

Colchester Museums

Heritage Open Days

Discover Colchester's heritage in the annual celebration of historic buildings and sites.



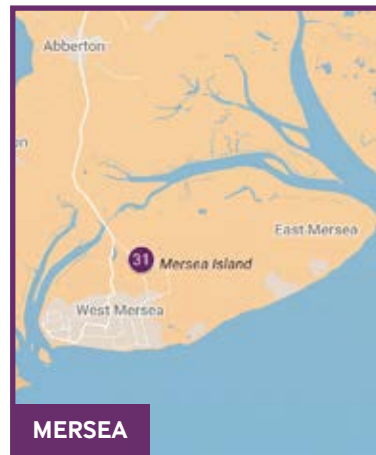
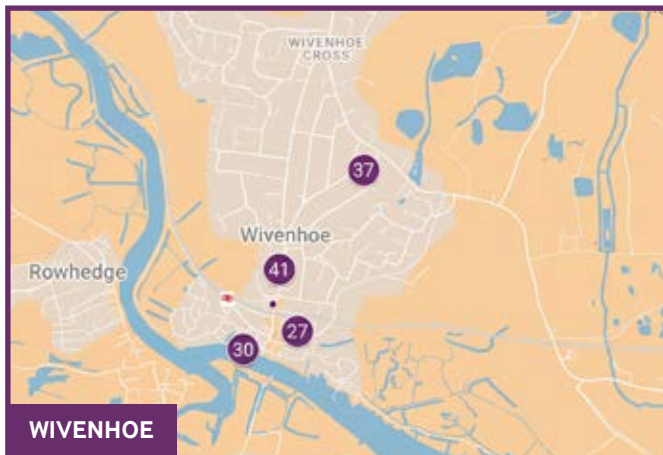
heritage open days

**11 - 20
September
2026**



www.visitcolchester.com/whats-on/heritage-open-days

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Use the MiPermit app to easily pay for your parking in Colchester and access great parking offers. Visit colchester.gov.uk/parking for current charges and offers.

Friday 11 – Sunday 20 September

34 St Botolph’s Church
St Botolph’s Street, CO1 2PG

St Botolph’s Church built in 1836-37 has an impressive interior which has been partially restored recently. The Church stands next to the ruins of the Norman Priory which is now in the care of English Heritage.
11 September, 09.30 – 15.30; 12 September, 09.00 – 16.00; 13 September, 09.30 – 15.30; 14 September, 09.30 – 12.30; 15-20 September, 09.30 – 15.30

Friday 11 September

12 St Stephen’s Church
Church Lane, Great Wigborough, CO5 7RL

Medieval church badly damaged in the Colchester Earthquake of 1884 and subsequently rebuilt. Stained glass windows. Refreshments.
10.00 – 16.00

19 Mercury Theatre
Balkerne Gate, CO1 1PT

Backstage tour of one of the leading theatres in Britain originally built in 1972 and refurbished recently.
Tours include stage, workshop and wardrobe and last 45 minutes. To book call **01206 573948** or via **mercurytheatre.co.uk** Tours at 10.00, 10.30, 11.00 and 11.30

23 Colchester Baptist Church
Eld Lane, CO1 1LS

The base for Colchester Baptists since the early 18th Century. Additions include a 19th-century school hall and late 20th-century wing which houses the Open Door Charity.
13.00 – 16.00

Saturday 12 September

1 Gray’s Summerhouse
Castle Park, CO1 1TJ

Built by Charles Gray in 1731 in the form of a miniature Greek temple. Interior is decorated with plaster medallions. The nearby Gardener’s Hut will also be open for the first time this year.
Self-guided walk from Castle bridge. 10.00 – 16.00

2 Roman Circus Centre
Roman Circus Walk, CO2 7GZ

The site of the only known Roman Circus in Britain for the very popular and dangerous sport of chariot racing. Now the home of the Colchester Archaeological Trust, housing Roman displays including the ‘Lexden Lady’.
10.00 – 15.30

6 St Leonard at the Hythe
Hythe Hill, CO1 2NP

14th-century church bearing the scars of the 1648 Siege of Colchester. Restored on several occasions in the 19th century, including after the 1884 earthquake. Napoleonic period graves in the churchyard. Refreshments. Churches Conservation Trust.
10.00 – 16.00

8 Colchester Castle
Castle Park, CO1 1TJ

Europe’s largest Norman keep. Built on the foundations of the Roman Temple of Claudius, it has been a museum since 1860 and has internationally important Iron Age and Roman collections.
10.00 – 17.00 (last entry 16.30)



