



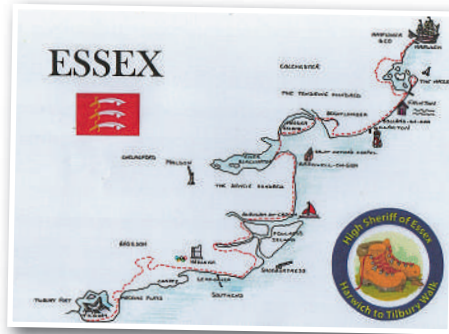
# Doing what I can to walk the walk

THE HA'PENNY Pier was glowing in the early morning sunshine. We left Harwich with a spring in our step, for this was the High Sheriff of Essex Walk of 150 miles to Tilbury. Leading the way, with an amazing rendition of 'Walking with the King', was the aptly named Wash Your Hands Band, formed to raise the spirits of communities in the Tendring area during lockdown. And so began another 'first' in a shrieval year that has become like no other.

My Declaration did not go as planned. The initial arrangements in County Hall were rapidly pared down to three of us, in full court dress, in our garden – at least the sun shone! My attentions then turned to what I could do – a sentiment shared by so many. The traditional garden party now involved sending 650 invites to a virtual 'Wish You Were Here Summer Party', asking for a photo or short video clip and a request for donations. It provided an amusing, uplifting and generous response. To view the montage visit [Essexcommunityfoundation.org.uk](http://Essexcommunityfoundation.org.uk).



The invitation to the 'Wish You Were Here' virtual garden party during lockdown



The dotted red line shows the walking route north to south along the Essex coast

The original aim of my walk was to complete it during term-time and engage groups from coastal schools. With schools closed the walk was moved to mid-August. The sun beat down on us for most of the first five days. There were wild swims in the cool North Sea. If you haven't visited the Tendring coast in recent years then do – it will not disappoint. Fossil hunting on the Naze; the new sea defence of 22 fishtail groins between Holland-on-Sea and Clacton-on-Sea a work of beauty; as is the award-winning Clacton Pier.

The beautifully renovated Lady Grace took us across the estuary mouths to the Grade I listed seventh-century St Peter's Chapel – a remarkably spiritual place of pilgrimage for all persuasions and none. The golden glow from the freshly harvested fields provided a spectacular backdrop for a thoughtful reflection and blessing from my chaplain.

It is while walking along the Dengie peninsular that you feel so close to the elements, so unprotected from the encroaching sea, so vulnerable. The inlets and saltings can be misleading, encouraging you to attempt a short cut but sucking away at your boots with each step.

We enjoyed the culinary seafood delights at lively Leigh-on-Sea. So fuelled, we climbed to the 13th-century remains of Hadleigh's ghostly castle. It has stunning views over the estuary and is adjacent to the site of the 2012 Olympic mountain bike course.

Below: High Sheriff Julie Fosh at Kirby Creek near Frinton-on-Sea on her walk



Crossing the Crouch on the Burnham Ferry, COVID-19 compliant, with James and Lucy Bettley, Paul Fosh, Bess and Finty

In total I was joined at various stages by over 100 people including several mayors and chairs. The group on the National Citizen Service programme epitomised all that is great about young people: supportive, enthusiastic and good fun. So too, the 2nd Stanforle-Hope Scouts with their twenty-five strong chorus of 'Oggy, Oggy, Oggy' on Mucking Flat.

Passing the well-preserved Coalhouse and Tilbury Forts I finished at the World's End pub and reflected on the journey north to south on the Essex coast. Now I wonder... the next steps into the unknown for 'High Sheriff 2020'.

**Julie Fosh**  
High Sheriff of Essex 2020 -2021