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SUMMER 2025



Explore
Essex

ESSEX EXPLORER

Magazine



History and heritage

Wildlife walks

Day's out

WIN

A TOPSAIL CHARTERS
'TWO ISLAND
CRUISE' FOR TWO



Credit: Andrew Adams

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Welcome ...

To the summer edition of Essex Explorer magazine. This edition is a heritage special as we discover the history, myths and folklores of our county.

Thanks to Topsail Charters we have a fantastic competition where you could be in with a chance to win a 'Two Island Cruise' on a Thames sailing barge for two people.

We celebrate 30 years of the Tudor walled garden at Cressing Temple Barns and the 20th anniversary of the historic Jaywick Martello Tower opening to the public.

Discover 10 great heritage day's out, the attractions featured in the BBC1 programme, 'Great British Railway Journeys', and two new walking trails - one that's sure to create a buzz.

We also bring you all the latest news from the Essex Country Parks, along with a tasty apple pancake recipe from our friends at Tiptree tea Rooms.

There are also some excellent ideas for day's out over the coming months in the listings (page 38) as well as much, much more.



This magazine is available as an accessible PDF.
To request a copy email 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

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

 Explore.Essex@essex.gov.uk

Please share or recycle this magazine where possible.





Image: James Lawrence

Collecting stories to celebrate the Essex spirit

Discover a collection of funded projects that aim to collect, record and share stories that celebrate the county's spirit and ever-evolving folklore.



Image: Jessica Pearce

Multimedia artist Jessica Pearce is leading 'Legendary Essex', a project collecting local tales and modern myths from across Essex, culminating in an exhibition this September. Essex residents can submit tales and myths on a postcard. www.legendaryessex.co.uk

Essex born storyteller James Lawrence, also known as 'man about country', recently walked 250 miles across the county.



Image: James Lawrence

James is challenging the perception of Essex and encouraging others to rediscover their local natural spaces and share their stories. He's leading a series of free storytelling walks in July for members of the public. www.manaboutcountry.co.uk/waysofessex

Both projects are supported by the Essex County Council Arts and Cultural Fund.

The Essex Record Office (ERO) is developing a new programme to collect peoples narratives following a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. 'Open the Box' aims to record and preserve stories from underrepresented groups for future generations.

The ERO is seeking your views and have launched an anonymous survey. www.tinyurl.com/EssexRO



Historic venue to host first archaeology and heritage festival

The first free festival celebrating the county's archaeology and heritage is coming to Crossing Temple Barns.

Organised by Place Services at Essex County Council, the family friendly event will feature talks by archaeology and heritage experts to bring the past to life. It will also include medieval re-enactments, falconry, children's activities and museum exhibits.

Tim Murphy, Place Services Historic Environment manager, said: "Essex is home to lots of historical assets and we wanted to celebrate and promote these wonderful artifacts to the public and involve them in discovering, preserving and presenting the best of the county's heritage."

www.explore-essex.com/whats-on/festival-of-essex-archaeology



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**HOLIDAY
ACTIVITY DAYS
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SKYROPES
adventure

High
adventure

10 Essex heritage days out for every generation

Step back in time this summer and enjoy activities, day's out with a difference and discover new corners of the county with our top 10 suggestions.



ONE

Embark on an adventure inspired by 'Great British Railway Journeys' in Essex: Discover more about the locations seen on the small screen on pages eight and nine.



Credit: Sophie Oldhamstead

TWO

Take the Tendring Witch Heritage Trail: Enjoy an immersive storytelling experience on Tendring's Sunshine Coast. Uncover more if you dare on pages 10 and 11.



Credit: Tendring District Council

THREE

Set sail with Topsail Charters: Helping the past sail into the future with their stunning Thames barges, pages 34 and 35. You might also like Sailing and Powerboat Experience Days and courses with Essex Outdoors.



Credit: Topsail Charters



FOUR

Enjoy an event at Cressing Temple Barns: Read more about the 'Working Farm' project, the Tudor walled garden's 30th anniversary, the Friends of Cressing Temple's Apple Day and the very first Festival of Essex Archaeology and Heritage. Pages 16 and 17.



FIVE

Take a walk on the wild side: Revel in wildflowers, discover community orchards full of native fruit trees at the Essex Country Parks and learn more about landscape restoration. You might also like Wild Wednesdays – free Forest School sessions, pages 32 and 33.



SIX

Get busy on the Farleigh Hospice Buzz in the City trail: See page 21 to find out more about this family friendly event and discover the buzz in Chelmsford city centre.



SEVEN

Visit a historic tower: Help Jaywick Martello Tower celebrate being open to the public for 20 years this summer. Enjoy an exhibition and much more, pages 12 and 13.



EIGHT

Drop into a marvellous museum: Visit the 'Extinction – From Dinosaurs to Today' exhibition at Braintree Museum. See page 36.



NINE

Visit a magnificent mill: Discover more about the power of the mills past, along with their summer and September Heritage Week opening dates. See pages 14 and 15.



TEN

Enjoy a heritage walk in Essex: Discover some of the best heritage walks to wander along during the long summer days. www.explore-essex.com/blog/best-essex-heritage-walks

Still stuck for ideas? Then browse our day's out listings from Visit Essex and Essex Cultural Network partners from page 37. The only questions is what to do first.

Discover Essex gems with Great British Railway Journeys

Broadcaster, Michael Portillo, recently explored the county's history on the popular BBC programme 'Great British Railway Journeys'.

Here we look at some of our county's treasures and explore some of the lesser known attractions that featured on the small screen.



Episode 16

The Gibberd Garden, Harlow

This Grade II listed garden where art and nature meet is nestled on the edge of Harlow.

Created by leading post war architect Sir Frederick Gibberd, who was renowned for his design and planning of Harlow Town, the garden contains an eclectic collection of sculptures and architectural elements throughout the nine acres of beautifully landscaped grounds.

Developed between 1954 and 1984, when Sir Frederick Gibberd lived there, the garden is considered one of the most important of the 20th century.

www.thegibberdgarden.co.uk



Credit: Sophie Oldhamstead

Episode 16

Audley End Miniature Railway

Designed by David Curwen and opened in 1964 by Sir Stirling Moss, this miniature railway was a project of Lord Braybrooke.

The railway is a one-and-a-half-mile circuit and runs through the woods and close to the Capability Brown gardens surrounding Audley End House. It offers an excellent day out for all the family with lots of events and activities running throughout the year.

www.audley-end-railway.co.uk



Episode 17

Chafford Gorges Nature Park

Much of the area around Chafford Hundred is formed from chalk, deposited 97 to 65 million years ago from a tropical sea. From the 18th century it was extensively quarried to produce lime for mortar and cement.

The disused quarries now form a nature park of over 200 acres run by Essex Wildlife Trust. A network of paths guide you through fascinating geological features and landscapes, including chalk meadows which support some unique flora and fauna. All within walking distance of Chafford Hundred railway station.

www.essexwt.org.uk/nature-reserves/chafford



Episode 18

Combined Services Military Museum, Maldon

The museum, a former bonded wine warehouse, opened to the public in 2024 and was founded by Dr. Richard Joseph Wooldridge who was inspired by his first find at the age of seven.

Named after the Combined Operations of World War Two, the collections include early English and European arms and armour, operational spy equipment, home front artifacts as well as firearms and munition.

It's also home to the only surviving MK2 'Cockle' canoe as used in the 'Cockleshell Heroes' raid.

www.cmsm.co.uk



Credit: Warner Textile Archive

Episode 19

Braintree Museum and Warner Textile Archive

The Warner and Sons Gallery at Braintree Museum showcases the unique and historic Warner Textile Archive collection.

Explore the silk manufacturing heritage of Braintree, learn about key designers and see intricate woven silks and groundbreaking textile inventions up close.

Highlights include the designs purchased for Winston Churchill's home, those used on the London Underground and fabrics made for the Royal Household, such as 'Queensway' which was designed and woven in Braintree for the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953.

www.braintreemuseum.co.uk



Credit: The Fry Gallery

Episode 19

Great Bardfield and The Fry Art Gallery, Saffron Walden

An accredited museum run by volunteers in Saffron Walden, The Fry Art Gallery opened in 1987 and is home to the North West Essex Collection. The Fry has an impressive number of paintings, prints, textiles, books and ceramics, many by artists associated with Great Bardfield.

From 1930 to today, Great Bardfield is home to artists whose reputations continue to grow.

John and Lucie Aldridge bought Place House in the village and hosted a series of open house exhibitions. John collaborated with neighbour Edward Bawden in designing wallpapers that were distributed by Cole and Sons.

This year The Fry Art Gallery is celebrating its anniversary.
www.fryartgallery.org/the-collection

Filming was supported by the Essex Film Office (www.essexfilloffice.co.uk) and all episodes of series 16 are available to watch on BBC iPlayer now.

www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00xgqxy/episodes/player

Take the enchanting Tendring witch trail

An immersive storytelling experience bringing the tales of the Essex witch trials to life is now available at Manningtree, St Osyth, Harwich and Walton-on-the-Naze.



The Essex witch trials took place between the 16th and 17th centuries and many Tendring communities were affected by it.

