lunch pub to Wickford (approx. every two hours, but not on Sundays).

**Alternative ending in South Woodham Ferrers:** This alternative ending is entirely flat, initially following a brook all the way to South Woodham Ferrers, with fields either side. It then skirts around the town, briefly passing through Woodham Fenn Nature Reserve and along Fenn Creek, to finally follow for an extended period along the tidal River Crouch and its mudflats and creeks, with Marsh Farm Country Park on the other side (a haven for birdwatchers).

With five shortcuts, this version of the walk can range from 20.0 km (12.4 mi) to 29.7 km (18.5 mi).

The long ending is extremely tranquil and very coastal in character. It is especially attractive at low tide.

For a timetable of the tide at the river's mouth (not too dissimilar from the tide at South Woodham Ferrers) look here, on the Crouch Harbour website: <http://crouchharbour.org.uk/tides/>.

### Lunch (last updated 28/05/20)

**Café on the Water** The Fishing Lodge, Hanningfield Reservoir, Giffords Lane, Chelmsford, Essex, CM3 8HX (01268 712 182, <https://www.watersideparksuk.com/park/hanningfield/cafes-on-the-water/>). Open daily 09.00-17.00 in summer (to 16.00 in shoulder season and to 15.00 in winter). Located 8.3km from the start of the walk, the Café on the Water serves a selection of main meals, sandwiches, salads and desserts, along with alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, and has a large decking area overlooking the reservoir.

**The Old Windmill**, South Hanningfield Road, South Hanningfield, Essex, CM3 8HT (01268 712 280, <https://www.brunningandprice.co.uk/oldwindmill/>). Open Mon-Sat 11.30-23.00, food served 12.00-22.00, Sun 12.00-22.30, with food served 12.00-21.30. Located 8.8 km from the start of the walk, The Old Windmill has been serving food and ale to locals since at least 1799, but in early 2011, when it came under the wing of Brunning and Price, it has undergone a comprehensive refurbishment, carefully returning the Old Windmill to its roots as a classic English country pub, with the bar at the heart of the building.

### Tea places in Battlesbridge (last updated 28/05/20)

**Tea Room at Frasers** 5 Maltings Lane, Battlesbridge, Wickford, SS11 7RF (07557 302 660, <https://www.battlesbridge.com/tea-room>). Open 10.00-16.00 Wed-Fri and 09.00-17.00 Sat-Sun.

**Ragmans Café** 5 Maltings Lane, Battlesbridge, Wickford, SS11 7RF (07903 087 044).

**The Barge Inn** Hawk Hill, Battlesbridge, Wickford, SS11 7RE (01268 732 622, <http://www.bargebattlesbridge.co.uk>). Open 12.00-23.30 Mon-Sat and to 22.30 Sun, food served all day.

**The Willows Tea Rooms** Old Granary, Hawk Hill, Battlesbridge, Wickford, SS11 7RE.

**Haybarn Tea Rooms** Bones Lane Antique Centre, Hawk Hill, Battlesbridge, Wickford, SS11 7RE (01268 763 500, <http://www.boneslaneantiquescentre.co.uk/tea-rooms>). Open 10.30-16.30 Tue-Sun.

**The Hawk** Hawk Hill, Battlesbridge, Wickford, SS11 7RJ (01268 767 263, <https://www.thehawkbattlesbridge.co.uk/>). Open 12.00-23.00 Mon-Sat (and to 22.30 Sun).

### Tea places in South Woodham Ferrers (last updated 31/05/20)

**Phoebe's Pantry** Marsh Farm Rd, South Woodham Ferrers, Essex, CM3 5WP (<https://phoebespantry.com/>).

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

**The Shaw Farm Inn** Old Wickford Road, South Woodham Ferrers, Chelmsford CM3 5QY (01245 320 916, <https://www.vintageinn.co.uk/restaurants/east/shawfarmchelmsford>). Open 11.30-23.00 Mon-Sat, 12.00-22.30 Sun. Food served all day. The original listed building, which is now the restaurant, used to be a farm and dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. It looks like a quaint cottage with rose gardens to the front. There is a huge back garden with a sizeable lake.

