

JANE'S WALK COLCHESTER 2025

Jane's Walk is an international festival of local walks taking place in towns & cities worldwide, celebrating the urbanist, writer & activist Jane Jacobs (1916-2006). Jane's Walks are typically shorter (under 3 miles), and best thought of as non-expert, community-led 'walking conversations' on a wide range of local themes.

Our Colchester festival this year is dedicated to Middlewick Ranges and to the community of people who have rallied to save this precious green space on the edge of our city.

All walks are FREE. No booking is necessary unless stated. Where advance booking is required, please do so by emailing info@walkcolchester.org.uk giving the walk number.

Walk times are approximate. Some 'Meet' locations (prefixed ///) use what3words.com

Unless otherwise indicated, all city centre walks are step-free. For further info on walk accessibility, see our website info and Facebook walk event pages, or call Rowena Macaulay (07710 474999).

Find us at: walkcolchester.org.uk/janes-walk and on Facebook/Insta/X (@janeswalkcolch)

Saturday 3rd May

WALK 1: An ancient route to Copford Church. Copford back in time: follow a route first trod thousands of years ago. Around Gravel Pits Wood, across Copford Plains, to the Church with its fabulous 12th-century wall paintings & Romanesque apse. Children welcome (all off-road, wild woods & activities in the church!). With David Knock & Claire Macaulay. Meet: 11am, Copford Village Hall, CO6 1BX (2m, 2hrs). *Check accessibility info.

ACCESSIBILITY: A rural walk, with some mixed terrain and off-road paths that could be muddy in wet weather. Some medium gradients. But step-free, and plenty of help on hand! Be in touch to discuss further if necessary.

WALK 2: Time to cherish or perish! A pilgrimage about protection. The gathering of souls for a rotary roam around the Hythe and New Town wards. The congregation will assemble for a reflective walk on how elements of life have been saved from peril and demise over the years. With Steve Shaw.

Meet: 2pm, Hythe Station (///plants.slowly.kick), (2m, 2hrs).

ACCESSIBILITY: The walking route will be hard-surfaced and fully accessible, avoiding steps and using dropped kerbs throughout, save for a short uneven gravel section of footpath. But plenty of help on hand if necessary.

EVENT: Jane's Walk Colchester Launch & Grand Quiz 2025! Fundraiser evening and festival opening. Tables/teams of 4-6. Bring your own drinks (alcohol/soft) and glasses. Vegetarian/vegan food from Bex Bakes (approx. £5-7), served from the Cardinal Bourne kitchen.

Venue/Time: Cardinal Bourne Hall, Priory St. (///prep.lower.saints), 7-11pm (doors 6.30pm). Tickets: £10 per person (www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1295591742779)

ACCESSIBILITY: Level access, accessible toilet.

Sunday 4th May

WALK 3: Weans Walk Wild in Wellies in Wivenhoe Woods. Go wild and enjoy games and fun activities with Forest School leader, Jean Quinn. Children of all ages (up to 12 yrs. accompanied by an adult). May be too long for 2-3 yr olds; usually too muddy for pushchairs. Break for snacks; bring a drink.

Meet: 10.30am, Wivenhoe Railway Station car park, CO7 9DJ (///rock.achieving.cheer), (1.5, 2.5hrs).

ACCESSIBILITY: This wooded walk is usually very muddy (unless we've had a really dry spell beforehand) with slopes & camber, and sometimes tree trunks to clamber over, so unfortunately its accessibility for wheelchair users is compromised. Please be in touch to discuss.

WALK 4: South of Southway: Life and living at home and at work. Communities divided by road building. Rich and poor in separate roads. Local people's stories, wartime from siege to WW2, rags to riches, the nurses home, changes in demography and character. And some local history... With Sheila Kelly.

Meet: 11.30am, Abbeygate St. by underpass. End: former Essex County Hospital (1.5m, 2hrs)

ACCESSIBILITY: This walk is fully wheelchair friendly, pavements and footpaths, with crossing points on dropped kerbs. Some slopes on underpasses and at St Johns Green. Some uneven footpaths around Beaconsfield and Creffield Roads.

WALK 5: A People's History of Colchester. An alternative look at our city's history, this time from below. How did our people - and not their kings, queens, lords and generals - forge our city's story? Expect some new sites and stories if you came last year! With Bryn Griffiths.

Meet: 2.30pm, The War Memorial. End: Colchester Town Station. (2.5m, 2.5hrs).

ACCESSIBILITY: A city centre walk that is hard-surfaced all the way and step-free. Some medium-steep gradients. Wheelchair users in need of assistance will find plenty of help on hand, but please be in touch to discuss further if necessary.