During this time there were around 500 executions for witchcraft, with Essex serving as a key site for prosecutions. The legal framework of criminalising witchcraft began with the 1563 Witchcraft Act. This introduced severe penalties, including execution for those accused of causing death through magic.

The 1604 Act, enacted under King James I, further escalated these punishments, making any form of harmful witchcraft a capital offence. Witch trials often depended on local accusations, with cases fuelled by fear, superstition and social tensions.

Accusations, like that against Mary Johnson in 1645, often arose from unexplained misfortunes. While some sought protection from 'cunning folk' who practised white magic, suspicion sometimes fell on them too. These fears and superstitions fuelled witch trials, often with tragic consequences. Occasionally a 'cunning woman' was accused of harmful magic, as happened to Ursula Kemp of St Osyth in 1582.

Stories of the Tendring Hundred communities affected by trials have been brought to life for the first time through augmented reality. Accessed by a smart phone, visitors of all ages can enjoy a living history experience.



Unique wooden benches and information boards that reflect each location's history have been installed and additional information is available on the Essex Sunshine Coast website.

Alison Rowlands, Professor of European History at the University of Essex, has helped to ensure the stories of those impacted by the witch trails are told authentically and resonate with today's society.

Gary Scott, Tending District Council Cabinet Member for Arts, Culture and Heritage said: "The Tendring Witch Heritage Trail is an immersive journey through our district's past. It not only preserves our past, but brings to life the rich stories that have shaped our history."

The trail was made possible thanks to funding from the Rural England Prosperity Fund.

www.essex-sunshine-coast.org.uk/tendring-witch-heritage-trail



Plan your visit

Manningtree:

The Walls, Manningtree, CO11 1HP

Harwich:

Cliff Park, Harwich, CO12 3NS

Walton-on-the-Naze:

Woodberry Way, Walton on the Naze, CO14 8DD

St Osyth:

The Bury, St Osyth, Clacton-on-Sea, CO16 8NY



Historic tower celebrates 20th anniversary

A historic building on Tendring's 'Sunshine Coast' built to repel Napoleon's forces is celebrating its 20th anniversary since opening to the public.

To celebrate the milestone moment a range of summer talks and exhibitions marking the anniversary of Jaywick Martello Tower (JMT) will take place this August.

As a vibrant arts, heritage and community venue near Clacton-on-Sea, it opened its doors to the public in 2005 after being purchased by Essex County Council in 2002.

Since opening, the tower's been renovated following grants from English Heritage and The National Lottery Heritage Fund to become an arts and heritage space for visitors and the local community.



The history of Jaywick Martello Tower

Built in 1809, it was originally one of 29 Martello towers located on England's East Coast to defend the country against the threat of invasion by Napoleon Bonaparte and his armies.

The name 'Martello' derives from a similar military sea defence tower at Mortella Point in Corsica. In fact, the Mortella Tower withstood the combined force of 101 cannons being fired from two Royal Navy battleships and was only defeated after a fire broke out inside the tower.

The navy were so impressed with the strength of the tower they took its measurements before they left Corsica and used them as the basis for the size and shape of all the Martello towers in England. The towers were home to three cannons, which usually included a 24-pounder facing out to sea and two smaller Howitzers at each side.

With walls two to three metres thick and roughly 10 metres high, the Martello towers were built using approximately 750,000 bricks. At Jaywick, the tower was constructed with bricks made at Grays using London Clay and were transported to the site by barge.

Events and exhibitions

A range of events and exhibitions celebrating the iconic tower are taking place from now until September.

Tower at Twenty

Thursday 26 June to
Sunday 3 August

Enjoy this special exhibition and discover the tower's history through stories and events since it opened to the public in 2005.

As part of the Tower at Twenty exhibition a community scrapbook is being created. If you have any images or memories of the tower over the past 20 years that you'd like to share then email: JaywickMartelloTower@essex.gov.uk

The Friends of Jaywick Martello Tower

Thursday 7 August to
Sunday 7 September

The friends are preparing an exhibition to celebrate the tower's 20th anniversary and will be hosting workshops and events.

Wise Ram Theatre: Sundream

Saturday 13 September

Following a programme of free activities and workshops, a new play will be performed at the tower and will feature two local writers new monologues, voiced by professional actors.

www.explore-essex.com/events



Jaywick Martello Tower today

Since becoming a thriving heritage venue, the tower has welcomed thousands of visitors since opening. It regularly hosts workshops, activities and events for schools, local community groups and families based around the core themes of art, heritage and the environment.

On an annual basis its arts and cultural programme features exhibitions, adult creative workshops and talks on subjects ranging from climate change to local history. It also regularly hosts free and low-cost events, workshops and activities for children and families.

Celebrating Jaywick Martello Tower

This August, and to celebrate the Grade II listed venues anniversary, two exhibitions will be held.

The first exhibition will celebrate 20-years of the venue opening its doors to the public, while the second - by the Friends of Jaywick Martello Tower - will focus on the tower's construction and heritage.

www.explore-essex.com/jaywick-martello-tower

Meet your Essex millwright

The role of a millwright dates to before the 15th century and these specialised and skilled tradesmen travelled the county installing, maintaining and repairing mills.



Mountnessing post mill

Millwrighting could be considered as one of the oldest engineering trades, however over the decades the role has diminished as technology has progressed. Here we meet millwright James Owden who talks about his work.

Have you always worked as a millwright?

No, previously I was self-employed and was working in the building trade. I joined ECC in 2009 and worked as a part-time assistant to Graham Robinson, the millwright at the time. After he retired in 2014 I became the millwright.



Finchingfield post mill

How do you become a millwright?

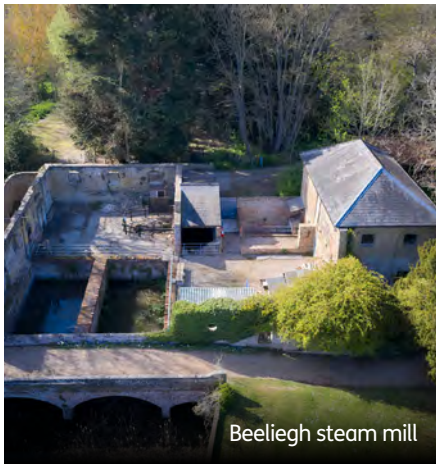
Ideally, you have to become a millwright's assistant first in order to learn the trade. Sadly, there are no actual training courses available to become a millwright and so there are no formal qualifications.

Generally, it's a case of learning on the job. In fact, it's how it worked in years gone by as a millwright would take on an apprentice who would work alongside them for up to seven years. After that they had the necessary skills and knowledge to become a millwright and were free to take on an apprentice.

Unfortunately, there are very few millwrights left today. What a lot of people don't realise is that ECC is the only council in England to employ a millwright. While I work for ECC I'm more than happy to provide advice and guidance to anyone who owns a mill in Essex.



Alderford water mill



Beeliegh steam mill



Mountnassing post mill

What does a millwright's job entail?

In former times, millwrights were required to build and maintain the counties mills. Nearly every village would have had a mill which would need regular upkeep and maintenance so in many ways a millwright was a job for life. However, there's no market to build such constructions today, so a millwright's work is restoring and maintaining the counties surviving mills.

As a millwright I visit each mill ECC owns and carry out any maintenance work and small repairs that are necessary.

All the mills – be they water, wind or steam – have different maintenance requirements so a lot of small repair jobs are needed to keep them working. These mainly involve tightening wedges, lubricating moving parts, turning sails and so forth.

Do you work with the mills volunteer groups?

Yes, as they're extremely important to help maintain the mills and each mill has one. The number of volunteers varies with each mill but mainly groups are between 10 to 40 members. Some of the members also join working parties where they work on restoration and maintenance projects.

During the warmer months volunteer group members will open the mills so people can visit these fantastic heritage venues. In fact, without their efforts the mills wouldn't be able to open to the public.

Heritage Week

Saturday 13,
Sunday 14
and Sunday
21 September:
11.00am to 5.00pm

Delve deep into history during Heritage Week and discover the mills summer open days by visiting: www.explore-essex.com/places-to-go/heritage-places

Vintage farm machinery to be restored



A two-furrow top-soil plough

Led by the Friends of Cressing Temple and supported by the Cressing Temple Community Shed, a 'Working Farm' project will see some of the site's antique farm machinery restored before it's redisplayed to visitors.

Currently the historic site is home to a Bentall and a Bamford mower, a two-furrow top-soil plough and a Tumbril cart.

The machinery will be given a new lease of life and will be painted by Cressing's volunteers, who'll also carry out minor repairs to the equipment.

Thanks to the funding, educational materials focusing on agricultural history since the Middle Ages will be created, along with signage and videos about working farm life in the first half of the 20th century.

Sue Lowe, Chair of The Friends of Cressing Temple, said: "We'd like to thank the Arts Council National Lottery funding for their support as it provides us with the opportunity to showcase various features and attractions at Cressing in a way that has not previously been possible.

"Thanks to the funding, visitors will be able to see how the equipment was used and discover a lost farming way of life."

Visit Cressing today to see the first of the farm machinery to be restored. www.explore-essex.com/blog/cressing-working-farm



Celebrating Cressing's Tudor walled garden

At the heart of Cressing Temple Barns is a stunning secret garden that was fully restored three decades ago for visitors to enjoy.

