

# THE WALTON BACKWATERS



Walton Channel and Titchmarsh Marina © PRPA

⊕ **51°55.0N 01°17.9'E** (off Pye End buoy)  
**Tides** entrance to Walton Backwaters:  
 0:00 (difference from Harwich)

The Walton Backwaters are a protected site of special scientific interest and a haven for wildlife. It is not the place to cruise if in search of dramatic scenery and interesting landmarks, as the vistas consist mainly of saltings and creeks with the occasional topsail glimpsed across land. Some days it can even seem quite bleak, but once in amongst the islands, it is a place to escape from civilisation and commercialism. Many will have 'visited' the Walton Backwaters as children when reading Arthur Ransome's 'Secret Water', and for some, the magic kindled by the book never goes away. Much of The Backwaters are within sight of Felixstowe docks, yet are a haven for wildlife.

## APPROACH AND ENTRANCE

Approaching from any direction it is vital for the newcomer to locate Pye End safe water buoy before attempting to enter The Backwaters. Once found, the entrance is fairly straightforward, except in strong easterly winds when a chop can build up quickly to dangerous proportions. Thanks to the efforts of the yacht club, the channel into The Backwaters is well marked and with reasonable preparation offers no particular hazards, although depths in places are only about 1.5 metres at LWS. Selected buoys are lit, but I would recommend a daytime entrance prior to a night-time one, as the newcomer can find it confusing. Up to Island Point the speed limit is 8 knots and from there onwards throughout the Backwaters, 6 knots and 4 knots past quays etc. On reaching Island Point north cardinal buoy marking the spit of the north-east end of Horsey Island,

Hamford Water curves off to starboard and the Walton Channel to port.

## WALTON CHANNEL, FOUNDRY REACH AND TWIZZLE CREEK

Three more red can buoys lead into Walton Channel and depths here drop again for a time to little more than a metre at LWS in places. There is then a green conical buoy to watch out for and leave to starboard, as it marks another spit that has caught many keels around low water. If the weather is fine, there will be many boats at anchor just inside the Walton Channel, as the firm beach of Stone Point to port makes a popular landing place and this can be a delightful spot to bring up on a summers night. Stone Point is an SSSI and managed by Walton and Frinton Yacht Club which is trying to preserve the amenity for the good of all. There are notices warning of a tern nesting site which should be observed and everyone should treat this place with respect so we can all continue to be allowed this amenity. If planning a club or group visit, please speak with WFYC prior.

There are moorings to follow all along the Walton Channel to the north cardinal buoy marking the spit separating Foundry Reach and Twizzle Creek. Foundry Reach branches off to port and very soon becomes drying. By following the line of the moorings in the centre of the creek this leads to the boatyards and WFYC yacht basin. Shortly after entering

## WALTON SKIPPERS INFORMATION

### WALTON YACHT BASIN

<b>Harbour</b>	Contact Bedwell & Co.,
<b>Master</b>	Tel: 01255 675873
<b>Water</b>	On berths
<b>Electricity</b>	On berths
<b>Fuel</b>	In town
<b>Facilities</b>	WC and showers at club (open daily)
<b>Boatyard</b>	Bedwell & Co., Tel: 01255 675873 and Frank Halls & Son at the Town Hard, Tel: 01255 675596
<b>Chandlery</b>	Both boatyards have chandlery attached
<b>Slips</b>	Bedwells has an 18 ton crane and two slip sheds for up to 40 tons; Frank Halls has a 12 ton hoist. Websites: <a href="http://www.wfyc.co.uk">www.wfyc.co.uk</a> and <a href="http://www.frankhalls.com">www.frankhalls.com</a>

Foundry Reach there is a landing to port by some steps in the sea wall from where you can walk into Walton, although it's a bit muddy and the walk is along the sea wall and then through a breakers yard! Don't use the jetty at Foundry Dock as there is no way out of the yard here. On reaching the Walton and Frinton Yacht Club buildings, the creek forks. To port is the entrance to the yacht basin and on to the town hard and to starboard the creek leads up to Bedwells yard, although just

## WALTON SHORESIDE INFORMATION

<b>Stores</b>	Good range in town quarter of a mile, including Co-op convenience store in High Street open 0700-2200 (0900-1700 Sun)
<b>Banks</b>	None, cash machine in Co-op
<b>PO</b>	In High Street
<b>Public Tel.</b>	At WFYC and in town
<b>Club</b>	Walton and Frinton Yacht Club. Tel: 01255 678161
<b>Taxis</b>	Walton Taxis, Tel: 01255 675910; Shore Taxis, Tel: 01255 676887
<b>Accommodation</b>	A range available in town including the Walton Tavern on the front and the Queens Head in the High Street, contact Tourist Information
<b>Tourist Info.</b>	Seasonal opening on Princes Esplanade. Tel: 01255 675542



in the starboard arm to port there is a quay by the club, where you can temporarily moor to enquire.

