**BEELEIGH FALLS & HEYBRIDGE BASIN**

**COASTAL WALK**

**CIRCULAR WALK**
Long walk with uneven or muddy ground. Walking boots recommended.

**START**
MALDON TOWN CENTRE

**OVERVIEW**
This most enjoyable waterside walk provides the perfect introduction to Maldon’s countryside and riverside. You will explore the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation, see the scenic Beeleigh Falls and walk along the seawall beside the Blackwater Estuary, with fine views of Maldon. Heybridge Basin (near the halfway point) has a number of opportunities for refreshments.

**HOW TO GET HERE**

Location for the start of the walk:
Maldon Town Centre

OS Explorer Map No: 183

OS Grid Reference: TL 852 070

Parking:
Butt Lane Car Park, off Maldon High Street CM9 5HD

Public Transport:
Regular buses from Chelmsford, Colchester, Witham and surrounding villages (nearest bus stops in Maldon High Street)

**USEFUL WEBSITES**

NATIONAL TRUST
www.nationaltrust.org.uk

ESSEX BIRDWATCHING SOCIETY
www.ebws.org.uk

CHELMER CRUISES
www.waterways.org.uk/waterways/sites/essex-waterways/boat-trips

Tell us what you think of the walk & send us your photos:
VISITMALDONDISTRICT.CO.UK/WALKS @VISITMALDONDISTRICT

---

**LEECH MEMORIAL GARDEN**

In 1974, Edna and Joan Leech, who lived in Lodge Road, Maldon, were killed in a plane crash. In their will they gave their garden to the residents of, and visitors to, Maldon and money was provided for the care of the garden. Their actions secured the garden’s future for future generations. This tranquil, hidden garden is a haven for wildlife and offers magnificent views over water meadows and the reed beds of the River Blackwater.

**BEELEIGH ABBEY**

Beeleigh Abbey was a monastery constructed in 1180 for the White Canons. After the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII, many of the abbey buildings were pulled down. In 1943, the Abbey was purchased by the Foyle family, owners of the famous Foyle’s bookshop. It is now a private residence and is not generally open to the public, although the spectacular gardens are open on specific days during the summer months. The nearby Beeleigh Falls are a small set of man-made navigations joining the Chelmer and Blackwater rivers, they are popular with paddle-boarders and kayakers.

**THE CHELMER & BLACKWATER NAVIGATION**

The Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation was designed by the famous canal architect John Rennie. It opened in 1797, with the last working traffic using the navigation in the early 1970s. Nowadays it is the preserve of recreational users. The Navigation runs for 14 miles (with 13 locks) through a largely unspoilt part of rural Essex and connects the county town of Chelmsford with the tidal estuary of the River Blackwater.

**HEYBRIDGE BASIN**

Heybridge Basin marks the eastern end of the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation. As early as 1796 a sawyer, Richard Tovee, bought land by the basin, and Thomas Malden also purchased a plot to receive coal. A granary was built by the Navigation Company and service industries such as rope-makers and boat-builders were also soon established. Nowadays the canal is used for more recreational activities such as Canal Boat trips, Paddleboarding and Canoeing as well as regular river cruises provide by Chelmer Cruises (see useful websites for details).

**THE BLACKWATER ESTUARY**

The Blackwater Estuary and the flooded gravel pits to your right (now a nature reserve) are a haven for many kinds of birds. Depending on the season, you may see common tern, oystercatchers, redshanks, godwits, shelducks, swifts and swallows. During the winter the estuary is alive with overwintering birds, including hundreds of Brent geese.

**VISITMALDONDISTRICT.CO.UK**  @TOURISM@MALDON.GOV.UK

This walk was developed by Maldon District Council & Chris Harvey.
1. Begin the walk from Butt Lane car park; walk towards the High Street, passing through Wenlock Way. On reaching the High Street, turn right, passing the 18th-century Plume Library. Cross over Market Hill on the zebra crossing and pass the 15th-century Moot Hall and the 13th-century All Saints’ Church. At the church, turn right along Silver Street, passing the Blue Boar on your left. Silver Street curves left and continues as Beeleigh Road. Continue ahead; where the road ends, keep ahead along a track. You very soon bear slightly left to continue along a parallel, fenced path. After 50 yards you come to an entrance to the Leech Memorial Garden on the left.

2. After visiting the garden, continue along the tree-lined footpath as it heads downhill. To avoid having to dodge the traffic on the busy A414 ahead, turn right onto a tarmac path, which heads down towards the River Chelmer. By the river, the path turns left to pass under the road bridge, then turns left again to head up through trees to a T-junction. Turn right here. Maintain direction along this canopied green lane. Follow the waymark along the grassy path, keeping left to emerge onto a gravel path. You soon pass the front entrance of Beeleigh Abbey on your right. Continue past the abbey and at the end of the road turn right onto a lane (Abbey Turning).

3. The lane heads past Beeleigh Grange Farm, Kingfisher Cottage and Beeleigh Falls House. Just past Beeleigh Falls House, you pass the back of Beeleigh Mill, which in Victorian times was a large flour mill, with two water wheels driving ten millstones and a steam-powered beam engine which drove five stones. The Steam Mill is currently being restored and is very occasionally open to the public. Once past Beeleigh Mill, look out for the kissing gate ahead of you. Go through this and head for Beeleigh Falls. This elaborate system of weirs controls the point where the rivers Chelmer and Blackwater meet the sea. Cross the long wooden footbridge, then take the path to the right, which goes around the edge of the weir. On reaching the path by the navigation and Beeleigh Lock, turn right. Follow the navigation footpath for ½ mile, with the Maldon Golf Club on your right. On reaching this grassy path for 400 yards until it comes out onto Bates Road. Walk along Bates Road for 250 yards, then turn left onto the B1018 (The Causeway). Continue over two roundabouts, then cross over the River Chelmer at Fullbridge.

4. Turn right along the navigation footpath. After 300 yards (shortly after passing large sluice gates), the path goes under the A414 road bridge. Continue ahead on the footpath which runs alongside the navigation for 2 miles. Along the way, you will pass (on the opposite bank of the canal) a Tesco’s supermarket and typical canalside buildings, such as the Bentalls warehouse, which was built in 1863.

5. You will eventually reach Heybridge Basin, where there are interesting 18th- and early 19th-century houses and pubs, as well as a fascinating collection of pleasure craft of all shapes and sizes. The sea lock (alongside the “Old Ship” pub) connects the canal to the Blackwater Estuary. Cross over the upper or lower gates of the sea lock and head up the embankment opposite. Continue along the seawall footpath, taking in the views of Northey Island to your left. As you round the point, there are good views ahead of Maldon and Promenade Park. ½ miles after leaving Heybridge Basin, you will reach a junction of paths.

6. Turn left here; after 75 yards, turn right, where the path runs adjacent to an industrial estate. Follow this grassy path for 400 yards until it comes out onto Bates Road. Walk along Bates Road for 250 yards, then turn left onto the B1018 (The Causeway). Continue over two roundabouts, then cross over the River Chelmer at Fullbridge.

7. Immediately after crossing Fullbridge, turn left onto Anchorage Hill, continuing ahead on Chardlers Quay. As you reach the end of the modern waterside housing development on Chardlers Quay, look out for an enclosed footpath heading diagonally uphill to the right. Take this path, which emerges onto Butt Lane. Turn left, then right to find the entrance to Butt Lane Car Park, which was the starting point of our walk.