Digging into history

The existing walled garden at Cressing Temple dates to the late 16th century. It was built by Sir John Smyth, along with a Tudor mansion and granary, when he purchased Cressing Temple in 1539. At the time it would've been a farming estate with 800 acres of arable land and pasture for 600 sheep and 32 cattle.

Built to serve the needs of the manor's residents, the garden covers over half an acre and the south side is joined to the chapel and Tudor cellar, forming a small courtyard where residents could enter directly from the house.

The estate was sold at the end of the Civil War in 1646. Over the next 300 years it changed hands several times and we know the Tudor manor house was demolished during the 18th century, as it doesn't appear on an estate map from 1794.

The walled garden was cultivated as a kitchen garden, serving the needs of the different tenant farmers who lived in the 16th century farmhouse and ran the estate.

Restoring the walled garden

Essex County Council purchased the site in 1987 and set out to develop and turn Cressing Temple Barns, including the walled garden, into a focal point for the county's heritage.

Excavations took place in the walled garden in the 1990's but little of the original Tudor layout had survived the centuries. However, some herringbone pathways and the remains of a raised brick walkway were discovered.

It suggests that originally it may have been a pleasure garden with a typical Tudor design, perhaps including a knot garden, arbour and fountain similar to now.

Visit the glorious Tudor garden: www.explore-essex.com/cressing-temple-barns



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



Mandarin duck

Here Andrew explains why summer is one of his favourite seasons.

“Summer, the pinnacle of nature’s exuberance, is the season where life reaches its full crescendo. It’s a time of golden warmth, where the landscapes bask under the generous embrace of the sun.

“The world hums with energy, wildflowers glow with vibrant radiance, woodlands hum with the sounds of thriving wildlife, and shimmering waters glisten beneath cloudless skies.

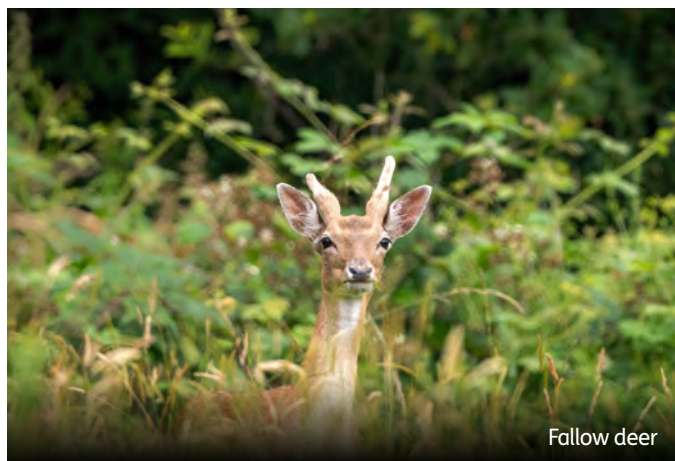
“It’s the season of movement, of exploration, of soaking in the beauty that stretches far beyond the horizon.”

To see more of Andrew’s photography, visit his Instagram page: [#andrew_d_adams](#) or visit Youpic: www.youpic.com/AndrewAdams

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



Toad



Fallow deer



Egyptian goose



Painted lady



Black soldier fly



Honey bee



Common blue



Common red soldier beetle



Grasshopper



Mandarin ducks



Common blue



New arts trail creates buzz

A fun, free walking trail will transform Chelmsford into a buzzing arts space this summer.

Get out and about during the school holidays and discover sculptures of giant and mini bees that will be displayed throughout the streets and parks of Chelmsford, encouraging people to 'bee' active and enjoy spending time outdoors.

Held from Saturday 5 July to Tuesday 9 September, the Buzz in the City art trail is raising funds for the charity Farleigh Hospice which has worked with Chelmsford For You – the city's Business Improvement District – to organise the event.

Supported by Chelmsford City Council and sponsored by Teledyne E2V and Fisher Jones Greenwood Solicitors, the arts trail is a great free and family friendly way to explore and discover new areas of a buzzing city.

Throughout the trail there'll be 30 giant bees uniquely decorated by artists, along with smaller bees created by schools, care homes and community groups.

Each one will be installed in a place of interest in the city centre. Residents and visitors can buzz round the city following the trail with a map or using the official mobile app.

You can even own a giant bee sculpture and help raise money for Farleigh Hospice at The Buzz in the City auction at the Channels Estate, Chelmsford, on Wednesday 17 September.

For more information and to download the app visit:
www.buzzinthecity.co.uk

Images courtesy of Farleigh Hospice.



Spotter's guide

Discover bees and butterflies this summer.

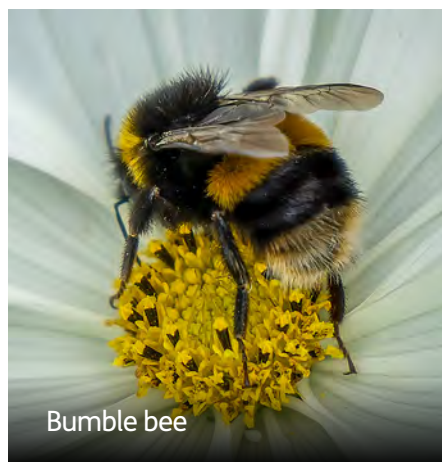


Use this spotter guide to familiarise yourself with some of the rare, declining or protected wildlife that inhabit our parks and green spaces.

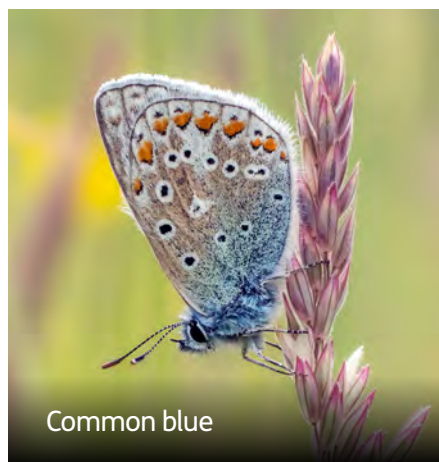
The teams at the Essex Country Parks are studying these common and rare bees and butterflies to help boost food supplies, habitats and numbers.

Discover the results from a butterfly survey at Belhus Woods and how you can get involved in the national butterfly census: www.explore-essex.com/blog/butterfly-survey

Images courtesy of Andrew Adams.



Bumble bee



Common blue



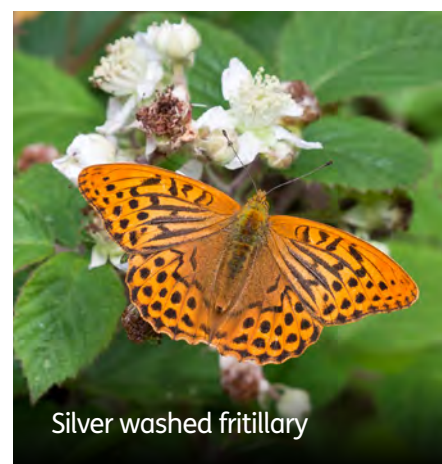
White letter hairstreak



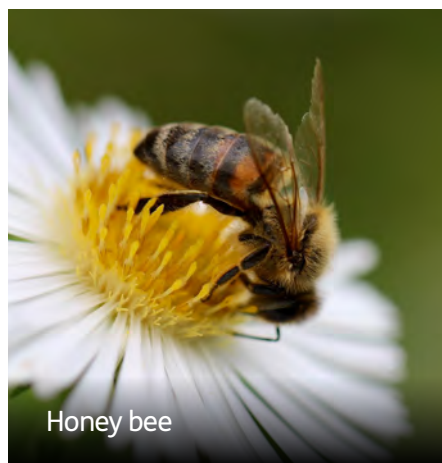
Common carder bee



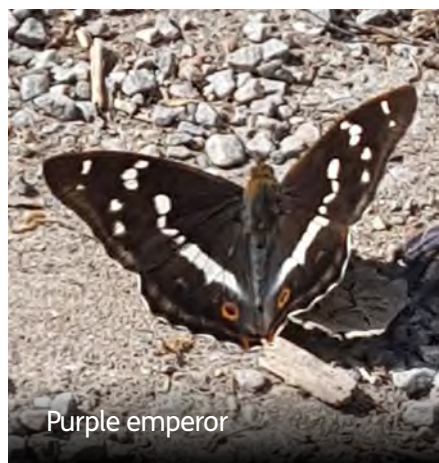
Gatekeeper



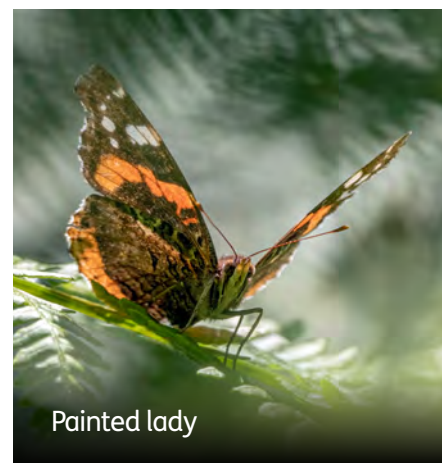
Silver washed fritillary



Honey bee



Purple emperor



Painted lady



Meadow brown



Essex skipper



Peacock

Love your local wildlife

An ambitious programme of landscape restoration is happening at the Essex Country Parks.

