



Title: Admiral McHardy Way

Distance: about 9.5 miles

Time taken: 4 hours

Location: Little Baddow, 4 miles East of Chelmsford

Parking: Church Road, north of the bridge over the Chelmer

OS Explorer Map: 183

Grid Reference: TL762086

Transport: Bus 31A - Chelmsford

### **Walk description**

This lovely route takes you along the banks of the Chelmer before heading across farmland, along the historic Grace's walk, and through a variety of woodlands before heading back down to the river for the final walk back to the parking. This circular route is well-signposted, commemorating in 1990, 150 years of policing in Essex and although there is some road walking, there's not much and in the main the roads are just quiet lanes. Admiral McHardy Way is named after the first Chief Constable of Essex

### **Directions**

- A. From the parking,(P) take the footpath on the north end of the bridge, heading west. (2) You will be walking along the Chelmer River bank, on the northern side of the river. After about 400 yards you will come to a bridge over the river, with footpath waymarkers pointing in a bewildering variety of directions. Keep going along the northern river bank, past the lock gates. (3)
- B. The river meanders gently at this point; stay along it's northern bank as you head north west and then turn south west. At a point about 1.5 miles from the start there is a footpath junction with a large path heading straight ahead, going under the A12 towards Chelmsford. (4) Don't take this, instead turn left to stay besides the river bank as it curves around to head south.
- C. At about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile from the junction there is a green iron bridge over the river. (5) Cross the Chelmer here and follow the path eastwards across the fields. Cross the stream using the small footbridge, then continue across the next field walking just to the left of a pylon. (6) D. At the roadside, go straight across. (7) This takes you along a long, straight track, called Grace's Walk. Look out for Alice's Ghost, said to haunt the area near the bridge! (8)

E. As you walk up from the bridge, you come to Great Graces. (9) Go through the farm gate to the roadside then cross to the footpath opposite. This takes you through an orchard and then out onto a lane. (10) Turn left on the lane, heading up hill, past the gates of Riffhams, to a T-junction. Turn left going past Riffhams Lane and look for the entrance into the woods on the right side of the road, just by the 'STOP' roadsign painted on the road. (11)

F. Turn into the woods. Follow the path as it heads into the National Trust area called Lingwood Common. (12) The path snakes through the trees, going gently up hill, until you come to a bench on your left overlooking a valley to the right.(13) Turn sharp left here, behind the bench, to head northeast. The path goes alongside a fence before emerging onto the main village road 'The Ridge'. (14) Cross the road and turn left.

G. Walk along the road for about 250 yards then turn right into Fir Tree Lane leading to Darcy Rise. Continue along this lane past all the houses and into the woods. (15) You will see the Smaller Poors Piece Nature Reserve on your left, but continue straight on until you come to a large junction with a sign for the Danbury Ridge Nature Reserves. At this point turn left along a wide bridleway. (16)

H. Follow the bridleway northwards until you reach a small gravel lane. Walk along this to the end (Postman's Lane), then turn left along the tarmac Spring Elms Lane. After a few yards you will see Mill Lane on your left: opposite this, on the right, is a gravel drive to a house. (17) As you approach the front of the house you will see a path to the left, beside a wooden fence. Follow that into the woods called Heather Hills.

I. The path continues through the woods for a while then emerges onto a field edge. The field slopes gently down from here all the way to the Chelmer, giving wonderful views across the Essex countryside. There is some evidence of ancient earthworks in the woods to your left, meaning these views have probably been enjoyed for thousands of years.

J. Continue along the field edge with the woods on the left until you come to a paddock. (18) Turn right here, then left again at the hedge to go past Tofts Farm. Follow the concrete track until you come to the front entrance to Tofts. On the opposite side of the access road you will see a stile into a field; (19) climb over this and make for the south west corner of the field. Here you will find a stile taking you into some more woodlands.

K. After a few yards you emerge from the woodlands into a green lane, which takes you to a farmtrack. At this point the route ahead becomes quite overgrown, so turn right on the farmtrack (20) and then left on the road, to head back to the village.

L. Turn right in the village to head downhill. Take the second road on the left, turning into Spring Close. (21)

M. As you walk along Spring Close you will see it forms a T-junction. Straight ahead at the junction you will see a path between 2 houses(22). Follow this, heading west across a field

and into Holybred Wood. Go straight on through the woods and out the other side, heading straight across another field.

N. About ¼ mile into this field you will come across a waymarker right in the middle of the field. Although (apart from the waymarker) there are no features to guide you at this point, you can see a small distance away on your right a few trees and the remnants of a low hedge, indicating where a field boundary used to lie. Turn right towards this hedge, heading downhill.(23)

O. With the hedge on you right carry on to the end of the field and through another hedge. You now have to cross some ground which can be a bit boggy: keep going straight on as best you can until you reach the south bank of the Chelmer. (24)

P. Turn left along the Chelmer enjoying the waterfowl, then cross the roadbridge back to the parking spot.

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