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SPRING 2026



Explore  
Essex

# ESSEX EXPLORER

## Magazine

Celebrating 250  
years of Constable

Culture, crafts  
and gardens

Spring spa breaks,  
strolls and scones

**WIN**

a spa package with  
Talbooth House

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# THE Festival of Essex Archaeology & Heritage

Thursday  
23 JULY  
10.00am to 5.00pm

History,  
archaeology  
and family fun  
at Cressing  
Temple Barns

 Essex County Council

 CRESSING  
TEMPLE BARNs

[explore-essex.com/events](https://explore-essex.com/events)

# Welcome . . .

To the spring edition of Essex Explorer magazine. In this edition we have a fantastic competition for you to enter to win a spa package worth almost £600 courtesy of our friends at Talbooth House.

We're also launching Pup Stars! - our new competition for four-legged friends to win a £25 Pets at Home voucher every month. We want to see photos of your fabulous furry friends enjoying the Essex Country Parks. See page eight for how to enter.

We celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of English Romantic painter John Constable and feature a range of walks and exhibitions taking place. We also look at the latest arts and culture projects coming to the county.

There are also great recipes from our friends at Tiptree Tea Rooms and some simple but fun make at home craft creations to keep you and your kids entertained.

Browse more ideas for days out over the coming months (see page 38) or meander around the county thanks to new trails, the Essex Film Office movie map as well as much more.



Credit: Hanningfield Waterside Park

**This magazine is available as an accessible PDF.**  
To request a copy email [Explore.Essex@essex.gov.uk](mailto:Explore.Essex@essex.gov.uk)

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## About us

Explore Essex brings together a unique group of green spaces and heritage places owned and managed by Essex County Council. Our mission is to provide a range of facilities and activities for the people of Essex to enjoy. Conservation is also at the heart of what we do, and any money spent with the Explore Essex group of places is ultimately reinvested to maintain and develop our sites for the benefit of visitors and to protect the flora and fauna within.

## Get Connected

Keep up-to-date with our news, activities and competitions.

 [www.explore-essex.com](http://www.explore-essex.com)

 [@exploressex](https://www.facebook.com/exploressex)

 [@exploressex](https://www.instagram.com/exploressex)

 [@exploressex](https://twitter.com/exploressex)

 [Explore.Essex@essex.gov.uk](mailto:Explore.Essex@essex.gov.uk)

Please share or recycle this magazine where possible.



## New barn owl boxes and more to support wildlife at Essex Country Parks

Funded work has continued at the Essex Country Parks to support wildlife and biodiversity for the future.

Some of the highlights include new fencing to protect the grazing marsh and borrow dykes at Cudmore Grove and Marsh Farm to boost numbers of water voles, waders and overwintering birds, such as brent geese.

At Belhus Woods new areas of wood pasture and grassland will be grazed by red poll cattle this year to encourage more species of flowers, insects and small mammals. New nesting boxes have also been put up for dormice and barn owls – with the latter moving in almost straight away.



## Super sustainability initiatives coming this year

A new Sustainable Essex website and editions of the Climate Action Advice Packs are now available for the county's residents.



The new packs provide residents with expert advice on how we can all help the local environment.

The Sustainable Essex website also allows residents to explore the work carried out by local communities and organisations across the county.

To view the new packs visit: [www.essex.gov.uk/planning-land-and-recycling/energy-climate-and-environment/reducing-carbon-emissions](http://www.essex.gov.uk/planning-land-and-recycling/energy-climate-and-environment/reducing-carbon-emissions)

Want to find out more and read the Climate Action annual report? Visit: [www.essex.gov.uk/about-council/plans-and-strategies/environment-and-planning/climate-action](http://www.essex.gov.uk/about-council/plans-and-strategies/environment-and-planning/climate-action)

For all the latest environmental news stories from across the county, sign up to the newsletter: [www.pages.news.essex.gov.uk/pages/subscribe](http://www.pages.news.essex.gov.uk/pages/subscribe)

## New heritage trails coming to Cressing

A range of new interactive walking trails are coming to Cressing Temple Barns as part of the Working Farm project.

From September visitors will be able to enjoy the new trails, which will be full of information at the push of a button or via a QR code.

Thanks to funding from the National Lottery, through Arts Council England, the Friends of Cressing Temple Barns have been busy with a project documenting the 900-year history of Cressing as a working farm.

Having restored some of the antique farm machinery to its former glory, the Friends are now working on eight new walking trails - each focusing on a different era of Cressing's history.

From the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 to Cressing hosting 'land girls' during World War Two, the story of the site's rich farming history will be brought to life through storytelling and educational materials.

Sue Lowe, Chair of The Friends of Cressing Temple, said: "Many will be familiar with Cressing's majestic timber-framed barns but less well known is its rich and varied 900-year history as a working farm - from the 1100s right through to the 1980s.

"From this September visitors of all ages will be able to enjoy the new walking trails and gleaming machinery. Before then though you might catch a glimpse of us road-testing the trails, sprucing up the machinery or installing new signage and audiovisual equipment."

[www.explore-essex.com/cressing-temple-barns](http://www.explore-essex.com/cressing-temple-barns)



# 12 things to do in Essex this spring

We've pulled together our top 12 tips on what to see and where to go to put a spring in your step this season.



## ONE

**Celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Constable** this year by taking a walk in Dedham and exploring the landscapes that inspired him (see pages [16](#) and [17](#)).



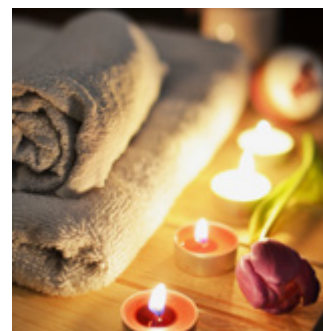
## TWO

**Visit Colchester and Ipswich museums:** Look out for events and exhibitions to celebrate Constable and step back in time this year (pages [18](#) and [19](#)).



## THREE

**Relax and unwind this spring at an Essex spa:** Take a trip to Maison Talbooth, Dedham, and enter our competition to win a spa day (pages [36](#) and [37](#)).



## FOUR

**Take your four-legged friends on an adventure:** Discover different walks at Essex Country Parks and enter our 'Pup Stars' competition to be a parks pup of the month (pages [8](#) and [9](#)).

## FIVE

**Discover the new treasure trails in Rochford:** Choose from woods and villages, town and reservoir or rivers scenic drive (pages [32 and 33](#)).



## SIX

Spend precious time with the family at home with our **Easter makes** (pages [28 and 29](#)).



## SEVEN

**Learn to sail:** Discover the new adults learn to sail weekends at Bradwell-on-Sea, kid's weeks or enjoy a sailing experience day (pages [34 and 35](#)).

## NINE

**Visit a gorgeous garden this spring:** Read more about Beth Chatto and her award-winning garden (pages [14 and 15](#)).



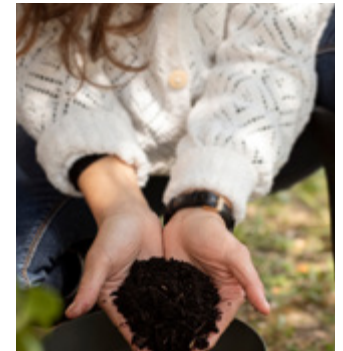
## ELEVEN

**Volunteer with us:** Boost social connection and mental health by volunteering at one of our sites. [www.explore-essex.com/support-us](http://www.explore-essex.com/support-us)



## TEN

**Cook up a storm with our seasonal recipes** from our friends at Tiptree Tea Rooms or enjoy an afternoon tea at one of Tiptree's top locations or at home (pages [26 and 27](#)).



## TWELVE

**Go green:** Download the Carbon Cutting Essex app, take up home composting and check out the new guides on how we can all make small changes that make a big difference.

[www.greenredeem.co.uk/cce](http://www.greenredeem.co.uk/cce)

[www.lovesessex.org/ideas/get-started-home-composting](http://www.lovesessex.org/ideas/get-started-home-composting)

## EIGHT

Discover how Essex crafts people are contributing to Oscar nominated films and **plan a day out inspired by the movie map** (pages [22 and 23](#)).



## Discover the Essex Country Parks Explorer Pass to save.

Planning to make 2026 your year outside? Invest in an Essex Country Parks annual Explorer Pass to save money on multiple visits and more.

[www.explore-essex.com/explorer-pass](http://www.explore-essex.com/explorer-pass)

# Does your park loving pooch have star quality?

Enter our 'Park Pup Stars' competition to win vouchers.

Essex Country Parks are running a competition for outdoor loving dogs and their owners this year.

We want to see photos of your fabulous four-legged friends enjoying the country parks and hear the reasons why they love visiting.

**Does your pooch possess the cuteness and character to be our star of the month?**

We'll share some of the entries on social media with one winner receiving a £25 Pets Corner voucher and the chance to feature in our calendar at the end of the year.

#### To enter

Simply send your photo(s) along with your dog's name, park and reason why your pooch loves to visit to: [explore.essex@essex.gov.uk](mailto:explore.essex@essex.gov.uk)

#### Participating parks:

- Belhus Woods Country Park
- Cudmore Grove Country Park
- Danbury Country Park
- Great Notley Country Park
- Hadleigh Country Park
- Marsh Farm Country Park
- Thorndon Country Park (north and south)
- Weald Country Park

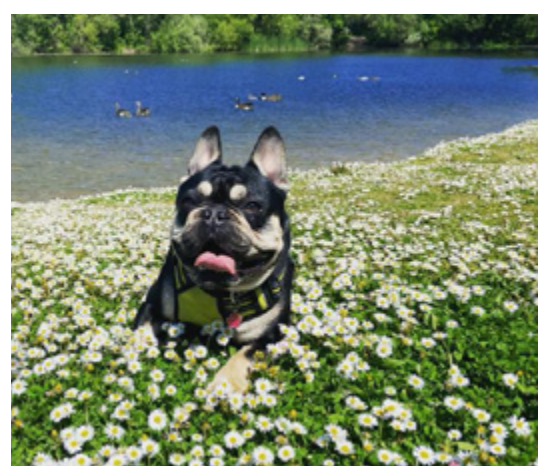
For full terms and conditions:

[www.explore-essex.com/essex-parks-pup-stars](http://www.explore-essex.com/essex-parks-pup-stars)

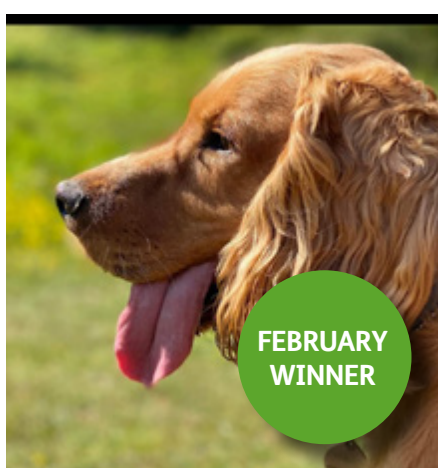
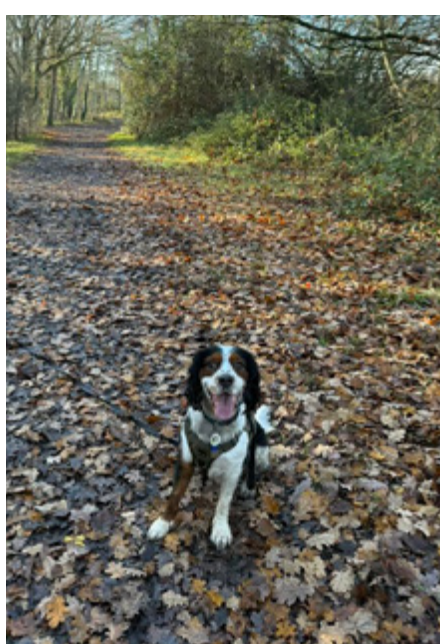
# Meet some of our Pup Star entrants

Thanks to everyone who has entered so far.