We look at some of the projects taking place to help improve habitats that were once home to familiar flora and fauna.



**Marsh Farm County Park:
Water voles**

Water voles were once a frequent sight in wetland habitats but 90% of the UK's population has been lost since the 1970s.

However, we're lucky to have this endangered species at Marsh Farm Country Park in South Woodham Ferrers.

This 350-acre country park is surrounded on three sides by the River Crouch, Clements Green Creek and Fenn Creek. Its many scenic riverside paths offer perfect walking and bird spotting opportunities. The waterside landscape also contains many channels and borrow dykes which are ideal for water voles.

The park team are planning a project to improve some of the ditches for this species at the site. They'll regulate the water flow to boost the growth of wetland plants and improve the quality and amount of habitat available. This will also have benefits for other amphibians and freshwater invertebrates at the site.



**Cudmore Grove Country Park:
Fisher's estuarine moth**

Cudmore Grove on Mersea Island overlooks the Blackwater and Colne Estuaries. It's a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a Ramsar site, a National Nature Reserve and a Special Protection Area. Its valuable mix of habitat is hugely important for a variety of common, rare and declining wildlife.

The Cudmore team are starting works to improve habitats and one scheme includes supporting the Fisher's estuarine moth.

In England, this rare moth is only found in north Essex and Kent. The larvae are dependent on hog's fennel, which is uncommon and at risk from rising sea levels. Efforts are being made to increase suitable habitats for the moth and establish populations that are safe from flooding. At Cudmore, the team is supporting the hog's fennel growth to help the moth population.

Read more about the Fisher's estuarine moth on the butterfly conservation website.

www.butterfly-conservation.org/moths/fishers-estuarine-moth



Belhus Woods Country Park: Shril carder bees

Located in south Essex, Belhus Woods has over 300 acres of meadows, lakes and ancient woodland.

In the coming months the Belhus team are beginning grassland and wood pasture restoration to benefit plants, insects and birds.

As part of the works a small number of native red poll cattle will lightly graze the area at Hunts Hill Lakes, which is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation of metropolitan grade.

The cattle eat just enough grass for wildflowers to flourish which, along with their waste, helps increase the variety of insects and pollinators at the site. This also benefits those higher up the food chain.

In particular, the team are hoping to attract rare shrill carder bees which are only found in a handful of locations in the UK, including Hadleigh Country Park. They also hope that the works will attract a greater diversity of beetles.



Essex Country Parks: Landscape restoration

The ambitious landscape restoration and management programmes at the Essex Country Parks support a nationwide effort to protect and enhance the environment for the future.

Many of the projects are made possible by government funding from the Countryside Stewardship Scheme and all of the works are agreed by Natural England and overseen by ecologists.

www.explore-essex.com/blog/countryside-stewardships

Wonderful wildflower walks

Take a wander on the wild side with wonderful wildflower walks at the Essex Country Parks this summer.

Grassland restoration is taking place to boost the variety of wildflowers at the parks. With the flora flourishing there's no better season to visit.



Image: Andrew Adams

Belhus Woods Country Park, Aveley

With woodland areas and grassland meadows throughout the park, Belhus Woods is a haven for flowers. Depending on where you go, you'll be in for a treat this summer.

If you like woodland wildflowers then head to Brick Kiln and Running Water Woods and you'll see stitchwort, cow parsley and red campion.

Alternatively, take a stroll around one of the five lakes and you can marvel at aquatic flowers like yellow flag iris, ragged robin, white water lilies and water mint.

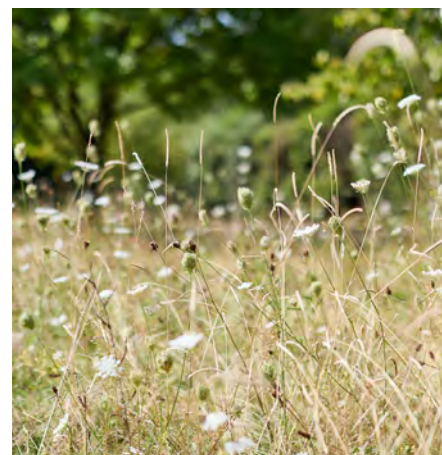
If meadow walks and wildflowers are more your thing then there are several to choose from. You'll spot different wildflower species like buttercups, birds foot trefoil, vetches, vetchlings and yellow hay rattle which are all abundant and last until late summer.

Danbury Country Park, Chelmsford

Visit the wildflower meadow at the Grade II listed Danbury Country Park and discover an oasis for flora.

This area of the park isn't cut during the summer months, so it allows the grass and flowers to flourish which in turn helps many species of insects, including butterflies and pollinators, to thrive.

Take a meander through this wildflower meadow and you'll see ox-eye daises and so much more including harebells along the hedgerows.





Great Notley Country Park

Up until late August Great Notley is the perfect green space to spot wildflowers. Take a stroll from the main picnic field and over the mounds and you'll come across some of the best spots.

On your travels you'll be able to see ox-eye daises, common poppy, scabious, saxifrage, cowslips, cornflowers, lady's bed straw and even pyramid orchids. Last year a bee orchid was spotted around the lake.

Did you know that Great Notley's wildflower meadows and lakes were created from nothing and over the years have grown and developed into what you see today?

Hadleigh Country Park

As a Site of Special Scientific Interest, Hadleigh Country Park has many different types of wildflowers blooming within its grounds.

Head to Benfleet Downs, an area of species rich and nationally important grassland, and you'll spot an interesting and diverse range of plants. Some rare wildflowers you might spot include deptford pink, field garlic, hartwort and hairy vetchling.



Weald Country Park

Take a trip to this historic Grade II listed park and discover the work to restore and improve the grasslands and boost biodiversity.

Saunter along to Lodge Field and The Roughs and you'll spot vetches and vetchlings, birdsfoot trefoil, buttercups, ox-eye daises along with rarer marsh orchids.



Get fruity with community orchards

Did you know that new orchards were planted at three of the Essex Country Parks after working with the Essex Forest Initiative and Essex County Council's Place Services?

The orchards at Belhus Woods, Hadleigh and Weald Country Parks include fruit trees that are native East Anglian varieties. They're specific to our region and will benefit both local communities and wildlife.

The apple, cherry, pear and plum trees were chosen as they're best suited to our soil and local climate. They also include varieties that've been lost over the last century.

Some of the varieties planted in the orchards include conference, laxton's superb, satisfaction and princess pear trees.

Rare apple tree species such as discovery, queen, rosy blenheim, Maldon wonder and Braintree seedling have also been planted.

Orchards are extremely important as they provide many benefits for wildlife. The flowering blossom is vital for pollinators and the fruit is a great food source for birds, mammals and insects - whether it's on the tree or on the ground.

Visitors of all ages are free to enjoy these orchards and play amongst the blossom. They're also welcome to picnic in the summer and pick fruit during the autumn.

To discover the fruit tree varieties and their own unique histories visit: www.applesandorchards.org.uk



Apple Day at Cressing Temple Barns

Sunday 12 October: 10.00am to 4.00pm

Enjoy a fun day out for all the family, with apples, fresh juice and cider. Browse local craft stalls, enjoy entertainment from the Company of Merrie Folk and Morris dancing as well as live music.

Animals from Gemma's Mobile Farm and a garden trail, along with hot food and sweet treats, will also be available.

www.explore-essex.com/whats-on/apple-day-cressing-temple-barns



Create your own tasty Tiptree treat

Tiptree salted caramel and apple pancakes.

Enjoy this fruity pancake recipe from Tiptree Tea Rooms that makes two stacks serving two people. You can adapt this recipe for larger homemade pancakes.

Ingredients

6 Scotch pancakes (you can use readymade)
1 large Bramley cooking apple
1 tablespoon sultanas
2 tablespoons Tiptree salted caramel spread
1 tablespoon icing sugar

To garnish

1 Red skinned eating apple
2 tablespoons granulated sugar
Knob of butter
100g Dark chocolate, optional

Method

For garnish cut the red apple into four pieces, then core and cut it into thin slices.

Put sugar and butter in a heavy pan and let it dissolve and start to colour.

Add a few apple slices and allow them to caramelise, then remove them and let them cool.

Peel, core and slice the Bramley apple, put in a bowl with sultanas and cook in microwave or pan.

Lightly toast the pancakes.

Put two of the pancakes on separate serving dishes to make stacks.

Spread each pancake with one teaspoon of Tiptree salted caramel spread.

Top with some cooked Bramley apple and sultanas.

Spread salted caramel spread on the next two pancakes and place on the stack.

Add the cooked apple and top with final pancakes, then dust with icing sugar.

Garnish with the caramelised apple slices.

As an optional extra, dust with grated chocolate or chocolate that has been melted over a bowl of hot water and drizzle onto pancakes.

Visit a Tiptree Tea Room and enjoy a tasty treat:

www.tiptree.com/pages/tearooms

Capture a moment in history with a time capsule

Gather your loved ones and preserve your memories this summer with a time capsule, they're fun to make whatever your age.



