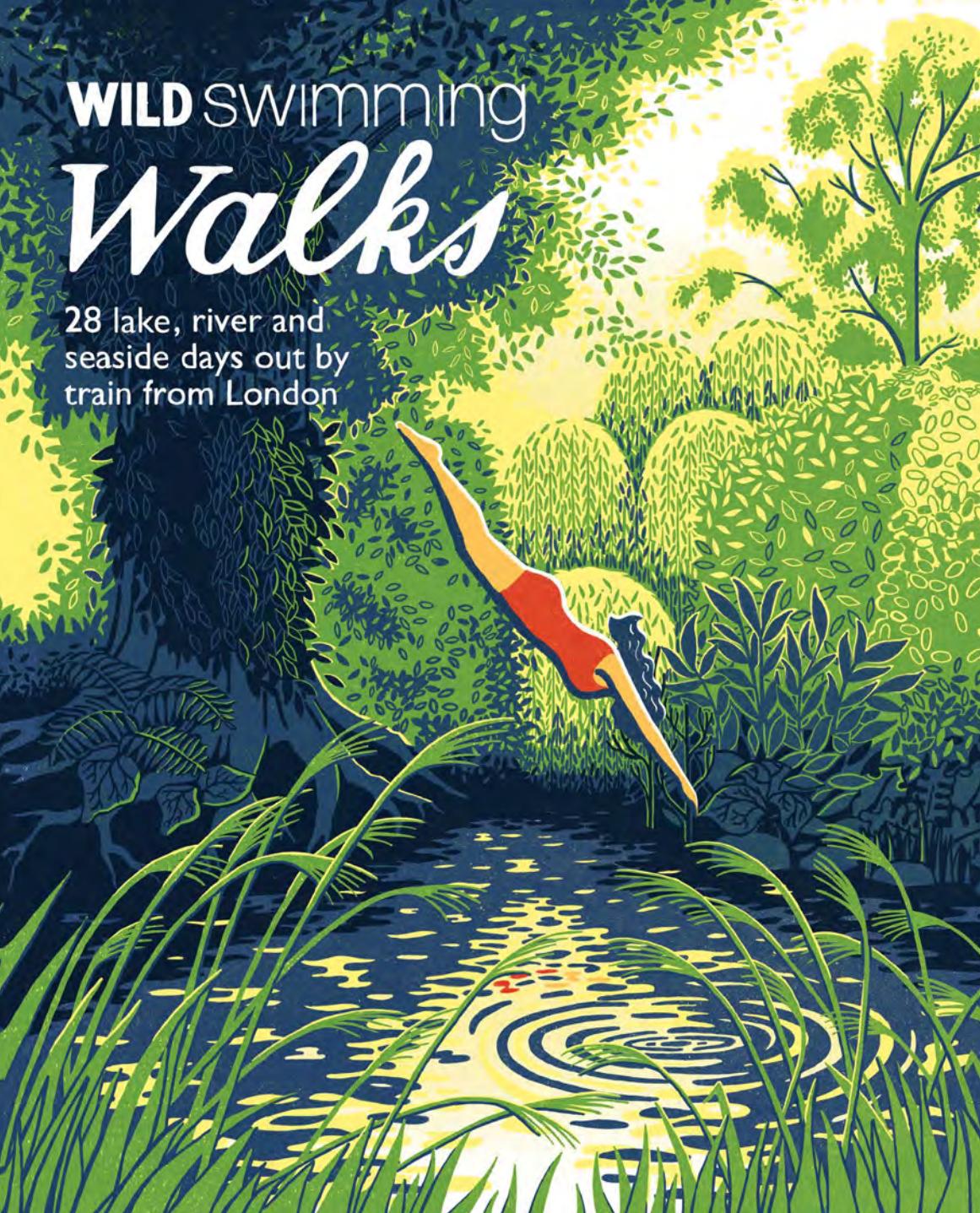


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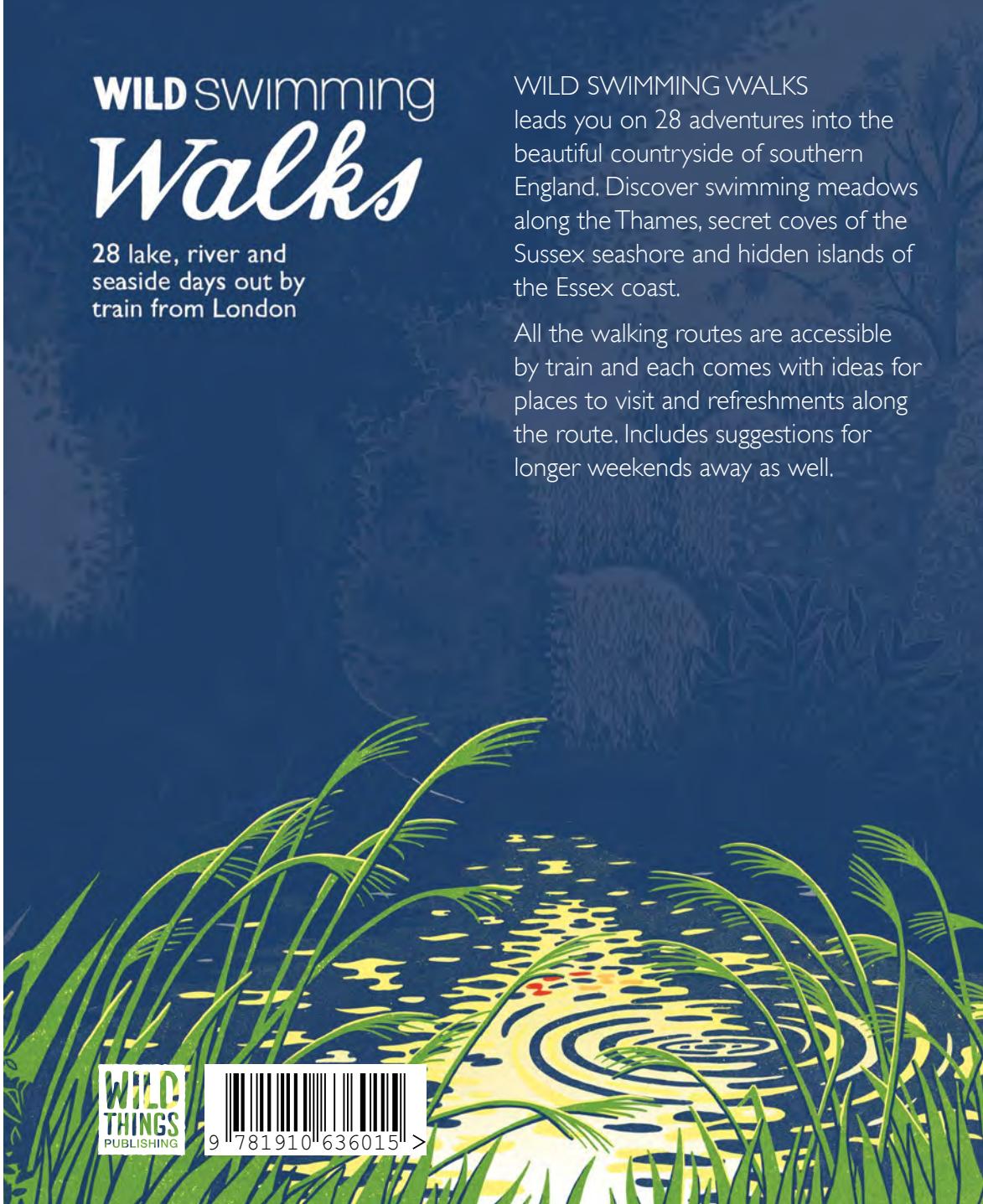
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The Kenwood Ladies' Pond on Hampstead Heath has been a women's swimming pond since 1926. World famous for its history and idyllic setting, it has become a magnet for London residents and visitors alike. Margaret Dickinson (editor) is a year-round wild swimmer, documentary film-maker and writer who campaigned to save swimming on the Heath.



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KIRBY CROSS TO FRINTON AND WALTON-ON-THE-NAZE, ESSEX



A perfect summer's walk both inland across countryside and through two contrasting seaside resorts, with sea swims from sandy beaches.

