



River Crouch and its connection to Basildon





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The river Crouch estuary is at the mouth of the North Sea between Holliwel Point on the north bank and Foulness point on the Southern Bank, and is immediately north of the eastern Thames.

From the map you can see that it flows inland pass Foulness Island, Wallasea Island, at this point the river Roach branches off to the South. It continues to

Burnham on Crouch, North Fambridge, South Woodham Ferrers with its navigable point ending up at Battle Bridge.

The history of the river tells us that it was an important seaway and harbour since before Roman times, and was once known as Huolve or Wholve. Its current name is probably named after the two places called Creeksea either side of the river which had an old ferry between them.

SO, WHAT IS ITS CONNECTION TO BASILDON – The following text is taken from Wikipedia – “The Crouch rises in the ‘The Wilderness’ on the Burstead Golf course at Little Burstead. The Wilderness consists of several small ponds surrounded by a tiny area of ancient woodland. The ponds date from around 1250, when they were used for the farming of fish for Stockwell Hall, and also served as a defensive moat for the hall. In the mid-16th century, the hall was moved to a new site, some 250 yards to the west, and the original building was dismantled and reassembled to form the rear of the new hall



The “Wilderness” on Little Burstead Golf Course.



Stockwell Hall-Little Burstead

Although the “Wilderness” is now owned by the golf course, a covenant prevents them from make any changes to it”.

After flowing briefly to the north east, the stream follows a more southerly direction, running parallel to the A176 Noak Hill Road for approximately 1.3 miles. It is then joined by another stream, rising to the West of Dunton Wayletts, which passes around a hill, taking it close to the junction of the A127 and B148 (West Mayne) roads, behind Dunton Wayletts farm, in fact a pond which was part of the source of this stream is where the Dunton Flyover now is. Its course continues along the south side of Dunton Road for approximately four hundred yards before



crossing under the road to continue north of Dunton Road., and is soon joined by a third-stream flowing northward from Steeple View, Estate. This stream runs the length of Laindon High Road, its source probably somewhere in the region of Langdon Hills

Country Park.

This stream crosses Dunton Road just before you get to the Blacksmith Forge near the Old Fortune of War cross roads. These streams, now pass under the A176, Noak Hill Road at just passed the parish sign of Great Burstead and South Green. (Noak Hill road originally in the parish of Laindon).



It then continues its easterly direction, to the west of Crays Hill. It goes under the A129, London/Southend Road and joins up with another stream flowing northwards from springs and lakes in Gloucester Park, Basildon. This stream is

probably the one that runs across the road known as the 'Wash' in Wash Road just before the junction of Pipp's Hill Road and Hardings Lane.



The Wash, Wash Road 1920/30s

The river valley skirts the northern edge of Crays Hill and the southern edge of Ramsden Bellhouse, before the Crouch reaches Wickford, close to Wickford railway station. It was in Wickford where there was severe flooding in 1958.

The river then turns south and is separated from the railway station by allotments gardens and Wickford Junior School. After passing under the A129 road, it turns to the east, and the road crosses it again as it turns north. Following the flooding, the course of the river was re-engineered, and runs in a concrete channel.

Another tributary joins from the south. It starts at the springs in Northlands Park, Basildon, and is also fed by water from the Parks lake, which was constructed in the 1970s to collect floodwater from developments at the neighbourhoods of Fryerns and Chalvedon.



Northlands Park

After passing under the A127 Southend Arterial Road at Burnt Mills and flowing along the western edge of Nevendon, it runs parallel to the A132 (Nevendon) road. It discharges into the Crouch after passing through a culvert (concrete channel) beneath the roundabout where the A129 and A132 meet.

Downstream of the Wickford railway bridge, the Crouch is crossed by the Lower Southend Road, where the concrete channel ends and the river becomes more natural again. It continues to the south of Runwell and forms the northern border of Wickford Memorial Park, after which is crossed by the Crouch Valley railway. As it approaches Battlesbridge, the river is crossed by three bridges, all of which have been part of the A130 road.

On reaching the final bridge at Battlebridge we have a dam constructed across the river, which is where a tide mill used to operate. The present mill building dates from the late 18th century. There is an opening in the dam, containing a pair of V-gates, which allowed the incoming tide to pass through, but as the tide fell, the gates closed, allowing the impounded water to drive the water wheel. The mill is no longer in use and is used as a warehouse and offices.



The tide mill at Battlebridge, photograph dated c1955 – Francis Frith

As the Crouch run through relatively flat landscape, it is therefore not ideal for powering water mills. Nevertheless, there are other sites where mills are known to have existed, based on documentary records. The furthest being at Great Burstead, possibly near to Noak Bridge, where a mill was recorded in 1593. The miller at the time was John Crouch. A mill was also recorded at Ramsden Bellhouse in 1086 as part of the Domesday survey.

Moving further downstream there was a tide mill at the head of Stow Creek near Fambridge in the 16th and 17th centuries. The Domesday survey also mentions one at Burnham

The river from here then flows to the North Sea, but en -route we come across Fenn Creek, a stream rising from nearby Hanningfield Reservoir. There are possible many other small streams that link into the crouch or with other streams running into the crouch.

For example, we have the 'Lyge'. The 'Lyge' being a stream that springs from the hill upon which St Nicholas Church, Laindon stands. The name 'Lyge' is Celtic and 'Dun' is Anglo Saxon for 'Hill' is where Laindon gets its name from – 'Hill by the Lyge' (The oldest known record of Laindon dates from 998 when a man from 'Ligeandune' was required for ship duty – Comesday Book records the name as 'Legenduna'.



Another being a stream that starts in Coombe Woods, Langdon Hills and runs down on the South side of Dry Street at the back of the houses in the street linking up with the pond in Northlands farm.

It then crosses the street further down to the North side of the street. This is met by a stream running down on the North side from Westley Heights, Langdon Hills, it seems to head towards and

linking up with the stream from Gloucester Park.

In 1825 it was proposed to extend navigation from Battlebridge to Purfleet with a branch at Billericay. The route to Billericay would have been around 7.5 miles long and 29 locks were proposed in order to negotiate the difference in height. The engineer Alexander Clark prepared the proposal, with the help from surveyors J & H Clayton. The proposal was submitted to Essex County Council on 30th November 1825, but the amount of trade likely to use the canal could never have justified the expense of so many locks, and no more was heard of the scheme.

The river is navigable for 17.5 miles from its mouth, North Sea to Battlebridge. It is, however around 28 miles from the river mouth to the Wilderness at Little Burstead.

References:

Wikipedia

Wickford Community Archive

Internet

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BBHS

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