The best thing about making a time capsule is what you put in it and where you place it is up to you. Traditionally they're hidden underground for future generations to unearth but you can hide them indoors, either in a loft, shed or outbuilding.

First find a container which is airtight and sealed so water can't get in. Commonly used containers are either aluminium or stainless steel.

Creating a time capsule is simple but here are six ideas to help get you started:

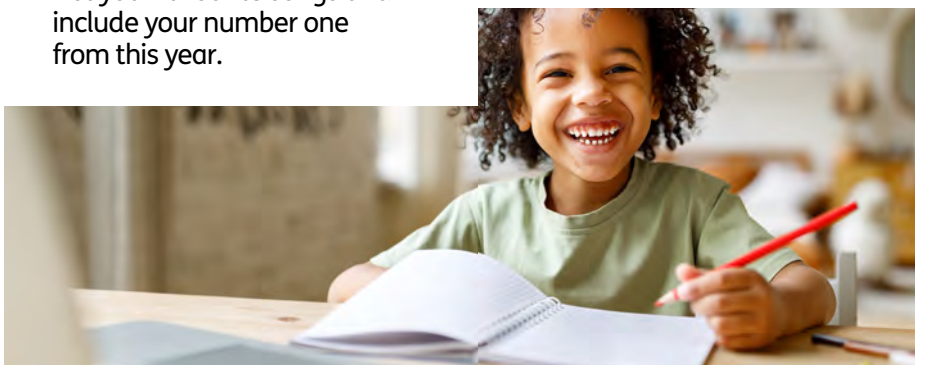
- Include a letter to your future self with details about your average day.
- Write a list of any predictions you have or new technologies you think may exist in years to come.

- Find a coin or stamp – these change overtime so they make great mementos.
- Add a family photo or an image of your home as it stands today.
- Buy some newspapers and include local and national news stories.
- List your favourite songs and include your number one from this year.

Once your container is full, add the date and decide where to place it.

If you're going to place it underground, choose somewhere that you can easily and safely dig and mark.

Why not draw a map and give it to the youngest family member to keep?



Easy to make woodland wands

This simple craft activity is a great way to spend time outdoors and make magical family memories.



First gather and prepare multiple pieces of colourful ribbon and cut them to similar lengths. Choose different widths, patterns and colours. You'll need five to 10 pieces per wand. Put these safely into a bag for later.

Next, decide which Essex Country Park or green space you'd like to visit. You'll need a place to sit to make your wands, so bring a picnic blanket, your favourite drinks and snacks and your bag of pre-prepared ribbons. Or you could look for a picnic table in the park.

Find your best wand stick simply by exploring the woodland floor and looking underneath trees. Once you've found your wand give it a gentle tap to check if it's strong enough.

Once you have found one you like, head back to your seating area and neatly arrange your ribbons.

Show your little one(s) how to tie the first ribbon around the stick, securing it with a knot. Watch them add more until they're happy with how it looks. Then let their imagination do the rest.

Remember to bring your wands to our Summer Magic Trails during the school holidays and make magical memories to last a lifetime.

Explore Essex

ESSEX EXPLORERS

FREE Summer Magic Trail

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

Essex County Council

explore-essex.com/events

Essex Year of Colour

ESSEX COUNTRY PARKS

Let their wild side run free at Forest School

Last year over 1,400 visitors enjoyed Wild Wednesdays at Danbury Country Park. We discover more about the free Forest School taking place this August.



Wild Wednesday sessions at Danbury Country Park are a fantastic way for the family to spend time together in the great outdoors.



Research shows that fresh air, exercise and spending time in nature are hugely beneficial for people's physical and mental health.

Forest Schools are a great way to boost health and wellbeing and allow family and friends to re-connect by ditching the digital devices and having fun.

Wild Wednesday visitors can enjoy a number of child led activities, set up by the education rangers, including den building, hammocks, rope swings, mud kitchen, nature crafts and a scavenger hunt – all depending on the day.

So, bring a picnic and some ball games and make a day of it. Remember to check the weather forecast and pack sun cream, hats and plenty of water and snacks if it's hot. Or a raincoat if not.

Summer 2024 attendees recommend Wild Wednesdays

Not sure that Wild Wednesdays are for you and your family? Check out some of the feedback from last year's attendees to discover why everyone will love it.

Lauren from Chelmsford said: "It's fun for all the family. There's lots of space and it's a great way for children to make new friends, be outdoors and be free. We look forward to this every week and every year."

"It's an opportunity for kids to be kids," added Katie from Southend. "It's the best day out."

Free Wild Wednesdays take place at Danbury Country Park every Wednesday throughout August 2025.

www.explore-essex.com/events

You might also like School Holiday Activity Days at Essex Outdoors Centres: www.essexoutdoors.com/school-holiday-activities



Summer Reading Challenge 2025

Saturday 19 July to
Saturday 6 September

This year's Summer Reading Challenge, delivered by libraries and produced by The Reading Agency, will inspire children to tap into the world of imagination and reading, exploring the magical connection between storytelling and nature.

Join the wonderful characters, created by the brilliant children's illustrator Dapo Adeola, who brings the Story Garden theme to life to create an enchanted world where children can find magical creatures, plants and flowers to inspire their next reading adventure.

Children are encouraged to read any library book of their choice, fiction, non-fiction, picture books or books they share with parents and carers – they all count. They can earn stickers by telling Essex Libraries about the books they've read or writing a review.

They can also create a piece of art based on the book or attend a library event. After collecting six stickers they earn their certificate and medal.

Keep up to date on Facebook, X and Instagram @EssexLibraries



Set sail in a historic barge

Based on Maldon's Hythe Quay, Topsail Charters run cruises on Thames sailing barges which can be enjoyed by all ages.



Once the barges were a familiar sight as 2,000 of them operated along the East Coast at their peak, however only a handful of these traditional cargo vessels survive today.

Operated by a two-man crew, the barges have a mast that lowers down onto the deck allowing them to navigate rivers and under bridges, yet their leeboards enabled them to go to sea. The barges flexibility and small crew numbers meant they stayed profitable as cargo vessels, long after other types of historic ships were replaced by road and rail.

Thistle: 1895

130 years afloat

Thistle is the oldest iron barge still sailing. Launched by William Hamilton and Co on the River Clyde, her first owner was a coal merchant of Battersea. Thistle was sold in 1972 and restoration started at Woodbridge in 1980.

She has been part of the Topsail fleet since 2001 and is a familiar sight on the rivers and ports of the East Coast, her cargo is now up to 50 passengers.

Hydrogen: 1906

119 years afloat

Hydrogen was launched at Rochester and her working life began carrying tar and oil from the Thames and Medway to Scotland. She's a fine example of a large coasting barge, capable of carrying 200 tons of cargo.

Since 1992 Hydrogen has been one of Topsail Charters fleet and is now the largest wooden barge still sailing, taking 50 passengers.





Reminder

2025 marks 50 years of charter work

Built in 1929, Reminder is Topsail's youngest barge and is one of last made of steel. In 1975, she was restored and her cargo hold was converted to accommodate 12 passengers with overnight accommodation.

Reminder spent her time exploring the rivers and estuaries of the East Coast, a function she stills fulfils today.



Skills and materials

Today, Topsail Charters need access to specialist skills and materials that were abundant when barges were in their heyday.

For example, the strength of Hydrogen's hull lies in her timbers. Nowadays a sustainable tropical hardwood is used but originally it was oak. Sourcing a tree is a very expensive challenge and today there's only a few shipwrights skilled enough to handle such rebuilds.

Becoming a qualified barge skipper takes many years of experience. Topsail employs two local men following an initiative with Maldon's Plume School. One of them showed an interest in barges as a schoolboy and now at the age of 28, he's one of the youngest qualified skippers.

Topsail Charters offer a range of cruises from Brightlingsea, Harwich, Ipswich or Maldon. Visit www.top-sail.co.uk and choose 'Public Trips'.

Images courtesy of Topsail Charters.

Competition

WIN a 'Two Island Cruise' for two from Maldon, it's one of Topsail Charters most popular barge trips.

Set sail onboard Hydrogen or Thistle from Maldon's Hythe Quay and see the sights before returning.

To enter email the answer to the question below to: Explore.Essex@essex.gov.uk

Enter by midnight
Sunday 17 August 2025.

Q: What is the name of the oldest iron barge still sailing and part of Topsail Charter's fleet?

A: Holly
B: Thistle
C: Fern

Prize is valid to Wednesday 31 December 2025. Excludes food and drink.

For full terms and conditions visit: www.explore-essex.com/ee-comp

**You might also like
Sailing and Powerboating
Experience Days at
Essex Outdoors Bradwell
on the River Blackwater.**

www.essexoutdoors.com/experience-days-on-the-water

Essex Museums: Bringing the past to life

Essex is home to many marvellous museums that are dedicated to preserving the county's history.



Here we look at some great museums that are sure to inspire and educate you about our county's past.

