

2-10 May 2026

JANE'S WALK

Colchester

A week of walks, film & talks
hosted by local people,
returning in early May

Part of a worldwide
festival celebrating the life
of the urbanist, writer and activist
Jane Jacobs (1916-2006)



@janeswalkcolch

walkcolchester.org.uk/janes-walk

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 e.g. under 3 miles (some less than 1m), 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 the memory of Barbara Butler and Charles Debenham, Jane's Walk leaders and friends who we have sadly lost in 2025-26.

All walks are FREE. No advance booking necessary unless stated. Where required, please see individual walk info for instructions. 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 and Facebook event pages. Or email us with questions (janeswalkcolch@gmail.com).

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

Saturday 2nd May

WALK 1: An ancient route to Copford Church. First trod thousands of years ago, via Gravel Pits Wood and Copford Plains. Hear about local regenerative farming practices, visit the Church with its 12th-century wall paintings & Romanesque apse. Children welcome (off-road, wild woods & church activities!). With David Knock & Claire Macaulay.
Meet: 11am, Copford Village Hall, CO6 1BX (2m, 2hrs). *Check access info.

WALK 2: Outside looking In. The Siege, June/August 1648, from the Parliamentary view. Lord Fairfax wanted to encircle the Royalist rebels. We'll walk around the area where he established his headquarters and a ring of forts to harry the defenders and prevent escape. With Pamela Bradley.
Meet: 2pm, Abbeygate Street (///storms.fault.agenda). (3m, 2.5hrs). *Check access info.

WALK 3: A sensory walk along the Hythe. Join YAK artist (Firstsite), Beck Norris, on a unique journey exploring the history and 'present' of King Edward Quay, experienced through the senses. Discover craftsmanship in the mundane, beauty in wear and tear. With opportunities to make, create and connect with surroundings in new ways. Bring a sketchbook (optional). Other materials provided.
Meet: 2pm, Uni Mart Asian Supermarket (///foods.brand.belts). (0.7m, 1.5hrs)

EVENT: FESTIVAL LAUNCH and FILM: THE ESSEX WAYS (2025, dir. Thomas Winward). Join us for the screening of this documentary following the 21-day Essex journeying of 'Man About Country', James Lawrence. With guest toast to Jane Jacobs and fab raffle. Food and paying bar.
Time/Venue: 6-10pm, The Commons Cafe at The Minories.
Tickets: <https://JW2026-Festival-Launch.eventbrite.co.uk>

Sunday 3rd May

WALK 4: Children's Art Walk: Old to New. Art activities at the Priory ruins, Meanwhile Garden and Firstsite. Explore their history and experiment with a variety of fun art techniques to capture their different features. For children aged 7-11 yrs (accompanied by an adult). All materials provided. Pre-booking required (email: janeswalkcolch@gmail.com). 20 children max. With Clare Marsh.
Meet: 10.30am, St Botolph's Priory, on the grass by the church. (0.25m, 2hrs)

WALK 5: Argy Bargy and Turning Tides: An examination of changing communities on the River Colne. Gentle riverside walk looking at the river's changing usage, commercial decline and subsequent neglect, and the community of boat dwellers who preserve this maritime heritage, yet are threatened with displacement. Ends with a chance to see boats close up and chat to residents over a cuppa. With Orlando Clarke.
Meet: 11.30am, bridge by Riverside Place (///shark.work.snow). (2.5m, 2.15hrs)

WALK 6: A walk to celebrate Colchester as a City of Sanctuary. A walk exploring our diverse community. Hear historical and contemporary stories that help us understand how over the centuries our refugee and migrant communities have helped make our city a great place to live, learn and work. In partnership with Colchester Refugee, Asylum and Migrant Action (RAMA) and Colchester Unite Against Racism (CUAR). With Bryn Griffiths.
Meet: 2.30pm, Colchester War Memorial, CO1 1DN (2.5m, 2.5 hours)

