



Wivenhoe Circular walk

2 circular walks on either side of the Colne estuary. ****check ferry times in advance****

To Rowhedge by ferry across the River Colne

Length 14.8km (9.2 miles), 4 hours 15 minutes. For the whole outing, including trains, sights, meals and ferries, allow at least 9 hours 30 minutes.

Toughness 2 out of 10

OS Maps Explorer 184 or Landranger 168. Wivenhoe, map reference TM 036 217, is in **Essex**, 5km south-east of Colchester.

Features This walk is made up of two loops, one on the Wivenhoe side of the river Colne and one on the Rowhedge side. However, there is no bridge - you need to take a ferry. This means the full walk is only possible at weekends and on bank holiday Mondays between Easter and the middle of October when the ferry at Wivenhoe is working (although you might be lucky enough to thumb a lift across from a boat at other times). You also need to get there at a time to suit the tides (see the travel details below). But it is well worth making the extra effort to fit in this unusual walk. Both parts of the walk are about 7km, so allow 2 hours for each.

Wivenhoe, perhaps because of its proximity to the University of Essex, is a remarkable village bursting with community spirit, with volunteers out there constantly manning the ferry, re-roofing the boat house or washing down the slipways. There are always half a dozen dinghies being made by amateurs in the riverside's Nottage Maritime Institute. From the church and town, the morning's walk is along the mudflats of the River Colne past zones of former dereliction (now in the course of regeneration through new housing), past a £14.5 million flood surge barrier, and past sand-extraction works and lakes created in old extraction craters. Returning to Wivenhoe, catch the ferry over to the village of Rowhedge.

Rowhedge must be the only village in the UK where swans frequently block the main high street. But having circumvented this fearsome obstacle, you go via the church into a wood controlled by the Ministry of Defence and used on occasions as a firing range. The last part of the return journey is, for some, the highlight of the day: passing the lovely Norman Church of St Andrew in Fingringhoe, with its chequerboard design of banded flint, to the former Fingringhoe Mill and on along the John Brunning Walk – mudflats and saltmarshes beside Roman River and a haven for heron, redshank, lapwing, shelduck, kestrels and barn owls.

Walk Options Both in the morning and the afternoon, shorten the walk or retrace your steps as necessary to ensure that you do not miss the ferry. A short cut for the morning walk is given in the walk directions (see the asterisk **[*]** below). It is also possible to do just the first or just the second half of the walk. Buses from Head Street in Rowhedge leave for Colchester every 15 minutes or so.

History In the fifteenth century, the twelfth Earl of Oxford was **Lord of the Manor** at **Wivenhoe**. He and his comrade-in-arms Viscount Beaumont held out in the last castle to surrender to the Lancastrians. They were imprisoned for over a decade. Beaumont later went insane, was looked after by Oxford and died. Oxford then married Beaumont's young wife Elizabeth. The fine brasses to Elizabeth and Beaumont lie in the chancel of the parish church.

In the 1750s there was a **health spa** at Wivenhoe, with fashionable folk taking seawater baths at a fee of one guinea for the season.

An **earthquake** on April 22nd 1884 damaged over 200 buildings, with nearly two tons of brickwork crashing through the roof of Wivenhoe Hall.

The **Nottage Maritime Institute** (tel 01206 823 029) in Wivenhoe was founded in 1896 by Captain Charles Nottage to 'improve navigation skills'. It has information on the area's maritime heritage, and welcomes visitors from 11am to 4.30pm daily from late April until mid-September (or by arrangement at other times).

The **flood surge barrier** was completed in 1993 and is designed to resist the highest tide likely to be seen in a thousand years. Sluices ensure the tidal flow is unchanged except when the barrier is closed.

The north wall of the **Church of St Andrew** at Fingringhoe dates from 1100. The church originally belonged to a French priory in Mersey and was dedicated to their St Ouen, who was Archbishop of Rouen. St Ouen has since been corrupted to St Andrew. Items hidden within the church at the time of the Reformation have recently been uncovered, including a Trinity crucifix.

Fingringhoe Mill closed in the early 1990s. It was a tidal mill in the sixteenth century, with a wheel underneath, but was converted to steam in the 1800s.

