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AUTUMN/WINTER 2025



Explore  
Essex

# ESSEX EXPLORER

## Magazine

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& kooky crafts

Panto, parks  
& places

Winter  
waterside  
walks



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# Get out more this winter



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# Welcome...

To the autumn edition of Essex Explorer magazine. In this edition we have a fantastic competition for you to enter to win a wonderful winter hamper courtesy of our friends at Tiptree Tea Rooms.

We bring you 10 great ideas to get you out and about during the autumn and winter months, the best pantomimes taking places throughout the county and discover the fascinating histories of the 'London' shipwreck and 'The Prittlewell Prince' at Southend Central Museum.

Also, you can find out more about some wonderful winter walks, discover some great art and craft ideas to keep children entertained. There's something for adults too, with some winter warming cocktail recipes thanks to Tiptree Tea Rooms.

Browse more ideas for days out over the coming months in the listings (see page 38) or take a trip and meander around the county thanks to a new movie map as well as much, much more.

As a county Essex has a beautiful landscape, so get out and about and enjoy all that the parks and green spaces have to offer as the days get shorter and the nights draw in.



**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)





## Essex Country Parks awarded Green Flag status

Our country parks have once again been recognised for their excellent standards by being awarded Green Flag status for 2025/2026.

The prestigious Green Flag award recognises well managed parks and demonstrates that the spaces meet the needs of the communities they serve.

For over five years, the international award confirms that our parks boast the highest possible environmental standards.

Plan your visit to one of the award-winning Essex Country Parks here: [www.explore-essex.com/places-to-go/essex-country-parks-2](http://www.explore-essex.com/places-to-go/essex-country-parks-2)



Image: Park ranger (centre) with volunteers at Danbury Country Park

## Make your garden weather wise

A new leaflet to help make your garden healthy, flood resistant and adverse to changing weather conditions has been launched by Essex County Council.

The leaflet contains all you need to know on how you can make changes to your garden to help reduce the impacts of bad weather on your home, such as flooding.

It also includes 12 garden features that you can install to help make your garden healthier - from small to big ideas - that also alleviate the risk from the changing seasons.

Find out more by visiting: [www.flood.essex.gov.uk/what-to-do-about-flooding/what-you-can-do-at-home](http://www.flood.essex.gov.uk/what-to-do-about-flooding/what-you-can-do-at-home)





## New grants to support county's creative sector

Two new funds supporting the county's art, culture and creative sectors are now open for applications.

The Creative Industries Development Fund and The Cultural Development Projects Fund have been formed to support creative businesses and arts and culture organisations.

Businesses within the creative industries from advertising to computer services, and many more, can apply for The Creative Industries Development Fund.

Eligible cultural organisations, such as museums, galleries and theatres, along with combined and performing arts groups, can apply for The Cultural Development Projects Fund.

Both funds will provide grants from £2,500 to £30,000 to successful applicants and are open for applications from now until Friday 31 October 2025.

For more information about either fund or to apply visit: [www.culture-essex.co.uk/about](http://www.culture-essex.co.uk/about)



Image: James Lawrence story walk by Realm Video

## New kid's short story competition launched

The Essex Book Festival has teamed up with the Essex Year of Opportunity to launch a new children's short story competition and it's open to all of the county's schools.

The 'Words for a Greener World Short Story' competition is open to all students aged seven to 16-years-old. Students can write a short story up to 500 words around the theme of climate change.

The stories will be submitted by participating schools or individually

if home schoolers. Each school can select a maximum of two entries per class to form part of a countywide longlist.

Winners will be announced at a special ceremony on Saturday 28 February 2026 at Essex Book Festival's annual Manifesto for Essex Climate Action Youth Summit.

To enter visit: [www.Essexbookfestival.org.uk/words-for-a-greener-world](http://www.Essexbookfestival.org.uk/words-for-a-greener-world)



Credit: Essex Book Festival



# 10 things to do this autumn and winter

We've pulled together 10 ways to make the most of the new seasons whatever the weather.



## ONE

**Use the new Essex Movie Map to inspire your days out.** Strike a pose for the camera in some of the county's top filming locations. From 'Wonder Woman' to Lady Mary from 'Downton New Era', take a selfie in some of the county's filming hot spots. Read more, pages [10 and 11](#).



Credit: Thomas Duke

## TWO

**Take a waterside walk this winter.** Pack your binoculars, some warm layers and a hot drink and use our spotter's guide to identify some of the waders and overwintering birds at our sites. Discover some of the best country parks to visit, pages [14 and 15](#).



## THREE

**Listen to an Eerie Essex podcast this Halloween.** Uncover ghost stories and plan a visit to a haunted corner of the county, pages [8 and 9](#). Enjoy a free spooky trail in the Essex Country Parks and book your spot for Spooky Forest School.



Credit: Eerie Essex





Credit: Tiptree Tea Rooms

## FOUR

**Warm up with a delicious Tiptree cocktail.** Visit a tearoom for a tasty treat and enter our competition to win a wonderful winter hamper bursting with delicious delicacies, pages [22 and 23](#).



## FIVE

**Step back in time with Southend Museums.** Discover more about 'The London, Her Final Voyage' and 'The Prittlewell Prince – an Anglo-Saxon burial' with these excellent exhibitions, pages [32 to 35](#).



## SIX

**Get Gruffalo-tastic.** Enjoy some Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler themed fun. Find The Gruffalo and Friends in the Deep Dark Woods at Thorndon Country Park. Make some Stick Man cookies and read more about the new BBC special coming this Christmas, pages [26 and 27](#).



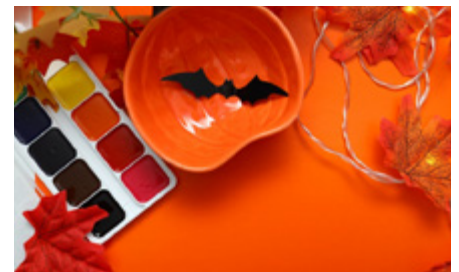
## SEVEN

**Cosy up with a criminally good read.** We've pulled together some of the hottest new cosy, and not so cosy, crime thrillers to enjoy this season. Make a brew, pull up a pew, grab a blanket and be transported, pages [24 and 25](#).



## EIGHT

**Book a magical pantomime for a happy ending.** Cast a spell over the whole family this upcoming festive season with our guide to some of the biggest pantos in Essex, pages [36 and 37](#).



## NINE

**Get crafty this autumn and Christmas.** Make bat batty leaves and twiggy stars. Keep hands and minds busy and enhance your home with these natural seasonal decorations, pages [28 to 31](#).



Credit: Essex Women's Commemoration Project

## TEN

**Discover more about the formidable 'Women of Essex'.** Join a talk at the Essex Record Office on Tuesday 25 November and find out more about the 33 new blue plaques dedicated to some special individuals. You can also research your own history at Essex Record Office. Read more on pages [12 and 13](#).

If that's not enough check out pages of listings from page [38 to 43](#).