From top left: Beau and The Guffalo at Thorndon; Luna at Belhus Woods, Bella at Belhus, Alfie at Weald, Rory in the woods at Belhus, Teddy at Hadleigh and Alfie at Weald.



JANUARY WINNER



FEBRUARY WINNER



# Photography in the parks

Andrew Adams is a long time Essex Explorer contributor who enjoys nothing more than trekking and photographing the flora and fauna found within our amazing parks.



Blue tit

These stunning seasonal images were taken at Danbury, Thorndon and Weald Country Parks.

To see more of Andrew's photography, visit his Instagram page: [#andrew\\_d\\_adams](#) or website: [www.andrewadamsphotography.com](http://www.andrewadamsphotography.com)

Find out more about Essex Country Parks by visiting: [www.explore-essex.com/places-to-go/essex-country-parks-2](http://www.explore-essex.com/places-to-go/essex-country-parks-2)



Fallow deer



Gosling



Swan



Greylag goose and goslings



Mandarin duck



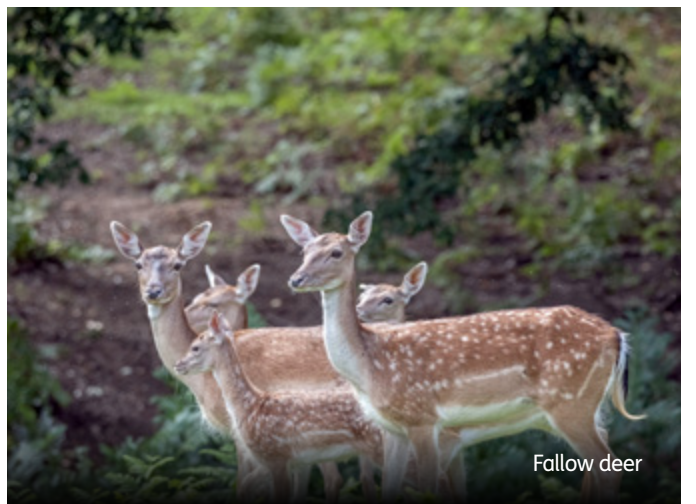
Egyptian gosling



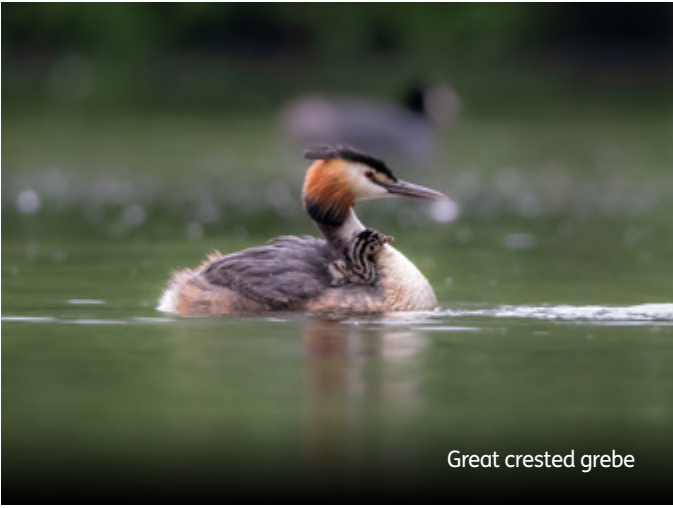
Egyptian goose and goslings



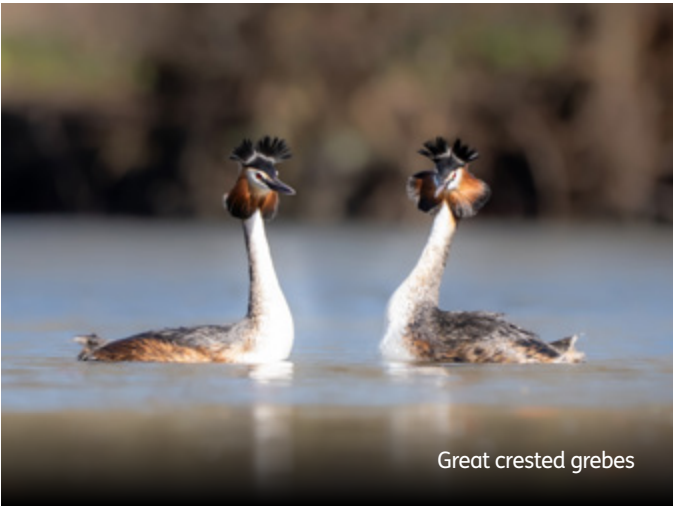
Goldfinch



Fallow deer



Great crested grebe



Great crested grebes



Spotted woodpecker

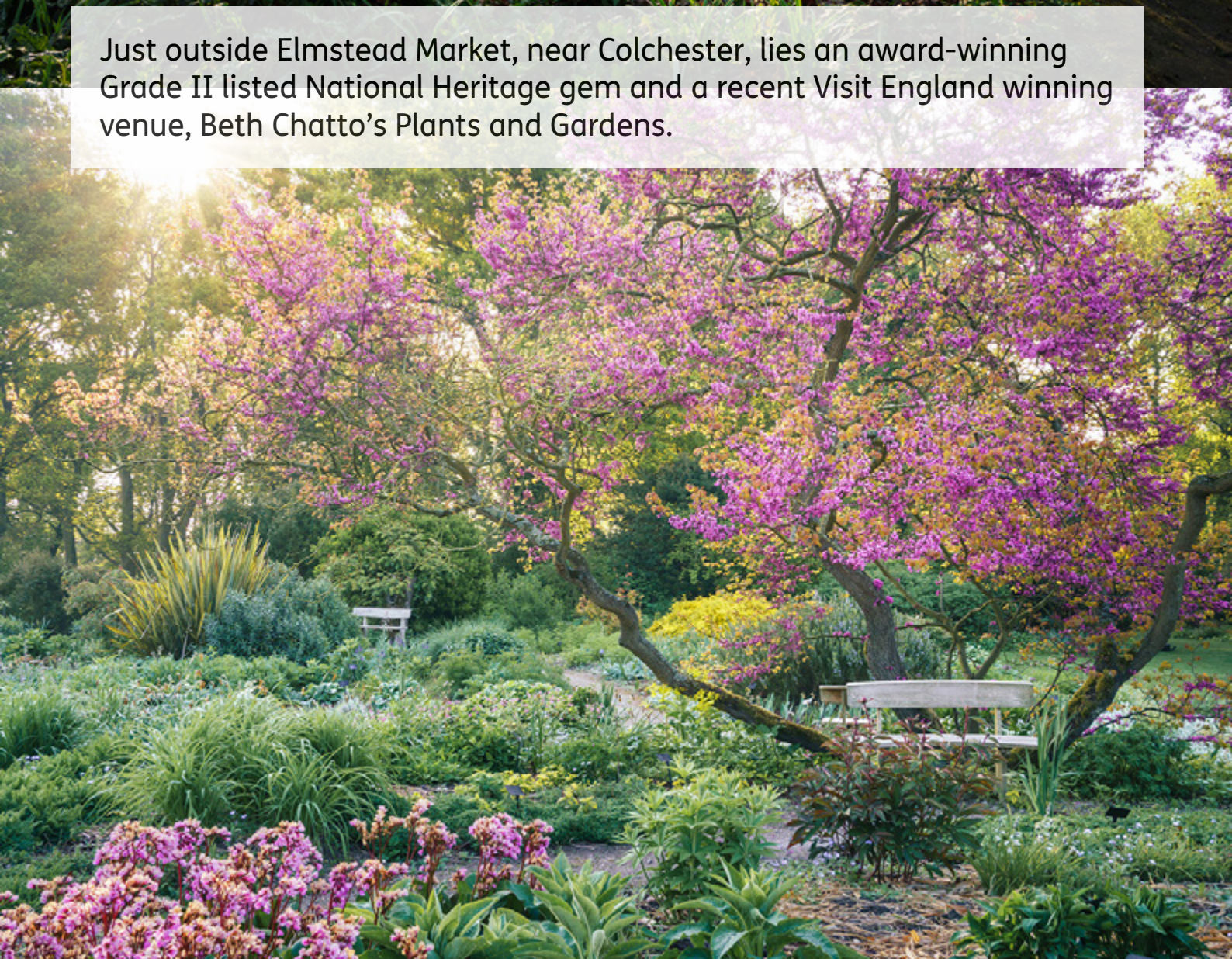


Bluebells

# Discover Beth Chatto's Gardens

A photograph of a garden path. The path is made of dirt and is surrounded by a dense variety of plants. In the foreground, there are large clumps of yellow daffodils and purple flowers. The path leads into the distance, flanked by more greenery and trees. The lighting is soft, suggesting a sunny day with some shade.

Just outside Elmstead Market, near Colchester, lies an award-winning Grade II listed National Heritage gem and a recent Visit England winning venue, Beth Chatto's Plants and Gardens.

A photograph of a garden scene. A large, mature tree with a thick, gnarled trunk is the central focus, covered in vibrant purple blossoms. A wooden bench is positioned in front of the tree. The garden is filled with various plants, including tall grasses and other flowering shrubs. The background shows more trees and a bright sky, suggesting a sunny day.

**C**reated by the famous plantswoman Beth Chatto OBE VHM in 1960, the renowned gardens follow her principle of 'right plant, right place' and is a popular destination for those with green fingers to this day.

