



Title: Essex Way: Harwich to Wrabness

Distance: 8.0 miles

Time taken: 3 hours

Location: Harwich

OS Explorer Map: 184

Grid Ref.: TL 408 052

Transport: Train: Harwich Town Station and Wrabness Rail Station

Refreshment: The Castle, Ramsey. Open 12 – 2.30 lunchtimes and from 6 in the evenings.

Walk description

This section of the Essex Way has wonderful variety of terrain. With the North Sea on your left at the start of the route and the Stour Estuary on your right at the end, there are salt marshes, woodlands, quiet villages and open farmlands in between.

The friendly Castle pub in Ramsey, about 5 ½ miles along the route, welcomes walkers but does not welcome muddy boots! Please either leave your boots in the porch or cover them with plastic bags.

The route starts at the High Lighthouse, built in 1818, which with the Low Lighthouse 150 yards away on the beach, formed a pair of lights which would appear one above the other for ships on the correct course up the Harwich Harbour. The changing course of the shipping channel made these lighthouses redundant and were replaced in 1863 by the iron Dovercourt Lighthouses.

This leg of the Essex Way passes through Copperas Wood, a 12 hectare SSSI nature reserve that has been traditionally used for Sweet Chestnut and Hornbeam coppicing.

Directions

A. From Harwich Town train station (and bus station), walk to the end of Station road and you will see in front of you the High Lighthouse (1). Cross Main Road to reach this point: there is a plaque on the wall of the Lighthouse indicating this is, officially, the end of the Essex Way – but of course, for us it is the beginning of the journey.

B. As you read the plaque, immediately behind you there is a signpost. Walk in the direction of the Treadwheel Crane; as you go down the passage you will see the first of the Essex Way direction indicators (2). These are placed along the route to guide walkers.

C. Walk past the Treadmill Crane to the coastal path and turn right, walking south with the North Sea on your left. You will go past the Low Lighthouse (now a maritime museum) and past a row of beach huts. Continue south until you reach the breakwater, then follow the coastal path as it turns to the right then curves back to head south west. Keep going past the Dovercourt Lighthouses (3), and past another collection of beach huts.

D. At about ½ mile past the Dovercourt Lighthouses the coastal path turn to the right, and shortly after, stops by a small car park. There are public toilets here. In the far left corner of the car park is a gate with a sign on saying 'No Unauthorised Access'. Go around this gate and follow the rough track to the left of a pond (4). This path runs along the top of the sea wall.

E. After a few yards the sea wall turns right and then left. Stay on the sea wall with the salt marshes on your left, as the sea wall turns to the left. As it turns left for the second time you will see the strip of water on your left become a distinctively meandering shape (5): at that point there is a waymarker indicating that the Essex Way doglegs away from the sea wall and heads north west, across the fields.

F. Walk along the field edge path for about three-quarters of a mile to some steps (6) which lead you up onto a farm track; turn left along this for about 100 yards then turn right past some trees, heading towards a derelict farmhouse, called Burnthouse Farm. You will see a row of houses across the field to your left. As you get near to the farmhouse, the path turns left to cross behind it to the B1414, the Harwich Road. You are now in Little Oakley.

G. Virtually opposite you across the road you will see the road to Little Oakley village hall, past the recycling bins (7). Walk south west along this road – but look to your right to see the garden figures!

H. Take the footpath at the western end of the village hall car park, initially walking to the right of a hedge, heading south west. The hedge stops, and 100 yards or so later, the Essex Way takes a 90 degree turn to the right, heading north west along a strip of rough grass between two fields. After a short while you will come to the corner of a hedge, cross through this on the wide track and continue north west, but now with a hedge to your left. You will see Ramsey Windmill in the distance ahead of you (8).

I As you approach the end of the field you will see a small copse ahead of you. Walk with the woods on your right, still heading north west, to the end of the copse then turn right to skirt behind a building, bringing you out onto Church Hill. Cross over this road and turn left to the roundabout, then cross over the main A120, turn left to Main Road, and turn right along Main

Road, over the road bridge into Ramsey village (9). The 103 bus to Harwich and Colchester goes from here. Turn left at the T-junction in front of the large double fronted house. The Castle pub is in front of you.

J. Continue past the pub, for about 180 yards. Look for a small footpath off to the right, which goes past the Wesleyan Chapel (10). This path takes you up a steep hill, with a hedge on your left. As the hill starts to flatten out, turn left following the hedge line and you will come to the windmill. Just as you pass the windmill the path veers right to cut off the SW corner of the field, heading north west. Keep walking north west and after 50 yards you will come to a stile into a paddock, then 50 yards later a stile out of the paddock (11), then heading now slightly more to the west, continue walking for another 100 yards to the hedge corner you can see ahead.

K. At this hedge corner there is a stile taking you through the hedge. Cross over this and follow the field edge with the hedge on your right until after about 150 yards you come to another stile on the right. Cross this. You are now facing roughly north.

L. Look at the field edge on the opposite side of the field, ahead and slightly to your left. You will see (from the right) a communications tower, a building, a gap and then a hedge. Cross the field towards the right end of this hedge (12), heading slightly west of north. Once past the end of the hedge, continue along the field edge heading north and then along a farm track to the B1532, the Wrabness Road.

M. Turn left on the road and walk about 400 yards. As the road curves to the left you will see a metal gate on the right leading to the Copperas Wood Nature Reserve. Turn right into this. Follow the path downhill through the trees, as it curves slightly to the left. Cross over a railway bridge and continue along the path. After a while you will come to the riverside overlooking Copperas Bay, with terrific views across to the Suffolk coast opposite (13). Turn left to walk along the river bank.

N. When the woods end, carry on straight ahead alongside the river through a long field (14), passing 'Strandlands' on your left, then continue along the river's edge to a small woodland. As you emerge from the woodland the Essex Way continues ahead: turn left here (15) to walk inland up the field edge then up a track, over the railway, along Black Boy Lane, and turn right at Station Road for Wrabness Station.

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