WALK 7: X Marks The Spot: Creating our personal why, when and what of Colchester through a kaleidoscope of words. A poetry writing walk, exploring Colchester's rich, varied history, through a personal lens. Our own experiences of this city are unique: as we walk and chat, the places we visit will be the inspiration for written pieces that help us reminisce as we celebrate this place we call home. Bring a notebook or phone to write on. With Polly Stubbs.
Meet: 4pm, Firstsite entrance, Lewis Gardens (1m, 2hrs)

WALK 8: Allotments, Gardens and Health Care in Myland! Explore new initiatives linking food, health and community. The allotments of Myland (Colchester Allotment Association), a new community garden for service users, established by Mill Rd surgery (part of the Primary Care Network), and Together We Grow, the celebrated community garden (High Woods Country Park). With Robert Johnstone.
Meet: 5pm, Colchester (North) Station, northern entrance (3.5m, 2.5 hrs). *Check access info.

Monday 4th May

WALK 9: The General Strike of May 1926, according to the journal of a Colchester teenager, E.J. Rudsdale. Guided by readings and sketches, we imagine Colchester 100 years ago, during the 9-day General Strike. Also, a chance to embellish

some of the journal drawings (bring a Sharpie and coloured pencils) and celebrate collective action. With Rebecca Rocket. Meet: 10am, Colchester Castle, inside Museum Street entrance (///kind.upgrading.rainy). (2.5m, 2hrs).

This walk is followed by events hosted by Colchester Trades Council to commemorate the General Strike of 1926: https://general_strike_event.eventbrite.co.uk

WALK 10: What's in a name? Soldiers, saints and statesmen; changes, controversies, conundrums. Discover the origins of Colchester's street and place names, and the stories of the people who coined them. With Thomas Stevenson. Meet: 1.30pm, The Old Fire Office, High St. (///riches.passes.verge). (2.5m, 2.5hrs)

WALK 11: Shine On Jaywick Sands! Join longtime Jaywick resident, community motivator and TV pundit, Danny Sloggett, for a magical mystery history walk along Jaywick's seafront and hear from the people who live there: "Everywhere you go in life has culture and class, and Jaywick has as well. This walk is about our memories of Jaywick and our hopes for its future". Meet: 1.30pm. St Christopher's Church, Jaywick, CO15 2HR (1.5m, 1.5hrs).

FILM/TALK: 'Our Land' (Dir. Orban Wallace. 2025), with introductory talk by Prof. Colin Samson and Q&A. We are delighted to be part of the UK release of this film, which follows the Right to Roam movement and asks: who has the right to access the countryside and who controls it? Colin Samson will discuss how relationships to the land and nature have been curtailed by the establishment of exclusive private property, and trace the 'cult of exclusion' to histories of enclosure and colonialism. Time/Venue: 5-8pm, Curzon Cinema (Screen 3), Queen St. Tickets: <https://JW2026-Our-Land.eventbrite.co.uk>

Tuesday 5th May

WALK 12: Come and meet some of our Castle Park Trees. Join me for a walk around Castle Park, identifying your favourite trees as we share our knowledge and stories of those we choose. I will have a route planned but am open to suggestions along the way. With Diana Hargrave. Meet: 10.30am, Colchester Castle, inside Museum Street entrance (///chat.voice.orbit) (1m, 1.5hrs).

WALK 13: Alleys and Follies - hidden in plain sight (1). Discover Colchester off-road, from Camp Folley North to Kendal Road Folley, Childwell Alley and The Moors; coffee and comfort in St Leonard's church, Parsons Lane to Love Walk and on to Camp Folley South. Ending at the Odd One Out PH. Geography, history, legend and gossip along the way! With Des Bowden. Meet: 2.30pm, Napier Road North carpark (///vent.acting.scrap). (3.4m, 3hrs). *Check access info.

EVENT/TALK: Jane's Walk Colchester supports...