12 St Stephen’s Church
Church Lane, Great Wigborough, CO5 7RL

Medieval church badly damaged in the Colchester Earthquake of 1884 and subsequently rebuilt. Stained glass windows. Refreshments.
10.00 – 16.00

18 St John’s Orthodox Church (Former Garrison Church)
Military Road, CO1 2AN

Built in 1856, at the time of the Crimean War. A unique survival, this timber church is now run by the Romanian Orthodox Church.
Tour at 16.00

22 Town to Sea Trail
War Memorial, Castle Park, CO1 1TJ

Venture from Castle Park to the historic Hythe port area on a guided tour exploring Colchester’s seafaring heritage.
Tour starts at 11.00 and lasts 2 hours.

22 Walking the Walls
War Memorial, Castle Park, CO1 1TJ

A guided walk around Britain’s oldest town wall. Built in response to the Boudican revolt of AD 60, over two-thirds still remain with fascinating stories at the stopping points.
Tour starts at 14.00 and lasts 2 hours.

36 Quaker Meeting House
6 Church Street, CO1 1NF

Georgian building of 1802, frequented by John Constable whose 250th birthday is celebrated this year. Refurbished in 1971 by Quakers after a long history of worshipping in the town.
10.00 – 16.00

15 Garrison Walk NEW
Colchester Airborne Soldier Statue, Flagstaff Road open space, CO2 7NY

A tour of Colchester’s Victorian Garrison. Learn why the barracks were built, view the remarkable architecture and learn about the incredible historic events those who served there took part in.
Tour starts at 11.00 and lasts 1½ hours.

35 St John’s Green Primary School
St John’s Green, CO2 7HE

Rare opportunity to explore a late Victorian school built in 1898 by local architects Goodey & Cressall.
10.00 – 14.00



43 SPACE Colchester
37 Queen Street, CO1 2PQ

Artist Open Studios event set in the former police station, now a thriving artist community space. An 18th-century building with surviving cell block, CID and admin offices.
10.00 – 17.00

Sunday 13 September

14 St Giles Masonic Centre
5 St John’s Green, CO2 7EZ

Originally a Norman church with later additions, including a wooden tower built in 1819. Converted to present use in 1972-6.
Tours at 11.00 and 12.30

17 St John’s Abbey Gatehouse
St John’s Green, CO2 7EZ

15th-century gatehouse with flint flushwork, vaulted roof and battlements, which played a crucial role in the 1648 Siege of Colchester. English Heritage.
10.00 – 16.00

22 Colchester Siege Walk
War Memorial, Castle Park, CO1 1TJ

Occurring during the English Civil War, the 1648 Siege of Colchester is one of the most dramatic and influential events in the history of the city. Explore the places most closely tied to the Siege.
Tour starts at 11.00 and lasts two hours.

19 Roman Walk
Mercury Theatre, Balkerne Gate, CO1 1PT

Colchester was first a Roman legionary fortress, then a city from AD 49 and the first capital of Britain. See the city’s Roman remains and learn about its history during this guided walk.
Tour starts at 14.00 and lasts two hours.

25 Greyfriars Luxury Hotel & Restaurant Tours
High Street, CO1 1UG

Refurbished 18th-century building on the site of a former Franciscan Priory. In its recent history, it has been home to secondary and adult education and is now a luxury hotel. Tours of the site and its surroundings; exhibition of its social and architectural history. Refreshments including lunch and afternoon tea available. Exhibition open 10.30 – 16.00.
Tours at 11.00 and 14.00. To book a place on a tour call **01206 575913** or email **events@greyfriarscolchester.co.uk**

Saturday 12 & Sunday 13 September

4 St James the Great Church
East Hill, CO1 2QL

A beautiful Grade 2 listed Anglo-Catholic church situated in an imposing position. A house of worship of historical, architectural and artistic interest, being a repository of Colchester’s heritage.
Sat. 09.30 – 16.00; Sun. 12.00 – 16.00

7 Roman Theatre
Maidenburgh Street, CO1 1UB

Remains of a Roman theatre which seated 3,000 people. This theatre was a victim of the destruction of Colchester by Boudica in AD 60.
Sat. 09.45 – 16.30, Sun. 10.30 – 16.30

20 Cuckoo Farm Studios
Boxted Road, Mile End, CO4 5HH

Housed in early 19th-century farm buildings and formerly part of Severalls Hospital, the studios are now home to over thirty artists.
11.00 – 16.00