EVENT/TALK: 'Care in the Countryside'. With British writer and social historian, Ken Warpole ('Brightening from the East: Essays on landscape & memory', 2025), 'a literary original... whose books combine the Orwellian ideal of common decency with understated erudition' (The New Statesman). The relentless global relocation from countryside to cities, means 'rural life will be increasingly inhabited by an ageing population', an opportunity Warpole argues, 'to reconfigure and innovate rural life as something not to be feared but as a chance for innovation and a renewal of local civic pride'.

Venue/Time: The Headgate Theatre, 7-9pm (doors 6.30pm). Tickets on door (Pay as You Feel).

Monday 5th May

WALK 6: Looking Up at Colchester. What are we missing when we don't look up at the buildings and skylines around Colchester City centre? Discover new vistas on a walk inspired by the work of Richard Arnopp and Adrian Rushton, who in 2024 took a series of photographs to record Colchester's town centre buildings 'from the first floor up' (published on Colchester Civic Society's website to celebrate their 60th anniversary). With Pamela Bradley.

Meet/End: 10.30am, Firstsite entrance (1.5m, 1.5hrs)

ACCESSIBILITY: A city centre walk that is hard-surfaced all the way and step-free.

WALK 7: Alleys and Follies - Hidden in plain sight (1). Discover Colchester off-road, from Camp Folley North to Kendal Road Folley, Childwell Alley and thence to The Moors; Parsons Lane to Love Walk (coffee stop at Old Heath Rec) and on to Camp Folley South. Plenty of geography, history, legend and gossip along the way! With Des Bowden and Phil Hitchins.

Meet: 2.30pm, Napier Road North carpark (///vent.acting.scrap), End: Odd One Out PH (3.4m, 3hrs). *Check accessibility info.

ACCESSIBILITY: a difficult walk for wheelchair users, although there may be alternative routes in the relevant sections with assistance (in particular, steps at Lidl Car Park and over Railway Bridge). Also a steep gradient at Love Lane, and potentially muddy slope from Moors to Spurgeon St. Be in touch to discuss further if necessary.

EVENT/TALK: Our Island Stories: Country Walks Through Colonial Britain. A talk by Corinne Fowler (author of same, 2024), Professor of Colonialism and Heritage at the University of Leicester, perhaps best known for her work with the National Trust to record their properties' links with slavery and Britain's colonial past. Corinne will discuss what a walk in the countryside can reveal about our country's colonial history. Introduced by Bryn Griffiths (expect film clips, poetry and some folk singing too...).

Venue/Time: The Headgate Theatre, 7-9.30pm (doors 6.30pm). Tickets on door (Pay as You Feel).

Tuesday 6th May

WALK 8: Walking for Wellbeing ("it's far more than a walk"). We are delighted to have regular walk host and 'walk motivator' Shawn Leek (Walk, Talk, Support), join our Jane's Walk 2025 programme. Enjoy our beautiful Castle Park and the companionship of new friends on this open to all walk. Then do it again the week after if it suits you!

Meet: 11am, Firstsite entrance, CO1 1JH (approx. 1m, 1hr).

ACCESSIBILITY: A city centre walk that is hard-surfaced all the way. Some sections with medium-steep gradients within Castle Park. Wheelchair users in need of assistance will find plenty of help on hand, but please be in touch to discuss further if necessary.

WALK 9: In the Footsteps of the Colchester 10. Ordinary to Extraordinary Events in Tudor Colchester. A trail launched in partnership with Colchester Young Archaeologists Club, the result of an English Heritage challenge to deliver 'a little known or forgotten' local story. It tells the tale of some ordinary people - artisans of Tudor Colchester - whose lives took an extraordinary turn, at a shocking event in the town more than 450 years ago. With Barbara Butler.

Meet: 5.30pm, St James's Church, East Hill. End: Castle Bailey (1m, 1.5hrs)

ACCESSIBILITY: A city centre walk that is hard-surfaced all the way and step-free. Some sections with medium-steep gradients (e.g. East Hill and Dutch Quarter). Wheelchair users in need of assistance will find plenty of help on hand, but please be in touch to discuss further if necessary. There is seating near Balkerne Gate and in Castle Park. No dogs allowed in Castle Park.

WALK 10: A Westlands Warble & Wander - Stroll and Sing. Join natural voice singing quartet Voce Silva in a walk through Westlands Country Park and beyond, stopping to learn acapella songs together in harmony. Songs will be taught by ear, no singing experience necessary. With Lorraine Francis & Julie Linton.

Meet: 6.30pm, inside entrance gate in James Carter Rd, opp. Shillito Close CO3 9XA (1.3m, 1.5hrs). *Check accessibility info.

ACCESSIBILITY: Kissing gate access to this park means it unfortunately may not be accessible to users of larger chairs or mobility scooters. Some uneven terrain and possibly muddy woodland paths. Bring a light portable seat if needed. Please be in touch with further questions.