### The History of Beth Chatto's Plants and Gardens

Following her husband Andrew's retirement, the Chatto family built their new home on wasteland that had once been part of the Chatto fruit farm.

Starting a garden on the site proved difficult due to the low annual rainfall, so Beth turned to Andrew's plant research and selected flora that could survive different conditions.

As a child of enthusiastic gardening parents, Beth became involved in the Flower Club movement in the late 1950's demonstrating flower arranging, speaking at lectures and opening clubs.

In 1967 the Beth Chatto Garden Nursery officially began. Due to the Flower Club members, Beth had an enthusiastic audience and from a small hand typed sheet to a mail order business, a plant nursery was born. Today the propagation team produce around 100,000 plants each year with many propagated from plants Beth collected.

In January 1975, Beth's exhibition 'Unusual Plants' won a silver medal at RHS Hall, Westminster. During the following years Beth's stand of 'unusual plants' went on to win 10 consecutive gold medals at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show.

Due to this success, Beth produced her first book, 'The Dry Garden' in 1978 and went on to publish eight more as well as write magazine and newspaper articles.



This success led to her speaking at lectures during the 1980's and 1990's in America, Canada and further afield. In fact, in 1987 Beth received the Royal Horticulture Society's highest accolade - the Victoria Medal of Honour (VHM).

In 2002 Beth's passion and knowledge were further recognised and she was awarded an OBE for services to horticulture in the Queen's Birthday honours.

From 2002 to 2015, Beth received an Honorary Doctorate from Anglia Ruskin University and celebrated 50 years of the gardens (in 2010). She was also received a Lifetime Achievement award from the Society of Garden Design in 2014.

Wanting her passion for plants to continue, she established the Beth Chatto Education Trust Charity in 2015.

On May 13, 2018, Beth passed away at the age of 94-years-old. To celebrate her life a memorial was held at the Garden Museum in London.

In a career spanning six decades Beth Chatto OBE VHM introduced to the world to her ethos of 'right plant, right place' – a principle which continues to inspire gardeners.

### Beth Chatto's Plants and Gardens

Today the seven-and-a-half-acre site is home to a series of gardens and is run by Beth's granddaughter Julia Boulton.

Open to the public throughout the year, the gardens feature a visitor information centre, tearoom, gift shop and a plant nursery.

The gardens themselves contain five distinct areas. Visitors can marvel at the scree garden, which features a series of raised beds containing alpine plants, a water garden full of rich foliage and colours, and a gravel garden showcasing drought tolerant plants.

Others include a woodland garden – featuring shade loving plants under a canopy of oak trees – and a reservoir garden that's home to ornamental grasses and prairie style plants.

Not only can visitors enjoy the gardens, but they can also learn about propagation, attend workshops and events (see the listings on page 37 for more) as well as discover all the latest projects being carried out by the Beth Chatto Education Trust.

Plan a trip today by visiting: [www.bethchatto.co.uk](http://www.bethchatto.co.uk)

Images courtesy of Julie Skelton.



# Take a walk through Constable country

To mark the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of artist John Constable, why not visit 'Constable Country' and explore the landscape that inspired the renowned painter?



Born in East Bergholt in 1776, Constable became known for his paintings of the Essex and Suffolk landscape.

**I**n fact, he became famous in the art world in 1824 when his painting – ‘The Haywain’ – was exhibited at the Louve, Paris. Originally painted in 1821, ‘The Haywain’ is just one of Constable’s artworks and to mark his 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary three fascinating exhibitions are coming to Ipswich and Colchester Museums.

However, you can experience and explore the areas that inspired him to produce artworks such as ‘The Haywain’, ‘The Vale of Dedham’ and ‘Flatford Mill (Scene on a Navigable River)’, amongst many others.

Take a trip to Dedham Vale and the Stour Valley - both are recognised as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty – and you can take a walk through the ages. Whether you’re an experienced hiker or looking for a leisurely stroll, this three-mile walk is ideal for all ages and abilities.

- Starting in the centre of Dedham outside St. Mary’s church, walk eastwards along the high street (the Marlborough Head inn should be on your left and the war memorial on your right).
- Where the road bends sharply to the right go straight on along the footpath (which soon bears left) and continue so you pass Dedham Hall Business Park on the left and after half-a-mile you’ll reach the River Stour.
- Turn right and walk along the footpath next to the river and you’ll pass Fen Bridge, which is a replica of the bridge Constable would have used to go to school in Dedham.
- Continue on to Flatford and cross over the humped back bridge. Turn right and you can see a small Constable exhibition in Bridge Cottage, the dry dock, Flatford Mill and Willy Lotts cottage which featured in ‘The Haywain’.
- Here you can choose to shorten or lengthen your walk. For a short walk cross back over the hump backed bridge and walk back into Dedham.
- For a longer walk, continue eastwards along the riverside path on the south bank of the river and you’ll come to the ‘56 gates’ – these were concrete sluice gates built in 1947 to prevent flooding. Cross over the bridge and follow the path to the right, you’ll go through a field gate and through a field with cattle and you’ll reach a concrete farm road.
- Turn right on the road and follow it for approximately a quarter of a mile until it takes a sharp left hand. Then follow the footpath opposite you and it’ll take you back to Dedham where you can recover with a drink and a bite to eat in the 15<sup>th</sup> century inn, The Marlborough Head.

Discover more about John Constable and the walks around the Dedham Vale by visiting: [www.visitessex.com/explore/destinations/dedham-vale](http://www.visitessex.com/explore/destinations/dedham-vale)



Credit: Diana Jarvis

**Want to combine history and culture with a walk at an Essex Country Park? Then visit Hadleigh and enjoy a walk of the park where you can take in the stunning views of Hadleigh Castle.**

Constable, who visited Hadleigh Castle in 1814, produced an oil painting of it in 1829. Today the painting is housed at the Yale Centre for British Art in New Haven. However, you can experience the castle in all its glory on this simple but enjoyable walk.

For a round trip to Hadleigh Castle start at Chapel Lane car park and walk downhill until you reach the marsh.

Then turn left towards the castle and follow the path until you reach the farm track, which rises steeply to the castle.

To return to Chapel Lane car park, head out of the castle towards the Salvation Army tea rooms and follow the road with the white houses - Sea View Terrace - to a farm track which takes you back to the park’s entrance.

[www.explore-essex.com/places-to-go/find-whats-near-me/hadleigh-country-park](http://www.explore-essex.com/places-to-go/find-whats-near-me/hadleigh-country-park)



# Exhibitions to commemorate 250 years of John Constable

Three landmark exhibitions are coming to Colchester and Ipswich Museums to celebrate the artist.



The Haywain

John Constable became one of the country's most important painters before his death in 1837 at the age of 60. He was an English Romantic painter known for his bucolic landscapes, which are considered as some of the most popular and valuable in British art. To commemorate his life and art, the year-long exhibitions will feature a programme of works and activities.

**S**upported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, and other funding partners, the exhibitions will run from Saturday 28 March to Sunday 28 February 2027.

The exhibitions will showcase rare and internationally significant artworks on loan from the Tate, Victoria and Albert Museum, Royal Academy, National Galleries of Scotland and the Government Art Collection.

Forthcoming exhibitions include:

**Constable: A Cast of Characters**

(Sunday 28 March to Sunday 14 June).

Featuring personal letters, period costume and historical artefacts,

the exhibition focuses on those who inspired and supported John Constable. Works from Colchester and Ipswich Museums will be on display along with loans from private collectors. A new sculpture by artist and descendant, Sarah Constable, will also be available to view.

**Constable: Walking the Landscape**

(Saturday 11 July to Sunday 4 October).

This three-month exhibition celebrates Constable's connection to the countryside that inspired him and that he loved. The exhibition will feature rarely seen works on loan and his most personal paintings from his childhood home.

**Constable to Contemporary**

(Saturday 24 October to Sunday 28 February 2027).

The final exhibition will highlight the relevancy and legacy of Constable's works and will feature new works by local artists and community groups.

For more information about the exhibitions, tickets and booking visit: [www.ipswich.cimuseums.org.uk/constable250](http://www.ipswich.cimuseums.org.uk/constable250)



Hadleigh Castle



The Vale of Dedham



Wivenhoe Park

## Step back in time with a visit to Hollytrees Museum.

Built in 1718, the Georgian house was home to Charles Gray, an attorney, a Justice of the Peace and a Member of Parliament for Colchester. Until 1929 the house was used as a private residence when it then became a museum.

In fact, the house is known as Hollytrees due to the holly trees planted in the grounds by Charles Gray in 1729.

Today, the museum is home to a range of collections including toys, art, costumes and clocks, such as the Bernard Mason Clock collection which features long cases and lantern clocks.

Specialising in local history, the museum offers a range of activities for all ages.

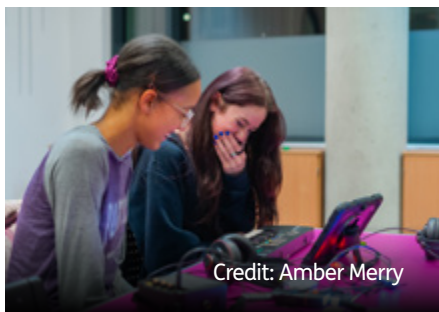
[www.colchester.cimuseums.org.uk/visit/hollytrees-museum](http://www.colchester.cimuseums.org.uk/visit/hollytrees-museum)

# New art and cultural projects coming to county

New arts and culture projects are coming to Essex this year thanks to council funding.



Credit: Creative Colchester



Credit: Amber Merry



Credit: Mads Pierce

**T**he six successful applicants of the council's Creative Industries Project Development Fund and the Cultural Development Project Fund will launch projects that support local talent.

Receiving between £2,500 and £30,000 in funding, the projects include filmmaking, music and research, workshops and a new Roman exhibition.

The successful applicants include film studios, a music organisation, museums and community interest companies - all of which will support young people and help them gain industry experience.

## Creative Industries Project Fund includes:

**WVE Studios** will be inspiring the next generation of the county's creative professionals by providing a filmmaking programme and a career pathway for student filmmakers.

**CLIP Sound and Music CIC** is researching and developing the 'Photon Smasher'. Aimed at young scientists, STEM and creative educators and musicians, the project will feature a pioneering microphone that allows users to listen to light.

**Aura Films** will produce films inspired by Essex legends and folklores and reimagined for modern audiences. The project will offer placements to those aspiring to enter the film and television industry.

**Creative Colchester CIC is hosting a Creative Careers Progression Day** for young people wanting to work in the industry. The event will see practitioners provide advice and industry insights.



Credit: Aura Films

### Cultural Development Grant Fund includes:

**Epping Forest District Museum** will present 'Town and Country: Life in Roman Duroлитum'. The project will feature local Roman heritage exhibitions, events and school talks to support materials from the Duroлитum archaeological site.