Brightlingsea Museum

This year the museum is hosting a special exhibition commemorating the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe day. The exhibition will feature life in the town during wartime, both civilian and as a naval base. There's also a fun trail for children and plenty of interactive displays. www.brightlingseamuseum.co.uk

East Anglian Railway Museum

Railway enthusiasts can enjoy a new exhibition building and heritage centre at the East Anglian Railway Museum in Wakes Colne, near Halstead. The centre opens on Sunday 13 July, the same day as the museum launches its 'Railway 200' event - a special day celebrating the 200th anniversary of the modern railway network. www.earm.co.uk

Maldon Museum in the Park

This year the museum has two temporary exhibitions, one celebrates Maldon's artists while

the other focuses on the town's lost railways. Housed in the former Park Keeper's Lodge in Promenade Park, Maldon, the museum exhibits focus on the town's history throughout the ages. www.e-voice.org.uk/maldonmuseuminthepark

Rayleigh Town Museum

With timbers from Rayleigh Castle on display, First World War exhibits and much more, Rayleigh Town Museum has interesting displays and a great trail for children. This year the museum's celebrating its ninth anniversary since opening. www.rayleightownmuseum.org/home.html

Saffron Walden Museum

Experience a 'Summer of Wonder' as Saffron Walden Museum celebrates its 190th anniversary. Since opening in 1835, the museum's mission has been to 'cultivate a taste for the beautiful in nature and thus lead to an examination of the wonderful.' It also has a series of workshops and events planned. www.saffron-walden-museum.arttickets.org.uk

For more information about Museums Essex visit:

www.museums-essex.org

Braintree Museum

Enjoy a new exhibition running from July until November.

'Extinction - From Dinosaurs to Today' looks at why things go extinct and how to prevent it. The museum, which has a popular café, also hosts group and school visits as well as exhibitions and events for the whole family.

www.braintreemuseum.co.uk



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**8 Parks
1 Pass**

**Special places
all year round**

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month free**

**When purchased
during July**

CODE: Summer25



Essex County Council



explore-essex.com/explorer-pass

Summer 2025



Credit: Epping Ongar Railway

Brentwood Brewery

Summer Beer Festival

Saturday 26 July:
12.00pm to 5.00pm

Great food, plenty of award-winning Brentwood and Elephant School Beer and live music with a Brit Pop theme. Suitable for 18-years-old and over. Price: Free.

www.brentwoodbrewing.co.uk

August Cheese Club

Saturday 2 August:
12.00pm to 3.00pm

An afternoon at the brewery's August Cheese Club. A good choice of draught and bottled beer, along with other drinks. Suitable for 18-years-old and over. Price: Free.

www.brentwoodbrewing.co.uk

Brightlingsea Museum

Summer season events and activities

Now to Sunday 31 August
Saturday 11.00am to 5.00pm,
Sunday, Wednesday, Thursday
and Friday: 2.00pm to 5.00pm

Fascinating and interactive displays on maritime and social history, plus craft activities for children and art exhibitions. New programme of guided walks. Suitable for all ages. Price: Free.

www.brightlingseamuseum.co.uk

Café in the Park, Colchester Bandstand

Soundwave Sessions

Now until Sunday 7 September:
Various times

Discover a line up of local bands, brass ensembles and more. Concerts are free and family friendly. Suitable for all ages. Price: See website.

www.colchester-events.co.uk/event/soundwave-sessions

Clacton Pier

Free Fireworks Extravaganza

Saturday 26 July, 2 August, 9 August, 16 August, Thursday 21 August and Sunday 24 August: 9.00pm

Spectacular firework displays throughout the summer. Just grab your spot on the pier and enjoy the show. Suitable for all ages. Price: Free. www.clactonpier.co.uk/events

Colchester Castle

Mythical Creatures

Saturday 26 July to Sunday 22 February 2026:
Monday to Saturday:
10.00am to 5.00pm
Sunday: 11.00am to 5.00pm

Embark on a magical story quest through folklore and legend, brought to life through enchanted objects. This immersive exhibition invites families to explore local tales and mythical creatures through storytelling. Suitable for: See website. Price: See website. www.colchester.cimuseums.org.uk

Colchester Zoological Society

Giants Weekend

Saturday 19 July and Sunday 20 July: 9:30am to 5:30pm

Enjoy a 'zooper' weekend with facts about the zoo's magnificent giants, from friendly giraffes to African elephants. Suitable for all ages. Price: Event included in standard admission.

www.colchesterzoologicalsociety.com/event/giants-weekend

Summer Holiday Fun

Wednesday 23 July to Sunday 31 August

Discover a wild adventure filled with daytime activities. Suitable for all ages. Price: Free for zoo passholders. www.colchesterzoologicalsociety.com/event/summer-holidays

Summer Lates

Saturday 9 August 2025 and Wednesday 30 August: 9:30am to 8:00pm

Enjoy more value for your money as we remain open until 8.00pm. Suitable for all ages. Price: Event included in standard admission. www.colchesterzoologicalsociety.com/event/summer-lates

Cliffs Pavilion

Jake Bugg

Tuesday 22 July: 7.00pm

Jake will perform two sets, acoustic and electric, with tracks from his latest album. Suitable for 16-years-old and over. Under-16s must be seated with an adult over 18-years-old. Price: Tickets from £35.50.

www.trafalgartickets.com/cliffs-pavilion-southend/en-GB/whats-on

Bat Out of Hell

Monday 4 to Saturday 9 August: 8.00pm
Wednesday and Saturday matinees: 2.30pm

The iconic music of Jim Steinman and Meat Loaf will once again shake the stage and ignite your love for rock. Suitable for 12-years-old and over. Price: From £32.00.

www.trafalgartickets.com/cliffs-pavilion-southend/en-GB/whats-on

TINA: The Tina Turner Musical

Tuesday 26 August to Saturday 6 September: 7.30pm
Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday matinees: 2.30pm

Experience Tina Turner's inspiring story which reveals a woman who conquered the world against all odds. Suitable for ages 14-years-old and over. Price: From £29.00.

www.trafalgartickets.com/cliffs-pavilion-southend/en-GB/whats-on

Cressing Temple Barns

Helen Rollason: A Vintage and Makers Day Out

Sunday 13 July: 10.00am to 4.00pm

Step back in time and celebrate all things vintage from classic cars to collectibles. Includes live entertainment, jive dancing, food and stalls. Suitable for all ages. Price: Adults £8.00, over 65-years-old £7.00, child £4.00. www.explore-essex.com/whats-on/helen-rollason-vintage-day-out

Festival of Essex Archaeology and Heritage

Thursday 24 July: 10.00am to 5.00pm

Meet experts and browse finds, enjoy children's activities and re-enactments, talks and more. Suitable for all ages. Price: Free. Some talks need to be booked in advance. www.explore-essex.com/whats-on/festival-of-essex-archaeology

Epping Ongar Railway

Real Ale and Cider Festival

Friday 25 to Sunday 27 July: 12.00pm to 9.30pm Friday and Saturday, 5.00pm on Sunday

Join CAMRA and Epping Ongar Railway for the summer festival, bars at both stations and on the trains. Suitable for 18-years-old and over, children welcome during the day. Price: Adult day ticket, £19.50, adult evening £12.00 (drinks on top). www.eorailway.co.uk/events/real-ale-and-cider-festival

Essex Country Parks

Summer Magic Trails

Running throughout the school summer holidays

Pick up or download a free trail to find and count the magical creatures hiding in the parks. Running at Essex Country Parks and Cressing Temple Barns. Suitable for children under eight-years-old. Price: Free. www.explore-essex.com/events

Wild Wednesdays

Wednesdays throughout August: 11.00am to 2.00pm

Forest school play at Danbury Country Park for all generations. Free. www.explore-essex.com/events

Essex and South Suffolk Community Rail Partnership

Seaside Special

Wednesday 31 July and
Thursday 28 August

Enjoy a magician, goodie bag and return on any train the same day. Suitable for all ages. Price: Adult £5.00, child £3.00.

www.esscrp.org.uk/events/seaside-special-august-2025

Essex Outdoors

School Holiday Activity Days

Weekdays throughout the school summer holiday:
9.00am to 5.00pm

Running at Bradwell-on-Sea, Danbury, Harlow and Mersea centres. Book the kids in to enjoy a full day of outdoor activities, dependent on the site and the day you book. Suitable for children aged eight-years-old and over. Price: £40.00 per day. www.essexoutdoors.com/school-holiday-activities

On the Water Sailing and Powerboat Experience Days

Weekends and various dates
during the summer holidays

Departing from Bradwell-on-Sea and west Mersea. Boats can accommodate parties of seven people. Suitable for ages seven-years-old and over. Price: See website. Includes a skipper for the day and the chance to take the helm. www.essexoutdoors.com/experience-days-on-the-water

Essex Record Office

ERO Presents: Round-up of archaeology in the county

Tuesday 15 July:
10.40am to 12.00pm

Join speaker Maria Medlycott for this talk and round up of archaeology from across Essex. Suitable for all ages. Price: £6.50. www.essexrecordoffice.co.uk/whats-on/events

ERO Presents: The former Essex County Hospital site, Colchester

Tuesday 30 September:
10.40am to 12.00pm

Join speaker Adam Wightman who talks about the archaeological excavations at the Essex County Hospital site. Suitable for all ages. Price: £6.50. www.essexrecordoffice.co.uk/whats-on