Wednesday 7th May

WALK 11: The Forgotten Churches and Graveyards of Colchester. From the pre-Christian era to the Victorian, from Greek Orthodox to Quakers, from Muslim to Masonic, we have always had churches. Colchester's former churches have become a museum, an arts centre, a masonic hall, a theatre, or have been demolished entirely leaving only a few gravestones. This walk will discover many forgotten gems as well as highlight the different attitudes to preserving our past. With Robert Johnstone.

Meet: 6pm, Colchester War Memorial, High St (2m, 2hrs)

ACCESSIBILITY: A city centre walk that is hard-surfaced and low gradient all the way.

WALK 12: Nightingales of Middlewick Ranges. Join an evening walk and listen to the nightingales of Middlewick Ranges. One of the premier sites in the country due to the ideal habitats of scrub and woodland. We should be serenaded during our short walk by several singing nightingales. With Dougal Urquhart, Chair of CNHS.

Meet: 7pm, Speedwell Road footpath entrance to Middlewick, Old Heath, CO2 8DP (<1m, 2hrs). *Check accessibility info.

ACCESSIBILITY: Mostly flat grassland paths except for a short steep sandy path to the top of the butts for a late evening panoramic view of the Ranges.

Thursday 8th May

WALK 13: Alleys and Follies - Hidden Colchester (2). More off-road surprises: from Camp Folley to Old Heath Rec; Parsons Walk and Grant Meadows to Distillery Lane; Bourne Valley to the cemetery, and The Folley to Plum Hall. With Des Bowden and Phil Hitchins.

Meet: 4pm, Napier Road North carpark (///vent.acting.scrap), End: Odd One Out PH (3.4m, 3hrs). *Check accessibility info.

ACCESSIBILITY: Step-free and mostly hard-surfaced, though potentially muddy paths at Parsons Lane and in sections of Bourne Woods. Boardwalk through Bourne Woods. Be in touch to discuss further if necessary.

WALK 14: Dead Centre of Colchester! A Who's Who of Colchester Cemetery. A walk around Colchester Cemetery, learn its history and visit some headstones to remember the Colcestrians who walked our streets before us and now rest in our beautiful Victorian

burial ground. Interesting stories of lives gone by. With Sharon Mooney.
Meet: 5:30pm, at the lower Cemetery entrance, opp. Bourne Rd, inside the gates on the left-hand side (0.5m, 2 hrs).

ACCESSIBILITY: Step-free and hard-surfaced. Some medium-steep gradients at first.

FILM/Documentary: Architecton (2024), Dir. Victor Kossakovsky. ‘An epic, intimate, and poetic meditation on architecture and how the design and construction of buildings from the ancient past reveal our destruction — and offer hope for survival and a way forward. Through Kossakovsky’s lens, the grandeur and folly of humanity and its precarious relationship with nature posits two urgent questions: how do we build, and how can we build better, before it’s too late?’ (BFI).
Venue/Time: Colchester Arts Centre, 7-9.30pm (doors 6.30pm). Tickets on door (Pay as You Feel).

Friday 9th May

WALK 15: Together We Walk, Together We Grow! A circular ‘growers’ walk from East Bay allotments (with Level Best) via High Woods Country Park up to the Together We Grow community garden, a 2-acre site with orchards, veg beds & poly tunnels (+tea/coffee & cake!), then returning to town via Mercers Farm allotments. With Clare Smee.
Meet: 10am, East Bay allotments (///jolly.tags.dinner) (3m, 3.5 hrs).

ACCESSIBILITY: step-free, and hard-surfaced paths except for within the allotment sites themselves, where the terrain is grassy/earthen and uneven, and the going is difficult for wheelchair users in particular. There are also some long medium-steep gradients on both outward and return journeys to High Woods (downhill on return).

WALK 16: Poetry in Motion - One Square Mile. In 2023/24, to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the school, St. John’s Green Primary launched a multi-disciplinary project using history, art, geography and language to embrace the school’s place at the heart of our city. This year’s edition of the Poetry in Motion walk is a collaboration between the school and Essex Poetry Collective, as a continuation of the legacy of this project. Visit some of Colchester’s best-known landmarks but through the eyes and words of some of the children from Year 5. With Billie Vasquez-Walters and members of the school community.
Meet: 1.15pm, St John’s Green Primary School (old site), CO2 7HE. End: Roman Circus Visitor Centre (1.8m, 2hrs)

ACCESSIBILITY: A city centre walk that is step-free and hard-surfaced. Entails some medium-steep gradients in short sections.

WALK 17: The Dead, the Undead and things that go bump off the scaffold. All the ghosts you could want, a walk over the bodies you didn’t even know were there, and vivid descriptions from times gone by. A rollicking tour of Colchester for the Dead and Undead. not for the faint hearted! With Max Fox.
Meet: 5.30pm, between the Mercury Theatre and Balkerne Gate (1m, 2 hrs)

ACCESSIBILITY: A city centre walk that is step-free and hard-surfaced.

