1. The walk starts from St Peter’s churchyard. Take the footpath which passes the main entrance of the church, going through the gap in the stone wall on the eastern edge of the churchyard. Go straight ahead on the path, which has a hedge to the left.

2. Keep going in the same direction, crossing the farm track, onto a grassy field path. At the end of the field, cross the footbridge in the gap in the hedge, continuing in an easterly direction.

3. Cross the smaller field, and then turn right at the field edge in the direction of the river (south). At the end of the field, with the small pond to your right, turn left onto a grassy path, with a large field to your right. Head towards Joyce’s Farm, passing in front of the Georgian farmhouse.

4. At the top of a small rise (just past the farmhouses), follow the footpath sign to the left towards some old farm outbuildings. Skirt around these buildings (turning right, then left around the edge of the field). On reaching the footpath sign pointing across the centre of a field, walk across this field to the point where the overhead power-line meets the trees bordering Lauriston Farm. 10 yards to the left of this point, there is a footbridge. Cross this bridge, passing through the gate on the other side. Follow the footpath signposted as a footpath. The path soon bends right, then left. After nearly 400 yards, cross over a farm ditch. Turn immediately left onto the grassy track which soon curves right, with a ditch and high hedge to your left. After nearly 400 yards, cross over a farm track, keeping to the grassy path with the ditch and hedge to your left.

5. Go through the gate at the eastern end of the field. Turn right after 20 yards, after skirting around a pond, by using a grassy ‘bridge’ which crosses a ditch. Turn immediately left onto the grassy track which soon curves right, with a ditch and high hedge to your left. After nearly 400 yards, cross over a farm track, keeping to the grassy path with the ditch and hedge to your left.

6. 40 yards after the field edge path takes a right turn to follow the field perimeter, cross the footbridge (in the gap in the hedge) to your left. Then turn left for 40 yards, and turn right at a footpath sign and take the grassy track across the middle of a large field. On reaching the far side of the field at the T-junction, take a left turn onto the track signposted as a footpath. The path soon bends right, then left and goes past the imposing house at Wycke Farm.

7. ¼ mile after passing the entrance to the farmhouse (just before a copse on the right), turn right to take the signed footpath, which runs along the left-hand edge of a large field. After ½ mile, cross the footbridge in the far right hand corner of the field, following the path as it bends right, then left. After 125 yards, cross another footbridge and enter another large field, keeping to path on left hand edge. Go over a crossing track, eventually reaching a lane.

8. Turn left onto the lane, which soon zigzags right and then left, passing a 15 mph speed limit restricted access sign, follow the track, designated public bridleway. Eventually, you will reach Rolls Farm; continue past the farmhouse. The path bends right towards the sea wall, ascend the slope ahead of you and turn right to follow the path along the top of the sea wall.

9. This is a perfect spot to admire the Blackwater Estuary, with the Dengie Peninsula on the opposite bank, and Osea Island in the middle distance. Continue on the sea wall for the next 3½ miles. On the way, you will pass Joyce’s Marsh, which is being restored to wet grazing for birds by the Blackwater Wildfowlers’ Association.

10. On reaching the head of Goldhanger Creek (with the village and church close by), descend the steps away from the sea wall, taking the second path left, which is laid with gravel and runs between high hedges. Pass the football pitch and children’s playground on the left, arriving at Fish Street. Turn right to pass some historic properties, and then go past the Chequers pub on your right; look out for the early 20th century water pump in the village square, recently restored to full working order to commemorate the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee. In a few yards you will reach the starting point of the walk.
This lovely walk combines a good stretch of walking in Essex farmland with a decent hike on the sea wall alongside the estuary of the River Blackwater. The walk starts and finishes in the charming and historic village of Goldhanger, with its old cottages, two pubs and 11th century church of St Peter’s. Along the way, there are red hills (formed as a result of generations of local salt making), inter-tidal salt marsh and mudflats (a chance to see brent geese, grey plovers, black-tailed godwits and dunlins), and boats harvesting the oyster beds.

This walk was kindly developed by Chris Harvey for the Maldon District Tourist Information Centre. 50p to cover printing costs.

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Refreshments on (or close to) the walk
Chequers, The Square, Goldhanger CM9 8AS. Tel: 01621 788203
Cricketers, 33 Church Street, CM9 8AR. Tel: 01621 788468
Salty Dogs Tearoom www.saltydogstearooms.co.uk Tel: 01621 788471

Useful web links
Saltmarsh 75 www.saltmarsh75.co.uk
Blackwater Wildfowlers Association www.blackwaterwildfowlers.org.uk
Essex Birdwatching Society www.ebws.org.uk

visitmaldondistrict.co.uk

Goldhanger was once a well-used smugglers’ haunt. The village was sufficiently distant from Maldon to escape the attentions of all but the most diligent officers stationed there. A favourite trick of the Goldhanger smugglers was to float rafts of tubs containing gin, brandy and tobacco down the Blackwater, and land them at Mill Beach (opposite Northey Island).