Firstsite

Firstsite Summer Holiday Fun

Tuesday to Saturday throughout
the school summer holiday:
10.00am to 2,30pm

Join us for free, drop-in activities for families, running daily. Suitable for four to 11-years-old but all ages welcome. Parents and caregivers must be present for the duration of each session. Price: Free. www.firstsite.uk/holiday-fun

Firstsite Art Fair

Saturday 2 August:
10.00am to 5.00pm

Featuring artworks by artists from Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk. Browse and buy unique pieces, meet the artists and more. Suitable for all ages. Price: Free. Some workshops and activities may require booking. www.firstsite.uk/event/the-firstsite-art-fair

Gibberd Gallery

Slow Twitch

Saturday 2 August to Saturday
13 September
Monday to Saturday, closed
Sundays and Bank Holidays:
11.00am to 4.00pm

Exhibition by Harlow's Sculpture Town Artist in Residence Weng-io Wong. 'Slow Twitch' explores the connections between city development, memory and resilience. Suitable for all ages. Price: Free. www.sculpturetown.uk

Harlow Museum and Walled Gardens

Hands on History

Tuesday 29 July to
Saturday 2 August

This free program offers you the chance to gain hands on experience with real artifacts. Suitable for 14 to 19-years-old. Price: Free. www.harlowmuseum.com/learning

Community Fête

Saturday 16 August:
12.00pm to 4.00pm

With over 30 stalls featuring Harlow's vibrant community groups, there's something for everyone to enjoy. Suitable for all ages. Price: Free. www.harlowmuseum.com/whats-on

Textile Time Machine

Tuesday 5 August to
Thursday 28 August

Take part in a range of activities from crafting to weaving. There will be both free drop-in and bookable sessions. Suitable for four-years-old and over. Price: See website. www.harlowmuseum.com/whats-on

Hedingham Castle

Classic and Vintage Car Show

Sunday 10 August:
11.00am to 4.00pm

Featuring a range of vintage, classic and modern classic vehicles, plus live music and stalls. Suitable for all ages. Price: Adults £11.00, juniors £9.00. Family tickets available, see website.

www.hedinghamcastle.co.uk/events/classic-vintage-car-show

Knights of Albion Joust

Sunday 24 and Monday
25 August: 10.00am to 4.00pm

Prepare for an unforgettable clash of courage as The Knights of Albion return for the final joust of the season. Suitable for all ages. Price: Adults £21.50, juniors £16.00. Family tickets available.

www.hedinghamcastle.co.uk/events/albion-joust

Fairytale Fest Suffolk

Friday 29 August:
11.00am to 5.30pm

Meet your favourite fairytale characters and see them perform, ride a unicorn, visit the petting zoo and more. Suitable for all ages. Price: Tickets £55.00 for one adult and one child. www.hedinghamcastle.co.uk/events/fairytale-fest-suffolk

Hylands Estate

Adventure Outdoor Cinema

Thursday 24 to Sunday 27 July

The UK's biggest outdoor cinema tour is starting with a packed programme. Enjoy films in the park grounds, various films and times available. Suitable for all ages, under 16-years-old must be accompanied by an adult. Price: £9.50 to £22.50.

www.hylandsestate.co.uk/organiser/adventure-cinema

Hylands Open Estate Day

Sunday 10 August:
10.00am to 3.00pm

Browse free family activities, Essex Foodies Market, the Stables courtyard and artist studios. Hot Box Events provide the tunes outside the house. Suitable for all ages. Price: Free. www.hylandsestate.co.uk/explore/openestate

Country Calling: Presented by Wild Promotions

Saturday 16 and Sunday 17
August: 11.00am to 10.30pm

Join us for the biggest country music festival in the region, featuring multiple stages packed with international headliners and incredible homegrown talent. Suitable for all ages. Price: Adults £65.00, children £30.00, under three-years-old free. www.hylandsestate.co.uk/events/country-calling

Outdoor Theatre: The Wind in the Willows

Tuesday 19 August:
1.00pm and 4.00pm

Immersion Theatre bring their trademark style and energy to the riverbank with larger-than-life characters. Suitable for all ages. Price: Adults £15.00, children (under 16-years-old) £10.00. www.hylandsestate.co.uk/events/outdoor-theatre-the-wind-in-the-willows

Glass, Jewellery and pottery workshops

Various dates, times and prices. See website for details.

www.hylandsestate.co.uk

Hyde Hall

The Great Woodland Adventure

Now until Sunday 31 August:
10.00am to 5.00pm

From hands on activities to exciting outdoor challenges, there's something for everyone. Suitable for all ages. Price: Adults: £16.80, children £5.00, under five-years-old free. www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/hyde-hall/whats-on

Hyde Hall Flower Show

Wednesday 30 July to Sunday 3
August: 10.00am to 5.00pm

The Flower Show returns with an array of nursery and trade stands, talks and demonstrations in the Potting Shed Theatre, live music and great food. Suitable for adults. Price: £16.80. www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/hyde-hall/rhs-garden-hyde-hall-flower-show

Contemporary Craft and Design Fair

Friday 22 to Monday 25 August:
10.00am to 5.00pm

Purchase from a treasure trove of original and affordable designs created by some of the UK's finest craftsmen and artists, including textiles and paintings. Suitable for adults: Price: £16.80. www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/hyde-hall/whats-on

Ingatstone Hall

Royal Heritage Living History

Sunday 10 August

Meet King Henry VIII, Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour and Anne of Cleves as they perambulate, ask about their lives and hear their stories. Suitable for all ages. Adults: £10.50, pensioners and students £8.40, children (five to 16-years-old) £5.25, under-fives free.

www.ingatstonehall.com/events

Gardens open

Sunday 17 August

Proceeds to British Red Cross. Suitable for all ages. Price: Adults £10.50, pensioners and students £8.40, children (five to 16-years-old) £5.25, under-fives free. www.ingatestonehall.com/events

The Festival Players presents
As You like It

Thursday 21 August

William Shakespeare's pastoral romance telling of the lives of the exiled Duke Senior and his daughter, Rosalind, in the Forest of Arden. Suitable for all ages. Price: Adults £17.00, children £11.00. www.ingatestonehall.com/events/theatre-open-air/as-you-like-it-/2272

Morris Dancing

Thursday 28 August

Mayflower Morris from Billericay perform their traditional dances. Suitable for all ages. Price: Adults £10.50, pensioners and students £8.40, children (five to 16-years-old) £5.25, under-fives free. www.ingatestonehall.com/events/dance/mayflower-morris-men-/2053

Langley Park Rally School

Junior driving and rally lessons

Tuesday and Wednesdays throughout the school holidays. Hourly slots available.

Learn to drive on our gravel track. Suitable for ages eight-years-old and over. Price: £35.00 for 15 minutes or £65.00 for 30 minutes of driving. Use code 'social' for 10% off. www.langleyparkrallyschool.co.uk/junior-drivers

Mercury Theatre

The Dreamer – Live

Friday 25 July: 7.30pm

Star of 'The Greatest Magician™', the award-winning James Phelan debuts this breathtaking new magic show. Suitable for 12-years-old and over. Price: From £27.50. www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/event/the-dreamer-live

A Beautiful Thread

Tuesday 29 July: 7.30pm

Starring Anton Lesser, 'A Beautiful Thread' weaves Hardy's life with his poetry and great novels, accompanied by a folk musical programme. Suitable for 12-years-old and over. Price: From £27.50. www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/event/a-beautiful-thread

Splat!

Sunday 10 August:
11.30am and 2.00pm

A family friendly physical comedy about art and creativity following two aspiring artists – one dedicated and serious, the other erratic and messy. Suitable for three to six-years-old. Price: From £15.00. www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/event/splat

Dinosaur Adventure Live: The Big Jurassic Storm

Tuesday 12 August: 2.00pm

When a satellite tasked with controlling the island's weather systems malfunctions, chaos erupts. The mission: Find the code hidden deep within the island, reboot the satellite and save the dinosaurs. Suitable for all ages. Price: From £15.00. www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/event/dinosaur-adventure-live-danger-on-t-rex-mountain

Museum of Chelmsford

Shifting Perspectives: Exploring Art Together

Now to Sunday 2 November
2025: 10am to 5pm

In a series of workshops facilitated with the Alzheimer's Society we invited people living with dementia and their companions to explore works of art by women artists from our collection. Suitable for all ages. Price: Free with admission to the museum (£4.00 or free for members). www.chelmsford.gov.uk/museums/whats-on/temporary-exhibitions

Sanctus Stories: Expressing Ourselves for All to See: Art, Identity and Belonging

Saturday 2 to Thursday 28
August: 10.00am to 5.00pm

A raw and authentic celebration of creativity from the heart of the Chelmsford community supported by Sanctus, a local charity working with people affected by homelessness. Suitable for 18-years-old and over. Price: Free with admission to the museum (£4.00 or free for members). www.chelmsford.gov.uk/museums/whats-on/temporary-exhibitions

Myddelton House Gardens

Robin Hood

Saturday 26 July:
3:00pm and 7.30pm

DOT Productions come back to the gardens with a children's tale everyone will love. Suitable for all ages. Price: £12.00. www.visitleevalley.org.uk/event-listings/robin-hood

Sense and Sensibility

Saturday 26 July: 7.30pm

2025 marks the 250th anniversary year of Jane Austen and what better way to celebrate her life than to delve into one of her finest novels. Suitable for all ages. Price: £18.00. www.visitleevalley.org.uk/event-listings/sense-%26-sensibility