20 The Temple-Cox Museum and Library
Cuckoo Farm Studios, Boxted Road, Mile End, CO4 5HH

An immersive installation and intimate archive of objects and reference books, decades in the making. Maximum of 3 guests at a time.
11.00 – 16.00

21 Boxted Airfield Museum
Langham Lane, Langham CO4 5NW

Explore a World War II US airfield, home of 56th Fighter Group which took part in D-Day and the Battle of the Bulge. Photographic exhibition and fuselage section of a B26 Marauder, the only example in the UK.
10.00 – 16.00

24 7 Queen Street (The Brewhouse)
Queen Street, CO1 2PG

This remarkable timber-framed building dates to the early 14th century and has the earliest shop window in Colchester.
Sat. 14.00 – 18.00; Sun. 14.00 – 16.30

26 St Peter’s Church
North Hill, CO1 1DZ

Medieval church with tower of 1758 including an impressive Victorian clock. The church interior features a 17th-century pulpit and interesting memorials.
Sat. 10.00 – 16.00; Sun. 12.00 – 16.00

38 Peake’s House
East Stockwell Street, CO1 1ST

Colchester’s Dutch Quarter was once home to Flemish weavers who brought superior cloth-making skills to the town after fleeing religious persecution. The Tudor Peake’s House was probably originally three weavers’ houses. Landmark Trust.
10.00 – 16.00. Pre-booking preferred, **landmarktrust.org.uk/news-and-events/opendays/peakes-house-open-day-26**

Monday 14 September

29 St Mary’s at the Walls Church (Colchester Arts Centre)
Church Street, CO1 1NF

Late 19th-century church with medieval tower severely damaged during the 1648 Siege of Colchester. Interesting monuments including John Rebow, died 1699. ‘Mosaic’ toilets.
Open 12.30 – 15.30. Tours at 13.00, 14.00 & 15.00

Tuesday 15 September

32 The Munnings Art Museum
Castle Hill, Dedham CO7 6AZ

The museum is the former home of painter Sir Alfred Munnings. Tudor and Georgian in design, the house has interesting architectural features. Over 150 paintings are on display documenting country life in the early 20th century.
11.00 – 16.30

Friday 18 September

39 New Town Walk NEW
Wimpole Road Methodist Church, Wimpole Road, CO1 2DN

A guided walk exploring the fascinating history of this area of Colchester, which was a planned development in the late 19th century with housing for all classes of society.
Tour starts at 14.00.

Saturday 19 September

6 St Leonard at the Hythe
Hythe Hill, CO1 2NP

14th-century church bearing the scars of the 1648 Siege of Colchester. Restored on several occasions in the 19th century, including after the 1884 earthquake. Napoleonic period graves in the churchyard. Churches Conservation Trust.
10.00 – 16.00

9 Colchester Town Hall
High Street, CO1 1FR

Remarkable Edwardian building designed by John Belcher and opened in 1902, surmounted by a bronze figure of St Helena, 162 feet above the street.
Meet in the entrance hall. Tours take place at 10.00 & 11.00 and last one hour.

9 Old Library and Town Hall Law Courts NEW
Colchester Town Hall, High Street, CO1 1FR

Explore Colchester’s first Public Library built to the designs of Brightwen Binyon and opened in 1894. Then venture into the former law courts and prison cells. Meet in the entrance hall of the Town Hall. Please note because of the nature of these historic buildings, the tour is not fully accessible.
Tours take place at 13.00 & 14.30 and last one hour.

9 Meet and Play the Moot Hall Organ
Colchester Town Hall, High Street, CO1 1FR

A rare opportunity to hear and play this remarkable organ installed in 1902 at a cost of £1,000. Fully restored in 2014-15. Children’s activities.
12.00 – 15.00

10 Audley Chapel
Berechurch Hall Road, CO2 9NU

The 16th-century burial chapel of the Audley family, with fine hammer-beam roof and unique monuments and features. Churches Conservation Trust.
10.00 – 14.00

28 Hollytrees Museum
High Street, CO1 1UG

Georgian townhouse built in 1718-19 and extended in 1748 by Charles Gray. Hollytrees has been a local history museum for almost a century, currently housing permanent social history displays including Colchester-built clocks and the ‘Discover Museum Treasures’ exhibition featuring ‘Juliasaurus’ a 75% complete dinosaur skeleton, potentially a new species.
Entrance ticket required, ballot allocation only. Maximum of four persons per household. Call **01206 282920** or visit the Colchester Visitor Information Centre. Time slots: 10.00, 11.30, 14.00, 15.30. Ballot closes 29 August.