An online panel/discussion on 'Creating Pilgrimage Routes: Faith-based, radical and community-led paths'. Hosted jointly by (local Jane's Walk leader) Lora Aziz, co-chair of the World Trails Network Arts & Culture Task Force and walklistencreate.org (3rd in a series of six events exploring 'Pilgrimage'). Time: 7pm, Tickets: <https://wlc.zone/a42>

Wednesday 6th May

WALK 14: Town Centre to High Woods - a nature walk with Ted Benton. From Land Lane green space, along the eastern flank of the Roman wall and down to the bridge over the Colne. If the weather is good, hope for dragonflies, meadow butterflies and birdsong. Then across Cowdray Ave. and up via sloping meadows to the woodland of the Country Park and café. After a break, a different route back. Meet: 11am. Top of Land Lane, opposite Priory St. on East Hill (1.8m, 1.5hrs, each way)

WALK 15: Brutal But Beautiful: Essex University. A tour of the University of Essex's iconic 1960's Brutalist architecture, including the Towers, the Hex restaurant, and the Library with its Paternoster lift. Hear about the founding vision that shaped its concrete and glass. With Jess Twyman. Meet: 2pm, Square 4, outside Campus Shop (///bolt.fumes.looks), (0.3m, 1 hr).

WALK 16: History of Middlewick Ranges. Hear about the rich history of this former firing range and the important role it played in the lives of Colchester people. Thousands came to watch spectacles like the horse racing and mock battles, while many British regiments came to practice their drills, parades and firing. With Dougal Urquhart. Meet: 7pm, Speedwell Rd, footpath entrance, Old Heath (///bossy.bugs.sunset). (1.2m, 2hrs). *Check access info.

Thursday 7th May

WALK 17: 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 (tea/coffee in garden), Bourne Valley to the cemetery, and The Folley to Plum Hall. With Des Bowden. Meet: 2.30pm, Napier Rd North carpark (///vent.acting.scrap). (3.4m, 3hrs). *Check access info.

WALK 18: Finding light in the darkness. What do we see when the sun goes down? Join Nelleke van Helfteren and Chrissie Alexander on a short evening walk, exploring and photographing the changing nature of light in familiar spaces: North Hill, Jumbo, the Mercury, Balcerne Hill bridge and the Arts Centre graveyard, where a moth light will reveal who's flying tonight. Bring a phone or a camera. No experience necessary. Meet: 9pm, The Old Fire Office, High St. (///riches.passes.verge). (0.5m, 1.5hrs)

Friday 8th May

WALK 19: Little Explorers: A Toddler-Led Nature Walk. Join Lora Aziz for a gentle, curiosity-led stroll in High Woods Country Park. See the world through your toddler's eyes, whether bug watching, stick collecting or pausing to admire an interesting leaf, and connect with like-minded parents. Onsite changing facilities and coffee. Ideal for toddlers/preschoolers (1-4 yrs). Siblings welcome. Meet: 10am, High Woods Visitor Centre. (0.5m, 2hrs).

WALK 20: Roses for Remembrance – lest we forget.

A deeper look at the symbolic meaning of the rose beds in Castle Park. The rose beds are enjoyed by many. This walk is an opportunity to appreciate the commemorative plaques attached to them; reminders of people and events that have shaped our lives. With 'Friend of Castle Park', Cindy Salmon. Meet: 11am, The Bandstand, Castle Park (///glow.shares.secure). (0.25m, 1hr).

WALK 21: Constable in the City. In June 2026, artist John Constable would've been 250 yrs old. To celebrate, there are events in East Bergholt, his birthplace, and Flatford, the setting for The Haywain. But Constable also spent time in Colchester when he stayed with relatives, and often went out sketching. This walk visits these city centre locations and looks at the sketches he created there. With Bob Finch. Meet: 2.30pm, outside Mercury Theatre (2m, 2hrs).

WALK 22: A Westlands Wander and Warble – Stroll and Sing.

Join Lorraine Francis, one quarter of natural voice singing quartet, Voce Silva, on a gentle wander through Westlands Country Park, learning unaccompanied harmony songs celebrating nature and the joy of singing. Everything taught by ear, no singing experience necessary. Meet: 6.30pm, inside entrance gate on James Carter Rd, opp. Shillito Close (1.3m, 1.5hrs). *Check access info.

Saturday 9th May

WALK 23: Six curious vicars of Colchester and their churches. An easy stroll around some of the churches of Colchester, illuminated by stories, poetry and maybe a bit of street theatre. With Dorian Kelly and friends. Meet: 11am. Colchester Arts Centre (///radar.doors.degree). (1.5m, 2hrs).