**The Minories.** Renowned as being Colchester's oldest art gallery, the project will see The Minories produce a sustainable marketing programme to promote the gallery and improve access to it.

The funding is vital for the arts and cultural community. In fact, recent figures revealed that organisations within the art, culture and film sectors are highly important to the county's economy. In 2025 more than 7,500 creative Essex companies employed over 30,000 people.



Credit: WWE Studios

To find out more about the projects visit: [www.culture-essex.co.uk/funding](http://www.culture-essex.co.uk/funding)

Applications for this year's funding are now closed. The successful applicants will be announced at the end of March 2026.

# Starring Essex

Discover the Oscar worthy craftspeople working behind the scenes on the world's biggest movies.

Credit: Netflix

**F**ounded and led by marine engineer Jim Dines, Heritage Marine Ltd has evolved from a traditional shipyard into a specialist provider for film. Jim's career spans decades from serving as an Engineer Officer in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary to working on the design and build of two 40,000-ton tankers for the Ministry of Defence.

Did you know that when you're marvelling at sweeping maritime scenes in blockbuster films, that a boatyard in Maldon is often responsible for helping to create the magic?

Today, his passion for maritime heritage fuels a unique enterprise that blends engineering precision with creative artistry.

Heritage Marine doesn't just restore historic vessels - it builds entire worlds for film. From authentic World War Two landing craft to fantastic flying ships, Heritage Marine's expertise has supported some of the most ambitious film projects.

In recent years it's supported:

- Guillermo del Toro's 'Frankenstein' (2025), produced by Netflix. The team designed and built the rigging for a full size ship, which was then

transported to Canada. They flew out to spend five weeks rigging the ship, standing by as specialist advisers on the shoot.

- 'Paddington III: Paddington in Peru' (2024), produced by StudioCanal and Heyday Films. The team rigged and supplied maritime props and set decoration for gimballed boat sets, built rope bridges and provided marine training for the cast and crew.
- Paramount's 'A Quiet Place: Day One' (2024), directed by Michael Sarnoski. The company supplied and operated a 1914 steel coaster as the hero ship for dramatic dockside scenes.



And that's just a glimpse of their most recent work in a portfolio that spans 'Game of Thrones', 'Wonder Woman', 'Death on the Nile' and many more.

Through the Heritage Marine Foundation - a registered charity set up by the company - Jim and his team are passing on these rare skills to young people, ensuring the preservation of maritime heritage while creating pathways into the film industry.

**From horror chocolatier to Netflix collaborator**

Guillermo del Toro's production of 'Frankenstein' also selected another Essex-based supplier to work with

for their adaptation of Mary Shelly's gothic novel. They opted to use authentic, handcrafted props to help realise chilling yet realistic effects on screen.

This is where a rather unusual supplier, Sarah Hardy, Essex-based 'horror chocolatier' and founder of 'The Edible Museum' in Sible Hedingham, came in. Sarah was commissioned to craft 'jewel like' chocolate beetles in a precise palette, with colours that tied back to the narrative and specific characters (for instance red hues to reflect Frankenstein's mother).

Sarah delivered a stock of anatomically accurate pieces made of milk, dark and white chocolate,

combining her sculpting background and mould-making techniques to achieve hyper-realistic results. The crew loved them and ordered more immediately.

Sarah's craft reflects years of experience earning recognition from Guillermo del Toro himself, who chose her authentic craftsmanship over CGI and AI for this project.

**Starring Essex:** Want to see more? Then use the movie map to inspire your days out.

[www.essexfilloffice.co.uk/essex-movie-map](http://www.essexfilloffice.co.uk/essex-movie-map)

# Spring reads

**We've pulled together a selection of new books for every occasion. So, whether you're looking for thrills, chills or good old escapism, get ready to be transported from the comfort of your sofa.**

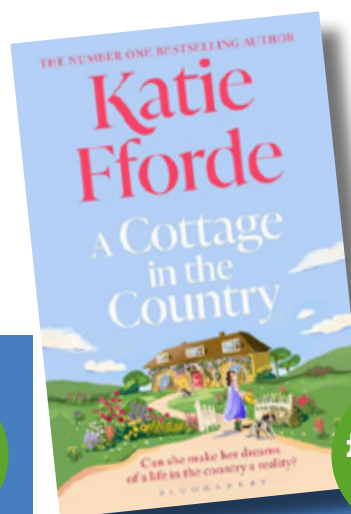


**£25.00**  
RRP HB

Book club:

## Land

By Maggie O'Farrell



**£16.99**  
RRP HB

Cosy fiction:

## A Cottage in the Country

By Katie Fforde



**£10.99**  
RRP PB

Not so cosy crime:

## What the Night Brings

By Mark Billingham

'You will never understand how the land remembers, how deep the roots grow.'

A spellbinding story of separation, longing, recovery and survival as a family makes a new home in the aftermath of tragedy. From the bestselling and award-winning author of 'Hamnet'.

The heartwarming new romance from the number one bestselling author, for perfect escapism.

'An escapist, romantic story of love, friendship and gorgeous houses...'

'Warm, wise and wonderful',  
Lucy Diamond.

The brand-new Tom Thorne thriller in paperback.

'A sensational, masterful, sharp and shocking thriller. Mark Billingham needs no introduction, but What the Night Brings is a true standout in one of the great crime series of our time,'  
Chris Whittaker.



**£20.00**  
RRP HB

Non-fiction:

## Wild Peaks

By Tom Chesshyre

A journey through Britain's first National Park on its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Celebrated travel writer Tom Chesshyre hits the trails on a 363-mile ramble to celebrate this symbolic home of hiking.

Don your cagoule, grab a compass and join Tom as he explores how the land has changed and how we have too.



**£7.99**  
RRP PB

Kids book:

## The Wonder

By Tom Percival

From bestselling author-illustrator Tom Percival comes a beautiful picture book that encourages us to take notice of all the wondrous little things that happen to us each day.

## 2026 is the National Year of Reading

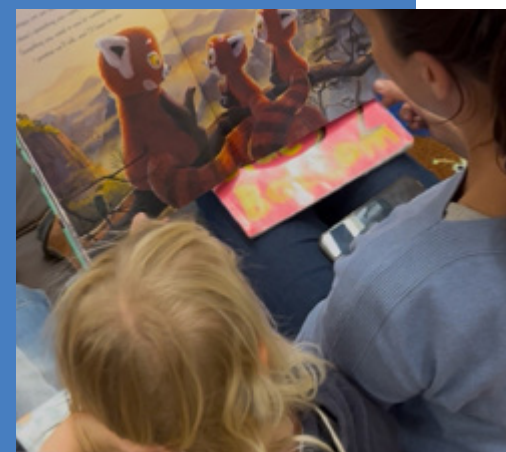
Led by the Department for Education and the National Literacy Trust, the National Year of Reading aims to take dullness and routine out of reading.

Along with other libraries across the land, Essex Library Service will be seeking new ways to boost reading for pleasure, by linking reading to your existing passions.

Are you into music? Games? Films? They can find reading that matches your hobby, your interest or your mood.

Look out for new events and initiatives coming your way this year. Key events will be added to their website as they are announced.

[www.libraries.essex.gov.uk/news/national-year-of-reading](http://www.libraries.essex.gov.uk/news/national-year-of-reading)



# Tasty Tiptree treats

Enjoy a quintessential afternoon tea in this stunning setting in Dedham or make your own scones to enjoy with friends and family at home.



Tiptree staff met The King and Queen in February to mark 25 years of The Essex Rose and 140 years of jam making at Tiptree.

Credit: Paul Starr

## Essex Rose Tea Room

## Nestled in Dedham village, the Essex Rose Tea Room offers a peaceful retreat with nearby attractions.

Why not indulge in a tasty afternoon tea, available every day from 12.00pm, and make a day of it with a scenic stroll along the River Stour or enjoy a boat ride from Dedham Boathouse.

You could combine your visit and relax at Milsoms Hotel and Spa or embark on the Constable walk, immersing yourself in the area's heritage. The Essex Rose and Dedham invites visitors to enjoy its diverse offerings at their own pace.

Discover all the Tiptree Tea Rooms:  
[www.tiptreetearooms.com/pages/locations](http://www.tiptreetearooms.com/pages/locations)

## Make Tiptree treats at home

Sometimes there's nothing better than a classic sweet scone to accompany your afternoon tea, but every now and then, this fluffy, foolproof scone recipe serves as the perfect base.

## Ingredients

- 350g self-raising flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 90g unsalted butter, cubed
- 40g caster sugar
- 175ml milk
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- ½ tsp lemon juice or white wine vinegar
- 1 beaten egg, to glaze
- Rodda's Clotted Cream, to serve
- [Tiptree East Anglian Strawberry Conserve, to serve](#)
- You will need a 5cm/2" round cutter

## Directions

1. Preheat oven to 220°C/200°C Fan / gas mark 7.
2. Cover two baking trays with parchment paper.
3. Add milk to a measuring jug and add vanilla extract and lemon juice or vinegar. Set aside, it will look curdled in a few minutes.
4. Add flour and baking powder to a large bowl. Mix well.
5. Add butter and rub into the flour with fingertips until the mixture looks like fine breadcrumbs.
6. Add the sugar and mix.
7. Add the milk bit by bit and using a fork or blunt knife stir the milk into the flour to get a soft sticky dough. If the dough seems a bit dry add a splash more milk.
8. Then tip the dough onto a lightly floured surface and knead lightly. Two or three dough folds should be enough. Don't overwork the dough.
9. Pat to an even round, about three to four cm thick.
10. Dip the cutter into some flour, then cut as many rounds as possible. Don't twist the cutter, just push down and lift straight up.
11. Gather the remaining dough back into another round and cut out more scones.
12. Place scones on the baking trays and brush the top with beaten egg. Try not to get any egg down the sides.
13. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes until pale golden brown and well risen.
14. Eat whilst still slightly warm with Tiptree East Anglian Strawberry Conserve and Rodda's Clotted Cream.

For more variations including Earl Grey and lemon and black pepper and strawberry visit:  
[www.tiptree.com/blogs/recipes/classic-scone-recipe-with-3-variations](http://www.tiptree.com/blogs/recipes/classic-scone-recipe-with-3-variations)

Recipe for Tiptree by @MazzyMc on Instagram

# Make your own Easter woodland bunny

Children and parents alike can enjoy this low-cost and simple craft, it's great fun whatever your age.



Whether you're in your garden, out and about on your next walk or visiting an Essex Country Park, why not collect wildflowers, leaves, long blades of fresh grass and twigs (optional)?

To create your woodland bunny picture, you'll also need a pen(s), paper and a basket.