# Delve into the dark side of the county with Eerie Essex

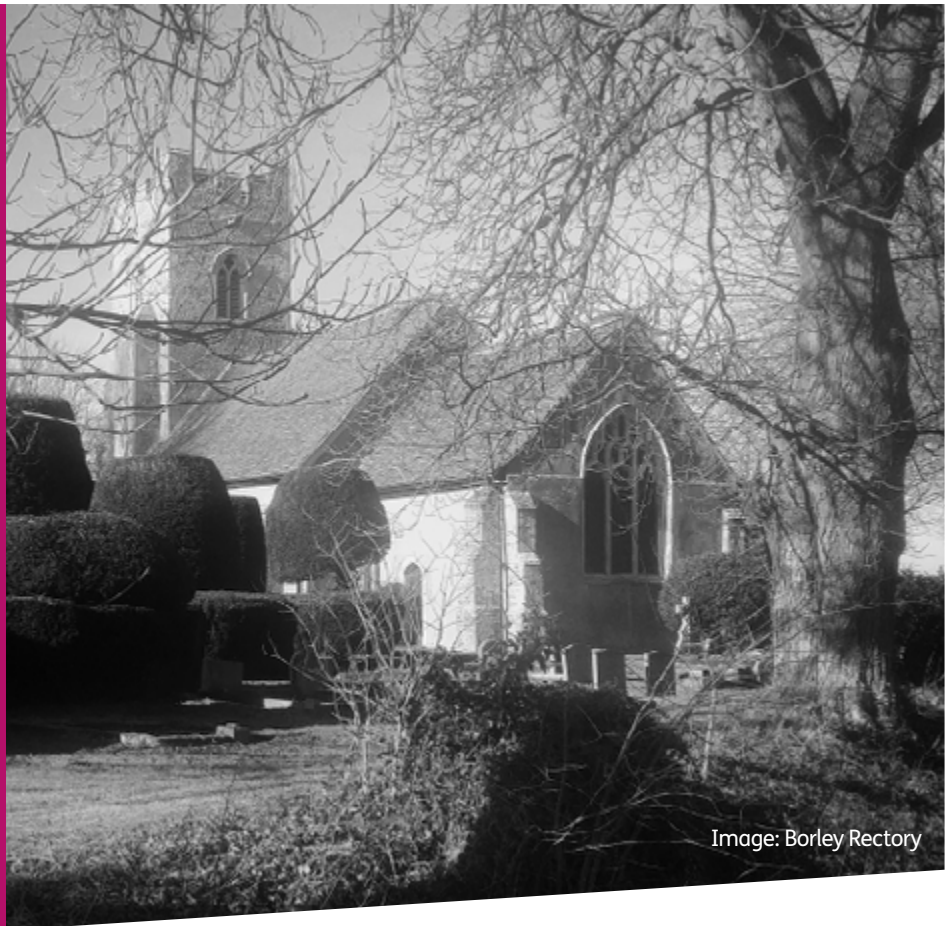


Image: Borley Rectory

**With the night's drawing in, we delve into the darker side of the county's folklores with Bethan Briggs-Miller and Ailsa Clarke from Eerie Essex to find out more about their podcast and what they have planned.**

## How did Eerie Essex begin?

We met whilst working as gallery assistants at Firstsite. It was here that we would spend time talking to visitors and swapping any recent tales and legends we'd discovered. During lockdown we started listening to 'Weird Norfolk' and we asked if they'd ever include tales from Essex, they said 'well why don't you do it', so we did.



## How would describe Eerie Essex?

Eerie Essex is a podcast which delves into the darker side of the county. We explore the folklore, urban legends and supernatural encounters that form part of Essex's rich history and we want to share these stories.

## How many podcasts have you produced since launching?

We've produced 39 episodes so far, which is around one a month. Each podcast takes approximately an hour to record due to research and editing. We look at newspaper archives and folklore books which takes time. Also, editing out the interruptions, waffling and laughter takes a while. Basically, a lot of work goes into producing each podcast.

## Do you have a favourite story or folklore from your travels around the county?

We've covered some incredible stories, but I think the one that we both enjoyed was the Witches of Canewdon. So many places have terrible stories of women being persecuted and falsely accused but Canewdon was the village where Matthew Hopkins, the Witchfinder General, feared to tread. Here we have tales of a coven that demanded respect and of cunning folk who were sought out for their craft.





Bethan Briggs-Miller



Ailsa Clarke

#### What was your favourite interview?

All our guests have been wonderful and brought so much to the table, but we enjoyed having James Shakeshaft and Alasdair Beckett-King on from the Lorem podcast. We couldn't stop laughing and had to edit out pauses whilst we caught our breath.

#### Is there an area of Essex that has more ghost or folklore stories than any other?

We do seem to keep coming back to Epping Forest. It has reports of ghosts, UFOs, demons, cryptids and fairies. It seems to have every kind of encounter you could want.

#### What podcasts do you have for the future?

At some point we'll discuss Black Shuck (the name given to a ghostly black dog which is said to roam the coastline and countryside of East Anglia) and debate the county's most famous haunting at Borley Rectory.

#### Will you be hosting anymore 'on the road' series of podcasts?

Yes, we're delighted to go back 'on the road'. We've new places to visit, stories to record and we'll be returning to Wivenhoe. We had a queue out the door when we recorded there last time, and there may even be a book in it.

#### You held a live show at Colchester Arts Centre, do you have plans for anymore?

We're currently arranging a few live episodes, but we can't say anymore yet. Keep an eye on our social media for upcoming announcements.

#### What's the best way for people to contact you if they have a story to tell?

We'd love people to send us their stories via [eerieessexpodcast@gmail.com](mailto:eerieessexpodcast@gmail.com) or they can visit the 'Share a Story' page on our website.

Listen to all the podcasts by visiting: [www.eerieessex.com](http://www.eerieessex.com)

Images courtesy of Eerie Essex.

## You may also like 'The Witches of Essex'

A new TV show about 'The Witches of Essex' is currently airing on Sky History.

Presented by Rylan Clark and historian Professor Alice Roberts, the programme takes viewers back to 1542 and investigates the stories of those accused.

The programme examines how the law and local authorities shaped this turbulent chapter of history.

The programme was supported by the Essex Film Office.

[www.history.co.uk/shows/witches-of-essex](http://www.history.co.uk/shows/witches-of-essex)



# Honoring Essex women

**A scheme honouring Essex women and celebrating some of the county's most notable female residents has seen 33 blue plaques erected, with more to come before the project finishes.**

The Essex Women's Commemoration Project (EWCP) was set up in 2020 by the Lord-Lieutenant of Essex, Jennifer Tolhurst.





**A**t the time Essex theatre director, Graham Watts, wrote to the Lord-Lieutenant about celebrating the quatercentenary of the birth of Colchester playwright and philosopher Margaret Cavendish, who was born in 1623. As a theatre director, Graham had directed a play written by Margaret in 1660.

Following this, the Lord-Lieutenant asked Graham and four Deputy Lieutenants - Julia Abel Smith, James Bettley, Roy Clare, and Juliet Townsend - to form the EWCP.

Their remit was to identify Essex women who hadn't received public recognition and to work with local councils, societies and organisations to install blue plaques in their memory.

Research began with the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. The team sifted through potential candidates and identified fifty women whose historic achievements merited local recognition and who weren't memorialised in Essex.

Since launching, the EWCP team has unearthed fascinating stories and has commemorated some of the county's notable women, from playwrights to gardeners and artists to trade unionists.



Blue plaques have been mounted for sisters Kate and Louise Lilley, the leaders of the suffrage movement in Clacton-in-Sea, author Hannah Woolley (1622 to 1675), who published early books about household management, Catherine Marsh (1818 to 1912) from Colchester who was an author and philanthropist, along with many more.

One story amongst many is Amy Bull's (nee Hicks), a suffragette who declared at a campaign meeting at Co-Operative Hall, Colchester, that women's suffrage campaigners were neither 'freaks nor frumps'.

It's due to the EWCP that we now know that Amy was awarded an MBE in 1920 for her work in the War Office - it was known that she'd received an MBE 'sometime before 1948'. However, in March 1912, Amy was imprisoned for four months for taking part in the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) window-smashing campaign in London's West End.

Thanks to the EWCP, Amy's story of being imprisoned and honoured in the space of eight years has been brought to life, as well as many narratives of Essex women that may have been lost to history.

To date, 33 blue plaques to Essex women had been installed across the county, with more to be unveiled before the EWCP officially ends this year.

It's hoped that the EWCP's work will inspire others to continue with the important task of commemorating the county's distinguished women, not only in Essex but also in other counties throughout the UK.

Images courtesy of Essex Women's Commemoration Project.

To celebrate the project's completion, along with learning more about the stories of the celebrated Essex women, a talk is being held on Tuesday 25 November at the Essex Record Office with speaker Dr. James Bettley – one of the members of the EWCP team.

For more information about the talk and tickets visit [www.essexrecordoffice.co.uk/whats-on/events](http://www.essexrecordoffice.co.uk/whats-on/events)

To discover more about the EWCP and the work of the Lord-Lieutenant of Essex visit [www.essex-lieutenancy.org.uk/special-projects/essex-womens-commemoration-project](http://www.essex-lieutenancy.org.uk/special-projects/essex-womens-commemoration-project)

If you're interested in reading more about Amy Bull, her mother Lillian and the Essex suffragettes visit [www.essexrecordofficeblog.co.uk/neither-freaks-nor-frumps-two-essex-suffragettes-lillian-and-amy-hicks](http://www.essexrecordofficeblog.co.uk/neither-freaks-nor-frumps-two-essex-suffragettes-lillian-and-amy-hicks)



# Must visit movie spots

Strike a pose and visit the top filming spots in the county with the new movie map. Plan a day out with a difference.