Ferry Wivenhoe Ferry: For the current 2018 timetable refer to

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Photos Upload your photos to the [SWC Group on Flickr](#), and [videos to Youtube](#). This walk's tags are:



By Car **Start** CO7 9DJ

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Walk Directions

The [numbers] and sketch map they refer to, is only in the book.

- [1]** Coming off platform 2 at **Wivenhoe Station**, do not go over the bridge but take the tarmac path on its left-hand side, your direction 115°. In 30 metres you pass the Station pub on the other side of the railway tracks. 45 metres further on *turn left*, go up steps to an earth access road, with King Georges Field opposite. Here you *turn right*, your direction 80°, and keep ahead, ignoring ways off.
- In 70 metres the road becomes tarmac and you keep ahead, passing a car park with public WCs on your left. In 60 metres, at the High Street T-junction, with the Greyhound pub opposite, you *turn right* downhill. In 85 metres you pass on your left-hand side the entrance to **St Mary's Church**. In a further 50 metres, bend right with the main road for 10 metres, then left, to continue down to the banks of the **River Colne**.
- The Walk on the Wivenhoe side of the river**
- Turn left*, along The Quay, with the Royal British Legion hall on your left.
- In 20 metres you pass the **Nottage Maritime Institute** on your left-hand side and in a further 10 metres the **Rose & Crown** pub.
- Continue straight on, along a gravel track next to the riverbank, in 50 metres going over a concrete ramp with a wooden jetty on its right. The route ahead through the former Cook's Shipyard, for a long time diverted whilst the residential redevelopment was in progress, has now been reinstated.
- Keep ahead* on the gravel track which becomes The Folly after 30 metres. In 40 metres you enter the **Cook's Shipyard Residential Development** with its brick pavings. In 30 metres ignore a footpath post on your left, pass through bollards and keep ahead, in 25 metres coming out onto an estate road.
- Turn right* and as the road swings to the left *bear right* to the head of Pearl Walk, with a public pontoon directly ahead. *Bear left* onto an asphalted access road and in 40 metres go through bollards to keep ahead. As the access road swings left, keep ahead (slightly right) to pass the Environment Agency's **River Colne Barrier Flood Control HQ** then the barrier itself.
- Now take the pedestrian path ahead, which soon becomes a gravel path, alongside the bank of the river on your right. In 25 metres you pass the Wivenhoe Sailing Club on your left-hand side. A dismantled railway line runs parallel away on your left-hand side. You now walk on the gravel and stone surfaced sea wall path, in 50 metres going through a wooden swing gate.

