

1. The 'Old City' Walk (green) 1.5 miles

Starting from the waterfront car parks, the Victory or the Coast Inn, walk past the Yacht Club, floating causeway, and boatyards, to the Dabchicks Sailing Club and turn right into The Lane. The old 'Victory' pub is on the corner. Here the old fisherman's cottages wonderfully known as the 'old city' nestle as they have for centuries. The residents were known as 'Lanies' and were a quite separate community from the 'Townies' up by the Parish Church.



A stream, 'the Bumby' used to pass down the middle of the road, reaching the sea by the Dabchicks Sailing Club.

Also notice on the right, by City Road, 'The Nutshell', probably the smallest cottage in Essex. Opposite on the wall a mark can be seen showing the height the water reached in the famous 1953 floods.

Walk on up the hill, passing 'Gossip Cottage' on your left, to 'Spite' Corner. There pick up the path just to the right of the Caravan Park entrance. This finally opens out to beautiful views by the Council's cemeteries.

Turn left and follow the path down to the sea wall. Turn left again and walk back to the cottages, car parks, pubs, cafes, and restaurants.



5. The Esplanade Beach Walk (orange) 2.3 miles

From the Victoria Esplanade car parks walk west along the beach (i.e., to the right as you look at the water). The 'greensward' was not always neat and mown. Until WWII it was usually full of grassy weeds and bedstraw, lined with brambles, and cows from the local farms would be led down here to graze. Willoughby Bean, a land developer and local councillor in the late 1800's, envisaged a mini Brighton on this frontage with a light railway from Colchester, and a Pier with a service to Bradwell where a further rail link returned to London. A statue of the then Queen was also planned for Victoria Esplanade, and the parallel avenues (not made up until well after WWII) bear witness to the start of this great vision which died with the 1920's depression. The seaside resort had yet to be invented and the 'Esplanade' road was little more than a stony track above the beach, until 1939, when it was made up on the orders of the Ministry of Defence.

During WWII the beach was festooned with barbed wire, and all beach huts removed; most were stored in back gardens and put back again after the war. The Two Sugars Cafe was once a WWII gun emplacement. The building lower down on the beach to the left was the Searchlight. If you sit on the seats to the right of the Cafe you are sitting above a WWII Ammunition Store. It is now sealed but stretches under the road.

The last section of the Esplanade ends in a grassy path in front of three bungalows, a route to what was once Mersea's Boating Lake. The lake, the lowest point along the shoreline, was originally a creek, surrounded by typical 1930's seaside world of wood and asbestos holiday bungalows, paths and gardens. This popular area in its heyday is now completely redeveloped. Further west along the beach you will pass some of the most expensive houses on the island, and at the end of the wall turn right up to the 'Monkey Steps' and see the information board about the area. Proceed along the lower path parallel with Coast Road past St Peter's Well, (more information about this walk can be seen under Walk 4). Rejoin Coast Road and continue to The Victory and all the restaurants to savour the local hospitality. Return up Coast Road and at the end of the houseboats turn right on to the Boardwalk, left on to the beach and back to Victoria Esplanade.



2. The Strood Channel Walk (blue) 3.5 miles

Starting from the waterfront car parks, the 'Victory' or 'Coast Inn', walk along past the Yacht Club, floating causeway and boatyards, to the site of the Old 'Victory', (closed in 1905), opposite the Dabchicks Sailing Club, and around past the Dabchicks to the sea wall and the old 'Nothe' cottages. Carry on along the sea wall and on the way, to your left you will see Ray Island, owned by the National Trust. It is managed by Essex Wildlife Trust and famously written about by the remarkable local vicar Rev. Sabine Baring Gould in his book 'Mehalah'. (He also penned 'Onward, Christian Soldiers').



You will come out at the bottom of the hill in Colchester Road. Cross the road and walk up the hill on the verge around the double bend and then re-cross to join the footpath at Paeony Chase.

Follow this until you rejoin the Colchester Road and turn right to rejoin the footpath between Brickhouse and the Bowls Club. Carry on through past the cemeteries to the top of The Lane and down the hill through to the 'Old City' to the waterfront where refreshments abound.

