

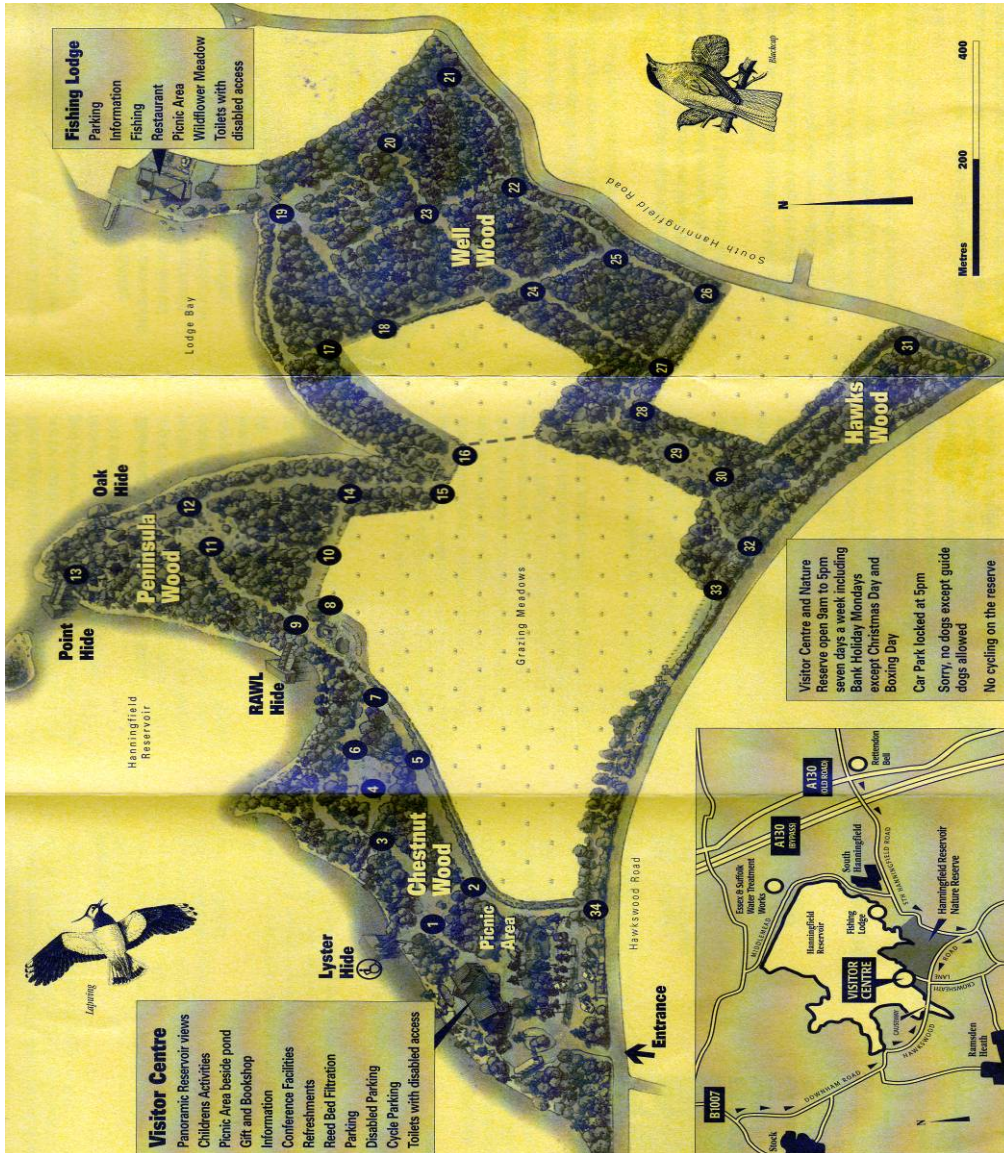
Photographs Malcolm Stuart

Historical details from Essex & Suffolk Water and Essex Record Office

Visitor Guide-- Essex Wildlife Trust

Walk devised by Malcolm Stuart & Stan Church. Layout by Patricia Stuart.

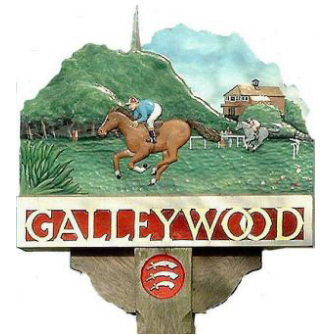
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Hanningfield – A Short Walk

6km (4 miles) – 2 hours. A short walk taking in the most interesting parts of the Hanningfield Nature Reserve and the less well known Crowsheath Community Woodland.

Mapping: OS Landranger™ 167



Start from the Hanningfield Reservoir Visitors Centre car park

(Open 9am to 5pm daily, except Christmas Day and Boxing Day)

To enter the 100 acre Nature Reserve go through the Visitors Centre building where you can make a contribution to Essex Wildlife funds and purchase a visitor guide which has details of the trails marked by numbered posts and fingerposts. Exit the Visitors Centre by the back door near the toilets, bear left over a bridge following the Chestnut Wood trail to post 1 where you can turn left to visit the Lyster Hide. Return to post 1 and turn left crossing a small bridge and following the trail to post 3. Continue straight ahead across a clearing past post 4 to post 6. Cross the bridge and continue to post 7 where you come out of the woodland onto the main path running alongside a grazing meadow. Turn left at post 7 and follow the main path which the volunteer maintenance group call the 'yellow brick road' because it was originally gravel. After 50 metres turn right over a small bridge to go along the board walk round the pond to the outdoor classroom and come back onto the yellow brick road at post 8. Turn left to post 9 and visit the Rawl Hide. Leaving the hide turn left at post 9 and continue through Peninsular Wood to post 11. Turn left and walk to post 12. Turn right across a short bridge to post 14 and carry straight ahead to post 15. Turn left taking in good views of the reservoir to post 16 where you turn left again to post 17. At post 17 ignore the fingerpost taking you right to the Fishing Lodge and instead



Hanningfield Reservoir Nature Reserve gained SSSI status in 1996 because of it's populations of Gadwell, Pochard, Shoveler, Teal, Tufted Duck, and Shelduck.