Top credit: 'The Essex Serpent', Apple TV  
Bottom credit: Thomas Duke



**V**isit Essex and the Essex Film Office have launched a new movie map to encourage trips to top film and TV locations across the county.

Explore the top spots that have hit the screen for yourself and plan a day out with a difference. From the gritty streets of the ever-popular spy thriller series 'Slow Horses' to the star-studded 'The Essex Serpent', the county has taken centre stage.

Thanks to the new movie map, you can follow in the footsteps of your favourite actors and superheroes.

The map includes locations from across the county such as for 'Mission Impossible: Dead Reckoning Part 1', which was filmed in Stansted Airport.

Why not recreate a pose from 'Wonder Woman' at Tilbury Fort or imagine being Lady Mary from 'Downton New Era' at the Electric Palace, Harwich?

Discover locations for much-loved historic TV shows, such as 'Porridge', which was filmed in HMP Chelmsford. The city was also the backdrop for one of the UK's biggest groundbreaking dramas, 'Mr Bates vs The Post Office', which was filmed at Chelmsford's Shire Hall.

Tom Hiddleston and Claire Danes fans can retrace their steps by following 'The Essex Serpent' trail, which takes in stunning scenes along the coast from Maldon to Mersea Island.

Many of these productions were supported by the Essex Film Office, which was established by Essex County Council in 2021.

Excited about the opportunities film tourism offers, Councillor Mark Durham, Chair of Visit Essex, said: "Over recent years Essex has seen a boom in TV and film productions, it has shone a light on our stunning woodlands, coast and unique buildings. From 'Killing Eve' to 'Downton Abbey', Essex has made an appearance on many popular TV shows and blockbuster films."

Starring Essex is part of the wider Visit Britain initiative, 'Starring Britain' - a campaign that encourages visitors to explore film locations and discover hidden gems.

To follow in the footsteps of the stars and to view the movie map visit: [www.essexfilmoffice.co.uk/essex-movie-map](http://www.essexfilmoffice.co.uk/essex-movie-map)

## Starring Essex: Coming soon to a small screen near you

The following productions have all been filmed in Essex for the small screen.

'Slow Horses' season five recently aired on Apple TV+ and the opening scenes were filmed in Bush Fair, Harlow.

'The Hack', an ITV drama documentary about the phone hacking scandal, has been recently released. Chelmsford's Shire Hall features in scenes in episode five.

'Wake Up Dead Man - A Knives Out Mystery', is due for release on Netflix on Friday 12 December, and premieres at international film festivals this autumn. Scenes were filmed at the Church of the Holy Innocents in High Beach, Epping.

## We need you: Turn your property into a film set

Do you own a building, land or location that could be used for filming?

Locations of all sizes and types, from picturesque or historical to industrial, are needed for filming.

Sign up for free to the Essex Film Office's locations database and your property may be featured on the big or small screen.

[www.essexfilmoffice.co.uk/register-your-property](http://www.essexfilmoffice.co.uk/register-your-property)



Credit: Cudmore Grove, Essex Film Office

# Wonderful winter waterside walks



## Belhus Woods Country Park

Located in south Essex, Belhus Woods is a haven for wildlife thanks to the ancient woodland, grassland meadows and lakes that are situated throughout the park. The lakes were created by past gravel extraction and are now a prominent feature of the park with some designated for conservation.

At Hunts Hill Lake the park team have installed nesting rafts for terns and carried out works on the bank to encourage sand martins.

Bird life at the park includes mute swans, tufted ducks, woodpeckers, kingfishers, kestrels, owls and even nightingales.

A lot of ditch work has also been undertaken at the park to encourage the endangered water vole, and the lakes are home to a variety of fish and insects that are fundamental to healthy wetland and lake population.

Take a stroll and enjoy the wildlife around the lakes. Head out from the café and take the path around the fishing lake. Follow the bridlepath around Whitehall Wood and up to Hunts Hill lake for a longer, circular route.

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

**Take a waterside wander and spot overwintering birds and waders in the Essex Country Parks this winter.**

Did you know that we are lucky to have many important wetlands and unique habitats in Essex that are crucial for attracting rare and declining wildlife?



## Cudmore Grove Country Park

Cudmore Grove is a nature reserve of unique coastal habitats, situated on the Blackwater and Colne Estuaries.

The low-lying grazing marsh is managed as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) nature reserve as it attracts wading birds and ducks throughout the year. During the winter season duck and waterbirds are on the Colne Estuary and up to 15 types of waders can be found on the rich mudflats. Walk the sea wall for some great views over different types of habitat.

Hunting birds of prey can be found on the meadow including kestrel and barn owls. On the grazing fields in winter, lots of wigeon and teal can be seen as well as large flocks of brent geese, while in the summer lapwings and avocet sometimes breed.

Enjoy a walk along the sea wall this autumn and winter and take in the different landscapes and waterbirds. See what you can spot.

Be aware that work is taking place during the autumn and winter to install predator fencing to keep the wildlife on the grazing marsh and borrow dyke safe. Please keep dogs on a lead and pay attention to any signs during your visit and whilst machinery is on site.

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





### Marsh Farm Country Park

Surrounded on three sides by the River Crouch, Clements Green Creek and Fenn Creek, Marsh Farm Country Park has 300 acres of grazing marsh.

Marsh Farm is recognised as a SSSI because of its importance for overwintering brent geese. The geese migrate from Russia to overwinter on the Essex coast by flying 2,500 miles from the deepest, darkest depths of Siberia.

The park itself is also home to many species of waders and ducks in the autumn and winter, and several species breed here in the spring including sedge warblers, cuckoos and skylarks.

When you're out in the park you may also see water voles. Although they are an endangered species, they can sometimes be seen in their borrows alongside the river. Work is taking place to increase the suitable habitat for the voles at the park.

Take one of the many routes and enjoy this stunning waterside landscape. Please be aware that work is taking place this autumn and winter to install fencing along the grazing marsh (and in the wildflower meadow) to protect the brent geese.

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

### Brent geese at the county parks

Brent geese are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act and graze marshes as their favourite, eel grass, can be found in coastal and estuary areas.

Currently, the numbers for brent geese are good, however, the conservation status is 'amber' as the UK only has a few overwintering sites ('red' is critically endangered, 'amber' is the next most critical, while 'green' is the least critical).

New fencing is being installed at both Cudmore and Marsh Farm Country Parks to protect the geese and other species that call the grazing marshes home. Red poll cattle and heritage sheep breeds help to keep the flora at just the right height for these geese to feed and other waterbirds to breed.

Read more about nature recovery at the Essex Country Parks. [www.explore-essex.com/blog/countryside-stewardships](http://www.explore-essex.com/blog/countryside-stewardships)



# Spotter's guide

**Waders and overwintering birds.**



Credit: Andrew Adams

**The autumn and winter months are the perfect time to get out and about in nature to spot overwintering birds and waders.**

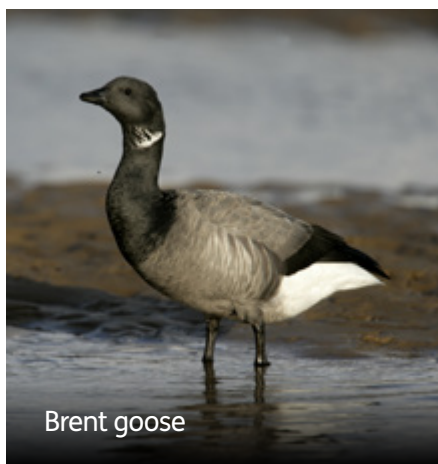
In this guide, we bring you the most common overwintering birds and waders that you're likely to spot on our county's coastline and at the Essex Country Parks of Cudmore Grove and Marsh Farm.

So why not take a stroll and embrace the great outdoors and see if you can spot any of our avian friends as the months get colder?