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

## Notes:

### Wickford

The town has existed since before 975. There is evidence that the area itself was inhabited in prehistoric times (probably by a tribe of Britons called Trinobantes), Roman and Saxon times. The name Wickford is of Saxon origin, Wic meaning a village, habitation, castle or dairy farm and Ford being a shallow river crossing. Wickford has been referenced by the Domesday Book. Up until the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was an agricultural village. Wickford became the birthplace of Naturism in the UK in 1922, when the English Gymnosophist ("naked philosopher", a name given by the Greeks to certain ancient Indian philosophers who pursued asceticism to the point of regarding food and clothing as detrimental to purity of thought) Society was formed and had its home in the town. In 1958 the town centre was hit by a flood, which made national news headlines. A second bad flood in 1960 meant changes to the course of the River Crouch were made. This included turning the river into a concrete channel through the centre of the town.

### St. Margaret Church, Downham

There has been a church here since the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century and it is likely that Christians have worshipped on this site for over a thousand years. The church is dedicated to St Margaret of Antioch – slayer of dragons and patron saint of child bearing. The oldest part of the present building is the redbrick tower that dates from around 1470. The main part of the church, the nave, was rebuilt in the nineteenth century using much of the material from the thirteenth century building. In March 1977 the building was gutted by fire, therefore you may be surprised to find a bright, modern interior with comfortable chairs.

The churchyard (Best Kept Churchyard in Essex 2010) is home to some remarkable trees: sizeable yew trees, a 200-year old Californian Sequoia and a pollarded Field Maple, some 5 metres in girth and the largest of its kind in the UK. The dovecote, just outside the lychgate, originally stood in the farm below the church and was moved to its current site brick by brick in 1991. The small half-timbered building next to it was built in the early 1700s as stables.

### Crowsheath Community Woodland

Crowsheath Community Woodland is a diverse mixture of meadows and young woodland. The site is popular especially with dog walkers – there is even a designated 'dog dip' area in the wildlife pond. Managed by Essex & Suffolk Water and Essex Wildlife Trust, it is home to barn owls, kestrels, dormice and water voles. Look out for dragonflies around the pond and birds of prey hunting over the long grass.

### Hanningfield Reservoir

Hanningfield Reservoir covers 40 hectares (870 acres), can hold 27 billion litres of water and is the 11<sup>th</sup> largest reservoir in England, owned by Essex and Suffolk Water. The reservoir was needed after WWII to supply the Essex New Towns, a growing Southend and new industries in the area. It was built 1950-57 and formed by flooding an area formerly known as Sandon Brook or Beck Valley between West and South Hanningfield, thereby covering the Sandon Valley of the ancient hamlet of Peasdown; although contrary to popular belief, no buildings survive under the water. The reservoir is filled by pumping water from the rivers Chelmer and Blackford through a 15 km pipeline.

It currently supplies water to around 540,000 homes in the Southend, Thurrock, Dagenham, Barking and Redbridge areas (up to 225 Million Litres a day). The reservoir has been declared a Site of Special Scientific Interest due to the important numbers of wildfowl that use the reservoir in autumn and winter, and large parts of it and the surrounding countryside have been developed as a Nature Reserve. The reservoir also is one of the premier fisheries in the UK, providing some of the best reservoir trout fishing by either bank or boat. A fishing permit needs to be bought in advance.

### Hanningfield Reservoir Nature Reserve

This 100-acre part of the estate is leased by Essex Wildlife Trust and is home to vast numbers of wildlife. There are many footpaths in the woodland around the water where wildlife can be seen and hides have been erected to afford excellent views of the visiting and resident bird population. 30 acres of the woodland are ancient in origin and spring flowers include carpets of Bluebells and Stitchwort. Open every day 09.00-17.00 (closed Christmas and Boxing Days). <https://www.essexwt.org.uk/nature-reserves/hanningfield>

### St. Peter's Church, South Hanningfield

From evidence in the north wall, the parish church of St Peter's originated in the late 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> century. The windows and glass reflect the history of the church and its time. Norman churches like St Peter's were built on hills, however small, to give a tactical advantage against attack from foreign invaders, meaning it now stands in a pleasant setting overlooking Hanningfield reservoir. The main parts of St Peter's were built as follows: nave 1180-1220, windows 1180-1220, tower ca. 1450 (restored 1888), porch ca. 1450 (restored 1905), chancel 1850.

### **Rettendon**

Rettendon is a small village about 13 km south east of Chelmsford. Situated near the River Crouch the village was once owned by the Bishop of Ely. On 6 December 1995, Rettendon was the scene of the triple murder of Patrick Tate, Tony Tucker, and Craig Rolfe, three drug dealers shot dead in a Range Rover down a small farm track. The films Essex Boys (starring Sean Bean), Rise of the Foot Soldier and Bonded by Blood are all based on the crime.