Saturday 10th May

CYCLE 18: Park to Park, Kidical Mass Bike Ride with bells and whistles! A family bike ride with free bike flags, spokey dokeys, streamers and horns. A safe, flat, marshalled ride with support for the return ride on request. All welcome (0-99 yrs). Children under 12 must be accompanied by a responsible adult. With Jean Quinn and Kim Barnetson.

Meet: 2pm, Richmond Rd kid's play park, CO2 7FR (1.5m, 0.5hrs). Younger riders may join at St John's Green School, Abbey Field site, for last shorter section. End: Old Heath Rec children's play area with café, toilets and free cake!

WALK 19: Jaywick Sands Magical Mystery History Walk. Join longtime Jaywick resident, community motivator and TV pundit, Danny Shine On Sloggett, for a walk along Jaywick's seafront and hear from the people who live there: "We've been left out for years. My job in life is for us not to be left out any more. Everywhere you go in life has culture and class, and Jaywick has as well. It needs investment and infrastructure and jobs. This walk is about our memories of Jaywick and our hopes for its future. We need to make Jaywick the Summer Bay of England!"

Meet/End: 3pm. St Christopher's Church, Jaywick, CO15 2HR (1.5m, 1.5hrs).

ACCESSIBILITY: hard-surfaced and step-free all the way, and low gradient except for one ramped section up on to the seawall.

EVENT/TALK: The Meaning of Middlewick. A panel-led discussion of the campaign to protect Middlewick Ranges for biodiversity and as a green space for people (with Martin Pugh, Caroline White, Mark Goacher and Ted Benton). Speakers will cover the role of citizen science in establishing the importance of the site for wildlife, the effectiveness of local planning, and the vision for Middlewick. There will also be an opportunity to reflect on wider contexts and lessons to be learned.

Venue/Time: 7-9pm (doors 6.30pm), The Headgate Rehearsal Room. Tickets on door (Pay as You Feel).

Sunday 11th May

WALK 20: Jumbo - Portrait and Landscape. An art walk for children. This walk gives children an introduction to Jumbo, combined with the opportunity to draw and paint the iconic water tower close to and on the skyline. All materials provided. A walk for primary aged children, 7-11 years. All children to be accompanied by an adult. With Clare Marsh.

NOTE: Pre-booking is required. To book, please email info@walkcolchester.org.uk.

Meet: 10am, outside the Mercury Theatre (0.5m, 1.5-2hrs). End: Hilly Fields.

ACCESSIBILITY: Step-free all the way. Part hard-surfaced, part off-road with some earthen and gravel sections. Some medium to steep gradients downhill and up. Plenty of help on hand, but please be in touch to discuss individual access issues.

JAZZ/CYCLE 21: 2nd Annual Pam Nelson Memorial Cycle Ride... with music! A round trip ride to Fingringhoe Nature Reserve via Friday Woods and back (mostly off-road, suitable for most cyclists). With a refreshment stop at the reserve cafe for tea/coffee, and music from Elmer van der Hoek and Frank Sebastian (with more at the Minories afterwards).

Booking advisable (email: info@walkcolchester.org.uk). Please ensure bikes are roadworthy & the distance OK at a leisurely pace. With Neil Allen & Emily Harrup.

Meet: 12 noon, outside St John's Green Primary School, CO2 7HE (approx. 12m return, approx. 4 hrs).

ACCESSIBILITY: Open to all ages, providing the distance is manageable at a leisurely pace and children are accompanied.

WALK 22: Seven Astonishing places, people or things about Colchester. Colchester is full of surprises. Some pretty amazing people who made the world a very different place. Local buildings and sites which may have more to them than you think. Join Dorian on one of his very different urban walks with poetry, readings and pop-up surprises. With Dorian Kelly.

Meet: 2pm, Colchester Arts Centre, Church Walk CO1 1NF. End: The Minories Garden (1m, 2hrs).

ACCESSIBILITY: This walk is fully wheelchair friendly, on pavements and via footpaths with crossing points on drop pavements. However I plan to visit Hilly Fields, where paths are unmade and can be challenging for wheelchair users. If need be though, I will present this section from the street above. There is a slight uphill slope from Maidenburgh Street through the park.

EVENT: End of festival PARTY - join us at The Commons Cafe to celebrate the close of another festival week, with jazz from Elmer van der Hoek, Frank Sebastian and friends. Venue/Time: 4.30pm, The Commons Cafe at The Minories (garden entrance).

Jane's Walk 2025 is kindly supported by Colchester Cultural & Creative Events Fund, Colchester Arts Centre, The Commons Cafe at The Minories, and many, many local people. We would like to thank Shaun Dipper for his amazing support of the festival through his graphics prowess over the past 15 years.
