



Title: Downham

Distance: about 7½ miles


Time taken: 3 hours

Location: 3 miles north of Basildon

OS Explorer Map: 175

Grid Ref.: TQ 730 953

Parking: (Limited) St Margaret's Church, Downham, CM11 1LG.

Bus:  Buses 14 & 15 from Wickford, roughly hourly, calling at Downham village, approx. ½ mile from start of walk

Train: No service

Refreshment: The Nags Head, Ramsden Heath and the Fox and Hounds, Ramsden Heath

PEAR Rating: 

Walk Description

This beautiful walk, right in the heart of Essex, is delightful. There are striking views to the south from Downham Church at the start of the walk, and from the byway above Brook Hill Farm you can see right across the valley to Runwell. Later in the walk, there are surprisingly extensive views across the countryside towards Kent. In between, you will walk along tiny almost forgotten green lanes, through flat open fields, over hilltops, through valleys and alongside the lovely Hanningfield reservoir.

Directions

A. From the small St Margaret's Church car park, Castledon Road, (P) walk south along the roadside for about 150 yards to Downham Hall Farm. Turn left into the farmyard, and look for a stile on the right (1), just past the house.

B. Keeping to the northern edge of this field, cross into the next using the stile, and keeping to the north of the pond, walk roughly east. At the facing hedge there is a stile and footbridge (2) taking you through a tiny wooded area into another field.

C. Cross this field diagonally, heading south east. Go through the field gap, and bearing slightly to the right, walk towards the hedge on the eastern side of the field so as to cut off the north eastern corner of the field. Look for a narrow grassy track heading south eastwards through a scrubby area (3), which brings you out into a small triangular field. Keeping the hedge on your left, walk south east through this field to the far corner, and follow a track out into a by-way.

D. Turn hard left on the by-way, heading uphill and north. The track goes up fairly steeply for about a quarter of a mile (4), then bears right for a few yards before turning left to continue north. The views from here are lovely (5), although it's a shame about the pylons.

E. Continue along the by-way for a further quarter of a mile until the track turns sharply left and you come to The Grange on your left and some more modest houses on the right. At the first house on the right, turn right to walk down into the valley. According to the Ordnance Survey map the footpath goes along the drive and through the garden of this first house, with a stile near the north eastern corner of the garden taking you out into the adjacent field. But when we were there, we saw a well-worn footpath on the field edge alongside the garden, and we followed that.

F. At the bottom of the valley turn right for a few yards, before crossing a footbridge on the left (6). Walk northwards uphill along an enclosed path for about 130 yards, then turn right still on the enclosed path. You will pass a five bar gate on your left (7).

G. Continue ahead for a few yards then follow the enclosed path around to the left to resume a northerly direction. You will pass a private garden on your left. As the path passes the private house it disappears and you find yourself on someone's lawn (8). This is a public right of way, although the signposting is obscured. Cross the lawn, avoiding the pond, to the Sudbury Road.

H. Turn left on the Sudbury Road. A few yards west of the driveway, you will see a stile on the opposite side of the road. Climb over this into a field and walk west alongside the hedge for about 50 yards, to the neatly trimmed hedge surrounding another private property. Turn right following the hedge line, then at the north-most corner of the hedge, bear left to go north east towards a field entrance.

I. The path across this field is not always clear. In the absence of a defined track, walk a couple of yards to the left of the line of telegraph poles (9). At the far side of the field, turn right walking roughly north for almost 250 yards, keeping the hedge on your left.

J. Turn right in front of Crowsheath Wood, then left to walk north, encircling the woods. Cross through the facing hedge, then continue north, with the hedge on your left. At the end of the field go through the next facing hedge then, still heading roughly north, walk along a footpath beside some green fencing (10). After a while the green fence stops and you are walking alongside some paddocks, complete with happy horses (photo 383 happy horses).

K. Continue out onto Hawkswood Road and turn left on the road (11), walking west, for half a mile. This road takes you past the Hanningfield Reservoir wildlife reserve, then past the reservoir itself (12). The reservoir itself is magnificent, and there is an equally lovely lake on the south side of the road, as well.

L. At the west end on the reservoir, on the south side of Hawkswood Road (opposite the reservoir access road) is a metal gate. Go through this gate, down a couple of steps, straight across a grassy area, to a small lane (13). Turn left on the lane and walk along for about 50 yards until you approach a house. There is a footpath just before the house, immediately to the right of the garage. Walk along this for about 50 yards until you come to the stile; cross the stile and you are in the Crowsheath Community Woodland.