### **River Crouch**

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 (grid reference TR026963) and Foulness Point (TR048954).

### **Battlesbridge Antiques and Craft Centre/Battlesbridge**

Over 80 dealers are housed in a variety of old buildings and courtyards, creating the largest Antique Centre in the South East. Open 7 days a week. Admission is free. Battlesbridge itself is named after the Bataille family, who kept the bridge over the Crouch in repair in its early days.

### **Woodham Fenn Nature Reserve**

This 20-acre reserve (Site of Special Scientific Interest and Special Protection Area) lies between and near the tidal limits of two small creeks running south into the River Crouch. The southern part is saltmarsh and the northern rough grassland with a transitional zone between the two – of special interest because this natural transition is very unusual in Essex.

### **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.

### **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 north 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.

### **Marsh Farm Country Park**

A 350-acre site, it is surrounded by the River Crouch and its creeks on three sides. The area was attractive to Iron Age settlers and in Roman times for its fishing, and for harvesting sea salt. Trading boomed and by the 15th century a wooden bridge had been built across the Crouch, but it was destroyed in the Civil War. During the 17<sup>th</sup> century the marshes were drained and a sea wall was built by the Dutch. During autumn and winter the water level on the marshes is allowed to rise for overwintering birds. Over 150 bird species can be seen, gaining it its status as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

## WALK DIRECTIONS

Alight from the train on platform 2 and leave **Wickford** station through the ticket hall or a gap to the right. Keep to the left of a turning circle, with some bike stands in the middle and a bus stop on the left and walk along **Station Approach** past the bus stop to a T-junction with **Station Avenue**, 80m away. *Turn left* (320°) and stay on this road for 400m, ignoring all ways off. Where the road veers to the right through a new housing estate, continue in the same direction along a cul-de-sac and in 50m go through a hedge gap along an unmarked gravel footpath, first through shrubs and trees, in 20m *veering left* through the new housing development (300°), along a tarmac path. In 30m cross **Aydon Close**.

In 60m walk through a wide gap in a field boundary hedge into a large meadow, with the raised railway line about a 100m away on the left. [The route described differs from the right of way as shown on the OS map, but follows usually-mowed permissive paths.] *Veer* ever so slightly *left* towards the left-hand edge of a field boundary hedge, and in 170m *turn right* around it. In 80m at the end of the hedge, continue towards the left-hand field boundary hedge on the far side of this second field, then *veer right* along this hedge. In 160m continue along the hedge, to walk between it and a fence on the right and eventually exit the field through a wooden squeeze gate in the hedge corner into another field, to continue in the same direction with another hedge on the left. In 230m exit through a wide gap to emerge on a shingle car wide track, where you *turn left*.

[!] 15m on, by a three-way footpath/byway sign, leave the lane through a metal kissing gate, following the sign for Public Footpath 18 and head straight on into another meadow. *Veer right* (300°) with a tall hedge on your right and a **large half-timbered house** visible in the middle distance. In 150m continue in the same direction between hedges and in 75m cross a stream over a raised railed wooden plank bridge. *Turn half right* (320°) in this grassy field towards a gap in the hedge 80m away, after which you *veer left* (285°) towards the far corner of the field by a red roofed white house. In 140m exit this field through a gap in the hedge into a grassy border to cross a stream over a railed wooden plank bridge and a stile.

Keep in the same direction through this field towards a post with a footpath marker on it at the right-hand edge of a barbed wire fence running around a pond in the field (this may be difficult to spot in summer), with a **small wooden hut** visible to its side. In 120m pass the pond and hut on the right side and in 50m exit the field across a stile in its right-hand corner. Continue in a similar direction with a farmyard on the right, to cross another stile 50m ahead. Now aim for a stile, 70m ahead, but well hidden behind fence posts, on the right of the redbrick house and its shed (320°), to exit this grassy field onto a concrete driveway. *Turn left* to reach a road where you *turn right* for 15m. [Well worth a short detour is **St. Margaret's Church, Downham**, 180m ahead along the road up on the hill, providing sweeping panoramic views and an award-winning churchyard.]

*Turn left* to cross the road and walk through a gap in the hedge with a bridleway signpost along a car wide farm track between barbed wire fences (255°), later also between rows of trees. In 450m continue along a car wide gravel lane past a handful of large houses on the right. In 200m, by a house called The Laurels, ignore a footpath to the left through a field. In 100m *turn left* with the lane at **De Beauvoir House**. Ignore a footpath off to the right over a stile after 20m. [!] 80m further along, at a three-way bridleway/footpath junction, *turn right* up along a car wide track, with a barbed wire fence on the left (350°). 80m on, where the path narrows, follow it uphill.

