



## Essex Extras: Paglesham

**Start and finish:** Paglesham Churchend (TQ 925 930)

**Distance:** 8½ miles (13km)

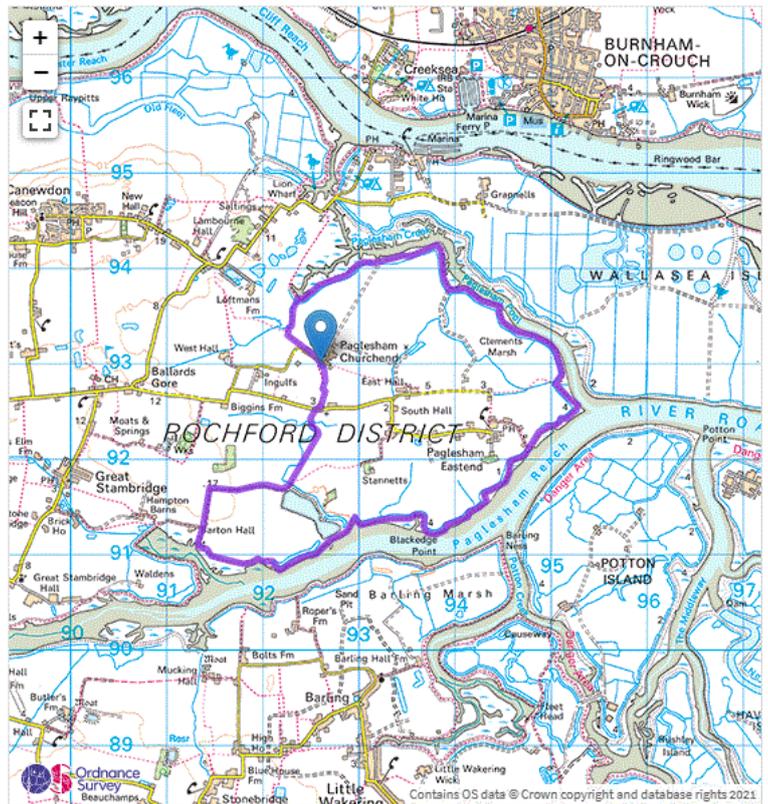
**Walking time:** 3½ hours

**Maps:** OS Explorer 183/184, Landranger 168

**Transport:** Southend and Rochford to Canewdon bus at Loftman's Corner (TQ 913 940), just under a mile from route; or (Easter to end September) Wallasea ferry (TQ 935 952) from Burnham-on-Crouch, 1½ miles from route

**Refreshments:** [Plough & Sail pub](#) near the quay

I probably should have put a seventh coastal walk in *Walking in Essex*, and this would have been it. And it's by no means the seventh-best either. With a wonderful parade of weatherboarded houses at the start and close encounters with two Essex islands, it's a joy even if there were not a fascinating bit of naval history en route.



From the church, take the path heading south at wooden sign, skirting the duckpond and then keeping a ditch on your left, switching to the right half-way to houses. At a road turn right, then soon left at concrete sign. Cross the field to a footbridge, following the path which curves left then right, and cross field towards leftmost of Southend's tower blocks.

Go up the bank to top of the fleet (a landlocked inlet), and turn right at wooden marker, following **Roach Valley Way** waymarks along the left edge of a field and through a green lane, eventually joining a farm track. Just before **Barton Hall** turn left on another farm track. Where it turns right continue ahead for a short way through marshy ground, then left (do not continue to the creek edge) to pick up the (here, very low) sea wall.

Continue on the sea wall all the way to **Paglesham quay**. For the Plough & Sail pub, turn left on footpath 10 through the boat yard and continue on the lane. Over the River Roach is one of the Essex islands, **Potton island**, but this is no offshore retreat (like Osea) or gastronomic paradise (like Mersea); it is part of the Foulness weapon testing range, from where bangs and flashes might arise at any time, and quite out-of-bounds to walkers.

Otherwise (or returning), keep on the sea wall, passing former oyster beds. A little inlet amongst them (probably around TQ 951 924), was the last resting place of **HMS Beagle**, on which Charles Darwin had done so much to lay to rest the biblical account of evolution. Its last days here, as the humble Watch Vessel no. 7, came to an inglorious end as it was broken up around 1870. The [Rochford District Community Archive](#) has more on this sad tale.

At a pillbox, as you turn from the River Roach to Paglesham Creek, a different island lies over the water. This is **Wallasea island**, and a complex place it is too. There's a small working harbour, a campsite, farm and seasonal ferry over to Burnham, all crammed into top north-western corner; the rest has seen the [largest wetlands project in Europe](#), under the aegis of the RSPB, with a network of nature-rich trails to explore.

Beyond Wallasea, the sea-wall gives good views of Burnham-on-Crouch. Eventually though, turn left at **Loftman's sluice** (TQ 924 938) to follow the Roach Valley Way beside a pretty inlet back to the start.