M. Bear right to cross a small field going south west, then follow the well designated path for about two thirds of a mile (14). The path gradually swings around so that by the time you reach the end of the woodland, your heading is roughly west.

N. As you come out onto Dowsett Lane, turn right to walk north for about 150 yards. Turn left towards Willowbank. Note the neat hedge on the right, which is followed by a small raised border. Just before the border, there is a tatty line of trees on the left. The footpath goes behind these trees, beside a fence (15). If you come to a pleasant bungalow with two sheds outside the fence, you've gone too far.

O. Walk west along the footpath to a footbridge (16), then out into a field with a fence on the left. Follow the curve of the fence line, into Mill Lane (17). Turn left and walk south for about a quarter of a mile, until the lovely leafy track becomes a residential road, then carry on for a further 300 yards to Heath Road and turn right.

P. Walk west along Heath Road for about 150 yards, until you come to The Nags Head. Opposite the pub, take the footpath going south over a stile, across a field and passing to the right of a stable block (18). The path then goes through a small copse, still heading south, before emerging into a field. Keep going south through the field with the hedge on your left, then at the far end go through a gap in the hedge and cross the next field diagonally in a south easterly direction, passing to the right of a small pond (19).

Q. In the corner of the field, cross a stile and turn left, walking east with a wooden fence on your right, to Park Lane. Turn right on the road, then bear right at the junction a few yards later (20) to continue south along Park Lane.

R. After about a quarter of a mile, look for a metalled farm track leaving the lane on your left, adjacent to a white house (21). Walk up the track into the farmyard and continue straight ahead past a barn on the right and a horse walker on the left, to the facing hedge where you will find another stile a few yards to your right.

S. Go over the stile, through the hedge and turn right to walk south. After 150 yards, cross through another facing hedge, and you are met with the most unexpected, amazing view. You are at the top of Pump Hill, and can see for miles and miles, right across the fields of Essex to the east, and south, all the way to the hills of north Kent.

T. This is horsey country and the hill is divided into a series of paddocks, some temporary, some permanent. Turn left along the crest of the hill for 100 yards or so, and then navigate your way downhill via a series of kissing gates (22), heading roughly south east towards the farm buildings you will soon see nestling in the valley. When we were there last, the kissing gates were themselves protected by electric wire; this can be moved out of the way using the non-conductive handles provided.

U. At the bottom of the hill are the stables. Go through the farmyard with the stables on your left, then bear right to the access road (23) and walk east to Church Road. The Fox and Hounds is immediately to the right of this access road; or to continue the walk, turn left.

V. Walk up Church Road for about 100 yards, until you are opposite the last house on the right hand side. Walk along the track to the left of this house, leading to a 5-barred wooden gate (24), and into the field beyond. De Beauvoir Farm specialises in rare breed British White cattle which particularly docile, and if you are lucky they may be in this field with you. Cross the field diagonally, heading north east, and exiting via a stile to the left of the gates. Turn right on the lane (25) walking east towards De Beauvoir House.

W. As you pass De Beauvoir House the lane turns to the right for about 350 yards, before turning left to head east again and becoming much more unkempt (26). This is a great place for black-berrying in late summer. Continue east on this lane until you reach Castledon Road, then turn left to walk up the hill back to St Margaret's Church and the parking.

[ROUTE DIRECTIONS at www.essexwalks.com](http://www.essexwalks.com)

The ROUTE MAP and ROUTE PHOTOS **also** need to be downloaded and saved on your computer for printing.



The Route Map PDF can be downloaded from this page: [Description & Map](#)



The Route Photos PDF can be downloaded from this page: [Photos](#)

This route description is not meant to be used in isolation, it is one piece of a three part guide to the walk. The other two pieces are the route map, and the numbered photographs. The walks work best when the description, map and the photos PDF are printed off and used in conjunction with each other.

The numbers in brackets in the description refer to specific points along the route, marked with numbered symbols and these in turn are matched to illustrative photographs which show you the lie of the land.



These symbols are shown at strategic points along the route, overlaid on a 1:50K Ordnance Survey map: [Online OS Map at www.essexwalks.com](#).