WALK 24: A celebration of Colchester's celluloid history, through the eyes of local film-making enthusiast, Bernard Polley. In 1937, a short cine film made of the Polley family sparked a lifetime interest for the 9-yr old, whose 200+ films about Colchester, included mapping the changing fortunes of its cinemas. Join us for a look back at these buildings and their stories. As told by his friends Billie and Elisa. Meet: 2.30pm. St. Botolph's roundabout, Mersea Rd exit (///villa.league.silly). (1m, 2hrs).

WALK 25: Colchester Fort and City: The twin-headed Roman eagle, west and east. A walk from East Bridge up to our City Hall, explaining that the Roman city faced east while the original fort faced west and what buildings we can predict from that. From the original quayside to the location of the Curia and more. With Max Fox. Meet: 4.30pm, East Bay, nr. East Bridge (///asks.lobby.rock). (1m, 1.5hrs). *Check access info.

WALK 26: Constable in the City. Repeat walk (see Friday 8th) celebrating Constable's 250th anniversary. With Bob Finch. Meet: 6.30pm, outside Mercury Theatre (2m, 2hrs).

Sunday 10th May

WALK 27: 3am with Ant. A walk for no good reason at the worst possible time. Help Ant in his bid to attract the lowest number of people on a Jane's Walk ever. Where's it going and why? Nobody knows. With Dr Anthony Roberts. Meet: 3am. Colchester Arts Centre (distance/length N/K) *But note, all access needs will be met if you email the Dr in advance: anthony@colchesterartscentre.com.

WALK 28: Foraging in the Footsteps of the Invading Roman Army at Lexden. The Roman invasion (AD43) brought a large army to take over Camulodunum, establishing a settlement at today's Lexden. Foragers were extremely important to feed these invading forces, a lost aspect of an important event in British history. With Mitch McLean. Booking required (email: wildceltlight@gmail.com). Meet: 10am, Lexden Crown PH (2m, 3hrs). *Check access info.

WALK 29: Weans Walk Wild in Wellies in Wivenhoe Woods. Games and fun activities with Forest School leader, Jean Quinn. Children up to 12 yrs, with adult. May be long for 2-3 yr olds; often muddy for pushchairs. Break for snacks; bring a drink. Booking advised (07791 916914). Max. 10 children. Meet: 10.30am, Wivenhoe Railway Station car park, CO7 9DJ (1.5m, 2.5hrs).

CYCLE 30: 3rd Annual Pam Nelson Memorial 'Jane's Cycle'.

A round trip to Fingringhoe Nature Reserve via Friday Woods (mostly off-road, leisurely pace, mixed ability). Refreshments at reserve cafe. Please ensure bikes are roadworthy. Booking advised (email: janewalkcolch@gmail.com). With Neil Allen. Meet: 12 noon, outside St John's Green Primary School, CO2 7HE (12m, 4 hrs).

WALK 31: Boudica Rising: A walk of ember and ash.

Follow local artist Rebekah Wallace, a First Nations immigrant, through Colchester's hidden layers, and experience 'sensory archeology'. This is not a history lesson - it's a shared excavation of spirit and story, walking the ash layer beneath modern Colchester. Meet: 11am, outside Mercury Theatre (2.5m, 2.5hrs).

WALK 32: The Wrong End of the Stick. A closer look at Colchester's public conveniences, the history, stories and remarkable artwork. Ending at The Minorities for refreshments. Bring your best (and worst) toilet jokes! With artist Anne Schwegmann-Fielding. Meet: 2.30pm, at the bridge to Colchester Castle (1.3m, 2hrs)

EVENT: End of festival drink. Help us celebrate the close of another festival week. All very welcome. Time/Venue: From 4.15pm, The Commons Cafe at The Minorities (garden entrance).

Jane's Walk 2026 is kindly supported by Colchester Cultural & Creative Events Fund, Colchester Arts Centre, The Commons Cafe at The Minorities, Beth Chatto Gardens, and many local volunteers, to whom we're very grateful.