The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck

Sunday 3 August: 3.00pm

Quantum Theatre's new adaptation of the Beatrix Potter's 'The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck' at Waltham Abbey Gardens. Suitable for all ages. Price: From £11.00. www.visitleevalley.org.uk/event-listings/jemima-puddle-duck

Alice Through the Looking Glass

Sunday 24 August:
3.00pm to 4.30pm

Quantum Theatre presents a new adaptation of Lewis Carroll's timeless classic, 'Through the Looking Glass (and What Alice Found There)'. Suitable for all ages. Price: From £11.00. www.visitleevalley.org.uk/event-listings/alice-through-the-looking-glass

Palace Theatre

Picture You Dead

Tuesday 22 to Saturday 26
July: 7.30pmThursday and Saturday
matinees: 2.30pm

In Brighton, DSI Grace investigates a cold case that leads him to the secretive world of fine art but beneath lurks an underworld of deception and murder. Suitable for 13-years-old and over. Price: Tickets from £28.00. www.trafalgartickets.com/palace-theatre-southend/en-GB/event/play/picture-you-dead-tickets

Fun Kids Science Weekly – Live

Friday 25 July:
1.00pm and 3.00pm

Fun Kids radio presenter Dan Simpson brings the weirdest and coolest stuff in science to the stage. Suitable for eight-years-old and over. Price: Tickets from £11.00. www.trafalgartickets.com/palace-theatre-southend/en-GB/event/family/fun-kids-science-weekly-live-tickets

The Last Laugh

Tuesday 19 to Saturday 23
August: 7.30pmWednesday, Thursday and
Saturday matinees: 2.30pm

Direct from the West End, a play which reimagines the lives of three of Britain's greatest comedy heroes, Tommy Cooper, Eric Morecambe and Bob Monkhouse. Suitable for: See website. Price: Tickets from £22.00. www.trafalgartickets.com/palace-theatre-southend/en-GB/event/play/the-last-laugh-tickets

Parndon Mill

Open Studios Weekend

Saturday 13 September and
Sunday 14 September
11.00am to 5.00pm

Enjoy the fine arts of painting, sculpture and craftwork from glass blowing to printing. Suitable for: See website. Price: See website. www.parndonmillgallery.org/events/open-studios

Stow Maries

Living History Weekend

Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 July

Expert historians explain and explore life in the past. Recreating life from the early Medieval period through to World War Two. Suitable for all ages. Price: Adult admission £12.00, retired concessions and young person £9.00, infant free. Family, two adults and two children, £37.00. www.stowmaries.org.uk/event/stow-maries-living-history-weekend-1046782954997

The Stow Maries Air Show

Saturday 23 August:
10.00am to 4.00pm

A breathtaking air display and much more to explore on the ground. A chance to enjoy the golden age of aviation. Suitable for five-years-old and over. Price: £10.00 to £20.00. www.stowmaries.org.uk/event/the-stow-maries-air-show-1047797559707

Back to the World War Two Farm

Saturday 30 August and
Sunday 31 August

World War Two vehicles, Women's Land Army living history, historic tractors and more. Suitable for five-years-old and over. Price: Free with museum admission. www.stowmaries.org.uk/event/stow-maries-back-to-the-ww2-farm-1067232373759

Talliston House and Gardens

Summer Vintage Tea Parties

Weekends throughout July and August: 12.00pm

Classic afternoon teas including an exploration of the house and gardens before relaxing in the Victorian watchtower. Suitable for 11-years-old and over. Price: £39.99 (minimum four guests).

www.talliston.com/vintage-tea-parties

The Headgate Theatre, Colchester

Hobson's Choice by Harold Brighouse

Tuesday 19 to Saturday 23 August: 7.45pm and 2.30pm
Saturday matinee

Bombastic bootmaker, Henry Hobson, stands between his three daughters and their future happiness, but Maggie, the 'plain' one, is ready to defy him. Enjoy a riot of love and family drama. Suitable for all ages. Price: £15.00. www.ticketsource.co.uk/headgatetheatre/e-zojrve

The Minories

Minories family art club

Saturday 26 July and Saturday 2 August: 11.00am to 3.00pm

Get creative under the guidance of a professional artist at this drop in event. Please wear clothes you don't mind getting paint or clay on. Suitable for ages four-years-old and over. Price: See website. www.theminories.org/whats-on

Art of the Roadz DJ Skills Workshop

Sunday 3 August: 4.00pm to 6.00pm

Learn to DJ with industry professionals in this free workshop. Suitable for young people aged between 14 to 25-years-old. Price: Free. www.theminories.org/whats-on

Jamaican Independence Day

Saturday 9 August: 2 - 10pm

Join Colchester's celebration of Jamaican Independence Day. With food, music and dancing. Suitable for all ages. Price: See website. www.theminories.org/whats-on

Rayleigh Town Museum

Victory in Europe (VE) 80th anniversary

Now until Saturday 6 September
Open Wednesday, Friday and Saturday: 10.00am to 4.00pm

A special exhibition on World War Two, includes both VE Day, VJ Day and Rayleigh during the war. Suitable for all ages. Price: Free. www.rayleightownmuseum.org

Rayleigh Heritage Walks

Sunday 27 July and Sunday 24 August

Explore Rayleigh's rich and varied history at our heritage walks. Booking essential. Suitable for all ages. Price: £6.00 per person. www.rayleightownmuseum.org

St Osyth Priory

St Osyth Summer Sounds

Saturday 30 and Sunday 31 August: 9.30am to 6.00pm

Two days of live music with award-winning saxophonist YolanDa Brown headlining. Suitable for all ages. Price: Tickets adult £21.30, young persons (14 to 17-years-old) £10.70, child six to 13-years-old £7.38, under five-years-old free. www.stosythsummersounds.co.uk

Tuffon Hall Vineyard

Jazz in the Vines

Saturday 23 August: 4.00pm to 7.00pm

Enjoy an afternoon of live music, delicious food and our very own award-winning wine. Suitable for all ages, no dogs. Price: £15.00 for adults and £5.00 for children (three to 17-years-old), under-three, free. www.tuffonhall.co.uk/visit-us-2

Vineyard Tours and Tastings

Sunday 31 August: 2.00pm

Stroll through our vineyard and enjoy tastings of three wines and one spirit in our stunning 16th century threshing barn. Suitable for 18-years-old and over, no dogs. Price: £25.00 per person. www.tuffonhall.co.uk/visit-us-2

Wivenhoe House Hotel

Lunch on the Lawn

Sunday 27 July, Sunday 3, 17, 24 and 31 August

A delightful fusion of good food, soulful melodies and a vibrant atmosphere that creates an unforgettable afternoon. Suitable for: See website. Price: See website. www.uk.resdiary.com/Diary/22378?date=2025-05-22

Visit Colchester

Delightful Dedham Guided Tour

Every Saturday at 11.00am,
plus Bank Holiday Mondays
at 2:00pm

Explore Dedham, the village at the heart of Constable Country. Discover the village architecture, links to Constable and the magnificent 'wool church'. Suitable for all ages. Price: Adults: £9.00, child (up to 15-years-old and must be accompanied by an adult) free. www.visitcolchester.com

Leafy Lexden Guided Tour

Every Saturday throughout the
year at 11.00am, plus Bank
Holiday Mondays at 2:00pm.

Once it was the Lexden Hundred, but now is it a suburb or a village? Join your guide to explore this unique part of Colchester. Suitable for all ages. Price: Adults: £9.00, child (up to 15-years-old and must be accompanied by an adult) free. www.visitcolchester.com

A Wivenhoe Wander

Wivenhoe on the banks of the River Colne is home to many artists but it also has a long history of ship building and fishing. Suitable for all ages. Price: Adults: £9.00, child (up to 15-years-old and must be accompanied by an adult) free. www.visitcolchester.com

Visit Maldon

Nearly Festival

Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 July

Enjoy the UK's best touring tribute acts live on stage at Promenade Park at this affordable alternative to bigger touring festivals. Look out for the kid zone, street food market and Pub in The Park. Suitable for all ages. Price: See website, under five-years-old free. www.visitmaldondistrict.co.uk/2025/03/21/the-nearly-festival-2025

Mannings and Thurston Funfair

Saturday 26 July to
Sunday 10 August

Two of the oldest names in the funfair business provide a fun-filled experience, from gentle rides and inflatables to sensational rides at Promenade Park. Suitable for all ages. Price: See website. www.visitmaldondistrict.co.uk

Burnham Kite Festival

Sunday 10 August

Bring along a kite to fly or you can make one on the day. Meet members of a professional kite flying team. At Riverside Park, Burnham-On-Crouch. Suitable for all ages. Price: See website. www.visitmaldondistrict.co.uk

UFest

Friday 15 August

Held in Maldon's Promenade Park, UFest brings local people together for a day of joy. Suitable for all ages. Price: Free. www.visitmaldondistrict.co.uk/2025/03/21/ufest-2025



Listings provided by Visit Essex and Cultural Network Essex members.

Find out more about Visit Essex and sign-up to become a member:

www.visitessex.com/industry-and-press/become-a-member

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