## Step 1:

Draw two dots for eyes, an upside-down triangle for the nose and a 'w' shape for the mouth.

## Step 2:

Use small leaves to make the bunny's round face and add petals to the top to make a crown. We used cherry blossom flowers, dandelions and daisies.

## Step 3:

Choose two pointy leaves to use as ears and the blades of grass or twigs as whiskers.

## Step 4:

You can stick all your bits to your piece of paper or re-arrange them to make lots of different pictures.



# Celebrate Easter with this 'eggcellent' wreath

Create a beautiful decorative wreath while recycling your old egg cartons.



To create this craft, you'll need the following materials:  
Egg boxes, scissors, paint, string or ribbon, thick cardboard and PVA glue.

## Step 1:

Create the base for your wreath by cutting out a cardboard circle – using a large dinner plate works well for this. Then, cut out a smaller circle (a smaller dinner plate would work) inside the larger circle to create your wreath base.

## Step 2:

Cut up your egg boxes to create pretty flower shapes - try a few different ways of cutting them to create different flower designs. Then, paint each 'flower' in a lovely spring colour.

## Step 3:

Cut some leaf shapes out of cardboard and paint them green. Use your PVA glue to stick them onto your wreath, on both the inside and outside edges.

## Step 4:

Apply PVA glue to the entire wreath and stick down your egg carton flowers. Try to cover your base.



## Step 5:

Once your wreath is dry, add some finishing touches. Pom-poms work well in the centre of the flowers.

## Step 6:

Finally, get some string or ribbon and attach it to the back of your wreath.

Now it's time to hang your wreath up. Where will yours go? You can always send in pictures of your wreath to [Explore.Essex@essex.gov.uk](mailto:Explore.Essex@essex.gov.uk)



# Spend family time outdoors this Easter



## Play in the parks

This spring Essex Country Parks will see a £300,00 investment in children's play areas.

In particular the much loved play trail at Great Notley will benefit from new sand pit play, climbing forest, sensory pieces and more.

Work will take place at Belhus Woods, Hadleigh and Great Notley Country Parks, which will result in some brief closures and diversions whilst the improvements are made.

Want to play in the parks this Easter? Families can enjoy the marine themed play area at Cudmore Grove, natural wooden play areas and Stick Man at Weald as well as The Gruffalo sculpture trail and den building at Thorndon, all of which remain open throughout.

A free Easter trail will also be running at all the Essex Country Parks throughout the school holiday for little ones to enjoy.

[www.explore-essex.com/places-to-go/kids-play-and-trails](http://www.explore-essex.com/places-to-go/kids-play-and-trails)

## Soar to new heights this spring

Looking for a fun family activity? Our high ropes adventures at Great Notley and Harlow are open for the Easter school holiday.

Challenge balance, boost confidence and have huge amounts of fun on these exhilarating sessions with a choice of courses depending on age and height.

Find out more:

[www.explore-essex.com/places-to-go/sky-ropes](http://www.explore-essex.com/places-to-go/sky-ropes)

[www.essexoutdoors.com/harlow-high-adventure/](http://www.essexoutdoors.com/harlow-high-adventure/)



## You might also like The Lock

Essex's largest indoor climbing wall. Discover taster sessions, learn to climb for children, young people and adults.

[www.essexoutdoors.com/the-lock-climbing-wall](http://www.essexoutdoors.com/the-lock-climbing-wall)





“The amount of time children are spending outdoors is decreasing, the amount of research showing that outdoor play is hugely important for children’s development has grown.

Dozens of studies have now found that spending time outdoors, especially in free play, benefits children’s physical health, social skills, and even their concentration and school readiness.”

UNICEF May 2025



**ESSEX  
COUNTRY  
PARKS**

**FREE**

# Easter Trail

Pick up or download the trail at the Essex Country Parks during the school holidays.

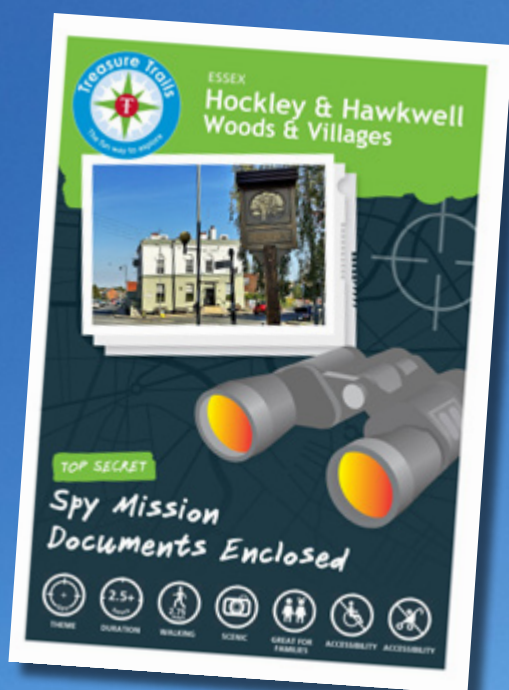


# New treasure trails coming to Rochford

Three brand-new family-friendly trails are being launched by Rochford District Council.

Partnering with Treasure Trails, the UK's leading provider of self-guided adventure walks, the new trails are designed to encourage active, outdoor fun for all ages. They'll also help support wellbeing, mental stimulation and community engagement.





The three trails are Hockley and Hawkwell, Rochford, and The Roach and Crouch.

All the trails - which were commissioned from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund - provide immersive, self-guided walking experiences that encourage everyone to discover the district's green spaces, historic sites and local charm.

The new trails also complement the existing walks available such as the Rayleigh, windmill, gardens and mount trail.

Each trail is themed as either a detective mystery, treasure hunt or spy mission and they take approximately two hours to complete. They also include around 20 clues to be solved as you make your way around (please note that some are more accessible than others due to the landscape).

As they're self-guided, you can walk them at any time, with no pre-booking and there's no limit on the number of participants - making it ideal for solo trail walkers, couples, families or even larger groups.

The trails are available to purchase from the Treasure Trails website, and all those completed can be entered into a monthly prize draw.

To download the trails app or obtain a printed booklet or digital pdf of the walks visit: [www.treasuretrails.co.uk](http://www.treasuretrails.co.uk)

For a range of walks in the Rochford district visit: [www.rochford.gov.uk/woodlands-walks](http://www.rochford.gov.uk/woodlands-walks)



# Learn to sail on the River Blackwater

Essex Outdoors Bradwell are launching a brand-new opportunity to spend a weekend on the water with their learn to sail weekends for adults. The centre also run activities for all ages from kid's weeks to family experience days. We find out more about their offers for the late spring and summer season.



Adults Learn to Sail Weekends

Based on the stunning River Blackwater estuary at Bradwell-on-Sea, the Royal Yachting Association (RYA) training centre at Essex Outdoors is the perfect place to get on the open water safely and at your own speed.

Whether you are a complete beginner or looking for a refresher, you'll be allocated a boat and an instructor to help you learn the ropes, hone your helming and strengthen your seamanship.

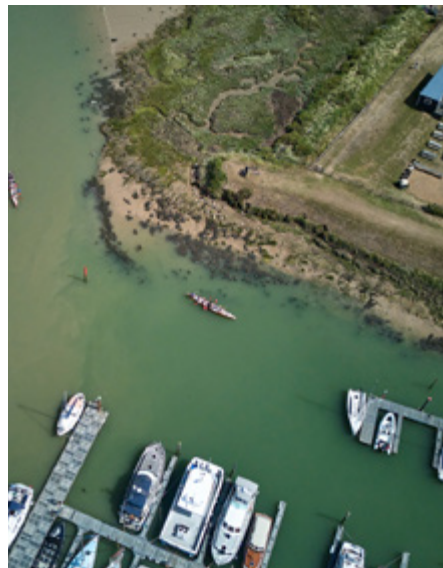
The experience and teaching will be tailored to your needs, so you can work through RYA Levels or tackle a specific skills gap.

Time on the water will be spent in Wayfarer dinghies and Dufour keelboats and Picos (single handed dinghies) are also available for keen and agile participants.

For those who don't live close by a residential two-night option is available, including all meals such as hearty breakfasts and BBQs on the beautiful waterfront.

The Learn to Sail Weekends are available to book now for over 18-year-olds. However, the team at Bradwell also offer experiences for other age groups.

[www.essexoutdoors.com/rya-adults-sailing-weekend](http://www.essexoutdoors.com/rya-adults-sailing-weekend)



Kid's Learn to Sail Weeks

The Kid's Learn to Sail Week is a flexible, five-day camp aimed at adventure-loving young people aged 10 to 16-years-old.

Whether your children are competent sailors and would like to develop their skills or they've never sailed before, the enthusiastic RYA instructors at Essex Outdoors Bradwell will work with them in small groups to ensure they get the most out of their time on the water.

With day and stay options, there are three weeks running during the school summer holiday, so book your child's place now – subject to availability as these popular camps get booked up fast.

“My son had a wonderful time. He said the food was amazing and accommodation was great. He enjoyed sharing with other lads of his age and has made some new friends in the process. I'd highly recommend to anyone considering this week-long adventure for their own children.” Gary, parent

[www.essexoutdoors.com/rya-youth-sailing-week](http://www.essexoutdoors.com/rya-youth-sailing-week)



Experience Days for all the family

Not sure sailing is for you but yearn for a day on the water? Essex Outdoors Experience Days are the perfect way to try your hand at helming or simply sit back and enjoy the stunning surroundings and a day out with a difference.

Book a spacious modern sailboat and your very own instructor and captain for the day. Boats cater for up to seven people, aged seven-years-old and above. Choose to set sail from Bradwell-on-Sea or West Mersea and build your own perfect day, with crabbing, lunch and stop options. Waterproofs (if required) and lifejackets are provided.

[www.essexoutdoors.com/experience-days-on-the-water](http://www.essexoutdoors.com/experience-days-on-the-water)



# Take a spa break in the heart of Constable Country

Escape to a world of luxury and relaxation this spring and discover a spa and hotel on the north Essex border.



**T**albooth House is a four AA Red Star hotel with view over Constable Country and the stunning Dedham Vale.

It has twelve individually designed bedrooms, each different in style, decor and character. All are named after English poets - from Shakespeare and Keats to Newbolt and Betjeman - and there's a copy of each poet's most famous poem framed in each room.

The hotel lends itself to a short break, in fact the Dedham Vale was mentioned in The Daily Telegraph as one of the top places for a 'cheeky weekend'.

## An oasis of calm

The hotel is stylish, relaxed and discreet and is ideal for spa days or even individual treatments during the week or at weekends.

With six treatment rooms, and a partnership with Elemis for all face and body sessions, visitors can enjoy full use of the facilities including a heated outdoor pool, hot tub, sauna and tennis court.