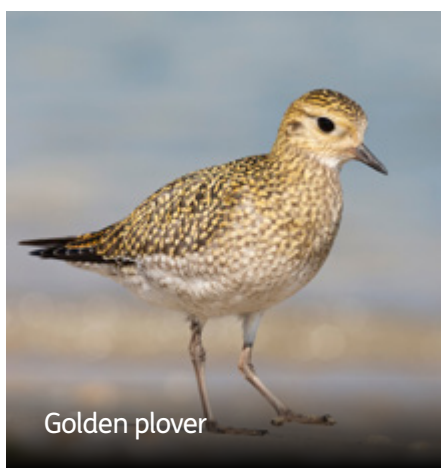
Avocet



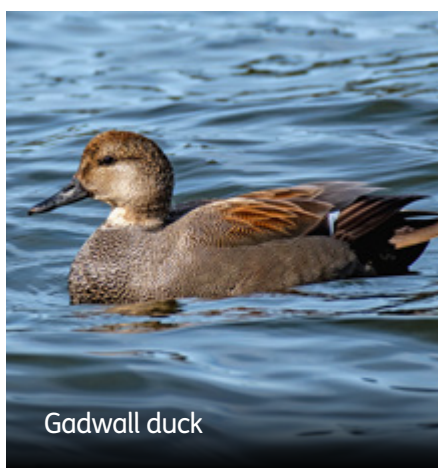
Brent goose



Common tern



Golden plover



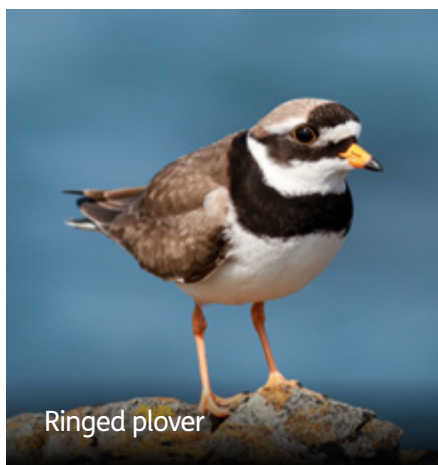
Gadwall duck



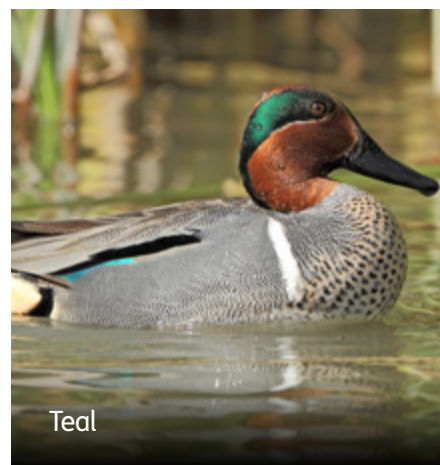
Oyster catcher



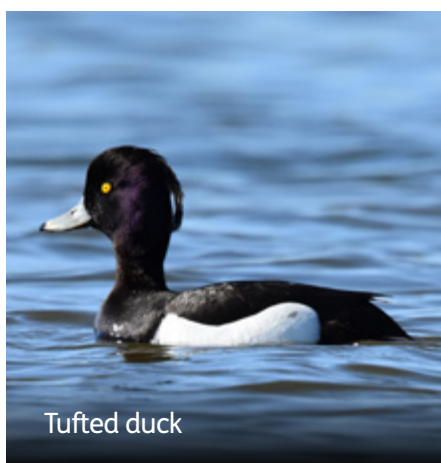
Redshank



Ringed plover



Teal



Tufted duck



Widgeon



Little Egret

# 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.



Cormorant

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](https://www.instagram.com/andrew_d_adams) or visit Youpic: [www.youpic.com/AndrewAdams](http://www.youpic.com/AndrewAdams)

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)



Dunnock





Tree creeper



Misty woodland

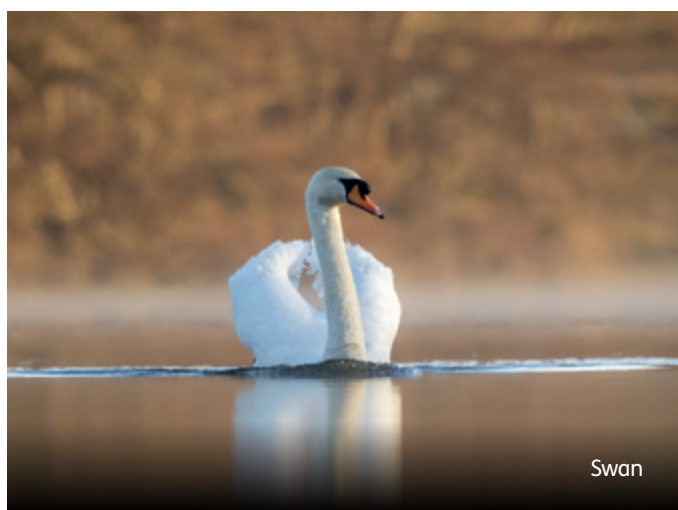


Redwing

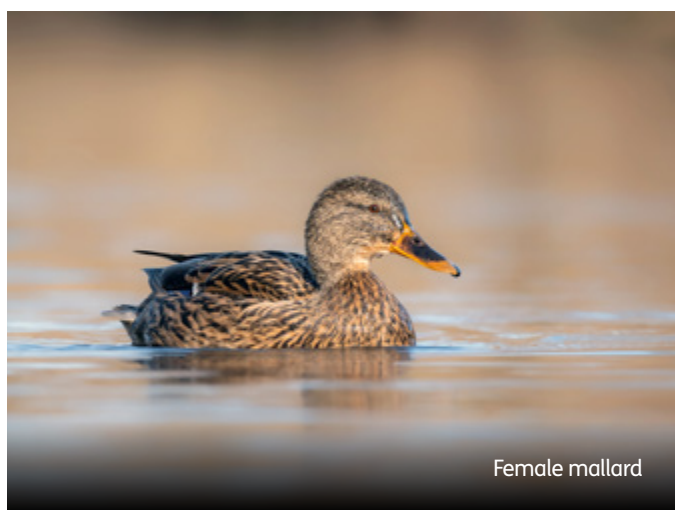




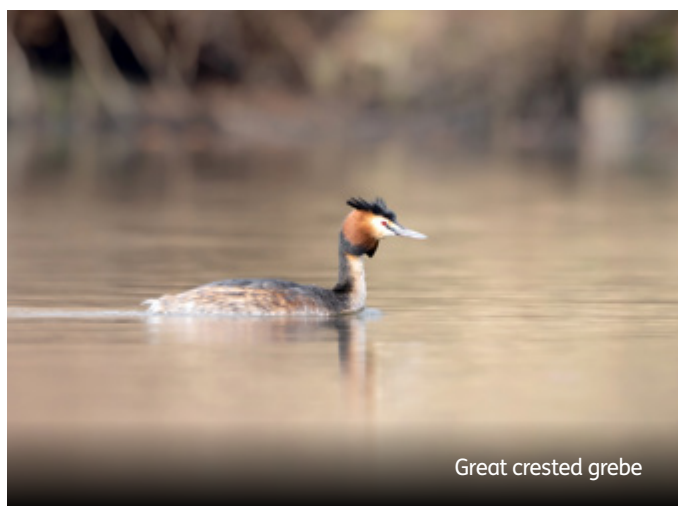
Weald Country Park



Swan



Female mallard



Great crested grebe



Egyptian geese





Moorhen



Ball headed gull



Little egret



Fallow deer

# Tiptree winter warmer cocktails

We've teamed up with our friends at Tiptree Tea Rooms to bring you some of their best winter warming cocktails to give you a golden glow when returning from a long walk, because 'baby it's cold outside'.

You might also like to take a trip to one of the Tiptree Tea Rooms across the county and indulge in breakfast, lunch or afternoon tea.



## Rumbling Thunder Cocktail

- A teaspoon of Tiptree Christmas Conserve
- 25ml high quality ginger cordial
- 50ml Tiptree English Spiced Rum
- Hot water
- Half a lime
- A heatproof mug or glass

## Method

Add a teaspoon of Tiptree Christmas Conserve into a heatproof mug or glass, add a small amount of hot water and stir until the conserve has dissolved.

Add a dash of ginger cordial and a measure of Tiptree Spiced Rum.

Squeeze in half a lime.

Top up with hot water.

Mix well, sip carefully and enjoy.



## White Christmas Cocktail

- 50ml Tiptree Christmas Pudding Rum Liqueur
- 25ml coffee liqueur
- 75ml single cream
- Teaspoon of ice
- Attractive glass - a jam jar works well

## Method

Fill your glass with ice and add 50ml Tiptree Christmas Pudding Rum Liqueur.

Add 25ml coffee liqueur.

Top up with 75ml single cream.

Stir gently.