Until late Victorian times, Frinton-on-Sea was nothing more than a church, several farms and a few cottages. It may be hard to picture this now, but the first part of the walk gives a sense of what it might have been like. From Kirby Cross station ① a little white gate opens directly into fields and, apart from a short stretch of road, footpaths lead through open countryside, past the village of Great Holland, all the way to the sea. A huge sea wall now forms a dramatic barrier, but beyond it the sandy shoreline remains remarkably deserted.

In the 1890s, suggestions for a pier in Frinton were rebuffed by the town developer, and pubs and boarding houses were also prohibited. By the first half of the 20th century the resort attracted high society with its lido, palm trees and first-class hotels. Now, times have changed again and, although boasting nothing more than a small high street and one pub, the quiet and natural charm of Frinton draws ever-growing numbers of swimmers, sun worshippers and nature lovers. With its beautiful sea front, sandy beach and jauntily painted beach huts, it is easy to find your own entertainment here in the peace of this quintessentially English seaside town. You will find yourself back in a world of cheese and tomato sandwiches, knotted handkerchiefs, striped deckchairs and Thermos flasks of tea – there are no ice-cream stalls or fast food vans, and it is heaven. Carry on walking along the front until you reach the pier, and you are then in Walton-on-the-Naze. The atmosphere here is a quite dramatic change from the serenity of Frinton, with pubs, chip shops and the pier itself.

All the way along the shore, from the rural stretch through the resorts, the swimming is exceptional. The beaches are sandy and pleasant for sitting on at low tide, with breakwaters in the resorts

INFORMATION

DISTANCE: 10.5 miles (options of 7.5 and 5 miles).

TIME: 5 to 6 hours for full walk.

MAP: OS Landranger 169 (Ipswich & The Naze); OS Explorer 184 (Colchester, Harwich & Clacton-on-Sea).

START POINT: Kirby Cross Station (or Frinton Station for short option).

END POINT: Walton-on-the-Naze Station.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT: Train from Liverpool Street, usually change at Thorpe-le-Soken. The train stops frequently and can be boarded at Stratford or stations further east.

SWIMMING: In the North Sea.

PLACES OF INTEREST: All Saints church, Great Holland (Thomas Hardy, as a young architect, assisted with the restoration); sea defences at Sandy Point; Frinton sea front; the Naze nature reserve and cliffs; the Naze Tower.

REFRESHMENTS: The Ship Inn, Great Holland (CO13 0JP, tel 01255 674809); numerous cafés and pubs in Walton-on-the-Naze including a café at the Naze Tower (CO14 8LE, tel 01255 852519).

WEEKEND SUGGESTION: Divide the walk in two by staying in Walton-on-the-Naze so that you can linger on the lovely beaches and explore the Naze at leisure.

every 100 metres or so that also act as windbreaks. In Frinton there is a wide grassy area overlooking the sea that provides a place to sit at high tide.

Swimming is possible at most stages of the tide. On one visit we swam at low tide and, after a bit of paddling, were soon able to swim in waters which gradually deepened and changed colour from sandy brown to a delicate, pale turquoise. At high tide the water can reach the sea wall and even moderate waves could make swimming dangerous. We found it tricky getting into the water at very high tide due to quite excitable wave action, but it was nothing any confident swimmer couldn't handle. Generally, the extent of shallow water and absence of currents make the beaches very welcoming for children and weak swimmers.

Just north of Walton-on-the-Naze is the John Weston Nature Reserve **5**, a great place to spot a wide variety of sea birds. The shoreline rises here to form low cliffs famous for fossils, and it is a dramatic example of sea erosion. At the southern end, a viewing platform was recently constructed at sea level, from which you can see

the layers of rock that form the cliffs: London Clay, Red Crag and gravels. Threatened by the approaching sea is the 86-foot Naze Tower built in 1720 as a navigational mark to aid shipping. It now houses an art gallery, a museum of the Tower, a tea room and a roof-top viewing platform with spectacular views of Essex, Suffolk and, on a clear day, Kent. From the cliffs the land slopes down westwards to the salt marshes and backwaters where, if you are lucky, you might spot harbour seals or grey seals **5**.

The Naze is a well-loved open space and especially important for wildlife conservation because it contains several distinct habitats: heathland, woodland, salt marsh and cliffs. Yet it only survives as it is because local people successfully resisted plans in the 1960s to develop it into a massive holiday camp. Large areas were bulldozed flat in preparation, so that the trees there now were nearly all planted since 1968, after the development was halted. Perhaps, if the conflict were happening now, the local objectors would be decried as Nimby's.