Further uphill you have a wood on your right. *Bear right* with the path near the top of the rise to pass a **car salvage companies' grounds** on the left, complete with its

rather picturesque three-tier stacker storage system. Stay on this path, now with a large hedge on your right, to emerge through bollards onto a car wide gravel lane (**Oak Road**) with houses on the left. In 300m reach a main road by a bridleway signpost on the right. *Turn right* on the pavement and after 50m, just after passing a bus stop opposite, cross the road to follow a wooden footpath signpost on the other side up a tarmac drive (340°).

After 50m the drive turns left and you continue ahead on a narrow grassy path, ditch and hedge on the left, wooden fence on the right. After 200m enter a narrow grassy strip through a wooded area by an information board on the left, welcoming you to **Crowsheath Community Woodland**. Continue along the left-hand hedge towards a line of trees at the bottom of a dip. In 100m at a signposted T-junction of footpaths by a stream running left to right, *turn left* for 25m to then *turn right* across the stream over a two-railed wooden bridge. *Turn right* on a wide grassy path along the stream. In 300 meters walk through a wide gap and *turn left* on a car wide track (ignoring the concrete bridge over the stream on the right). In 70m **[!]** *turn right* along an easy-to-miss narrow earthen path, in 10m with a mesh wire fence on the left (20°). In 250m the path emerges into an open grassy area, with electricity cables running across.

Head down the right-hand side of this meadow towards a white house (often not initially visible in summer) and in 60m leave it by another **Crowsheath Community Woodland** information board. Cross a railed wooden plank bridge and a small grassy area beside the white house to emerge onto a tarmac track by a footpath signpost and *turn left*. After 40m *turn right* with a marker post and then up some steps and through a metal gate onto a road, with **Hanningfield Reservoir** on the other side. Cross the road and *turn right* along the pavement. On the other side of the reservoir dam continue along the grassy pavement. After 40m **Crowsheath Lane** joins from the right. In another 35m you reach a wooden gate by a sign for **Hanningfield Reservoir Nature Reserve Visitor Centre**.

[Most of the rest of the route to the lunch pub leads through this Wildlife Trust-run Nature Reserve. **It is run as a charity. No entrance fee is charged, but donations are encouraged.** If you want to avoid this, the alternative route to the lunch pub is as follows: continue along the road for 1.1 km, *turn left* into **South Hanningfield Road** and in 1.25 km get to **The Old Windmill**.]

*Turn left* through the gate, follow signs for the visitor centre, soon *veering half right* and passing a car park on the right. After 20m *turn left* onto a gravel path towards the visitor centre (refreshments, public conveniences). A box for donations can be found at the cash till, where you can also purchase a detailed and informative map for a nominal price. Exit the visitor centre at the back, following signs for **Nature Trails**. *Veer left* at a fork and after 120m stay ahead, where the left turn would get you to **Lyster Hide**, the first of four bird hides on the water's edge. In 100m you cross a ditch on a wooden plank bridge and keep ahead at a path junction. The path then turns right to emerge into an open area in 100m.

In 25m, at a T-junction with a path, *turn left*. Cross a ditch after 30m on a wooden plank bridge. In 70m the path turns right and in 20m reaches a T-junction with a path where you *turn left*, now with a hedge on the right and grazing meadows behind. After 110m stay ahead at a fork, with a path over a wooden bridge off to the right. Pass a pond to your right to reach a path junction with a sign pointing left to **Rawl Hide**. **[!]** Continue ahead towards **Oak and Point Hides** and **Fishing Lodge** and in 190m further *turn left* at a T-junction. In 55m at a three-way sign, with **Oak and Point Hides** to the left (110 and 200m away), *turn right* to follow signs for the **Fishing Lodge**, with the reservoir soon on your left.

In 210m a path joins from the right. Take any of two paths ahead. In 80m *turn left* with the path (views of the reservoir and its water treatment plant left through the trees). In 50m you *turn left* with the path, ignoring a wooden gate into a grassy field towards a wood ahead. In 190m, in the field corner, with a path joining from right, *veer left onto the left of two paths*, closer to the water's edge. In 190m a path joins from the right, you continue in the same direction (this area is full of bluebells, when in season), [!] but in 45m *turn left* where another path meets from ahead. In 30m **leave the Nature Reserve** through a metal gate.

