

Tendring District Extended Heritage Guide

Prehistoric Wonders:

- **Clacton Spear (Clacton-on-Sea):** Oldest known worked wooden implement (~400,000 years old), discovered in 1911. Made from yew, likely used for hunting. Displayed at the Natural History Museum, London.
- **Neolithic Causewayed Enclosure (St Osyth):** Early Neolithic ritual site with Bronze Age barrows and cremation burials, dating from 4000–1500 BC.
- **Bronze & Iron Age Artefacts (Elmstead Market & Lawford):** Ring-ditches, cremation burials, and pottery from Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age, indicating ceremonial activity and settlement patterns.

Fossils & Shark Teeth (Tendring Locations):

- **Walton-on-the-Naze Cliffs:** Famous for fossil hunting, exposing London Clay (~50 million years old) and Red Crag (~3 million years old). Fossils include shark teeth (sand shark, mackerel shark, Megalodon), fossil wood, bird bones, shells, and rare species like *Neptunea angulata*.
- **Harwich Foreshore:** Harwich Stone Band within London Clay yields shark teeth, fossil fruits, seeds, giant turtles, fish bones, and early mammals like *Hyracotherium* (ancestor of the horse).
- **Wrabness & Brightlingsea:** Coastal exposures of London Clay yielding marine fossils such as shells, shark teeth, and fossil wood.
- **Colne Point (near St Osyth):** Geological interest for shingle spit formation; occasional marine fossils in beach deposits.
- **Clacton Cliffs & Foreshore (Lion Point, Jaywick):** Famous for the Clacton Spear and prehistoric fauna remains (lion, rhinoceros, elephant). Type site for the Clactonian flint industry.

Rare Fossil Highlights:

- **Megalodon Teeth:** Occasionally found at Walton-on-the-Naze.
- **Eocene Mammals:** *Coryphodon*, *Pliolophus*, and *Teilhardimys* from Harwich and offshore deposits.
- **Bird Fossils:** Walton-on-the-Naze holds some of the best-preserved Eocene bird fossils globally.

Best Time to Visit:

- Year-round for common finds (shark teeth, fossil wood, shells).
- After storms or winter tides for fresh exposures.
- Plan visits around a falling tide for maximum beach access.

Maritime Heritage:

- **Dovercourt Lighthouses (Harwich):** Prefabricated screw-pile structures from 1862, a milestone in lighthouse engineering history.
- **Beaumont Quay (Beaumont-cum-Moze):** 19th-century quay with remnants of a lime kiln and storehouse, reflecting maritime trade heritage.

- Martello Towers (Clacton-on-Sea): Napoleonic-era coastal defences built between 1809–1812, later adapted for military and coastguard use.

Historic Landmarks & Architecture:

- Naze Tower (Walton-on-the-Naze): Built in 1720 as a navigational aid, now a gallery and café with panoramic views.
- Harwich Redoubt Fort: Constructed in 1808 to defend against Napoleonic invasion; now a museum showcasing military history.
- Clacton Pier: Victorian pier built in 1871, originally for landing goods and passengers, now a major leisure attraction.
- Frinton Park Estate: Features Art Deco and Modernist houses designed by Oliver Hill in the 1930s, including the Grade II-listed Round House.
- A House for Essex (Wrabness): Architectural artwork by Grayson Perry celebrating storytelling and creativity.
- Thorpe Hall (Thorpe-le-Soken): Historic estate dating back to the 16th century, with early 20th-century gardens designed by Lady Byng and Robert Wallace.
- St Osyth's Priory: Augustinian monastic site founded in the 12th century, later converted into a grand estate post-Dissolution.

Historic Churches & Listed Buildings:

- Church of St Mary (Ardleigh): 14th century parish church.
- Church of St Michael (Kirby-le-Soken): 14th century.
- Church of All Saints (Great Holland): C15/C16 architecture.
- Spring Valley Mill (Ardleigh): Late 18th-century mill.
- Beaumont Hall & Rectory: Late 17th and early 19th century houses.

Heritage Trails:

- Clacton Heritage Trail: A 5-mile seafront trail with 19 locations, listening benches, and augmented reality experiences telling Clacton's story.
- Coastal Trail: Scenic walk from Holland Haven to Naze Tower, highlighting coastal landmarks.
- Tendring Witch Heritage Trail: Covers Manningtree, Mistley, St Osyth, Harwich, and Walton-on-the-Naze, commemorating Essex witch trials with sculptures and AR storytelling.
- Mayflower 400 Maritime & Heritage Trail (Harwich): Explores Harwich's links to the Mayflower and the founding of modern America; includes Christopher Jones's house.

Cultural & Social History:

- Kindertransport Memorial (Harwich): Bronze statue marking the arrival of Jewish children rescued from Nazi persecution (1938–1939).
- Tendring Poor Law Union (1835): Historical social welfare system covering the same area as the modern district.

- English Civil War & Witch Trials: Manningtree and Mistley were central to witch trials led by Matthew Hopkins, the self-styled Witchfinder General, in the 17th century.

Archaeological Discoveries:

- Clacton Spear: Oldest known worked wooden implement (~400,000 years old).
- Neolithic & Bronze Age Sites: Causewayed enclosure and barrows at St Osyth.
- Recent Excavations: Ring ditches, cremation burials, and pottery from Elmstead Market and Lawford.
- Geophysical Surveys: Evidence of historic field boundaries and possible ring ditches near Horsley Cross.

Additional Artefacts:

- Victorian Trade Artefacts (Dovercourt): Excavations revealed 19th-century lemonade bottles, stone jars, and remnants of the Queen's Head Hotel, showcasing local trade history.

Fossil Hunting Tips & Tide Safety:

- Check tide times; avoid being cut off by rising water.
- Keep 8 meters from cliff bases (risk of rockfalls and landslides).
- Wear sturdy boots; avoid mudslides.
- Collect only loose fossils; do not dig into cliffs (illegal at SSSI sites).
- Inform someone of your plans; carry a mobile phone.
- Emergency: Call 999 and ask for Coastguard.

Responsible Collecting & Conservation:

- Respect SSSI regulations and local conservation laws.
- Do not damage cliffs or protected habitats.
- Collect only loose fossils from the beach; leave scientifically important specimens in place.
- Consider donating rare finds to local museums or nature centres for research and public display.
- Support educational initiatives like The Naze Nature Discovery Centre for fossil identification and guided walks.