



JANE'S WALK COLCHESTER 2026

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 festival this year is dedicated to Barbara Butler and Charles Debenham, 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](https://www.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. Copford back in time: follow a route first trod thousands of years ago. Around Gravel Pits Wood, across Copford Plains; hear about local regenerative farming practices, before arriving at 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: Outside looking In. The Siege, June/August 1648, from the Parliamentary view. Lord Fairfax wanted to encircle the Royalist rebels. We will walk (hike) 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 accessibility info.

ACCESSIBILITY: This walk includes mixed terrain: both pavements and open rough ground (Hilly Fields), with some steep slopes.

WALK 3: A sensory walk along the Hythe. Once an industrial port, the Hythe offers many interesting glimpses into its past. Join YAK artist (Firstsite), Beck Norris, on a unique journey exploring the history and 'present' of King Edward Quay, as experienced through the senses, discovering craftsmanship in the seemingly mundane, the beauty in wear and tear. With opportunities to make, create and simply connect with your surroundings in new ways. Bring a sketchbook if you like, but materials provided. Meet: 2pm, Uni Mart Asian Supermarket (///foods.brand.belts). (0.7m, 1.5hrs)

ACCESSIBILITY: A short walk, hard-surfaced and step-free all the way, with regular rest points. The area can be noisy along the short stretch of Colne Causeway, but most of the walk is off-road. There will be regular opportunities to pause along the route.

EVENT: Jane's Walk Colchester LAUNCH and FILM: THE ESSEX WAYS (2025). Join us for our festival opening and screening of feature length documentary following the 21-day journeying of 'Man About Country', James Lawrence, around the county of his birth, shot and produced by fellow Essex man, Thomas Winward. With Q&A after, and guest toast to Jane Jacobs, raffle with fab top prizes. Food from the Commons kitchen and paying bar.

Venue/Time: The Commons Cafe at The Minories, 6-10pm (food from 6pm).

Tickets: <https://JW2026-Festival-Launch.eventbrite.co.uk>

ACCESSIBILITY: Level access from garden door, accessible toilet.

Sunday 3rd May

WALK 4: Children's Art Walk: Old to New. Art activities based on the Priory ruins, Beth Chatto's Meanwhile Garden and Firstsite, exploring the history of the sites and experimenting with a variety of fun art techniques to capture their very different features. For children aged 7-11 yrs (must be 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 (///works.seated.palms). (0.25m, 2hrs)

ACCESSIBILITY: A short, city centre walk, hard surfaced all the way but entailing some narrow pavements and a steep gradient on Queen St.

WALK 5: Argy Bargy and Turning Tides: An examination of changing communities on the River Colne. A gentle riverside walk looking at changes in the river's usage, its commercial decline and subsequent neglect, with a focus on the

community of boat dwellers who preserve this maritime heritage, yet are threatened with displacement by ongoing riverside housing development. 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)

ACCESSIBILITY: Route is step-free, mostly flat, with a good tarmac surface, except for a gravel section from East Bay between the allotments which is pitted, and followed by a hump immediately after the railway bridge, entailing short, steep up/down gradients.

WALK 6: A walk to celebrate Colchester as a City of Sanctuary. Curated by Bryn Griffiths. Expect lots of pop-up contributions as we walk to explore Colchester's diverse community. Hear historical and contemporary stories that help us understand how over the centuries our refugee and migrant communities have helped to make our city such a great place to live, learn and work. We are organising this walk in partnership with Colchester Refugee, Asylum and Migrant Action (RAMA) and Colchester Unite Against Racism (CUAR).

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 and varied history, through a personal lens. Our own experiences of this city are unique to us. As we walk and chat, the places we visit will become the inspiration for written pieces that help us reminisce (maybe even shed a tear!) 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)

ACCESSIBILITY: A step-free, city centre walk, hard-surfaced all the way, but with some steep gradients (St Julian Grove and East Hill)

WALK 8: Allotments, Gardens and Health Care in Myland! A walk exploring new initiatives aimed at linking food, health and community. Discover the allotments of Myland, courtesy of Colchester Allotment Association, and a new community garden for service users, established by Mill Rd surgery, part of the Primary Care Network (groups of GP practices, supporting proactive integrated care). Ending at Together We Grow, the celebrated community garden at High Woods Country Park. With Robert Johnstone.

Meet: 5pm, Colchester (North) Station, northern entrance (3.5m, 2.5 hrs)

ACCESSIBILITY: A longer walk. Step-free and no steep inclines, but mixed terrain (at allotments) and possibly some muddy patches on footpaths.

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 will imagine Colchester 100 years ago, during the 9-day General Strike. Also, a chance to embellish some journal drawings (bring a Sharpie and coloured pencils) and celebrate the power of collective action. With Rebecca Rocket.

Meet: 10am, Colchester Castle, inside Museum Street entrance (///kind.upgrading.rainy). (2.5m, 2hrs).