6. East Road to Waldegraves Walk (red) 2.75 miles

Starting either from 'The Fox', or 'The Wheatsheaf' at Waldegraves, walk in an anti-clockwise direction. If starting from 'The Fox', go left on East Road to Cross Lane on your left. Follow this road all the way down until it becomes a track leading to the Beach beside Seaview Holiday Park. This old established caravan site with both static and touring caravans includes a clubhouse known as 'The Two Tides'. There used to be a popular hostelry by the name of the 'The Two Tides' at the bottom of Seaview Avenue run by a Londoner known as Charlie Brown, but eventually he decamped to open a bar in Spain and the pub and land was redeveloped as 'Charleston Court' flats, in his memory. However, you turn left at the beach and continue to a fork in the path going left in to the trees and on to a greensward; at the end rejoin the seawall at Decoy Point. Continue past Waldegraves Holiday Park until a public entrance is reached and turn left in to the complex. Here you will find various amenities including the pub, a restaurant, driving range, pitch and putt and crazy golf. From here follow the road north away from the park back to East Road. Turn left and cross the road being careful of traffic in this narrow section of road. You will pass Mersea's Allotments which has over 80 plots and a waiting list for aspiring market gardeners. It is then a few hundred yards to 'The Fox' and a welcome pint.



3. 'Follies' Walk (pink) 2.5 miles

A Folly is a local term for an alley-way.

This walk includes parts of the ancient path connecting the 'Old City' with the Parish Church and Town. Starting from the waterfront car parks, proceed north past the Yacht Club and boatyards to the Dabchicks Sailing Club and turn right into 'The Lane'. A short way past 'City Road' the Folly starts on your right, follow it to an abrupt end at Firs Chase, cross the road going left up the hill to the junction and take Rosebank Road on your right. At the other end cross Victory Road and continue down the folly past Triangle Wood, curving up left, crossing St Peters Road and continue through the folly to Church Road and on to the White Hart, our oldest pub and the medieval St Peter & St Paul's Church. The 11th Century Church tower has bricks on the corners taken from a Roman Villa which was on the site. Turn left, towards the Post Office into the folly up past the Mersea Centre, cross Melrose Road and on to Barfield Road.



Turn right, and a short way across the road you will find West Mersea Park for a further stroll. Afterwards, cross back to Melrose Road passing the Sensory Garden on your right and fork left down to Yorick Road and turn right. A short way along turn left onto Beach Road and walk on right down to the beach, (or alternatively shorten by continuing up Yorick Road and left onto Coast Road). Down on the beach turn right and follow the beach back to the 'Monkey Steps' around the end of the wall, up on to Coast Road and back down to the waterfront.



7. The Fox & The Vineyard Walk (purple) 3 miles (over the border into East Mersea with an awkward ascent to seawall).

From 'The Fox' go east, to the right, along East Road and turn right into Waldegraves Lane. As the road bends away to the right take the track that carries on and continue along this path to Rewalls Farm*. Turn right on the road passing farm buildings and continue down the hill passing Mersea Island Vineyard on your right. A call in here will be very welcome for their range of English Wines and excellent beers. Their cafe serves tasty lunches and teas. Carry on down the hill toward the Essex County Council's Essex Outdoors complex, by the sea, a very successful international youth resort. Turn right on to the footpath around the complex and follow down to the seawall. Unfortunately the steps keep eroding and climbing can be difficult but once scaled turn right along the seawall and proceed to the seaward entrance to Waldegraves. From here you have the choices of Walk 6 to complete your journey back to 'The Fox'



* This path also continues on straight to East Mersea Church.



4. The White Hart, St Peter's Meadow, & The Boardwalk Walk (brown) 1.5 miles

From the White Hart walk along Coast Road towards the sea, passing Yew Tree House (1728) on the right, the site of a Roman dwelling and later a Saxon Benedictine Priory. At the Heritage information board walk down the 'Monkey Steps' (some say they are named after a disparaging local term for the Customs Officers who's lookout post was a timber cottage nearby, other because of a local monkey puzzle tree). Take the boardwalk to St Peter's Well, the ancient spring used for hundreds of years, for fresh water, and continue along beside St Peter's Well Meadow. This common land was once known as the 'cricket ground' and used for impromptu matches until the foreshore eel grass disappeared and the sea broke through to form the salt marsh. Today it is a SSSI and conservation area.

Continue to the boardwalk and cross to the beach and where houseboats have been berthed for over 100 years. Back along the beach passing the remains of WWII concrete sea defences and 'Kings Hard', an old landing jetty. Keep on the beach passing the 'Monkey Steps' and follow the wall along the beach to the next gap beside a house almost at beach level. Turn left up the diagonal path to Beach Road; and left again at the T-junction of Yorick Road and return to the pub.



WEST MERSEA WALKS

Produced by West Mersea Town Council and sponsored by the towns inns, restaurants and cafes. (Photographs by Peter Clements MBE)



These walks are intended to give visitors to our lovely island an insight into the town, coast and waterfront in a way that we hope will be both enjoyable and healthy and perhaps persuade you to call in for a well earned drink and maybe a bite to eat.

Many of the walks are short and connected so that you may join some together and expand your exploration.