### Chocolate Orange Martini

#### Ingredients

- 50ml Tiptree Chocolate Orange Vodka Liqueur
- 50ml Latte
- Two teaspoons Warmed Tiptree Chocolate Orange Spread
- A pinch chocolate sprinkles
- Ice
- Martini glass
- Cocktail shaker

#### Method

Melt two teaspoons of Tiptree Chocolate Orange Spread in a microwave for 20 seconds.

Get your cocktail shaker and add 50ml Tiptree Chocolate Orange Vodka Liqueur, 50ml latte, two teaspoons of Tiptree Chocolate Orange Spread and a scoop of ice.

Shake for roughly 30 seconds then strain into a martini glass.

For added effect you can line the glass with the spread and then add chocolate shavings for garnish.

If you want to make this without coffee, replace the latte with 25ml Triple sec and 25ml milk.

## WIN a Tiptree Tea Room Winter Hamper!

You could win a winter hamper worth approximately £80.00 thanks to our friends at Tiptree Tea Rooms.

To enter simply email the answer to the question below to: [Explore.Essex@essex.gov.uk](mailto:Explore.Essex@essex.gov.uk) and title your email: Tiptree competition.

Competition closes midnight Sunday 23 November 2025. Full terms and conditions: [www.explore-essex.com/ee-comp](http://www.explore-essex.com/ee-comp)

### Q: What is Tiptree most famous for?

- Jam
- Tea
- Coffee

Discover a Tiptree Tea Room near you:

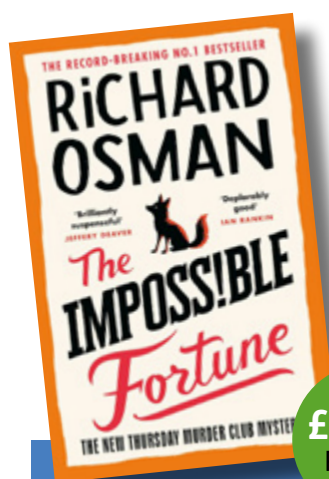
[www.tiptree.com/pages/tearooms](http://www.tiptree.com/pages/tearooms)



# Criminally good reads

We've pulled together some of the hottest new cosy, and not so cosy, crime thrillers to enjoy this season, many of which have also featured on the big and small screens earlier in the series.

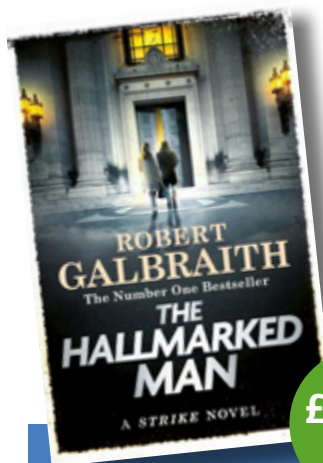
Pick up a copy from your local bookshop or download onto your Kindle. Make a brew, pull up a pew, grab a blanket and be transported.



£22.00  
RRP HB

## The Impossible Fortune (Thursday Murder Club 5)

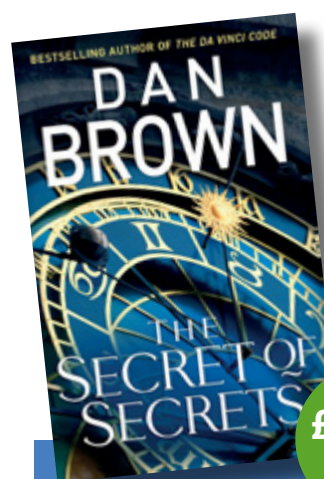
By Richard Osman



£30.00  
RRP HB

## The Hallmarked Man

By Robert Galbraith



£25.00  
RRP HB

## The Secret of Secrets

By Dan Brown

Don't miss the cosy new mystery in the bestselling 'Thursday Murder Club' series. The first in the series, 'The Thursday Murder Club', is now on Netflix.

'Funny, clever, compelling', Harlen Coben.

'No one can deny (Robert Galbraith, pseudonym of) J. K. Rowling's formidable talents as a crime writer', Daily Mail.

You'll love this gripping and masterful piece of storytelling for fans of 'Strike and Robin'. You can also enjoy 'Strike' on BBC iPlayer.

The long-awaited new race-against-time thriller from the global bestselling author of 'The Da Vinci Code', which is also a 2006 film starring Tom Hanks.

Against a backdrop of vast castles, towering churches, graveyards buried twelve deep and labyrinthine underground passages in ancient Prague, Langdon must pit his wits against a conspiracy which will take him to the edge of losing all that he holds dear.



## Kids' Winter Reading Challenge

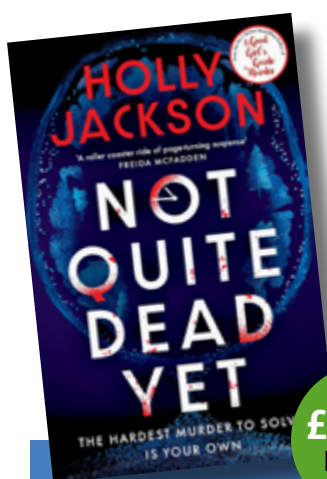
The Winter Reading Challenge is back at Essex Libraries.

Once again children will be able to take part in activities such as reading, writing, making artwork or even acting when they take the Winter Reading Challenge. They'll choose from 12 tasks, earning stickers as they go to complete their booklet.

Each challenge has been specially selected to support literacy skills, confidence with reading and creativity. You can even complete some of them in the library.

The Winter Reading Challenge will run throughout January and February 2026 and will be supported by The Essex Year of Opportunity. You can sign up for free by visiting any Essex library.

Make sure to follow @essexlibraries on Facebook and Instagram for more details and updates on the Winter Reading Challenge, including this year's theme. Visit [libraries.essex.gov.uk](https://libraries.essex.gov.uk) to find out more.



**£20.00**  
RRP HB

### Not Quite Dead Yet

By Holly Jackson

The debut adult novel from the author of the popular young adult series 'A Good Girl's Guide to Murder' features heiress Jet Mason, who has seven days to live after an attack and must use that time to solve her own murder. You can also watch 'A Good Girl's Guide to Murder' on Netflix.

'All the pizzazz, poignancy, humour and ingenious plotting of A Good Girl's Guide to Murder', Sunday Times Thriller of the Month.



**£16.99**  
RRP HB

### The Death of Us

By Abigail Dean

Star of the Essex Book Festival, appearing at Shenfield Library earlier this summer, discover this incredible novel by the bestselling author of 'Girl A' Abigail Dean. This is a story of murder. This is a story of survival. But most of all, this is a story of love.

'A superbly imagined, nuanced story of love and anguish', Daily Mail.



# Kids' corner: Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler

We love Julia Donaldson's and Axel Scheffler's picture books at Explore Essex and we can't wait for the new adaptation of 'The Scarecrow's Wedding', produced by Magic Light Pictures, for the BBC.



Two scarecrows are planning the perfect wedding and set off to find everything on their list.

But wicked cigar-smoking scarecrow, Reginald Rake, has other ideas and almost ruins their special day. Harry O'Hay must become a hero before he and Betty O'Barley can have the wedding of their dreams.

The half-hour special will air on BBC iPlayer and BBC One this Christmas.

**Official licensed sculpture trails at the Essex Country Parks.**

If you're a fan of the books why not visit our licensed sculpture trails at the Essex Country Parks.

Discover The Gruffalo in the Deep Dark Woods at Thorndon or visit the Stick Man family tree and friends at Weald Country Park.

[www.explore-essex.com/places-to-go/essex-country-parks-2](http://www.explore-essex.com/places-to-go/essex-country-parks-2)





# Simple Stick Man cookies

**These simple Stick Man cookies are sure to brighten up a cold winter's day for any fans of Julia Donaldson's and Axel Scheffler's picture books.**



"I'M NOT AN  
Stick Man, I'm Stick  
Man!"



## Ingredients:

- Shop bought cookies (or homemade)
- White royal icing or fondant
- Green fondant icing
- Cadbury's Flake 99 or similar
- Black royal icing

## Directions:

Place your cookies on a clean surface and pipe on the white royal icing. Spread the icing until it meets the edges. Leave this to set.

Cut the flake in half lengthwise and place it in the middle of the royal icing, leaving room for some legs and feet. Use the other half to make two arms, two legs and two feet.

