



Title: Saffron Trail: Battlesbridge to Chelmsford

Distance: 14¾ miles

Time taken: 6 hours

Start Point: Outside the Barge Inn, Battlesbridge

OS Explorer Map: 175 & 183

Grid Ref.: TQ 780 947

Transport:

Rail:- Battlesbridge Station (Shenfield - Southminster)

or Bus:- Regal No 1/1A (hourly) from Chelmsford

Refreshment:

The Windmill Tavern, East Hanningfield

The Cricketers Arms, Danbury;

The Griffin, Danbury Mount

Several pubs and restaurants in Chelmsford

## Walk Description

This is a lovely section of the Saffron Trail. From Battlesbridge the walk takes you northwards across gently undulating countryside to the village of East Hanningfield, then onwards to Danbury. From here the route turns to the west to go via some delightful woods to a stunning meadow near Riffhams. Then it's straightforward: head west along the historic Grace's walk (look out for Alice's ghost near the stream) and across to the Chelmer, and follow the banks of this river all the way into Chelmsford.

To break this walk into shorter chunks, you can stop at Danbury (9 miles from the start) from where there is a regular bus service running along the A414 into Chelmsford.

## Directions

### Battlesbridge to Danbury

**A.** This section of the Saffron Trail starts in Maltings Road, Battlesbridge. To get there from Battlesbridge Station, follow the access road to Hawk Hill and turn left. Just past the village pond turn left into Maltings Road, 70 yards west of the Barge Inn.

**B.** Walk north up Maltings Road for a few yards and find the footpath leading north opposite the antiques shop, to the right of a white gate (1). Continue along this path, with a fence on your left and then a garden centre, to the facing hedge. Turn right into the recreation grounds.

**C.** Walk north east alongside the hedge for 150 yards, until you come to a footpath through the hedge heading across the railway line (2). At the far side go down the steps and over a stile into a field. Bear right to cross the field to the left of the pylon and continue to the A132.

**D.** Cross a stile to the roadside. A few yards to the right of this stile, on the opposite side of the road, is another stile concealed in the hedgerow (3). Cross this and walk north towards the corner of the field and over another stile, then bear right to walk north east to Woodham Road opposite a car wash.

**E.** Turn right along the road for about 170 yards then left into Farm Crescent (4). Continue straight ahead along an enclosed footpath, leading northwards into some woodland. As you leave the woods, walk through a field with a hedge on your left, to the top of the hill where the footpaths cross. The FP ahead to Marks Farm looks over the open vistas of the countryside below and to the East, but unfortunately the Saffron Trail turns right here at the hedge line, to walk east along an enclosed green lane(5).

**F.** After about 350 yards you will emerge onto a metalled lane. Ignore the brick driveway on the left and carry straight on to join the lane by a wholesale nursery, then turn left to walk uphill, heading north on Rectory Lane (6).

**G.** Continue north along the lane as it goes over the hill, down past Frelins Farm, and up the other side of the valley past Marks Farm (7). From here the lane becomes a bridleway. Keep going over the crest of the hill, heading north for a further third of a mile then follow the track round to the left before turning right again to continue north down the hill into a wide valley.

**H.** Cross the stream using the farm bridge to your right (8) then continue north up the other side of the valley, past Potters Farm, and then over the hill to the Potters Lane / Buckhatch Lane T-junction beside a house called 'Casita'. Turn right and walk north east along the roadside. Turn left along a bridleway just before Buckhatch Farm (9).

**I.** Walk along this wide track to East Hanningfield Road then take the footpath opposite and just to your right, beside a red brick house called 'Hillview'. Just before you come to a black shed, cross the stile in the hedge to your right (10). Walk along the field edge, now with a hedge on your left.

**J.** Continue south west for a third of a mile. Cross a wooden bridge over a small stream, then turn right (northwards) with the hedge on your right. Carry on along an old green lane with oaks on either side and continue to the access road for a farm. Turn right along the lane past Lodge Farm Cottages, north towards East Hanningfield Hall.(11).

**K.** About 80 yards past the entrance to East Hanningfield Hall, the lane curves to the left and the fence on the right turns sharp right to enclose the Hall gardens. Take the footpath on the right, following the fence line as it turns towards some woods (12).

**L.** Walk into the woods along an unkempt path, and into a neglected and overgrown graveyard. The 7th century Saxon church that used to be here was

burnt down in a fire in 1883, and a new church built in the village. Bear left towards a headstone in the shape of a cross, and then exit the woods beside a stile (13).

**M.** Once out of the woods bear left (north east), cutting diagonally across a field towards a white topped waymarker (14). Cross through the gap and walk round the field with the hedge on your right. Go past the new footbridge, all the way to the north east corner of the field and cross the small plank bridge into the next field (15).

**N.** Continue northwards along another field edge, to a bridge and stile leading into a series of paddocks. Navigate through the paddocks over a couple more stiles, to the roadside. Turn left and walk along the roadside towards East Hanningfield (16).