DIRECTIONS

1 FROM KIRBY CROSS

At Kirby Cross station cross the railway tracks at the pedestrian level crossing at the east end of the platform and go straight ahead through a small white gate leading to a hard surfaced footpath through a field. On reaching a road, the B1032, turn right along it ignoring a signed footpath to the

right. The road is busy but there is a pavement. Take the first turning to the left then, after the first house on the right, take a signed but slightly overgrown footpath over a stile on the right. As the path approaches the far side of the field, follow the waymarks right then left to go through some trees to a minor road. At the road

turn left, or for the pub in Great Holland, which is about quarter of a mile off the route, turn right.

1 mile

2 GREAT HOLLAND TO THE SEA

Pass the church of All Saints', Great Holland, on your left. Pass the Hall, also on the left, where



DIRECTIONS

the road becomes more of a track. Just before a duck pond turn off right and soon, when the track forks, take the right-hand branch leading across open land towards the distant sea. About a quarter of a mile further on the track turns right, but take a signed footpath straight on. A little further on a track turns right but again keep on the footpath straight on. Cross a golf course, where the path is marked by low black and white posts, and continue to the sea defences where steps leads to a beach the other side, a good place for a first swim.

2 miles

③ FRINTON AND WALTON-ON-THE-NAZE

Turn left and walk either along the top of the sea defences or, depending on the tide, along the beach to Frinton. Here there is a choice between walking on the promenade by the beach huts or on the cliff top to enjoy the sea views. Sandy Hook breakwater is a small landmark about halfway. Continue along the front until you reach Walton-on-the-Naze pier.

5 miles

④ THE NAZE

The station is just inland from here, but unless you want to cut the walk short, carry on along the promenade to approach the Naze Tower –to visit it, take a path up from the car park. The Naze is a nature reserve where you can wander around freely. To complete our walk, head to the tip of the Naze either along the cliff

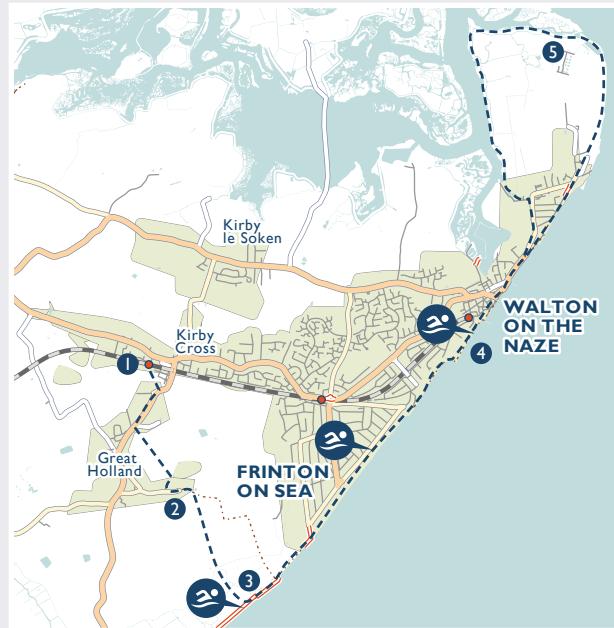
tops or below along the Crag Walk, a newly constructed track, or, if the tide is out, along the beach. The cliffs continue to the tip of the Naze where they drop to near sea level, and the beach and cliff top routes meet.

7 miles

⑤ THE NAZE BACKWATERS

Walk on round and back via the backwaters along a dyke built to protect the low-lying land. It runs west, then turns south by the Walton Channel and eventually leads to Walton. The path comes out on a road by a fish and chip shop and café. Turn right here and walk down the road to the sea front. Turn right and retrace

Bryony Fane, Margaret Dickinson



your earlier steps to the pier. Just before the pier, turn right uphill and continue up to a brick building, which was once the station; just past it is the much smaller modern station.

10.5 miles

SHORTER OPTIONS

Shorten by 7.5 miles by staying on the train to Frinton Station, then head down Connaught Avenue to the Esplanade, where you join our main route at Frinton sea front. Shorten by 5 miles at Walton pier – head inland straight to Walton-on-the-Naze station instead of walking around the Naze.