In 90m pass a display panel for **Hanningfield Reservoir** and *bear right* towards the car park by the **Fishing Lodge** with its **Café on the Water** and wooden terrace overlooking the reservoir (hot and cold refreshments, public conveniences). Follow the path left around the Fishing Lodge, cross a tarmac lane and head through a gap in the fence [!] *to turn right immediately* along a gravel path along the fence. In 60m walk through a wooden gate and continue on the tarmac lane. In 200m *turn left* at a T-junction with **South Hanningfield Road**. In 150m, you reach the lunch/early tea option **The Old Windmill**.

After lunch *turn right* out of the pub (i.e.: continue in the previous direction past the pub), and in 125m *turn left* at a T-junction along **Middlemead's** left-hand pavement. In 150m you pass a disused car park by the reservoir on the left and continue along the road. In 200m pass the drive up to **Broadmead**, an imposing house on your right. In 160m, at another drive turning right to **South Hanningfield Hall**, [!] *turn right just before it* with a footpath signpost up a grassy incline towards a church. Stay on the left with a hedge on your left. In 150m *turn left* through the fence around the churchyard of **St. Peter's Church, South Hanningfield**, past a redundant metal kissing gate. Follow a gravel path through the churchyard but *turn left* just inside the perimeter hedge to exit over a stile in the far-left corner into a pasture. Keep to the right-hand edge of the field, with a large thatched building and a tennis court on your right (60°).

In 150m cross a stile into the next pasture and continue in the same direction, soon passing under a line of pylons. In 300m in the far-right corner, upon reaching a wood, ignore the stile ahead into the wood, but *turn left* to stay inside the field (350°). Follow yellow markers with the wood on your right to in 320m cross a stile into the next field and continue in the same direction, with the reservoir dam away on the left. In 250m leave this field in its far-right corner over a stile and *turn right*, between wire fences through a wooded area. In 60m at a T-junction with a car wide track, *turn left* to immediately pass underneath a very large electricity pylon. After 160m, at a metal field gate, *turn right* and cross a railed plank bridge over a ditch to continue in the same direction (80°) across a large arable field along a usually well-cleared path.

Head towards a white-topped pole to the right of a solitary bush at a field corner with a solitary tree behind and to the right of it. In 170m, upon reaching the opposite field corner continue ahead for 10m, but then *turn left* across a ditch on a two-railed wooden plank bridge into another large arable field. *Veer right* (20°) across it along a usually well-cleared path towards a black wooden footpath signpost at the far end of the field (this may be difficult to spot from distance), or skirt left around the field's edge, if it is overgrown. In 340m, at the opposite side of the field, follow the signpost to the left across a concreted farmyard towards a gap in the fence to the right of a rusty metal gate, and then continue in the same direction across a concrete lane and through a gap in bushes, across a ditch and up some steps to emerge on the approach road to the **reservoir water treatment works**.

Ignore the footpath opposite down some steps and into a field, but instead [!] *turn right* along the road to in 150m cross the **dual carriageway A130** on it. In another 350m at a T-junction with a busy road, cross this and *turn left* along its grassy margin, with a

field behind a hedge on the right. After 190m, when level with the corner of the field on the right behind a hedge, **[!]** *turn right* through a hedge gap and then across a railed wooden plank bridge over a ditch into a field to follow its left-hand edge. 15m before the end of the field *turn left* across a ditch on an un-railed wooden plank bridge into a narrow, wooded strip, to *turn right* and exit it 20m later across a railed wooden plank bridge. Continue in the same direction on the right-hand side of a field with a wood on the right. After 60m at the end of the wood, and with a yellow marker on a post pointing across a large field, *follow this pointer slightly uphill* along a usually well-cleared path **[if the field is too muddy or overgrown, skirt around it along the right hand side boundary]**, and head to the right of a clump of trees near the brow of the field (80°).

From the brow *continue in the same direction* towards a difficult-to-spot wooden footpath signpost on a field boundary hedge corner, about 100m to the left of a couple of redbrick houses (post and houses might initially be obscured by high growth in mid-summer). From the post, follow the hedge for another 100m to the field corner and exit by a low white-topped wooden marker post into a narrow, wooded area, soon with a large pond to the right. After 110m you reach a tarmac lane (**Old Church Road**), where you *turn right*. In 150m pass the cream-painted **East Hanningfield Hall** on the left. After passing **Barnmead** on the left, ignore a footpath from the left at a fence corner.