Leaving the cardinal buoy to port and branching off to starboard into Twizzle Creek, the line of moorings lead to Titchmarsh Marina. You will soon come to some pontoons in the creek off the marina and half way along these there is a clear entrance to port into the marina. There is a sill, but if you can navigate the Twizzle you will usually have enough depth but there is a depth gauge on the pontoon to starboard to assist as you enter. The Twizzle is navigable for a short distance after the marina at high tide, but due to the oyster beds hereabouts, anchoring is not permitted.

**WALTON-ON-THE-NAZE**

Walton-on-the-Naze is a traditional family seaside resort with an outstanding and safe sandy beach. The narrow streets of the town contain numerous shops, restaurants and pubs overlooking the second longest pier in the country. In high summer the town is very busy, but at the end of the season it reverts to a sleepy place, with a rather old-fashioned charm.

**MOORINGS**

All the swinging moorings in this area belong to Frank Halls & Co., Bedwell & Co., or are privately owned and are marked H, B or P respectively, so you can easily check the availability and suitability of most with the yards. If looking for a marina berth you will surprisingly find yourself spoilt for choice in The Backwaters. Firstly, there is the limited access in Foundry Reach to the simplicity of the yacht basin by the WFYC and its closeness to town (being only five minutes walk from the High Street) and traditional surroundings. Secondly, there is the relatively simple access to the sophistication of Titchmarsh Marina with its first class facilities at reasonable prices. Although Titchmarsh is a little remote, requiring a taxi ride to town, you will find

**TITCHMARSH MARINA  
SKIPPERS INFORMATION**

<b>Harbour Master</b>	Call on VHF Ch80 call-sign "Titchmarsh Marina" or Tel: 01255 672185
<b>Water</b>	On pontoons
<b>Electricity</b>	On pontoons
<b>Fuel</b>	Diesel pontoon and LPG to port on entry
<b>Facilities</b>	Full marina facilities
<b>Internet</b>	Wi-fi hotspot
<b>Boatyard</b>	Full boatyard services available on-site
<b>Chandlery</b>	Large, well stocked on-site chandlery, Marinestore. Tel: 01255 677775
<b>Slips</b>	35 ton travel-hoist and 25 ton crane
<b>Scrubbing Posts</b>	Available, contact Harbour Master
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.titchmarshmarina.com">www.titchmarshmarina.com</a>

most of your requirements catered for on-site. Bikes are also available for hire.

The Walton Yacht Basin in Foundry Reach provides sheltered moorings for 60-70 boats. The basin is managed for the Walton Yacht Trust by Bedwell & Co., who should be contacted in advance for entrance and berthing information. There is a depth of 2 metres in the basin, but the narrow 3.6 metre wide entrance is only opened for a short period up to high water when there will generally be something in excess of 2 metres over the sill. You should note that at extreme neaps the entrance can be left closed to protect depths in the basin.

Titchmarsh Marina accessed from the Twizzle, offers 490 deep water floating pontoon berths in a large, very sheltered basin. Titchmarsh & Son had been boatbuilders in Mill Lane, Walton, since the 1950s and moved to the Twizzle to construct the marina over 30 years ago. The facilities on-site include the popular Harbour Lights restaurant and bar for