The Pool House complex includes the extended day spa, heated outdoor swimming pool, complete with hot tub, log burning fire, showers and changing areas.



Spa packages are specially designed to deliver the ultimate in relaxation and are perfect for couples, family or friends. From an evening of rejuvenation, a half day escape or a full day of pampering, you'll find something that's just right for you. Simply step back, relax and recharge.

[www.milsomhotels.com/talbooth-house-spa](http://www.milsomhotels.com/talbooth-house-spa)

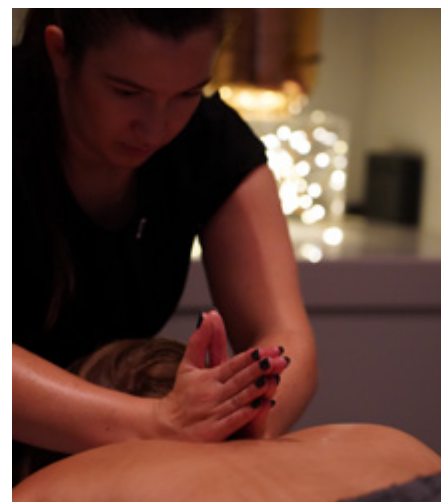




Image: Stoke by Nayland



Image: Stoke by Nayland

## Competition time

WIN an ultimate spa package at Talbooth House worth just under £600!

To enter simply email the answer to the question below to:

[Explore.essex@essex.gov.uk](mailto:Explore.essex@essex.gov.uk) by midnight Monday 4 May 2026.

## Spa competition

Which Essex town is Talbooth House near:

- Dedham
- Frinton-on-Sea
- Saffron Walden

Prize available to take during July, August or September 2026 (subject to availability).

For full terms and conditions: [www.explore-essex.com/ee-comp](http://www.explore-essex.com/ee-comp)

Discover more about the package:

[www.milsomhotels.com/special-offers/ultimate-spa-package](http://www.milsomhotels.com/special-offers/ultimate-spa-package)

 **TALBOOTH**  
HOUSE & SPA

## You might also like these other Essex spa hotels:

Stoke by Nayland Resort

Leavenheath, Colchester

The four-star award-winning Stoke by Nayland Resort is situated in 300 acres of rolling countryside, also in Constable Country and a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The resort is ideally positioned in the middle of the Ipswich, Bury St. Edmunds and Colchester triangle.

There is a relaxing spa within the hotel, and you'll find a heated indoor swimming pool with a Jacuzzi, sauna, steam room, exotic Rasul and Hammam treatment rooms. There's also a bistro and a whole range of health and beauty therapies on offer.

[www.stokebynayland.com](http://www.stokebynayland.com)

Roslin Beach Hotel

Thorpe Bay, Southend

The Roslin Beach Hotel and Retreat, a four-star boutique hotel offering bespoke rooms, refined cuisine and fabulous views. The hotel is situated along a picturesque stretch of sand and coastline.

Experience rejuvenation and restoration with confidence. Take advantage of the tranquil environment and luxurious ESPA and Elemis treatments designed to revitalise your body and mind.

[www.roslinhotel.com](http://www.roslinhotel.com)

All spa hotels featured in this article are members of Visit Essex.

[www.visitessex.com/accommodation/spa-stays](http://www.visitessex.com/accommodation/spa-stays)

Images courtesy of Visit Essex.

# Spring 2026



Credit: Hanningfield Waterside Park

Featuring musical theatre favourites: Matilda, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang and more. Discover a Film Making Workshop to explore and movie trailers. Suitable for ages five to 16-years-old. Price: See website. [www.chelmsfordtheatre.co.uk/whats-on/festivals/discover](http://www.chelmsfordtheatre.co.uk/whats-on/festivals/discover)

## The Tiger Who Came to Tea

Friday 3 to Sunday 5 April:  
2.00pm, Sat and Sun 11am, 2pm

Join the tea-guzzling tiger in this family show, packed with magic, songs and clumsy chaos. Suitable for three-years-old and over. Price: £16.50. [www.chelmsfordtheatre.co.uk/event/the-tiger-who-came-to-tea-2026](http://www.chelmsfordtheatre.co.uk/event/the-tiger-who-came-to-tea-2026)

## The Buddy Holly Story

Thursday 23 to Saturday 25  
April: 7.30pm Friday, Saturday  
2.30pm matinee

This award-winning show has been thrilling audiences with a cast of actor-musicians to tell the drama of Buddy Holly's life. Suitable for: See website. Price: £25.00 to £40.00. [www.chelmsfordtheatre.co.uk/event/buddy-the-buddy-holly-story](http://www.chelmsfordtheatre.co.uk/event/buddy-the-buddy-holly-story)

## There's A Monster in Your Show

Sunday 3 to Monday 4 May:  
Various times

Tom Fletcher's interactive adventures leap from page to stage, starring a group preparing for their show when they discover they aren't alone. Suitable for three-years-old and over. Price: £15.00 to £17.00. [www.chelmsfordtheatre.co.uk/event](http://www.chelmsfordtheatre.co.uk/event)

## Clacton Pier

### Easter Extravaganza

Saturday 28 March to  
Sunday 12 April

What better way to celebrate Easter than with a day full of family fun at the pier? Suitable for all ages. Price: See website. [www.clactonpier.co.uk/events/easter-eggstravagnza](http://www.clactonpier.co.uk/events/easter-eggstravagnza)

## Beth Chatto's Gardens

### Easter Trail

Saturday 28 March to Saturday  
11 April: 10.00am to 5.00pm  
(Closed Sundays).

Take part in the Easter Trail around Beth's Garden – find all the eggs, win a prize. Suitable for all ages. Price: See website. [www.bethchatto.co.uk](http://www.bethchatto.co.uk)

### Spring Craft Fair

Sunday 3 May:  
10.00am to 5.00pm

The fair is full of stalls from local producers. price includes entry to the garden. Suitable for all ages. Price: See website. [www.bethchatto.co.uk](http://www.bethchatto.co.uk)

## Braintree Museum

### Tabletop Sale

Saturday 28 March: 10.00am

Tabletop sale to raise money for Braintree District Museum Trust, plenty of second hand books, puzzles and bric-a-brack. Suitable for all ages. Price: Free. [www.braintreemuseum.co.uk](http://www.braintreemuseum.co.uk)

## Warner Textile Archive Behind the Scenes: Art Deco and Beyond

Friday 17 April: 10:30am

Explore the collection of textiles produced in the 1920s and 1930s bringing patterns that haven't been seen since their original creation. Suitable for adults. Price: £15.00. [www.warnertextilearchive.co.uk](http://www.warnertextilearchive.co.uk)

## Town Tour: Braintree 1925 – 1935

Saturday 25 April: 10:30am

See what Braintree would have been like during the 1920s and 1930s. From Art Deco style buildings, the increase of electrical goods and more. Suitable for adults. Price: £5.00. [www.braintreemuseum.co.uk](http://www.braintreemuseum.co.uk)

## Brentwood Brewery

### St. George's Day Beer Festival

Saturday 25 April:  
12.00pm to 5.00pm

Live music, great food and Brentwood-brewed beer to help celebrate England's patron saint. Suitable for: See website. Price: Free entrance. [www.brentwoodbrewing.co.uk/event/st-georges-day-festival](http://www.brentwoodbrewing.co.uk/event/st-georges-day-festival)

## Chelmsford Theatre

### Half-term Workshops

Tuesday 31 March to  
Friday 3 April

Free Easter Fireworks

Sunday 5 April: 8.00pm

Get ready for an explosion as the skies are lit up with a fireworks extravaganza programme. Suitable for all ages. Price: See website. [www.clactonpier.co.uk/events/fireworks-eastersunday](http://www.clactonpier.co.uk/events/fireworks-eastersunday)

May Day Bank Holiday Fireworks

Sunday 3 May: 8.00pm

Get ready for a spectacular fireworks extravaganza programme. Suitable for all ages. Price: See website. [www.clactonpier.co.uk/events/fireworks-mayday](http://www.clactonpier.co.uk/events/fireworks-mayday)

Charter Hall, Colchester

James B. Partridge: Primary School Bangers

Friday 3 April: 8.00pm

Viral sensation and Britain's favourite teacher James B Partridge brings his hit live show Primary School Bangers. Suitable for: See website. Price: See website. [www.colchester-events.co.uk/event/primary-school-bangers](http://www.colchester-events.co.uk/event/primary-school-bangers)

K-Pop Party

Sunday 12 April: 5.00pm

Get ready to sing and dance at K-Pop Party, the ultimate live concert experience of Korea's global music phenomenon. Suitable for: See website. Price: See website. [www.colchester-events.co.uk/event/k-pop-party](http://www.colchester-events.co.uk/event/k-pop-party) For more events at Charter Hall visit: [www.colchester-events.co.uk/whats-on](http://www.colchester-events.co.uk/whats-on)

Colchester United Football Club

Stadium Tours

Tuesday 31 March: 10.00am to 2.00pm

An exclusive behind-the-scenes tour of the JobServe Community Stadium. Discover areas normally off-limits and gain an insight into the

inner workings of the U's. Suitable for all ages. Price: £10.00 adults, £5.00 children. [www.coluboxoffice.com](http://www.coluboxoffice.com)

Dirty Dancing and Hits from the Movies

Friday 18 April: 7.30pm to 12.00pm

Relive the magic of your favourite movie moments in an unforgettable live performance. Sing and dance along to hits from Dirty Dancing, and classics from Footloose and more. Suitable for 16-years-old and over. Price: £22.00. [www.coluboxoffice.com](http://www.coluboxoffice.com)

Colchester Zoological Society

Easter Holidays

Saturday 28 March to Sunday 12 April

Enjoy a wild adventure filled with daytime activities suitable for children of all ages. Price: Event included in standard admission. [www.colchesterzoologicalsociety.com/event/easter-holidays](http://www.colchesterzoologicalsociety.com/event/easter-holidays)

Scales, Tails and Feathers Weekend

Saturday 18 and Sunday 19 April: 10.00am to 4.00pm

A 'zoo-per' weekend about the zoo's scales, tails and feathers. Take part in activities located under the shelter between the Sea Lion Tunnel and Inca Trail. Suitable for all ages. Price: Event included in standard admission. [www.colchesterzoologicalsociety.com/event/scales-tails-feathers-weekend](http://www.colchesterzoologicalsociety.com/event/scales-tails-feathers-weekend)

Dino Discovery Day

Saturday 9 May

Discover extinct species from millions of years ago as well as the chance to meet our dinosaur friends along with their keeper. Suitable for all ages. Price: Event included in standard admission. [www.colchesterzoologicalsociety.com](http://www.colchesterzoologicalsociety.com)