20m further, at a metal gate across the road, **[!]** *turn left* over a stile off the concrete lane with a wooden footpath signpost, now with a hedge and a ditch on your left and some trees initially, then a field on your right (160°). In a good 200m the path runs briefly between hawthorn bushes, then as a broader path between trees (skirt this to the right along the field boundary if overgrown). Cross a farm track to continue ahead to the right of a line of trees along a field edge (140°), up an incline towards a footpath post (or follow the farm track left and up the hill, to the left of the line of trees, if too overgrown). At the top of this little rise you get views to **Runwell** and **Wickford**.

*Turn left* across a plank bridge, and follow the field boundary. **[!]** In 90m *turn right* through a gap in the hedge at a half-hidden footpath marker post. Continue along the right-hand edge of a new vineyard, downhill with views half-left of **South Woodham Ferrers** and the **Crouch Valley**. In 100m at a footpath marker post pointing left, cross the approach track to another part of the vineyard on the right, and head further downhill. In 220m exit the field at its bottom right hand corner over a stile and follow a fenced path downhill along the flank of the valley (205°) towards the houses of **Rettondon**, where in about 600m you emerge onto a roadside pavement by a footpath signpost and with bus stops a little to the right.

Cross the road (**Old Bell Lane**) and *turn right* along the opposite pavement past a bus stop (weekday services to **Battlesbridge**) and in 10m past the bus stop *turn left* into **Salforal Close**, staying on the left-hand pavement. In 80m follow a footpath post between houses along a tarmac track into a pasture in 50m and continue in the same direction with a hedge on the right (150°). In 130m exit at the bottom right hand corner of the field to continue along a grassy track between rows of hawthorn. In 280m you emerge into a large arable field, with **Rettondon Hall** visible on a hill ahead. *Turn left* along the grassy field margin with a brook on the left. After 290m you reach a tall white-topped wooden pole, with a railed bridge visible 170m ahead.

### **Here you have a choice:**

**For the Alternative Ending in South Woodham Ferrers** head on towards the bridge (for details see the end of the main walk directions).

**For the main walk, ending in Battlesbridge**, *turn right* across the field (170°) along a usually clear path, with a farmhouse on a hill ahead. In 350m on the other side of the

field cross into the adjacent field across a ditch. *Veer half left* across this field along a usually clear path towards its far corner (130°). Cross the next arable field in broadly the same direction (but usually without a cleared path) towards an – often difficult to spot – gap in the field boundary hedge 230m away, about 10m left of the far field corner, and cross a ditch over a wooden plank bridge and a stile into the next field. *Veer right* (120°) uphill towards the corner of a hedge on the brow of the hill. In 130m at the brow (fine views back from here), ignore a wooden kissing gate ahead and **[!]** *turn right* along the grassy field margin, with the hedge now on your left, and with **Mark's Farm** (on the OS map) behind it.

In 200m in the field corner *turn right* with a fence and in 35m *turn left* across a stile into a lightly wooded area. Follow an indistinct and snaking path through the trees and bushes for 250m, *veering left* from the stile (due S), passing a derelict stile in 80m and eventually exiting the wooded area in 170m where it narrows, across a stile in a metal gate. In 20m *turn right* across a railed wooden plank bridge into a field, where you *turn left* along the grassy field boundary with a hedge on the left, slightly uphill. At the brow in 220m you get to a junction with a farm track, with views into the **Crouch Valley** ahead. Continue ahead to the left of a row of trees. In 180m exit the pasture into a wooded area and pass a white-topped pole with a **Saffron Trail** marker. Fork left immediately and follow a snaking path to the bottom of the wood in 200m.

*Turn left* at the bottom between garden fences and in 25m *turn right* with the path to exit onto a tarmac lane (**Farm Crescent**) in 50m and follow it to a main road. Cross it carefully to continue through a gap to the left of a metal field gate to continue on an initially car wide grassy path between hedges. After 450m climb over a low fence to the right of a usually locked metal field gate by the busy **A132**, which you cross very carefully to continue in the same direction, past a yellow metal gate, across a bridge over the railway line and through a metal field gate towards the bottom of the Crouch Valley. In 530m *turn right* along a grassy field margin, when the car wide gravel track turns left. In 130m reach the tidal **River Crouch**. In 260m pass a very large wooden decking extending over the river and *turn right* with the path along a stream inlet. In 120m *turn left* along a tarmac lane. In 340m a footpath joins from the right through a metal field gate. In 70m pass the entrance to **Battlesbridge Antique Centre** on the right with the **Tea Room at Frasers** nearby, before the lane turns left by **Ragmans Café** on the left. On the right are a few car park-spaces on gravel.