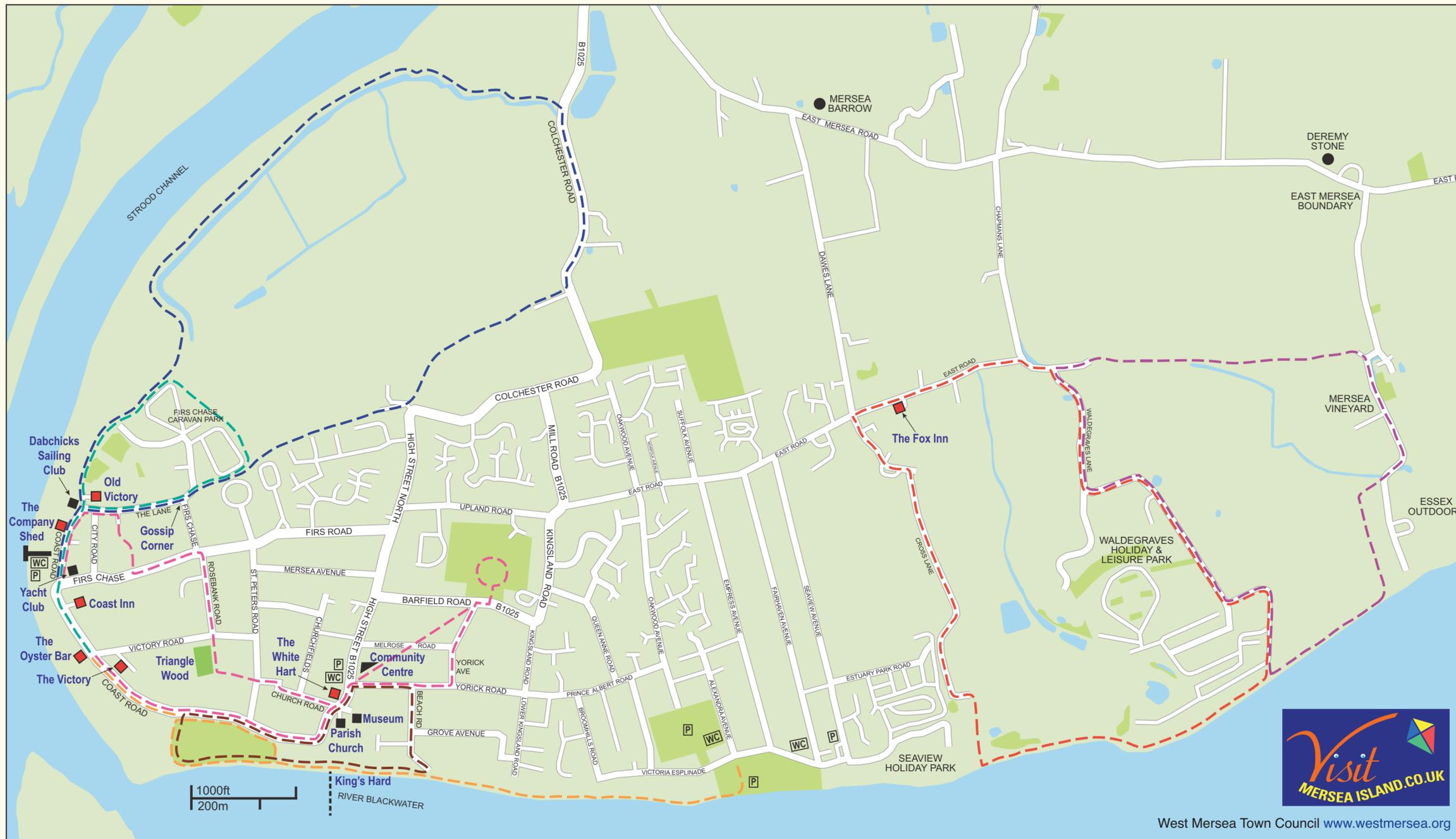
If you take a dog, please keep it on a lead and place 'poo bags' in the many bins provided.

Some walks use roads without pavements, so please use the grass verges where possible, and where there are none please walk on the side that faces the on-coming traffic.

Each walk is colour-marked on the map. The walks start from public car parks or those connected to the inns, and if you use the latter, please patronise the inn concerned.

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West Mersea Town Council www.westmersea.org

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- 3. The 'Follies' Walk (pink), 2.5 miles
- 4. The White Hart, St Peter's Meadow, & The Boardwalk Walk (brown), 1.5 miles
- 5. The Esplanade Beach Walk (orange), 2.3 miles
- 6. East Road to Waldegraves Walk (red), 2.75 miles
- 7. The Fox & The Vineyard Walk (purple), 3 miles

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