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turn left at post 17 and take the path round Lodge Bay to post 19 where you exit the Nature Reserve to the Fishing Lodge with its good views of the reservoir, the Café on the Water, and toilets.

Return from the Fishing Lodge on a shorter route down the main path via posts 19, 18, 17, 16, 15, 14, 10, 8, 9, 7, 5, to post 2 where there is a goose free picnic area adjacent to the Visitors Centre.

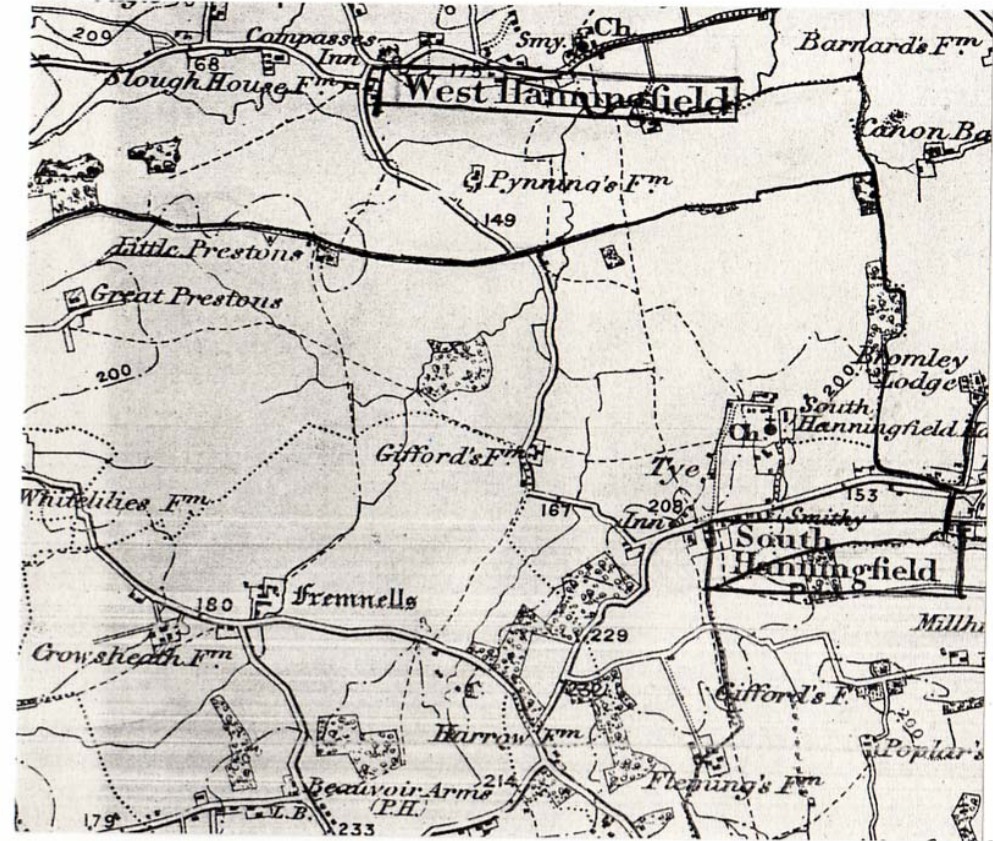
Pass back through the Visitors Centre and car park to come out onto Hawkswood Road, turn right and cross the road to go south up Crowsheath Lane. 500 metres up Crowsheath Lane, just after passing the entrance to Hawkswood Farm, turn right down an unmarked track going north-west. 250 metres down this track pass Little Abbots Cottages on your right and continue through a metal gate used to close the car park off at night. (Ignore the times given on this gate which conflict with those given at the car park). 100 metres further down the track turn left into Crowsheath Community Woodland car park. Walk through the car park to a kissing gate, giving access to a grass track which takes you south-west for 40 metres. Join a gravel path through the woodland to a field gate. Turn right after the field gate and follow the hedgerow on your right for 100 metres. Cross a brook and turn right down a narrow path in the middle of an overgrown lane which runs north-west for 200 metres. At the end of the lane turn right and head north-east towards a white painted pebbledash house. After 200 metres exit the Crowsheath Community Woodland over a stile followed by a short bridge over a ditch. The path continues between a paddock on your left and the house garden on your right. At the end of the paddock turn left onto the house approach drive. After 100 metres turn right off the approach drive at a waymark post and go up to a waterworks metal gate, giving access to Hawkswood Road and the west end of Fremnells Causeway. Cross Hawkswood Road and walk across the causeway for 600 metres to return to the Visitor Centre entrance.



The Fishing Lodge

Hanningfield Reservoir was constructed between 1950 and 1955 in the wide valley of Sandon Brook. It took 200 days to fill and became operational in August 1956 with the official opening on 19th September 1957.

The maximum depth is 55 ft and the length of the perimeter is 6 miles. 100% capacity is 26 billion litres and the lowest recorded level was in November 1996 at 39.2% capacity.



Sandon Valley before the reservoir, based on the 1939 OS Map.

Lost Buildings

The original Elizabethan Fremnells House at the south-west end of the reservoir was demolished as part of the construction works in 1950. The sweeping oak staircase and oak panelling were removed and used in the construction of a new Fremnells just to the west.

Other buildings demolished were Giffords Farm, Pynnings Farm and the Hamlet of Peadowns at the crossroads between the two farms.