TITCHMARSH MARINA SHORESIDE INFORMATION	
<b>Stores</b>	Basic supplies carried in chandlery, otherwise in town one mile, including Co-op convenience store in High Street open 0700-2200 (0900-1700 Sun)
<b>Banks</b>	None, cash machine in Co-op
<b>PO</b>	In High Street
<b>Public Tel.</b>	At marina by office
<b>Taxis</b>	Walton Taxis, Tel: 01255 675910; Shore Taxis, Tel: 01255 676887
<b>Accommodation</b>	A range available in town including the Walton Tavern on the front and the Queens Head in the High Street, contact Tourist Information
<b>Tourist Info.</b>	Seasonal opening on Princes Esplanade. Tel: 01255 675542
<b>Police</b>	Martello Road. Tel: 01255 851212
<b>Doctor</b>	Dr. J. A. F. Geldard & Ptnrs., Vicarage Lane. Tel: 01255 674373
<b>Hospital</b>	(A&E) Clacton Hospital (open 0900-1700) Tower Road (A&E) Ipswich Hospital, Heath Road. Tel: 01473 712233
<b>Dentist</b>	Mr. Turner, 26 Elm Tree Avenue, Frinton-On-Sea. Tel: 01255 672309
<b>Pharmacy</b>	R. S. Wheeler, 40 High Street. Tel: 01255 675900
<b>USEFUL NUMBERS</b>	
<b>GRP Repairs</b>	Smooth Finish (Titchmarsh Marina). Tel: 01206 251080
<b>Marine Electronics</b>	Hurst Marine Services (Titchmarsh Marina). Tel: 01255 673171
<b>Marine Engineers</b>	JB Services (in Frank Halls yard). Tel: 07971 644291 Marine & Motor Services (Town Hard). Tel: 01255 679234 French Marine Motors (Titchmarsh Marina). Tel: 01255 850303
<b>Sea School</b>	North Sea Yachting (Titchmarsh Marina). Tel: 01473 232221
<b>Yacht Brokers</b>	Westwater Yacht Sales (Titchmarsh Marina). Tel: 01255 672500

berth holders and visitors alike. The sill carries 1.2 metres at MLWS, so most craft can enter at any time on the top half of the tide and some of us with shoal draft can surprisingly have all-tide access on neaps. They do not have allocated visitors berths, but with the large number of berths in the marina, they can usually find you a space, but it is important to contact them prior.

**CREW CHANGES AND TRAVEL**

Walton-on-the-Naze is a convenient place for crew changes with good train and coach links. The station is close to the town centre with services to Colchester and London Liverpool Street (90 minutes – changing at Thorpe-le-Soken). For information contact ‘One’ Customer Services, Tel: 08456 007245 Website: www.

onerailway.com, or National Rail Enquiries, Tel: 08457 484950 Website: www.nationalrail.co.uk. Scheduled coach services are operated from Walton-on-the-Naze to London by National Express, Tel: 08705 808080 Website: www.nationalexpress.com. There are also regular bus services to the surrounding area. For information contact Traveline East Anglia, Tel: 08706 082608 Website: www.traveline.org.uk

**EATING AND DRINKING**

The Harbour Lights restaurant and bar in Titchmarsh Marina serves real ales in its small bar with extensive outside terrace with pleasant views. It is open 1200-2300 every day. The smart and busy restaurant serves breakfast, lunch,

afternoon teas and dinner from an extensive menu, 0800-2100 every day. Tel: 01255 851887.

Walton and Frinton Yacht Club is situated at the head of Foundry Reach and on the site of an old mill. It welcomes visitors and has a lounge, with the bar open 1130-1430 and 1800-2230 (Sundays 1200-1500 and 1830-2200) every day. The restaurant opens 1200-1345 and 1830-2015 (Fridays and Saturdays 2100) every day. Tel: 01255 675526.

Being a seaside town, Walton-on-the-Naze has a wide variety of eating and drinking establishments from pubs and clubs, cafés and takeaways to fish and chips and restaurants of many nationalities, most within the small area bounded by the sea front and the High Street. Taking a walk round this area will usually yield something to suit most tastes.

For lovers of seafood, Naze Oysters has its packing shed by Bedwells yard by the Town Hard. Tel 01255 673123.

**TO SEE AND DO**

Walton has safe and sandy bathing beaches along the seaward side of the town with the pier reaching out into the northern end of the Wallet. The pier has recently been taken on by new management and is showing evidence of their interest. Apart from the usual array of amusements, there is a ten-pin bowling alley (Tel: 01255 675646) open 1000-2400 every day, a diner and a bar. The Tyne Class lifeboat is also moored against the inside of the end of the pier these days, although the crew room and RNLI gift shop are still ashore near the entrance to the pier.