Next, cut two small leaves out of the green fondant.

Secure your flake Stick Man to the cookie using a dollop of royal icing.

Add the leaves to Stick Man's head.

Now it's time to add his features. Simply use the white icing sugar for the white of his eye and the black for his mouth and eyebrows.





# Make at home: Autumn leaf hedgehog

**Learn how to make this autumn leaf hedgehog, it's a great way to spend time with your children as the seasons start to turn.**



## Step 1

First go outside and gather some fallen leaves, maple are best, to create this cute little woodland creature.

## Step 2

Then fold a toilet roll tube in half and draw the shape of your hedgehog's body with a side profile.

## Step 3

Give him or her a nose and a tummy and leave enough around the edge so that you can open the toilet tube again once you're finished.

## Step 4

Then use scissors to cut out your shape and draw an eye, a paw and a foot.

## Step 5

Next, use glue dots to stick your leaves onto your hedgehog, don't forget to trim off any stems. Also, overlapping the leaves will give your hedgehog more spikes.

## Step 6

Finally do the same on the other side and trim the bottom leaves so that your hedgehog can stand.

Be in with a chance to win a make your own embroidery owl kit by sending us your hedgehog creations.

Simply email a photo of your hedgehog(s) to [Marketing.ExploreEssex@essex.gov.uk](mailto:Marketing.ExploreEssex@essex.gov.uk) by Sunday 23 November 2025 to enter the competition.





# Spooky Halloween leaf decorations

**Embrace the Halloween season and your kid's creativity with this easy craft idea. Have fun and enjoy sharing your spooky creations with family and friends.**

## Step 1

Gather the leaves. Visit an Essex Country Park and collect a variety of freshly fallen leaves. Look for leaves that are flat, such as maple, oak or sycamore, as these will be easier to paint. To create an interesting display, look for different sizes.

## Step 2

Lay down some newspaper to protect your working area from paint spills.

## Step 3

Choose a base colour for your leaves. Use black paint for bats, white for ghosts and bright orange is perfect for pumpkins.

Now use a paintbrush and acrylic paint and apply a generous layer of your chosen colour to one side of each leaf. Allow the leaves to dry out completely before moving on to the next step.

## Step 4

After checking that your base layer is dry, grab some markers or paint pens and let your creativity flow. Use a black marker to draw on faces for the pumpkins and the ghosts and use a white marker for the bats.

## Step 5

Now that your painted leaves are ready, it's time to show off your spooky creations. Simply attach a string to the stems and hang them, either indoors or outdoors.



# Create natural Christmas crafts

**Get those festive feels started by making your own hanging Christmas decoration.**





Head into the woods or your local Essex Country Park and gather natural supplies for this festive tree or star ornament.

For this you'll need embroidery floss or twine, some scissors and twigs.

### Step 1

Gather five to ten short twigs, roughly five inches long. They need to be about the same thickness, as well as smooth and straight. Make sure they are not too thick or your ornament will become too heavy.

### Step 2

Now that you have everything to get started, pick the best-looking twigs and trim them into lengths for the tree or the same length for a star.

Lay them out horizontally with the shortest on top and longest on the bottom for a tree or to start to form a star shape.

Now that they're cut to length, it's time to tie this craft together.

### Step 3

Cut three pieces of embroidery floss, about an adult's arm's length each, and braid the three strands of embroidery floss together.

### Step 4

Folding the braid in half, make a loop on the folded end by wrapping it around itself and pulling through to tie a knot. This will be the loop on the top of the ornament where it will hang from.

### Step 5

Now take the two pieces of braided floss coming from the loop you just formed and make a knot – but don't tighten all the way. Slot the smallest twig in the knot so it is in the centre and then pull tight.

Make another knot (don't tighten it yet) and slot the next longest twig in the centre and then pull tight. Keep going like this until all twigs are used and fastened off with a double knot.



# 'The London Shipwreck: Her Final Voyage'

**Running until Sunday 31 May 2026, a new exhibition at Southend Central Museum is showcasing never seen before 17<sup>th</sup> century objects from the seabed.**



**T**hrough personal objects, and the conservation work, the exhibition paints a picture of the lives of those who served on board the London – which is now a nationally important and legally protected wreck.

The ship was built in Chatham dockyard from 1654 to 1656 during the Interregnum (from 1649 to 1660 England was a republic as Interregnum means 'between reigns') by master shipwright Captain John Taylor. Following its launch, the London played an important role in British and European history, serving in both the Cromwellian and Restoration navies.

Having seen action in the Anglo-Spanish war, the London was later part of a convoy that collected Charles II from the Netherlands and carried the future James VII and II back to England at the time of the restitution of the monarchy.

Following a mysterious gunpowder explosion in 1665, the ship sank in the Thames Estuary. The explosion killed 300 people and the event was noted in 'The Diary of Samuel Pepys', which is one of the most important resources for studying the Restoration period.





Image: Leather shoe

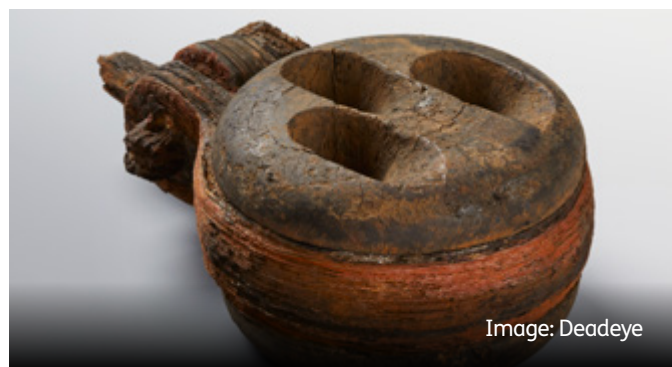


Image: Deadeye



Image: Jug fragment

While the museum has previously explored the history of the London - a superb cannon found at the wreck site remains on permanent display - the exhibition offers visitors the chance to see well-preserved historic objects, such as leather book covers, that have been painstakingly analysed and conserved.

The star of the exhibition is a rare timber gun carriage that would have held one of the cannons on the 17<sup>th</sup> century warship and is one of the few of its kind in existence.

Visitors can also discover the history and secrets of the London objects, along with the work that goes into conserving, preserving and presenting marine archaeology.

With interactive and educational activities for children, the exhibition offers something for everyone and is ideal for visitors of all ages.

Jools McCusker Maxwell, Southend Museum's Curator of Archaeology said: "The exhibition explores the painstaking conservation and expert analyses of the objects, alongside the historical narrative of life on board.

"We hope it will enlighten visitors on what happens to archaeological objects after they are excavated."

For more information visit:

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

Images courtesy of Southend Central Museum.

# Exhibition unveils secrets of the Prittlewell Prince

**Artefacts from an Anglo-Saxon royal burial site hailed as one of the UK's most important archaeological discoveries are now on permanent display at Southend Central Museum.**



‘The Prittlewell Princely Burial’ exhibition tells the story of the Anglo-Saxon burial site that was unearthed in the village of Prittlewell, near Southend-on-Sea, in 2003.

**T**he internationally important burial site was discovered when an archaeological survey took place as part of preparations for a road widening scheme.

It was known that the area was home to Roman and Anglo-Saxon burials sites as they were discovered in 1923 when Priory Crescent was being constructed. However, no one envisaged such a significant find being unearthed.

Forty specialist archaeologists from the Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) travelled to Prittlewell and excavated a small plot of land using specialist techniques.

On day one, the archaeologists discovered a large square pit with the remains of a timber structure.

The structure measured around 13 foot (four metres) square and five foot (one and a half metres) deep and housed around 40 rare and precious artefacts.

This was confirmed on the second day of the dig when a copper alloy bowl was found hanging on a hook in what appeared to be a burial chamber.

As the MOLA archaeologists delved deeper, they discovered a complete burial chamber full of objects and the remains of a wooden coffin where the deceased would have lain.

Artefacts found included gold coins, a lyre (an ancient harp), decorative glass beakers, a 1,400-year-old box (thought to be the only surviving example of Anglo-Saxon woodwork in Britain) and a copper alloy flagon, which is believed to have come from the eastern Mediterranean, most likely Syria.

However, while it became clear that it was an Anglo-Saxon burial chamber of a high-status person, the archaeologists were left with a puzzling problem when they discovered two gold foil crosses at the head of the coffin. These had been placed over the eyes of the deceased and indicated they were Christian.