**Here you have a choice:**

**To get to [The Barge Inn](#) or [The Willows Tea Rooms](#)** in the Old Granary, continue ahead to the main road. *Turn left* and in 100m the Inn is on the left.

**Else *turn right*** through a small white metal gate onto a gravel path, pond on the left, house on the right. In 35m *turn left* along a gravel lane to the house on the right (or visit the **Haybarn Tea Rooms** ahead of you), in 35m *turn left* towards the main road and then through a large white metal gate, where you *turn right* along the pavement. In 230m pass the recommended tea stop, **The Hawk**, on the left and *turn right* along **Station Approach** to reach the single platform at **Battlesbridge** in another 150m.

## Alternative Ending in South Woodham Ferrers

**Length:** From 20.4 km (13.7 mi) to 30.1 km (18.7 mi), with five different shortcuts

**Toughness:** From 3 out of 10 to 6 out of 10

### WALK DIRECTIONS

Follow the brook for another 3.3 km. In more detail: after 170m *turn left* to cross the brook on a metal-railed footbridge. In 500m *turn left* with the boundary for 20m and then right to cross a farm track and - ignoring a bridge away to the right - continue in the same direction a little to the right along the next field boundary with the brook again on the right. In 85m cross a metal-railed footbridge over a ditch and in 230m *turn right* to cross the brook over a wooden footbridge and *turn left immediately* over another railed footbridge and then a stile, to continue with a barbed wire fence on the left. In 500m cross a ditch to continue along the stream, with more fields on the right. In 110m cross a farm track joining from across the stream on the left and immediately *veer right* through a fence gap into another field corner and *turn left* along its boundary. In 200m leave this field in its far-left corner over a stile and then a plank bridge. In 130m you go under a HV pylon line.

In 180m leave this last field through a hedge gap onto a road on the outskirts of **South Woodham Ferrers**. *Turn left* along the road (**Woodham Road/Wickford Road**), and in 60m cross the brook for a last time. Over the next 270m you pass some houses, a bus stop and the entrance to the (long closed) **Tropical Wings Zoo**. Stay on the pavement to the left of the road, just before it turns right towards a busy road. After 50m on a tarmac path you continue along **Wickford Road** past **Fenn House**. At the end of the cul-de-sac continue in the same direction, ignoring a bridleway turning off left. At a major roundabout, *cross carefully over to the right* this side of the roundabout.

**By a couple of signposts** (a bridleway and a footpath each) **you have a choice:**

**For Shortcut I** (straight to the train station, while also passing two recommended tea stops, *turn left* with the bridleway signpost to the right of the roundabout and pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Shortcut I**.

**To continue with the main walk**, enter **Woodham Fenn Nature Reserve** (Access Land) with the footpath signpost through a wooden kissing gate to the right of a metal field gate and continue on a wide grassy path. In 250m you reach a white-topped low wooden marker post on the left, just before the path rises to a railway crossing.

**Here you have a choice:**

**For Shortcut II** (straight to the train station, but without passing recommended tea stops), *turn left* to cross a concrete bridge over a stream and pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Shortcut II**.

**To continue with the main walk**, carefully cross the railway line and continue in the same direction. In 200m ignore a footbridge on the right and *veer right* with the path. In 150m *turn left* with the path to cross a stream (leaving Nature Reserve and Access Land) and immediately *turn right* over a sewage plant outflow. Keep the stream on your right. In 350m **Fenn Creek** joins from the right. In 300m *bear left* with the path and

away from the creek. In 70m you come out on a road and *turn right*. In 20m *turn left* (there is a scenic circular **530m detour ahead**, around a grassy promontory in a bend of Fenn Creek), with a sailing club's buildings on your right behind trees. In 120m *turn right* to get back to the water's edge and *turn left* along it. Stay on this path with Fenn Creek on your right for 1.3 km until you get to the bank of the **River Crouch**. *Turn left* along the Crouch and in 420m you get to a slipway and a ford across to **Hullbridge**, by **Phoebe's Pantry** on the left.

**Here you have a choice:**

**For Shortcut III** (straight to the train station, entirely on tarmac, cutting out 5.1 km), *turn left* along **Marsh Farm Road**.