This walk is followed by an afternoon/evening of panels, discussion and film commemorating the Strike, hosted by Colchester Trades Council, at the Headgate Theatre, 2-9pm. For info/tickets: https://general_strike_event.eventbrite.co.uk

WALK 10: What's in a name? Soldiers, saints and statesmen; changes, controversies and conundrums. Discover the origins of some 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)

ACCESSIBILITY: The route is entirely on surfaced roads and paths. It will include some medium-steep gradients. All road crossings are equipped with dropped curves (or raised roads). There are a few sections with narrow pavements.

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: "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. 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: 1.30pm. 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.

FILM/TALK: 'Our Land' (Dir. Orban Wallace. 2025), introduced by Prof. Colin Samson with Q&A after. We are delighted to be part of the 2026 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? Presenting arguments from both sides, the film 'charts the conflict, exploring the complex issues of access, custodianship and conservation'.

In advance of the film, we welcome Colin Samson, who will discuss how relationships to the land and nature have been curtailed by the establishment of exclusive private property. Drawing on the 'Right to Roam' movement co-founder Nick Hayes' Book of Trespass, Colin will trace the 'cult of exclusion' to histories of enclosure and colonialism, ending with various proposals to reverse this loss of our common inheritances.

Time/Venue: 5-8pm, The 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 to spend a bit of time 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).

ACCESSIBILITY: The Castle Park paths are all hard-surfaced but set over some significant gradients in places. This walk is mostly step-free, but two of the featured trees are accessed via a downhill path with some shallow steps. These can be avoided via a longer detour, rejoining the group at the bottom of the hill.

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 thence to 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. Plenty of 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 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: 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').

7pm, Tickets: <https://wlc.zone/a42>

Wednesday 6th May

WALK 14: Town Centre to High Woods - a nature walk with Ted Benton.

The walk begins with Land Lane green space, along the eastern flank of the Roman wall and continues down to the pedestrian bridge over the river Colne. If the weather is good we should be able to see dragonflies and meadow butterflies, and hear birdsong. Then across Cowdray Avenue and up through sloping meadows to the woodland and café in the Country Park. After a break we can follow a different route back into town..

Meet: 11am. Top of Land Lane, opposite exit from Priory Street on East Hill (1.8m, 1.5hrs, each way)

ACCESSIBILITY: Sometimes muddy at bottom of Southern Slopes of the Country Park, and there is a steep uphill gradient over grass up towards the wood. There is a seat near the top. Best to use stout shoes or boots.

WALK 15: Brutal But Beautiful: Essex University. A tour of the University of Essex's iconic 1960's Brutalist architecture, talking about the founding vision that shaped its concrete and glass. The walk will include the Towers, the Hex restaurant, and the Library

with its Paternoster lift. With Jess Twyman.

Meet: 2pm, Square 4, outside Campus Shop (///bolt.fumes.looks), (0.3m, 1 hr).

ACCESSIBILITY: A short campus-based walk that is hard-surfaced and step-free. Please be in touch for travel information if necessary.

WALK 16: History of Middlewick Ranges. Hear stories about the rich history of this former firing range and how the area played an important role in the lives of the people of Colchester especially over the last 170 years. Thousands would come to watch the spectacles of horse racing, mock battles or agricultural shows, while regiments would travel from all corners of the country for their drill practices, field days, parades and firing practice. With Dougal Urquhart.

Meet: 7pm, Speedwell Rd, footpath entrance to Middlewick, Old Heath (///bossy.bugs.sunset), (1.2m, 2hrs).

ACCESSIBILITY: Flat grassland paths except for a short steep sandy path to top of the butts for a late evening panoramic view of the ranges. The latter is very tricky for wheelchair users, but plenty of support will be on hand! Be in touch to discuss if necessary.

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 Road North carpark (///vent.acting.scrap). (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 18: Finding light in the darkness. What do we see when the sun has gone down? Join Nelleke van Helfteren and Chrissie Alexander on a short evening walk at the top of the town, as we explore the changing nature of light in familiar spaces: North Hill, Jumbo, the Mercury and Balkerne Hill bridge. Along the way Chrissie will guide us in taking photos in the dark, so bring a phone or a camera. No experience necessary! The walk ends in the graveyard by the Arts Centre where Nelleke will set up a moth light to see who's flying tonight. You have the option to also return (very) early in the morning to join the moth reveal.

Meet: 9pm, The Old Fire Office, High St. (///riches.passes.verge). (0.5m, 1.5hrs)

ACCESSIBILITY: a short, city-centre walk, on quiet roads (or off-road) all the way and all hard-surfaced, with a central rest point and avoidable steps.