Radiocarbon dating the artefacts produced calibrated dates of AD 575 to 605 for the burial. However, the date range was revised after two gold Frankish coins (tremisses) were discovered and analysed, putting the burial site as no later than AD580. This suggested that the overall date range for the burial site was AD 580 to 605.

It was thought that the Princely remains were of Saeberth, a Saxon king of Essex, who was amongst the first of the local Saxon kings to have adopted Christianity. At the time, the majority of English kingdoms were still pagan with the exception of Kent, whose king Æthelbert had married a Christian woman.

However, due to tests and carbon dating, we know the tomb would have been constructed 11 years prior to Saeberth's death in AD 616.

Experts now believe that the Prittlewell Prince may have been connected to the Kentish Kings either through family or marriage, but whoever this early Christian nobleman was remains a mystery for now.

## Visit Southend Museums

Discover art, culture and heritage in Southend with stunning collections and fascinating exhibitions across four museums.

Beecroft Art Gallery, Central Museum, Prittlewell Priory, Southchurch Hall and Southend Planetarium all offer a great day out for you and your family and friends.

Whether it's viewing the latest art exhibition at the Beecroft Gallery, discovering local history of international importance at Southend Central Museum or exploring the stars with the Southend Planetarium, there's something for everyone and every venue offers a unique experience.

Find out more by visiting:  
[www.southendmuseums.co.uk](http://www.southendmuseums.co.uk)



'The Prittlewell Princely Burial' exhibition is available to view now at the museum and offers a fascinating day out. For more information visit: [www.southendmuseums.co.uk/princely-burial](http://www.southendmuseums.co.uk/princely-burial)

To view an interactive map of the burial chamber and the artefacts discovered visit: [www.prittlewellprincelyburial.org](http://www.prittlewellprincelyburial.org)

All images courtesy of Southend Central Museum.



# It's pantomime time

**Add some sparkle to the upcoming season with some of the biggest pantomimes across the county. Find the one closest to you in our guide and flock to the box office to book a fabulous fairy tale experience for all the family.**

For more theatre, events and activities see the listings on page 38.



## Chelmsford Theatre

### Aladdin

Friday 28 November to Sunday 4 January

Aladdin and friends fly into Chelmsford for a pantomime with all the ingredients of a perfect family Christmas treat. Expect magic carpets, genies, dazzling costumes, heroes and villains, laughter and a whole world full of fantastic adventure in a dazzling new ride through a classic panto tale.

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

## Cliffs Pavilion, Southend-on-Sea

### Cinderella

Saturday 13 December to Sunday 4 January

You shall go to the ball this Christmas with Rylan, who returns for another year to play the Fairy Godfather. Packed with all the traditional pantomime ingredients audiences expect, Cinderella features laugh-out-loud comedy, stunning scenery, beautiful costumes and plenty of boos and hisses. Book your tickets before the clock strikes midnight.

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

## Harlow Playhouse

### Sleeping Beauty

Friday 28 November to Sunday 4 January

A dreamy pantomime awaits. In the kingdom of 'Harlowtopia', far, far away, a beautiful princess awaits her true love's kiss to awaken her from a deep slumber. But the wicked fairy Carabosse has cast a spell, and only the bravest heroes can break it. A magic combination of spectacular costumes and toe-tapping tunes.

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

## Mercury Theatre, Colchester

### Mother Goose

Saturday 22 November to Sunday 18 Jan

To celebrate 10 golden years of the legendary duo Antony Stuart-Hicks and Dale Superville, the Mercury Theatre present the mother of all pantos – Mother Goose. Expect breath-taking sets, dazzling costumes, side-splitting comedy and plenty of Mercury magic in this 'eggs-traordinary' festive treat for the whole family.

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





Image: Peter Pan at Mercury Theatre by Pamela Raith

## Saffron Hall

## Dick Whittington

Sunday 21 to Monday 29 December

Step into a world of fun, laughter and adventure as Dick Whittington sets out to seek his fortune and make the streets “paved with gold” a reality. Along the way, he’ll face the evil Sir Rattington and his army of rodent rascals, threatening to take over the world. Will Dick and his plucky companions save the day?

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

## Princes Theatre, Clacton-on-Sea

## The Magical Adventures of Peter Pan

Saturday 6 to Monday 29 December

With Tink’s guidance and the help of magical fairy dust, Peter Pan must outsmart Captain Hook and his bumbling crew, overcoming challenges and discovering the true meaning of love, loyalty and never-ending magic. This magical pantomime features great songs from a live band, dazzling dance routines, stunning scenery, beautiful costumes and amazing 3D effects.

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

## Towngate Theatre, Basildon

## Sleeping Beauty

Thursday 27 November to Sunday 4 January

Basildon favourites Sophie Ladds and Ian Hallard return to the stage as everyone’s favourite panto villain and dame. With stunning scenery, colourful costumes, dancers and a fantastic live band at every performance, each show promises to be a non-stop, sparkling extravaganza that’s not to be missed.

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



# Days Out

Credit: 'Enlightened' at Hylands Park, Chelmsford

## Adventure Island

### Halloween: Fright Fantastic

Saturday 25 October to Friday 31 October: 11.00am to late

Get ready for a 'spooktacular' time at Adventure Island's Fright Fantastic. The park will be buzzing with Halloween fun, including live characters, trick-or-treating, a treasure hunt, eerie entertainment, free face painting and a best-dressed competition - plus all your favourite rides. A thrilling week of family friendly fun awaits. Suitable for all ages. Price: See website. [www.adventureisland.co.uk/event/halloween-fright-fantastic](http://www.adventureisland.co.uk/event/halloween-fright-fantastic)

### Christmas Wonderland

Selected dates from 29 November to 24 December: From 10.00am

Experience the magic of Christmas, the ultimate festive day out for the whole family. Meet Father Christmas, enjoy access to indoor rides, soft play, festive activities and receive a passport packed with free treats and vouchers. Annual Pass holders from Adventure Island or Sealife Adventure get 50% off the Father Christmas experience. Suitable for all ages. Price: See website. [www.adventureisland.co.uk/christmas](http://www.adventureisland.co.uk/christmas)

## Clacton Shopping Village

### Halloween

Friday 31 October: 10:30am to 2:30pm

Celebrate Halloween at Clacton Shopping Village with a day of spooky family friendly fun. Free activities for the kids, just book your free entry now. Suitable for all ages. Price: Free, [www.clactonshoppingvillage.com/events](http://www.clactonshoppingvillage.com/events)

### Santa's Grotto

Saturday 6, Sunday 7, Saturday 13, Sunday 14, Saturday 20 and Sunday 21 December: 10.00am to 4.00pm

Meet Santa, share your Christmas wishes and take home a festive gift. Book your experience now. Suitable for all ages. Price: £2.00 charity donation. [www.clactonshoppingvillage.com/events](http://www.clactonshoppingvillage.com/events)

## Colchester Zoological Society

### Trail of Terror

Friday 17, Saturday 18, Friday 24, Saturday 25, Monday 27, Wednesday 29 and Friday 31 October

Face your fears along a one and half mile route plus a train ride you won't want to remember. Due to the nature of this event, we will not

admit anyone under the age of five-years-old. Suitable for: We do not recommend this event for anyone under the age of 12-years-old. Tickets must be pre-booked online. [www.colchesterzoologicalsociety.com/event/trail-of-terror](http://www.colchesterzoologicalsociety.com/event/trail-of-terror)

### Shriek Week

Saturday 25 October to Sunday 2 November: 9:30am to 5:00pm

This October half term, enjoy a week filled with 'spooktacular' daytime activities. Suitable for all ages. Price: Event included in standard admission. [www.colchesterzoologicalsociety.com/event/shriek-week](http://www.colchesterzoologicalsociety.com/event/shriek-week)

### Magic of Christmas

Saturday 22, Sunday 23, Saturday 29 and Sunday 30 November, Saturday 6, Sunday 7, Saturday 13, Sunday 14 and Friday 19 to Wednesday 24 December: 9:30am to 4:00pm

Immerse yourself in the wonderful Christmas atmosphere with our festive activities taking place throughout the day. Suitable for all ages. Price: Event included in standard admission. [www.colchesterzoologicalsociety.com/event/magic-of-christmas](http://www.colchesterzoologicalsociety.com/event/magic-of-christmas)