10. In 85 metres ignore steps down to your left **[A]** (this is where the walk rejoins the sea wall path towards the end of the 'Wivenhoe side' leg of the walk – see below). In a further 50 metres, you pass the sand extraction workings on the other bank of the river.
11. 280 metres past these workings, you go through a wooden swing gate, some 10 metres past a wooden plank seat on your left, and continue on the sea wall path. In another 280 metres you pass a wrought iron metal bench on your left-hand side. In 270 metres, just as your path is entering trees, ignore a wooden kissing gate to the left **[2]**.
12. If you want a short cut back to town, take this path and in 400 metres you come to a lane T-junction where you go left – see the asterisk **[*]** below – rejoining the main walk.
13. But continuing with the main walk: the path bears right and you continue ahead, ignoring ways off and in 330 metres you cross a path with a footpath post on your left and continue onwards. In 140 metres *you have a choice* of either forking right on a path (between 8 inch wide lichen covered concrete gateposts), your direction 210°, back down to the riverbank, to continue for 200 metres by the riverbank before rejoining the 'upper' path, *or* just staying on the 'upper' path.
14. If you have kept on the 'upper' path, continue ahead, ignoring ways off and in 500 metres with the red-brick **Alfresford Lodge** (marked on the OS map) on your left-hand side, at 50° from you, *fork left* at a path junction through concrete posts, your direction 120°, to continue with a fence and field on your left-hand side. In 125 metres ignore a grassy way to your left. In a further 240 metres, you pass the remnants of a derelict pier on your right-hand side, with the last remnants of abandoned towers with pulleys which once carried overhead conveyors away to your left.
15. In 100 metres **[3]** *turn left* on an earth car road, your direction 50°. Go straight on, as the road surface becomes tarmac, ignoring ways off, gently uphill. In 170 metres you pass sand extraction works to your left-hand side, and then a giant sand extraction crater to your right. 250 metres further uphill, **[!]** take the signposted public bridleway *left* by a house called Broomlands, your direction 295°, initially down a private quarry access road. But in 20 metres *bear slightly left* to go through bollards onto a grassy bridleway, with a mesh fence and bushes on your left, and the quarry road running parallel to you on your right.
16. You now stay on this bridleway to the left of the quarry road until it exits onto a main road - but in more detail: in 300 metres the quarry road swings to the right and you keep ahead, in 20 metres passing an electricity pole with transformer on your left then through a propped open metal fieldgate onto a wide gravel path, your direction 300°. Keep ahead, in the same direction as a line of pylons some 30 metres over to your left in the open field, and with the quarry road still on your right.
17. In 190 metres, where your track begins to have hedges on both sides, you can if you wish fork left into the field on your left to continue along its right-hand edge in the same direction, now with hedges on your right-hand side, to rejoin the track in 150 metres, but the recommendation is you *just keep ahead* on the track. In 150 metres **[4]** where the field-edge route rejoins from the left, keep ahead, your direction 335°.
18. In 400 metres you pass to the right of a metal fieldgate, painted white, to pass a house, Alfresford Grange, on your left.
19. In 200 metres ignore a private road to the left to Marsh Farm. In a further 270 metres, the track joins the private quarry road as both come out on to a main road, which you cross then *turn left* along its grassy verge, your direction 305°.
20. The road swings to the right and after 110 metres **[5]**, with the driveway of a house called The Chase on your right, cross back over the road to *go through* a metal kissing gate, your direction 260°, on a path gently downhill through trees and bushes. In 280 metres go through another metal kissing gate and onwards. In 220 metres go up steps over the disused railway embankment, going down steps on the other side then through a metal kissing gate and onto a grassy path across a water meadow, heading back towards the riverbank.
21. In 225 metres climb up steps (**[A]**, see above) and *turn right* back along the sea wall path and you need to retrace your steps into town, to the **Rose & Crown pub** a possible lunch stop. The ferry is 25 metres beyond the pub
22. **The Walk on the Rowhedge Side of the river**
23. Take the ferry to Rowhedge. From its jetty *turn left* across a green to **The Anchor** pub, the suggested lunch place on this side of the river. **Ye Olde Albion** pub is another 100 metres further down the High Street.
24. To continue the walk: opposite the Anchor pub, *turn uphill* on Church Street. In 120 metres you *bear left* into the churchyard of the **Church of St. Lawrence**.
25. In 45 metres you pass the church on your left-hand side and in 25 metres you go on out of the church gates on the other side, to continue along Church Hill. In 50 metres, at a road crossing, with house No.17 on your left-hand side, *go left*, due south, on Taylors Road.
26. In 70 metres you come to a T-junction **[6]** where you *go right* on Parkfield Street. In 50 metres you go through a metal swing gate to the left of a pair of iron Commemorative Coronation Gates, on a signposted public footpath, *straight on*, with a sports field and a line of trees on your right (each tree a living memorial to those in the village who died in the First World War).
27. In 200 metres exit the sports ground through a metal barrier into a wood and onwards, ignoring ways off.
28. In 60 metres, having swung left with the path, ignore a path down to the left and *bear right*. In another 60 metres, at the start of a wooden fence and houses to your right-hand side, ignore the narrow path down to the left and steps down to the right. Then in 50 metres, by a footpath post, ignore a path to the right and *fork left*, your initial direction 230°.

