1. The walk starts in Church Street. By the King’s Head pub, turn left into the High Street. After 150 yards, turn right onto North Road. There is an interesting collection of old houses along this road. Where the road takes a sharp bend to the left, take the footpath going straight on (to the right of a house, with high hedges bordering the path). After a while, you will ascend some steps onto a bank, which has steps down the other side. Here, the path crosses the route of the former ‘Crab and Winkle’ railway line.

2. At a T-junction of paths, take the path to the left, which immediately goes through a gap in a hedge. The path immediately takes a right turn. After 300 yards, ignore the track heading off to the right towards the sea wall; instead, follow the direction of the arrow on the footpath signpost. After a further 250 yards on the grassy track which crosses a field, the path approaches the sea footpath signpost. After a further 250 yards, the path crosses the route of the former ‘Crab and Winkle’ railway line.

3. Just past the farmhouse, by the Ship Ahoy Quay marker, turn left to follow the footpath signpost away from the sea wall, descending the steps down the bank. At the front gate of Old Hall Farm turn right along the track. At a junction of paths, take the left hand path. After 150 yards, you will pass the outbuildings of Old Hall Farm. After passing the big barn on your left, turn right to follow the footpath arrow sign. Go through a gate and cross the field.

CAUTION: If the field is full of grazing brent geese, retrace your steps past the large barn, then look out for a path to the left, which is signposted ‘goose-friendly trail’! Take this path, which skirts around the edge of the field.

At the far edge of the field, go through the gate and turn left towards the sea wall. On reaching the sea wall, ascend the bank, turn right along the sea wall and immediately go through a gate. This is a good opportunity to admire the view over the Salcott Channel. To the west, is the hamlet of Salcott-cum-Virley, with its ruined church. The hilltop village to the north is Great Wborough; the church tower which can be seen in the north-east belongs to Peldon church. If the visibility is good, you might be able to spot the imposing Tudor gatehouse of Layer Marney Tower; this is the north-west, almost on the skyline. Walk along the sea wall for nearly 1/2 mile.

4. FOR THE LONGER WALK: go through another gate on the sea wall and continue ahead along the sea wall for 4.3 miles (see the walk overview map showing this route) as it heads around the older parts of Tollesbury. At the far edge of the field, go through the gate and turn left onto Church Street. This track affords particularly good opportunities for bird-watching. Ascend the sea wall, turn right and go through the gate.

FOR THE SHORT WALK: on reaching this gate on the sea wall, descend the bank, turn right and cross a stile onto a track marked ‘short cut’. Take this track across the marshes for over half a mile, until you reach the sea wall adjacent to Tollesbury Fleet. This track affords particularly good opportunities for bird-watching. Ascend the sea wall, turn right and go through the gate.

5. Both walks: From this point (if there is good visibility you can see the decommissioned nuclear power station at Bradwell to the south-east. Further east along the Dengie Peninsula, you might be able to make out the lonely chapel of St Peter’s, which is one of the oldest Saxon chapels in England. Continue along the sea wall for 2½ miles, retracing your route past Old Hall Farm and going past the footpath you originally took from Tollesbury.

6. Ignore the path heading off to the right, continuing along the sea wall towards Tollesbury Marina. On reaching the road by the Marina, descend the concrete steps by the Tollesbury Sailing Club HQ. To your left are the beautifully restored Sail Lofts. Turn right along Woodrolfe Road; after 1/2 mile, at the junction with Mell Road, this eventually runs into East Street.

Continue along East Street, which joins up with the High Street. You will soon see Church Street to your left, turn left here to finish the walk.
This fascinating walk has something for everyone. There are great views, historic sites and plenty of opportunities for bird-watching. Tollesbury is now renowned as a venue for sailing; once upon a time the marshes were the haunt of smugglers. Some of the scenes in the BBC’s dramatisation of Charles Dickens’s ‘Great Expectations’ were filmed in the marshes around Tollesbury; the series was first aired in December 2011.

This walk was kindly developed by Chris Harvey for the Maldon District Tourist Information Centre.

50p to cover printing costs

For further information please contact:
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Refreshments on (or close to) the walk
King’s Head, 1 High Street, Tollesbury, CM9 8RG. Tel: 01621 869203
McColls (General Store), 2 High Street, Tollesbury, CM9 8RG. Tel: 01621 868884
The Loft (Tea By The Sea), Woodrolfe Road, Tollesbury, CM9 8SE. Tel: 01621 869063
Tollesbury Café, Woodrolfe Road, Tollesbury, CM9 8RG. Tel: 01621 869980
Tyndall’s Bakery, 10 High Street, Tollesbury, CM9 8RG. Tel: 01621 869317

Useful web links
Saltmarsh 75 www.saltmarsh75.co.uk
Essex Birdwatching Society www.ebws.org.uk
RSPB www.rspb.org.uk

Distance:
Short walk - 6.4 miles (10.3 km);
Longer walk – 10.7 miles (17.3 km)

Time taken:
Short walk – 2 3/4 hours;
Longer walk – 4 3/4 hours

Location: 9 miles east of Maldon (via B1026 and B1023)
OS Explorer Map No.184 (Blackwater Estuary)
OS Grid Reference: TL 956 104
Parking: In Tollesbury village square (Church Street), CM9 8QU
Public Transport: Bus No. 95 – Maldon to Tollesbury. Mon-Sat (not Sundays)