**Maldon from the South, Wednesday 24th October 2018**

11 walkers, 18 miles – leader Ron Williamson

Continuing a recent theme of investigating the countryside surrounding stations of the Essex single track branch lines, we alighted at North Fambridge a village on the edge of the Dengie peninsula north of the River Crouch. Our intended route was to progress northwards for some 7 miles along the western boundary of the Dengie to Maldon before heading back to Althorne through the heart of the peninsula.

Good progress was made through Cold Norton with its church a mile from its parishioners. Somewhat surprised to find hills in this notoriously horizontal landscape we were glad of refreshments at Purleigh on top of the world. Onwards through the Essex vineyards, passing grand moated farm houses our approach to the Saxon town of Maldon was along a dismantled rail line which last saw passenger traffic nearly 80 years ago.

There is a lot to see of interest in Maldon and this nearly resulted in disaster. Less than a mile from our lunch stop and half a mile from our photo shoot the group had split in two. A fleet of immaculately restored Thames barges, the associated historic workshops and other marine artefacts proved such a distraction that some members seemed to forget there were still 8 miles to walk.

Eventually re-grouped we continued past Northey island, with its causeway still covered by the tide and were now experiencing the vast expanse of the Essex salt marshes a land so remote that it inspired HG Wells description of the Martian landing site in the War of the Worlds. The redundant church of St Marys’ Mundon added to this sense of isolation as we made our way back to civilisation at Althorne the deserted station waiting in the sunset for its rush hour.

We were fortunate today to have the services of Gavin our resident photographer whose pictorial account of our exploits can be seen here and on the Group Facebook page, along with photos by Barry Arnold on the latter.