**To the Mouth of the Thames, Saturday 26th October 2019**

15 walkers, 20 miles – leader Ron Williamson

Described by some as a magical landscape of marshland, lagoons, ditches and sea, the area east of Southend is for me not somewhere that I find myself easily attracted to despite it being on my doorstep.

14 brave souls, however, joined me on a grey overcast day prepared to face the predicted gales and rain as they explored for themselves what can be dire soulless countryside, maybe it was ignorance or perhaps the lack of contours on the map which attracted them.

The first five miles meandered in a generally northern direction towards the river Roach and a coffee stop at Barling Magna nature reserve with expansive views across the valley. So far, so good no mud and good paths, no rain and the wind behind us.

Now heading south towards the welcoming pub at Little Wakering, more good paths across remarkably dry fields, and still dry and warm as we consumed some of our provisions in the garden.

Ensuring that we had a good supply of emergency rations it was time to head east towards the seawall and the desolate Essex coastal marshes. The top of the sea wall proved to be a grand grassy pathway as we made our way to Haven Point and the mouth of the Thames, still dry but becoming increasingly windy (see group photo). As we travelled on towards the Broomway, a footpath through the sea, a sharp squall reminded us how remote and bleak marshland through a firing range can appear. Soon, however, after a diversion around more MOD land, we approached Shoeburyness with its beach facing the North Sea.

The full force of the elements were met full on as we turned the corner to complete the final 3 miles into the centre of Southend. The worst of the storm soon abated as the sun sunk into the Thames and below the horizon. Shame it was not visible through rain and drizzle.

Can’t wait for next visit due October 2022.

Photographs by Nigel Heys and Keith Lane.