**O.** Walk northwards along the greensward, past the Windmill Tavern on the left and the new All Saints' Church on the right. Just after the Three Horseshoes (sadly no longer a pub), turn right at the Y-junction to go along Bicknacre Road.

### **East Hanningfield to Danbury**

**P.** Turn left along Highfields Mead. Bear right along this road then take The Chase into Highfields Farm (17). Go straight through the farmyard, to the left of the farm buildings, exiting northwards via a track.

**Q.** Turn left along an avenue of poplars then right in front of a farm gate, to the facing hedge. Turn right again and walk east for 50 yards to a gap in the hedge leading into a wide open field. Head straight across this field going north (18).

**R.** Carry straight on as the footpath connects with the inset corner of the field, so the remaining 100 yards will have a south-north section of hedge on your left until you exit the field into an enclosed path, still going north. Bear right through some trees to pass a beautiful pond at Great Gibcracks. At the concrete track turn left for 40 yards, then right by a barn to go north along a field edge path (19).

**S.** With the hedge on your right, walk through 2 fields. In the third field the official footpath goes diagonally across, towards a stile 20 yards to the right of some woods. If this cross field route has not been kept clear, use the field edge instead.

**T.** Cross over the stile and turn left along the field edge and follow it round to the right and down towards the road (20). Walk through a gap to Sporehams Lane, passing to the left of a laurel hedge. Turn right on the lane, and walk past the ford (21) then up the hill.

**U.** About half a mile after the ford the lane turns sharp right with a side road (Fitzwalter Lane) joining from the left. The Saffron Trail stays on the road, going round to the right, then left up to the crossroads at Bicknacre Road. It would be much more pleasant to take the footpath heading north east from Fitzwalter Lane, across open access land to the same crossroads.

**V.** At the crossroads go straight ahead along Penny Royal Road, past The

Cricketers Arms. 50 yards later turn left along to a footpath next to a metal gate, heading up the hill towards St John the Baptist's Church, Danbury (22).

**W.** Just past the water tower take the path on the left through a graveyard, to the left of a hedge (23). Go straight on through the allotments and into some trees, with a fence on your left. Turn right at the Y junction (24) and follow this path to the road.

If you wish to stop at this point, No 31 & 36 buses to Chelmsford run from outside the re-opened Griffin pub about 200 yards down the road (right/east). Otherwise it is only another 5½ miles to the centre of Chelmsford.

## **Danbury to Chelmsford**

**X.** Cross the A414 and turn left for 100 yards, then right into Colemans Lane. Walk downhill past the houses. Just past the lowest point, turn left by the waymarker (25) and walk northwest along the valley for about a third of a mile, Turn left on Riffhams Lane.

**Y.** Near the crest of the hill, opposite the junction with Elm Green Lane, turn right into a beautiful meadow (26) and approach the north west corner of the field. Enter the woods by some wooden stocks and follow the path northwards.

**Z.** Leaving the woods continue north beside a fence then turn left in front of the hedge. At the north western corner of the field, exit over a stile into Grace's Lane. Turn left for a few yards then take the footpath on the right, through a wooden gate.

**AA.** Bear left along a narrow path between fences through an orchard, along the Admiral McHardy Way (27). At the far end, cross two stiles to the lane and go straight across to Grace's Walk, heading roughly west (28). Continue for about a mile.

**AB.** Go straight over Hammonds Road and across a field, passing just to the right of the pylon (29). Continue ahead over a footbridge and across the next field still heading west, to the River Chelmer.

**AC.** Cross over the green footbridge (30) and turn left to follow the riverside path. This takes you under the A12.

**AD.** Carry on along the river bank as it meanders west towards Chelmsford for two miles, initially along an old tow path and later, through the water meadows. Keep close to the river until you come to the A138 Chelmer Road underpass.

**AE.** Go through the underpass (31) and continue along the river bank until you come to a steep red brick bridge (32). Turn left over this, and carry on along the cycle path, still on the northerly bank of the river. Keep going past the Essex Records Office (33) to an access road.

**AF.** From this access road you can see the confluence of the rivers Chelmer and Can, and a peninsula in between them (34). This is where you want to get to. Continue along the river bank to a T-junction then turn left over a bridge onto this spit of land, then continue ahead until you see the River Can on your left.

**AG.** Keeping the river to your left, follow the river bank past a car park, under another underpass, and in front of the shops, pubs and restaurants in the heart of Chelmsford (35).

**AH.** Continue along this bank heading roughly northwest until you come to Bell Meadow, (36) where this section of the Saffron Trail ends. To get to Chelmsford rail and bus stations (a third of a mile away), turn right along New London Road to Tindal Square (a major road junction) then follow the road signs to the train station; the bus station is a few yards further on, past the railway bridge.

### [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](#).