**To continue with the main walk**, walk straight ahead and continue on the raised path along the river, soon leaving the houses of South Woodham Ferrers behind. In 1.1 km and in another 750m, left turning paths cut off some of the following loop around a promontory, which is encircled by the Crouch and by Clementsgreen Creek (see route map). In 2.4 km, after having passed **Hullbridge** and **Brandy Hole** on the other side of the river, *turn left* with the path, still with the Crouch on your right (a stretch called **Brandyhole Reach**). Follow the path around to the left up **Clementsgreen Creek**, while the Crouch flows away towards the North Sea. Then follow the path around the twists and turns of the Creek until you get closer again to the houses of South Woodham Ferrers. Keep ahead on the path in a northerly direction to the very end of the creek by a large sluice, with the buildings of **1<sup>st</sup> Woodham Ferrers Scout Group** on the left and by the sluice **[!]** continue in the same direction along a lower path where the raised path turns right towards the sluice.

In 170m *turn briefly right*, staying on the raised path, then left again to pick up your previous direction. Keep heading north, with reed-filled ponds to the right and in about 300m some sports fields to the left. In another 250m, at the end of the last pond, *veer left* down from the raised path towards a car park, and *turn left* through it (past the **South Woodham Ferrers Rugby, Sports and Social Pavilion**) to follow a concrete drive out of **Saltcoats Park** to a main road. Cross **Ferrers Road** and *turn right* along its opposite pavement. In 60m *turn left* into **Cutlers Road**. In 330m, where the road turns right, you *bear left* along a shared cycleway/footpath. At a T-junction in 30m *turn left*. In 160m **[!]** *turn right* towards a residential road and in 40m continue along it. In 100m continue along **Clements Green Lane**, where **Inchbonnie Road** joins from the left and later *turn right* along **Hullbridge Road** at a T-junction by a row of shops.

Cross the railway line and with **The Railway** just ahead, *turn left* into **South Woodham Ferrers Station** car park and onto the single platform [for other tea options though reverse-walk Shortcut I to **The Shaw Farm Inn** or **The Whalebone Inn/Scrimshaw's Restaurant** (< 10mins)].

### Shortcut I

**(direct to train station, while passing some recommended tea stops, cut afternoon route by 9.7 km)**

In 50m cross a busy road and continue ahead on a narrow tarmac path which becomes a tarmac lane. In 120m you pass a path on the left, leading in 40m to the entrance of the recommended tea stop **The Shaw Farm Inn** on the left. *Turn right* in 60m (just before another tea stop, **The Whalebone Inn/Scrimshaw's Restaurant**) along **Fennfields Road**. Ignore all ways off and in 250m continue ahead on a driveway between houses. In 35m *turn right* and in 15m left. In 25m *turn left* at a footpath signpost. In 30m continue along a car wide gravel lane (**Station Approach**). Soon after a road (**Elm Road**) joins from the left, you continue on a tarmac path with a footpath marker post until you are parallel with **Tanners Way** on the left and **South Woodham Ferrers Station** on the right. Enter the car park through the hedge at a footpath marker post and reach the single platform through a gap in the fence. **The Railway** pub is to the left at the main road.

### Shortcut II

**(direct to train station, cut afternoon route by 9.7 km)**

After 130m the grassy path veers left and through a metal kissing gate (exiting the **Nature Reserve**) and under a busy road. *Turn right*, following a footpath marker post, with a wooden fence on your left. In 40m *turn left, then right* with the tarmac path. In 25m *turn left* at a footpath signpost. In 30m continue along a car wide gravel lane (**Station Approach**). Soon after a road (**Elm Road**) joins from the left, you continue on a tarmac path with a footpath marker post until you are parallel with **Tanners Way** on the left and **South Woodham Ferrers Station** on the right. Enter the car park through the hedge at a footpath marker post and reach the single platform through a gap in the fence. **The Railway** pub is to the left at the main road.

### Shortcut III

**(direct to train station, entirely on tarmac, cut afternoon route by 4.4 km)**

In 570m at a T-junction with **Inchbonnie Road**, cross the road and *turn right*. In 30m *turn left* along a narrow footpath between houses. In 50m *turn left* on **Bulbecks Walk**. In 40m *turn right* along a path through bike barriers. In 40m keep ahead on **Hullbridge Road** and in 1.5 km cross the railway line and with the last tea stop **The Railway** just ahead, *turn left* into **South Woodham Ferrers Station** car park and onto the single platform [for other tea options reverse-walk Shortcut I to **The Shaw Farm Inn** or **The Whalebone Inn/Scrimshaw's Restaurant** (< 10mins)].