[www.coluboxoffice.com/event/dino-discovery-day](http://www.coluboxoffice.com/event/dino-discovery-day)

Cliffs Pavillion, Southend-on-Sea

Bluey's Big Play

Wednesday 8 to Sunday 12 April

Back by popular demand, Bluey, Bingo, Bandit and Chilli return in this live stage show. Featuring brilliantly created puppets and packed with music. Suitable for all ages. Price: £19.50 to £36.50. [www.trafalgartickets.com/cliffs-pavillion-southend/en-GB/event/family/blueys-big-play-tickets](http://www.trafalgartickets.com/cliffs-pavillion-southend/en-GB/event/family/blueys-big-play-tickets)

Diversity: Soul 2026

Wednesday 6 to Sunday 10 May

The future is now. Humans have become plugged in and completely connected to a world full of Artificial Intelligence, a world in which it is hard to distinguish reality from fiction. Suitable for: See website. Price £38.00 to £91.00. [www.trafalgartickets.com/cliffs-pavillion-southend/en-GB/event/dance/diversity-soul-2026-tickets](http://www.trafalgartickets.com/cliffs-pavillion-southend/en-GB/event/dance/diversity-soul-2026-tickets)

Crossing Temple Barns

Essex Spring Shopping Fair (by Charlie Owen events)

Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 April

Expect arts, crafts, beauty, gifts and garden goods, as well as food and drink stalls. Well behaved dogs on a lead welcome. Suitable for all ages. Price £5.00 to £6.00. Children free. [www.explore-essex.com/whats-on](http://www.explore-essex.com/whats-on)

Essex Country Parks

Easter Trail

Running throughout the Easter school holiday: 8.00am to dusk

Pick up or download an 'egg-cellent' free trail running at seven of the Essex Country Parks this school holiday. Suitable for primary school aged children. Price: Free. [www.explore-essex.com/events](http://www.explore-essex.com/events)

## Forest School at Danbury Country Park

Various dates

Discover term time sessions for under-fives and home educated children, Family Saturdays and holiday activities.

[www.explore-essex.com/events](http://www.explore-essex.com/events)

## Essex Record Office

ERO Presents:  
The loss of The London, 1665

Tuesday 31 March:  
10.40am to 12.00pm

Go behind the scenes of Southend Central Museum's newest exhibition and discover what the recovered artefacts reveal about this tragedy.

[www.essexrecordoffice.co.uk/whats-on/events](http://www.essexrecordoffice.co.uk/whats-on/events)

ERO Presents:  
The Chartist Revolution

Tuesday 28 April:  
10.40am to 12.00pm

Join speaker Professor Peter Gurney for this talk about the Chartist movement that shook British society to its foundations between the late 1830s and the early 1850s.

[www.essexrecordoffice.co.uk/whats-on/events](http://www.essexrecordoffice.co.uk/whats-on/events)

## Essex Outdoors

Harlow High Adventure

Various school holiday and weekend dates.

Affordable family fun on outdoor high ropes course and climbing walls. Check age and height restrictions on the website. Price: From £13.50. [www.essexoutdoors.com/harlow-high-adventure](http://www.essexoutdoors.com/harlow-high-adventure)

School Holiday Activity Days

Danbury, Harlow and Mersea centres

Various dates throughout the school holidays:  
9.00am to 5.00pm

Affordable activity days where kids will enjoy four sessions in small groups. From archery to zip wire, activities depend on the centre and day you book. Suitable for ages eight to 16-year-olds. Price: From £40.00. [www.essexoutdoors.com/school-holiday-activities](http://www.essexoutdoors.com/school-holiday-activities)

Sailing at Bradwell-on-Sea

Various dates throughout the summer

Discover sailing experience days, adult learn to sail weekends, children's sailing weeks and more at this RYA accredited centre on the River Blackwater.

[www.essexoutdoors.com/bradwell](http://www.essexoutdoors.com/bradwell)

Sky Ropes at Great Notley

Various school holiday and weekend dates. High ropes course at Great Notley Country Park. [www.explore-essex.com/places-to-go/sky-ropes](http://www.explore-essex.com/places-to-go/sky-ropes)

Epping Forest

Epping Forest Youth Photography Collective

Wednesday 8 April:  
11.30am to 1.00pm

Join the Epping Forest Volunteer Photographers for an introduction to photography. Suitable for all ages (under 18-years-old must be accompanied by a parent or carer). Price: £5.00. [www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/epping-forest-9768889881](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/epping-forest-9768889881)

Guided tour of Epping Forest exhibition

Thursday 23 April:  
2.00pm to 2.45pm

Short, guided tour of the Epping Forest Visitor Centre exhibition that explains the history of Epping Forest, how it was saved by the City of London and how the forest is managed. Suitable for all ages. Price: Free. [www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/)

[epping-forest-9768889881](http://epping-forest-9768889881)

Little Saplings

Friday 24 April:  
10.30am to 11.30am

Join us to hear a seasonal story, enjoy an activity and sing some nursery rhymes. Suitable for pre-schoolers. Price: Free. [www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/epping-forest-9768889881](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/epping-forest-9768889881)

Guided tour of Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge

Friday 24 April:  
2.00pm to 2.45pm

Join us for a fun and informative guided tour of Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge. Suitable for all ages. Price: Free. [www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/epping-forest-9768889881](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/epping-forest-9768889881)

Firstsite

Colchester Art Society at 80

Now to Sunday 12 April

In celebration of Colchester Art Society's 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary, be inspired by a rich and varied display of British and local landscapes, objects and nature. Suitable for all ages. Price: Free. [www.firstsite.uk/event/exhibition-colchester-art-society-at-80](http://www.firstsite.uk/event/exhibition-colchester-art-society-at-80)

Holiday Fun

Saturday 28 March to Saturday 11 April: 10.00am to 2:30pm

Get making, moving and munching with daily drop-in, family creative activities, plus free bookable outdoor sports to keep kids active and a hot lunch in the canteen. Suitable for four to 11-years-old but all ages welcome. Price: Free. [www.firstsite.uk/event\\_categories/holiday-fun](http://www.firstsite.uk/event_categories/holiday-fun)

The Royal Opera:  
The Magic Flute

Sunday 26 April: 2.00pm

Mozart's classic explores the search

for truth, love and enlightenment. Screened in the comfort of Firstsite's cinema. Suitable for all ages. Price: Tickets from £18.50. [www.firstsite.uk/event/the-royal-opera-the-magic-flute](http://www.firstsite.uk/event/the-royal-opera-the-magic-flute)

### Gibberd Gallery

#### Harlow Open 2026

Saturday 7 March to  
Saturday 2 May

Harlow Open 2026 presents selected works by artists from across Harlow, Uttlesford, East Herts, Epping and Broxbourne. The exhibition showcases a diverse range of mediums and styles. Suitable for all ages. Price: See website. [www.sculpturetown.uk/whats-on](http://www.sculpturetown.uk/whats-on)

### Layer Marney Tower

#### Bottle feeding the Lambs

Saturday 28 March to Saturday 4  
April and Tuesday 7 to Sunday  
12 April: 10.00am to 5.00pm

Come and visit the lambs and optional tractor ride to the farm. Suitable for all ages. Price: Adult £12.00, child £7.00.

[www.layermarneytower.co.uk/events](http://www.layermarneytower.co.uk/events)

#### Easter Sunday and Monday Fun

Sunday 5 to Monday 6 April:  
11.00am to 5.00pm

Egg and spoon race, toddler Easter egg hunt and garden games in the barn and tractor rides to the lambs. Suitable for all ages. Price: Adult £12.00, child £7.00.

[www.layermarneytower.co.uk/events/easter-sunday-and-monday](http://www.layermarneytower.co.uk/events/easter-sunday-and-monday)

### Hanningfield Waterside Park

#### Kids Craft Club

Tuesday 31 March, Tuesday 7  
April and Tuesday 26 May:  
11.00am to 1.00pm

Let the creativity loose at this craft club for two hours of entertainment

with no mess. Suitable for three to 11-years-old and over. Price: £2.50. [www.watersideparksuk.com/news/?park-location=hanningfield](http://www.watersideparksuk.com/news/?park-location=hanningfield)

### Hylands Estate

#### Hylands Open Estate Day

Sunday 12 April Sunday 10 May:  
10.00am to 3.00pm

Discover more about the history of Hylands House and the Essex Foodies Market. Enjoy live music from Hot Box Events. Suitable for all ages. Price: Free. [www.hylandsestate.co.uk/explore/openestate](http://www.hylandsestate.co.uk/explore/openestate)

#### All About Dogs (organised by Aztec Events)

Sunday 3 and Monday 4 May:  
9.30am to 5.00pm

Bring your dog to Hylands Park for Essex's largest ever dog festival. Thrilling arena displays, breed meet ups and lots of activities. Suitable for all ages. Price: £10.00 to £17.00 (concessions available). [www.hylandsestate.co.uk/series/all-about-dogs-show-2](http://www.hylandsestate.co.uk/series/all-about-dogs-show-2)

#### Jewellery Making, Glass and Pottery Workshops

Various weekends.  
10.00am to 2.00pm.

If you love the idea of making your own jewellery, glass creations and ceramics these sessions are for you. Suitable for 18-years-old and over. Prices from £90.00 per person. [www.hylandsestate.co.uk/organiser/tanya-krackowizer](http://www.hylandsestate.co.uk/organiser/tanya-krackowizer)

### Jaywick Mareello Tower

#### Passion for Fashion

Saturday 14 March to  
Sunday 3 May

Dr. Karen Dennis of Ketchup Clothes has devoted her career to analysing and mitigating the waste generated by the fashion industry. Suitable for all ages.

[www.explore-essex.com/events](http://www.explore-essex.com/events)

### Mercury Theatre

#### Toto The Ninja Cat and the Great Snake Escape

Thursday 2 to Saturday 18 April

Meet Toto. She might look like an ordinary cat, but she's no ordinary feline. Almost completely blind, Toto has incredible ninja skills, a big heart and a nose for adventure. Suitable for five-years-old and over. Price: £18.00. [www.mercurytheatre.co.uk](http://www.mercurytheatre.co.uk)

#### The Talented Mr Ripley

Tuesday 7 to Saturday 11 April

Step into a world of deception and deadly ambition. How far would you go to become someone else? Suitable for 16-years-old and over. Price: £16.00 to £47.50.

[www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/event/the-talented-mr-ripley](http://www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/event/the-talented-mr-ripley)

#### Sherlock Holmes and The Hunt for Moriarty

Tuesday 21 to Saturday 25 April

As the British Empire wages war in the name of a Queen whose health is failing, a series of events reveals a crack in the high corridors of power that threatens to destabilise monarchy, government and Empire. Suitable for 11-years-old and over. Price: £27.50 to £30.00.