Going north from the town centre there is the Columbine Centre, which is the home of the indoor bowls centre and multi-purpose hall that doubles at times as a theatre. Adjacent to this is the modern indoor swimming pool, Tel:



Sunset in the Walton Backwaters ©C. Blaney

01255 676608. Across on the seafront is the Old Lifeboat House by the new Coastguard building which houses the Maritime Museum. Open from Spring Bank Holiday to 31st August, Tel: 01255 678259. There are also wildlife spotting boat trips on The Backwaters on the launch ‘Katrina’, from Foundry Dock, Tel: 01255 671852.

Going further north still you will come to the grassy expanse of The Naze itself with wonderful views over the surrounding seas. Here you will also find the famous tower, built in the early 18th century as a navigational aid. It has in recent years been restored and now has tearooms, a museum and gallery with viewing platform at the top. From here you can see across The Backwaters, up to the Suffolk shoreline and on very clear days, I am told the north Kent coast comes into view. Open 1000-1700, April to October, admission £2.50 or £6 for a family ticket. Tel: 01255 852519.

# THE WALTON BACKWATERS

For the walker there are some very pleasant walks hereabouts, along the shoreline and sea walls. One pleasant and easy walk of about three miles, starts from the Naze Tower, goes out to the cliffs (take care of the crumbly cliff edges) and north past the Fossil Cliffs to the north end of The Naze, where it turns in towards The Backwaters alongside Cormorant Creek through the John Weston Nature Reserve. The path turns south alongside the Walton Channel and the start of Foundry Creek, where you can either branch back to the Naze Tower, or continue on the Foundry Dock and the path through the breakers yard back into town.

## HAMFORD WATER AND THE INNER BACKWATERS

Hamford Water is wide and open and carries plenty of water for well over a mile past Island Point and the entrance to the Walton Channel. Oakley Creek branches off to starboard marked by the Exchem east cardinal buoy after about a mile. Although anchoring is not generally recommended in this creek (and landing on the shore prohibited), it is worth exploring to see the seal colony that lives hereabouts. This is the only backwater still used by commercial shipping making their way to and from the explosives factory at Great Oakley, so keep a watchful eye out in the creek (and for that matter in the entrance to The Backwaters and Hamford Water) near high water.

Continuing past Oakley Creek up Hamford Water, Kirby Creek soon opens up to port. This top end of Hamford Water is a popular deep water anchorage in the right conditions. A spit extends from the tip of Skipper Island, so if entering Kirby Creek the recommendation is usually to follow the Horsey Island shoreline into the creek where there are a number of moorings to follow. Continuing down the creek you will come to the miniature Honey Island. Although to port of the island there are moorings, there is little water and no room to anchor clear of the oyster beds. To starboard just past

the island, there is plenty of room to bring up and some pools where you can lie afloat in peaceful surroundings. You can either land from a dinghy opposite Skippers Island and follow the sea wall path to Kirby Quay a mile away, or follow the very tricky and shallow creek round to port of the headland to the head of the creek at Kirby Quay itself. Kirby le Soken is half a mile away up a lane, where you will find a village store and post office and the Ship Inn, with its friendly bar and large restaurant, open lunchtimes and evenings. Tel: 01255 674256.

Back in Hamford Water and continuing on past the north of Skippers Island nature reserve, you come into Landermere Creek. The creek shallows here to about 2 metres at MLWS and best water is found by following the line of the northern shore, as extensive shoals spread north from Skippers Island. Again this is a popular anchorage and slightly more sheltered than downstream. After about half a mile the creek swings southwest and there is a small pool of deeper water just before this. The water shallows considerably in this reach to the west of Skippers Island at times to less than a metre at LAT, yet there are pools where moorings will be found, although for shoal draft yachts there is just room to anchor clear and stay afloat on most tides.

After about a third of a mile the creek swings to starboard again into a westerly direction and soon becomes drying, although there is initially a useful deep water pool carrying about 2 metres at LWS. Landing can be made from a dinghy further up this creek at Landermere Quay on the south side, or Beaumont Quay near the head of the creek on the north side. Although there seem to be drying moorings everywhere here, the area is wonderfully remote and quiet and ideal for those with shoal draft craft able to take the ground and those who enjoy exploration by tender, especially if by sailing dinghy in Arthur Ransome style.