29. In 75 metres you come to a concrete road, with a public footpath signposted right but you go *straight across*, your direction 230°. In 12 metres you pass between two concrete bollards and *bear left*.
30. In a further 65 metres by a footpath post *fork right* (where going left would lead to a burial ground in 35 metres) , your direction 260°. There is a large and rather lovely lake down off to your right-hand side.
31. In 150 metres you come to a tarmac road **[7]**, *which you cross* and then pass through a wooden kissing gate and into Ministry of Defence land. You nevertheless *continue on*, following the public footpath sign, your direction 295° initially. In 30 metres the path *bears left* and in a further 70 metres ignore a signposted fork to the right and keep on the main path, your direction 240°.
32. In 220 metres you come to a path crossing where you *go straight on* along a more minor path, marked by a (possibly overgrown) low post on the left with yellow arrow, your direction 260° initially, soon swinging left then right.
33. In 60 metres, at a clearing, you ignore the way your path seems to be going right, to carry *straight on* . In 35 metres *bear right* with your main path, your direction 325°. Keeping straight on, in 50 metres you come to a car-wide earth track and path junction where you *go left* on this track, your direction 265°.
34. In 30 metres you cross a car-wide track to continue more or less straight on (slightly to your left), your direction 230° and with a fence on your left-hand side.
35. Ignore all ways off to stay on the main way through woodland. In 100 metres ignore a stile on your left and in a further 40 metres ignore a track to the left, to keep straight on. In a further 400 metres, having ignored several ways off, ignore a grassy car-wide fork to the left to keep on your main track. In 145 metres you cross a path (by a sign warning of the Military Firing Range) to keep on the main track. In 200 metres you pass a heavy duty metal fieldgate, to go out through bollards on to a lay-by of the B1025 road **[8]**, where you *go left*, in 25 metres joining the B road. Continue ahead along the left-hand verge of the road and in 200 metres you cross over **Roman River** to go *immediately left* on Haye Lane.
36. In 400 metres, towards the top of the hill, **[9]** with Woodside Cottages on your right, *turn left* on a gravel car lane, signposted Byway, your direction 80°, in 30 metres passing the entrance to Haye Cottage on your right.
37. In 320 metres you pass **Haye Farm** on your left-hand side and in 750 metres **West House Farm** (both marked on the OS map).
38. In 80 metres at a triangular green with a large oak tree in its middle and a sign for Fingringhoe to one side, *fork left*, your direction 75°, coming to the main road **[10]** in 35 metres, where you *go left*, your direction 45°.
39. In 25 metres you pick up a path parallel to (and to the right of) the road, to continue on.
40. In 150 metres you rejoin the main road to go onwards. In 120 metres you pass the **Whalebone** pub on your left-hand side, to keep straight on to the **Church of St Andrew's, Fingringhoe**, (worth a visit).
41. In 100 metres **[!]** take the public footpath to your *left* your direction 350°, which heads down the private drive of Mill House. In 125 metres you walk down the right-hand side of **Roman River Mill**, on the tarmac road. At the end of its garden, on the right-hand side, go down steps to go downwards on to the **John Brunning Walk**, your direction 10°, on a grassy path between wire fences.
42. In 60 metres go over a wooden footbridge with two handrails, by Roman River. In 60 metres swing left with the path and in a further 50 metres, ignore the stile to the left, to *keep right* on the John Brunning Way, following its arrows and keeping beside the river.
43. Ignore ways off. In 200 metres, with a footpath post on your right, ignore the path ahead and *bear right* back down to the river, your direction 120°. In a further 200 metres go over a bridge with metal handrails. In 130 metres ignore a signposted fork to the left.
44. In 70 metres **[11]** *go up a bank* (where there used to be three steps), by a sign saying 'Danger. Proceed with Caution'. **Your onward route is now diverted** during a major housing redevelopment, on a large site previously occupied by warehouses. Instead of bearing right and heading back towards Rowhedge by the banks of the river, you now *turn left* at the top of the bank, heading inland into light woodland. At a path T-junction *turn right* and follow a path which soon comes out of woodland beside extensive building works (May 2017). Follow the diversion along the right-hand edge of the building site between protective fencing and at the end of the site you cross a new estate housing road to enter a Rowhedge residential street.
45. You soon pass Ye Olde Albion pub on your left as you make your way back to the ferry's jetty in Rowhedge. Take the ferry back to Wivenhoe
46. **From the Ferry back to the Station**
47. At the quay in Wivenhoe, if you wish to stop for tea, head for one of the recommended places, then make your way back to Wivenhoe railway station, initially reversing your outward route back to the High Street, then *turning left* on Station Road, in 225 metres, passing **The Station** pub on your left-hand side, with **Wivenhoe Station** on your right. The nearside platform is the one for trains back to London.

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