Friday 8th May

WALK 19: Little Explorers: A Toddler-Led Nature Walk. Join Lora Aziz for a gentle, curiosity-led walk in High Woods Country Park; a safe, relaxed stroll inviting you to follow your child's lead, whether that's bug watching, stick collecting, or pausing to admire an interesting leaf. A chance to see the world through your toddler's eyes, and connect with other like-minded parents. Changing facilities and coffee available. Ideal for toddlers and preschoolers (1–4 yrs). Siblings welcome.
Meet: 10am, in front of High Woods Visitor Centre ([///clay.silk.hangs](http://clay.silk.hangs)). (0.5m, 2hrs)

WALK 20: Roses for Remembrance – lest we forget. A deeper look at the symbolic meaning carried by 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 many of them as reminders of past people and events that have shaped our lives. With 'Friend of Castle Park', Cindy Salmon.
Meet: 11am, The Bandstand, Castle Park ([///glow.shares.secure](http://glow.shares.secure)). (0.25m, 1hr).

ACCESSIBILITY: A short, step-free walk on tarmac pathways, with a slight incline for a short distance.

WALK 21: Constable in the City. In June 2026, renowned artist John Constable would have been 250 yrs old. To celebrate, there are various events in East Bergholt, his birthplace, and in Flatford, where his father owned the Mill, the setting for his most famous painting, The Haywain (on display in Ipswich this summer). But did you know that Constable also spent time in Colchester when he stayed with relatives, and often went out sketching? This walk visits some of these city centre locations and looks the sketches he created during that time. With Bob Finch.
Meet: 2.30pm, outside Mercury Theatre (2m, 2hrs). This walk is repeated Sat. 9th.

ACCESSIBILITY: A level, step-free city centre walk, hard-surfaced, with restpoints.

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, stopping to learn unaccompanied harmony songs together, celebrating nature and the joy of singing. Everything is taught by ear, no previous singing experience necessary.
Meet: 6.30pm, inside entrance gate in James Carter Rd, opp. Shillito Close (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.

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)

ACCESSIBILITY: A city centre walk that is hard-surfaced and step-free, but may entail some medium-steep gradients.

WALK 24: A celebration of Colchester's celluloid history, through the eyes of Colchester film-making enthusiast, Bernard Polley.

In 1937, a short cine film was made of the Polley family whilst visiting family on Layer Road. This sparked a lifetime interest in film-making for the then 9 yr old Bernard. Since then, he has made over 200 films about Colchester, documenting many aspects of its history, including the changing fortunes of the city's cinemas. Join us for a look back at these buildings and their stories, concluding with a short film made by Bernard. As told by his friends Billie and Elisa.

Meet: 2.30pm. St. Botolph's roundabout, Mersea Rd exit (///villa.league.silly), (1m, 2hrs)

ACCESSIBILITY: 'A step-free city centre walk, hard-surfaced all the way, mostly level but with some short gradients'

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 accessibility info.

ACCESSIBILITY: A short, urban walk, but takes in East Hill, a significant, long gradient.

WALK 26: Constable in the City. A repeat of Bob Finch's walk (Friday 8th, above), celebrating the 250th anniversary of Constable's birth.

Meet: 6.30pm, outside Mercury Theatre (2m, 2hrs).

ACCESSIBILITY: A level, step-free city centre walk, hard-surfaced, with restpoints.

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 walk participants on a Jane's Walk ever. Where's it going? Nobody knows. Will it be worth it? You takes your chances. With Dr Anthony Roberts (The Dr will see you now).

Meet: 3am. Colchester Arts Centre (///radar.doors.degree). (unknown distance, unknown hours). *However, all accessibility needs will be met if you email the Dr in advance:

anthony@colchesterartscentre.com.

ACCESSIBILITY: Please see note from the walk leader immediately above.

WALK 28: Foraging in the Footsteps of the Invading Roman Army at Lexden.

The Roman Claudius invasion (AD43) brought a large invading army to take over the Celtic tribal capital kingdom of Camulodunum. To achieve this, a large, relatively unknown settlement was established at today's Lexden. Foragers were extremely important to feed the invading forces stationed there. This walk links us with a lost aspect of an important event in British history. With Mitch McLean. Booking required (email: wildceltlight@gmail.com).

Meet: 10am, Lexden Crown pub (2m, 3hrs). *Check accessibility info.

WALK 29: 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). Possibly too long for 2-3 yr olds; usually too 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).

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

CYCLE 30: 3rd Annual Pam Nelson Memorial 'Jane's Cycle' Ride. 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. Booking advisable (email: janeswalkcolch@gmail.com). Please ensure bikes are roadworthy & the distance OK at a leisurely pace. With Neil Allen.

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 31: Boudica Rising: A walk of ember and ash. Follow local artist Rebekah Wallace, a First Nations immigrant, through Colchester's hidden layers. Peel back the pavement beneath your feet. Experience 'sensory archeology', inherited from First Nations ways of being. Stand where a warrior queen burned an empire. 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)

ACCESSIBILITY: A hard-surfaced, step-free walk (there are some shallow steps which can be avoided), that includes medium-steep gradients down through Castle Park and some narrow pavements.

WALK 32: The Wrong End of the Stick. A closer look at Colchester's public conveniences, the history, stories and artwork. Ending at The Minories 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).

ACCESSIBILITY: A level, step-free city centre walk, hard-surfaced, with restpoints.

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 Minories. (garden entrance).

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