33 St James the Less Catholic Church
Priory Street, CO1 2QB

Completed in 1837, this is a good example of a relatively early Roman Catholic church in England by one of the leading Roman Catholic architects of the day. The church has remarkable stained glass windows.
11.00 – 15.00

Sunday 20 September

5 Cannock Mill
Old Heath Road, CO2 8AA

Historic building dating back to 1600, in use as a corn and fulling mill until the early 1960s. Now the home of Cannock Mill Cohousing which combines communal and private living.
13.30 – 16.00

13 Gosbecks Archaeological Park
Maldon Road, CO3 4RN

Guided tours of this remarkable site which features prominently in the story of Iron Age and Roman Colchester and is associated with the visit of the emperor Claudius in AD 43.
Meet at Maldon Road car park. Tours at 11.00 & 14.00

14 St Giles Masonic Centre
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40 Colchester Cemetery
Mersea Road, CO2 8RU

A large cemetery which dates back to 1856, containing two chapels (Church of England and Nonconformist) and many burials of interesting local people. Meet at the entrance gates by the former Cemetery Office.
Tours take place at 10.00 and 14.00 and last one hour.



42 St John the Baptist NEW
Church Road, Layer de la Haye, CO2 0EW

Demonstration of bell ringing in the 14th-century tower of this historic church with an opportunity to meet the ringers and have a go yourself.
14.00 – 16.00

Saturday 19 & Sunday 20 September

3 St Helen’s Chapel
St Helen’s Lane, CO1 1UR

Medieval chapel of Saxon origin built on Roman foundations. Re-built several times, now a Greek Orthodox Church.
Sat. 10.00 – 15.30; Sun. 12.00 – 16.00

7 Roman Theatre
Maidenburgh Street, CO1 1UB

Remains of a Roman theatre which seated 3,000 people. This theatre was a victim of the destruction of Colchester by Boudica in AD 60.
Sat. 09.45 – 16.30, Sun. 10.30 – 16.30

11 St Martin's Church
West Stockwell Street, CO1 1HN

Medieval church with an impressive 14th-century roof, wall paintings and Norman tower that was damaged in the 1648 Siege of Colchester. Now a Greek Orthodox Church.

Sat. 10.00 – 15.30; Sun. 12.00 – 16.00

17 St John's Abbey Gatehouse
St John's Green, CO2 7EZ

15th-century gatehouse with flint flushwork, vaulted roof and battlements, which played a crucial role in the 1648 Siege of Colchester. English Heritage.

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Sat. 10.00 – 16.00; Sun. 12.00 – 16.00

31 Mersea Barrow
Barrow Barn, 7A East Mersea Road, West Mersea, CO5 8EX

Nationally rare Roman burial mound dated AD 100-120, excavated in 1912. A rare opportunity to walk inside the mound to view the burial chamber.



Wivenhoe Heritage Open Days
Saturday 12 & Sunday 13 September /
Saturday 19 & Sunday 20 September

27 St Mary's Church
High Street, CO7 9BD

Mid-Victorian church with tower, built around 1500. Decorated with fine Tudor memorial brasses and a modern stained glass window by James Dodds.

12 September, 11.00 – 16.00; 13 & 20 September, 12.30 – 16.00. Not open on 19 September.

30 The Nottage
The Quay, CO7 9BX

A maritime institute and museum established in 1896 in memory of Capt. Charles G. Nottage. Located in a former sail loft since 1947.

13.00 – 16.00

37 Wivenhoe Chapel Museum
New Cemetery, Belle Vue Road

Housed in the former cemetery chapel, this museum tells the story of Wivenhoe through a range of exhibits and artefacts, including the 18th-century church clock from St Mary's.

10.00 – 13.00

41 'Wivenhoe Memories' Exhibition
William Loveless Hall, 85-87 High Street, CO7 9AB

The annual exhibition of historic photographs of Wivenhoe, this year with a 1960s theme.

19 & 20 September, 10.00 – 17.00

16 University of Essex – Albert Sloman Library
Wivenhoe Park, CO4 3SQ

Explore the University of Essex Special Collections. Discover archives, rare books, artworks and objects from our collections, learn how they are cared for, and uncover the stories they preserve.

12 September only, 12.00 – 16.00

Updates: For the latest information please go to www.visitcolchester.com/whats-on/heritage-open-days

Disclaimer: Every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this leaflet is correct. However sometimes changes to published openings become necessary and participants should check our website for updates before travelling.