[www.mercurytheatre.co.uk](http://www.mercurytheatre.co.uk)

#### Thespians

Saturday 9 to Saturday 23 May

The team from 'The Play That Goes Wrong', rewrite ancient history with a brand-new musical comedy. Suitable for eight-years-old and over. Price: £15.00 to £32.00.

[www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/event/thespians](http://www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/event/thespians)

## Museum of Chelmsford

Oi Chelmsford! Kes Gray:  
Chelmsford Born and Read

Now until Sunday 21 June:  
10.00am to 5.00pm

A family-friendly exhibition that explores the works of Chelmsford-born bestselling children's author, Kes Gray. Suitable for all ages. Price: Free with admission to the museum (£4.00 or free for members). [www.chelmsford.gov.uk/museums/whats-on](http://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/museums/whats-on)

Oi! It's the Easter Holidays!

Tuesday 31 March to Thursday 9  
April: 10.30am and 1.30pm

Inspired by Kes Gray and his dino delight, we're painting, crafting and digging. Suitable for ages over five to 10-years-old (children must be accompanied by an adult, who can attend for free). Price: £6.00 per child (£5.00 for members). [www.chelmsford.gov.uk/museums/whats-on/school-holidays/oi-its-the-easter-holidays](http://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/museums/whats-on/school-holidays/oi-its-the-easter-holidays)

Storytelling with Mike Dodsworth

Saturday 11 April: 10.30am,  
11.30am, 1.30pm and 2.30pm

Chelmsford based Storyteller Mike Dodsworth will be performing stories inspired by the imaginative world of Kes Gray. Suitable for all ages. Price: Free with admission to the museum (£4.00 or free for members). [www.chelmsford.gov.uk/museums/whats-on](http://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/museums/whats-on)

Oi Chelmsford! SEN Friendly Days

Saturday 11 April, Saturday 9  
May: 10.00am to 5.00pm

Join us for our new SEN Friendly Day, to coincide with the 'Oi Chelmsford! Kes Gray exhibition. Price: Free with admission to the museum (£4.00 or free for members). [www.chelmsford.gov.uk/museums/whats-on](http://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/museums/whats-on)

## Memory Café

Monday 13 April, Monday 11  
May: 10:30am to 12.00pm

Explore our museum objects with curators and volunteers, share your stories and enjoy a cup of tea. Suitable for those with dementia to attend with their families, friends and loved ones. Price: Free. [www.chelmsford.gov.uk/museums/whats-on/events-and-activities/memory-cafe](http://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/museums/whats-on/events-and-activities/memory-cafe)

## Boris Bear Cubs

Thursday 16 April and Thursday  
21 May: 10.30am to 12.00pm

Each 90-minute sessions for under five-years-old and their grown-ups. Price: £6.00 per child (£5.00 for members). Siblings under 12 months, free. [www.chelmsford.gov.uk/museums/whats-on/events-and-activities/boris-bear-cubs](http://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/museums/whats-on/events-and-activities/boris-bear-cubs)

## Naze Nature Discovery Centre

### The Naze Birds of Prey Evening

Thursday 2 April:  
6.00pm to 8.00pm

Imperial Birds of Prey Academy bring their fun show to The Naze, capturing your attention and imagination. Suitable for families. Price: £12.00 per person. [www.essexwt.org.uk/events/2026-04-02-naze-birds-prey-evening](http://www.essexwt.org.uk/events/2026-04-02-naze-birds-prey-evening)

### Nature Tots and Kids at the Naze

Tuesday 5 May

Drop in nature-themed fun, with lots for little ones to explore. There will be natural sensory items to discover, small-world, role-play, sand and water to explore. Suitable for all ages. Price: £8.80 per child. [www.essexwt.org.uk/events/2026-05-05-nature-tots-and-kids-naze](http://www.essexwt.org.uk/events/2026-05-05-nature-tots-and-kids-naze)

## Palace Theatre, Southend-on-Sea

Double Indemnity starring  
Mischa Barton

Tuesday 31 March to  
Saturday 4 April

Hollywood icon Mischa Barton makes her UK stage debut, the gripping adaptation of the story that inspired Billy Wilder's film noir classic. Suitable for: See website. Price: £25.00 to £52.00. [www.trafalgartickets.com/palace-theatre-southend/en-GB/event/play/double-indemnity-tickets](http://www.trafalgartickets.com/palace-theatre-southend/en-GB/event/play/double-indemnity-tickets)

## Sneaky Blinders: Murder Mystery Dinner

Thursday 9 April

Tommy Trilbie wants his cash. Mr Campbell wants revenge and Auntie Dolly has your card marked. But who's out for blood? Suitable for 18-years-old and over. Price: £45.00. [www.trafalgartickets.com/cliffs-pavilion-southend/en-GB/event/hospitality/sneaky-blinders-whodunit-tickets](http://www.trafalgartickets.com/cliffs-pavilion-southend/en-GB/event/hospitality/sneaky-blinders-whodunit-tickets)

## Tales From Acorn Wood

Saturday 2 to Sunday 3 May

Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler's beloved 'Tales from Acorn Wood' stories are brought to life on stage. Suitable for all ages. Price: £14.00 to £18.00. [www.trafalgartickets.com/palace-theatre-southend/en-GB/event/family/tales-from-acorn-wood-tickets](http://www.trafalgartickets.com/palace-theatre-southend/en-GB/event/family/tales-from-acorn-wood-tickets)

## Princes Theatre, Clacton-on-Sea

### Easter Pantomime: Mother Goose

Sunday 29 March:  
2.00pm and 6.30pm

Anton Benson Productions return to Clacton with another 'EGGcellent' Easter Panto full of song and dance. Suitable for: See website. Price: See website. [www.princestheatre.co.uk/event?i=873678595](http://www.princestheatre.co.uk/event?i=873678595)

## Chitty Chitty Bang Bang

Thursday 9 to Sunday 12 April

Get ready to be whisked away on

everyone's favourite flying car in the musical adaptation of the family film. Suitable for all ages. Price: See website. [www.princetheatre.co.uk/event?i=873670692](http://www.princetheatre.co.uk/event?i=873670692)

### Totally Tina

Thursday 30 April: 7.30pm

Come shake a tail feather with the UK's supreme Tina – Justine Riddoch – and her talented cast. Suitable for: See website. Price: See website. [www.princetheatre.co.uk/event?i=873677379](http://www.princetheatre.co.uk/event?i=873677379)

### Barry Steele's Roy Orbison Story 2026

Saturday 2 May: 7.30pm

Join Barry Steele's Roy Orbison Story for an unforgettable evening celebrating the legendary Roy Orbison and the Traveling Wilburys. Suitable for: See website. Price: See website. [www.princetheatre.co.uk/event?i=873670483](http://www.princetheatre.co.uk/event?i=873670483)

### Phantoms of the Popera Starring G4

Thursday 7 May: 7.30pm

G4 return to unleash their unique trademark sound on the greatest showstoppers that musical theatre has to offer. Suitable for: See website. Price: See website. [www.princetheatre.co.uk/event?i=873673294](http://www.princetheatre.co.uk/event?i=873673294)

### Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome

#### Dawn Patrol

Sunday 12 and 26 April and Sunday 10 May: 5.45am to 6.45am

Explore wildlife areas with a nature guide to see and hear nature waking up. Includes hot drink, museum entry and the option to upgrade to a cooked breakfast. Suitable for adults and accompanied children 11-years-old and over. Price: From £15.00. [www.stowmaries.org.uk/events](http://www.stowmaries.org.uk/events)

### Royal Flying Corps Living History Weekend

Saturday 2 and Sunday 3 May: 10.00am to 3.00pm

Enjoy the museum with the added attraction of living historians presenting as members of the Royal Flying Corps who served at the aerodrome during World War One. Suitable for all ages. Price: Adults £12.00, children 0 to 10-years-old free, children 11 to 15-years-old and concessions £9.00.

[www.stowmaries.org.uk/events](http://www.stowmaries.org.uk/events)

### Vulcan Restoration Trust, London Southend Airport

#### Visit the Vulcan Day

Sunday 19 April: 10:00am to 4:00pm

Get up close and personal with a Vulcan XL426 inside its hangar at London Southend Airport. Suitable for all ages. Price: Adults £10.00, under 16-years-old free, cockpit tours £8.00. [www.avrovulcan.com](http://www.avrovulcan.com)

#### Visit Twilight Taxi-Run

Sunday 19 April: 5.30pm to 8:30pm

Hear the engines howl and watch the Vulcan XL426 speed down the runway as the sun sets. Suitable for six-years-old and over. Price: Adults £50.00, under 16-years-old £16.00. [www.avrovulcan.com](http://www.avrovulcan.com)

### Westcliff Theatre, Clacton

#### Ice Age Adventure Live

Sunday 29 March: 2.00pm

Journey back in time to meet prehistoric animals in the coolest family show this side of the Arctic Circle. Suitable for all ages. Price: £18.50. [www.westcliffclacton.co.uk/kids/ice-age-adventure-live](http://www.westcliffclacton.co.uk/kids/ice-age-adventure-live)

### Bee Gees and Abba in Concert Experience

Friday 10 April: 7.30pm

Two of the biggest groups come together for a night of music that's guaranteed to have you boogying. Suitable for: See website. Price: £30.00, £29.00 (concessions). [www.westcliffclacton.co.uk/livemusic/bee-gees-abba-in-concert-experience](http://www.westcliffclacton.co.uk/livemusic/bee-gees-abba-in-concert-experience)

### Oh What A Night!

Saturday 11 April: 7.30pm

Oh What A Night! takes you on a musical journey through the career of Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons. Suitable for: See website. Price: £29.50. [www.westcliffclacton.co.uk/livemusic/oh-what-a-night](http://www.westcliffclacton.co.uk/livemusic/oh-what-a-night)

### The Sensational 60s Experience 2026

Friday 24 April: 7.30pm

Featuring an ensemble of original artistes and band members, this is a festival of nostalgia that'll take you back to a magical musical decade. Suitable for: See website. Price: £34.50. [www.westcliffclacton.co.uk/livemusic/the-sensational-60s-experience-2026](http://www.westcliffclacton.co.uk/livemusic/the-sensational-60s-experience-2026)

### Wizard Of Oz: Adult Panto

Saturday 25 April: 7.30pm

Follow Dorothy as she's whisked away to the Merry Old Land of Oz. Suitable for: Over 16-years-old only. Price: £27.50. [www.westcliffclacton.co.uk/comedy/wizard-of-oz-adult-panto](http://www.westcliffclacton.co.uk/comedy/wizard-of-oz-adult-panto)



### Listings provided by Visit Essex members

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