## The Santa Experience

Saturday 22 and Sunday 23,  
Saturday 29, Sunday 30  
November, Saturday 6, Sunday  
7, Saturday 13,  
Sunday 14, Friday  
19 to Wednesday 24 December

Step into Santa's magical world located within the zoo. Suitable for all ages. Price: All children visiting the Santa Experience will need a valid Santa Experience ticket along with a valid admission ticket\* to CZS. Guests accompanying children to the Santa Experience will also need a CZS admission ticket to be admitted entry to attend. [www.colchesterzoologicalsociety.com/event/the-santa-experience](http://www.colchesterzoologicalsociety.com/event/the-santa-experience)

## Enchanted Trail of Light

Friday 28, Saturday 29, Sunday  
30 November, Friday 5, Saturday  
6, Sunday 7, Friday 12, Saturday  
13, Sunday 14, Friday 19,  
Saturday 20, Sunday 21, Sunday  
28 and Monday 29 December

Enjoy a magical journey along a one-mile route, featuring a brand new 40 metre light tunnel with over 20,000 lights and new animal sculptures. Suitable for all ages. Price: Event is not included in standard admission. Tickets must be pre-booked online. [www.colchesterzoologicalsociety.com/event/enchanted-trail-of-light](http://www.colchesterzoologicalsociety.com/event/enchanted-trail-of-light)

## Cressing Temple Barns

## Essex Christmas

Shopping Fair by  
Charlie Owen

Friday 14 to Sunday 16  
November: 10.00am to 4:00pm

Browse and shop over 100 stalls, purchase handmade artisan products and unique gifts. Enjoy a selection of food and drink. Suitable for all. Well behaved dogs welcome. Under 18-years-old free. Price: Adults £7.00. Concessions £6.00.

[www.explore-essex.com/whats-on/essex-christmas-fair-cressing](http://www.explore-essex.com/whats-on/essex-christmas-fair-cressing)

## Essex County Cricket Club

## Christmas Party Nights

Dates throughout December

Celebrate the festive season with delicious food, exceptional service and a live DJ throughout the event to ensure it's a memorable evening for you and your guests. Contact the events team to discuss availability and pricing, call (01245) 254 063. Suitable for 18-years-old and over. Prices from £47.00 per person. [www.essexcricket.org.uk/christmas-shared-party-nights-package-form](http://www.essexcricket.org.uk/christmas-shared-party-nights-package-form)

## Essex Country Parks

## Seasonal trails: Halloween

Running throughout school  
holidays: 8.00am to dusk

Pick up or download a trail at the Essex Country Parks, including Cressing Temple Barns. Find the spooky creatures hiding in the landscape, complete the extra activities and enjoy time together in the great outdoors. Visit the play areas and make a day of it. Suitable for all the family. Price: Free. [www.explore-essex.com/events](http://www.explore-essex.com/events)

## Essex Outdoors

## School Holiday Activity Days

Various dates throughout  
October half term:  
9.00am to 5.00pm

Book your children into the very best childcare there is and keep them active and entertained while you work. Children rotate around four stimulating sessions in small groups. Activities vary but may include archery, bushcraft, climbing and paddlesports depending on the day and centre you book. Suitable for all ages. Price: £40.00 per child. [www.essexoutdoors.com/school-holiday-activities](http://www.essexoutdoors.com/school-holiday-activities)

## Essex Record Office

## ERO Presents: Workhouse People

Tuesday 28 October:  
10:40am to 12:00pm

Join speaker Stephen Norris for this talk exploring the Chelmsford Poor Law Union. This talk concentrates on a number of people who were connected in various ways to the workhouse. Suitable for all ages. Price: Tickets £6.50. [www.essexrecordoffice.co.uk/whats-on/events](http://www.essexrecordoffice.co.uk/whats-on/events)

ERO Presents: Essex Women's  
Commemoration Project

Tuesday 25 November:  
10.40am to 12.00pm

Join speaker Dr. James Bettley for this talk and discover the story of the project to identify distinguished Essex women who have not received the public recognition they deserve. Suitable for all ages. Price: Tickets £6.50. [www.essexrecordoffice.co.uk/whats-on/events](http://www.essexrecordoffice.co.uk/whats-on/events)

## Firstsite

## Into the Orchard

Now until Sunday 22  
February 2026

Take a sensory journey through the seasons at Cripes Fruit Farm in this immersive exhibition by artists Hana Loftus and Maddie Persent. Discover the soil, trees and abundant fruit in an audio-visual installation that brings the rhythm of orchard life vividly to the senses. Suitable for all ages. Price: Free. [www.firstsite.uk/whats-on](http://www.firstsite.uk/whats-on)

Exploring Watercolour with  
Simon Carter

Friday 24 October:  
10.00am to 4.00pm

Explore the traditional art of watercolour with internationally exhibited contemporary artist Simon Carter in this experimental and

unconventional full-day workshop. Includes 50% off any main meal from our Berryfield Café. Suitable for ages 16-years-old and over. Price: From £40.00. [www.firstsite.uk/event/exploring-watercolour-with-simon-carter](http://www.firstsite.uk/event/exploring-watercolour-with-simon-carter)

### Holiday Fun

Tuesday 28 October to Saturday 1 November:  
10.00am to 2:30pm

Get making, moving and munching this autumn half-term with daily drop-in creative activities. Plus, free bookable outdoor sports to keep kids active and a hot, nutritious 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)

### Art Fair

Saturday 22 November:  
10.00am to 4.00pm

Browse and buy unique pieces, meet the artists and enjoy live demos, workshops, portfolio surgeries, and guided tours - all in a vibrant, welcoming space celebrating creativity and community. Suitable for all ages. Price: Free entry, some workshops and activities may require tickets. [www.firstsite.uk/whats-on](http://www.firstsite.uk/whats-on)

### Boozy Brushes: Paint Your Pal

Saturday 22 November:  
7:30pm to 9:30pm

Bring a photo of your pet and join Sirena Hart for an exciting acrylic painting session, complete with live singing. Learn step-by-step while enjoying a lively, entertaining evening. Suitable for 18-years-old and over. Price: From £23.20. [www.firstsite.uk/event/boozy-brushes-paint-in-pairs](http://www.firstsite.uk/event/boozy-brushes-paint-in-pairs)

### Go Ape Chelmsford

#### Sundown Adventures

Friday 17 October to  
Sunday 9 November

Experience tree top thrills in a whole new light at Hylands Park Chelmsford for a limited time. Sundown Adventures offer a new level of forest fun in the dark. Enjoy a one to two hour experience and become a creature of the night as you climb through the canopy on a high ropes course lit with colourful lights. Test your skills on tree top crossings and experience the thrill of a zip wire into the darkness. Suitable for six-years-old and over (minimum height 1.2 metres). Price: From £31.95 per person. [www.goape.co.uk/adventures/sundown-adventures](http://www.goape.co.uk/adventures/sundown-adventures)

### Harlow Museum and Walled Gardens

#### Winter Wassail Festival

Saturday 13 December:  
12.00pm to 4.00pm

Join Matipo Arts in our beautiful walled gardens for a winter festival with a twist. Grab a bite to eat and browse the market stalls, enjoy original theatre and music across the afternoon, come together and celebrate the changing seasons with a Wassail. Suitable for all ages. Price: Free. [www.matipoarts.com/what-s-on](http://www.matipoarts.com/what-s-on)

### Harlow FC Exhibition and October Half Term Activities

Saturday 25 October to  
Friday 20 February

Step back into football history with our Harlow FC exhibition. Football themed October half term activities for children including a football skills session. Suitable for all ages. Price: Free. [www.harlowmuseum.com/whats-on](http://www.harlowmuseum.com/whats-on)

### Hedingham Castle

#### Tales in the Tower Ghost Stories

Friday 24 October: 7.00pm

Join Behind the Door Productions for a candlelit performance of 'Ghost Stories by M. R. James' in the majestic and haunting Banqueting Hall of the 900-year-old Norman Keep. Suitable for 14-years-old and over. Price: Tickets £18.00. [www.hedinghamcastle.co.uk/events/tales-in-the-tower-ghost-stories-by-m-r-james](http://www.hedinghamcastle.co.uk/events/tales-in-the-tower-ghost-stories-by-m-r-james)

#### Festive Wreath Workshop

Sunday 30 November:  
10:00am to 12:30pm

Join Evelyn Rose Floristry for a creative wreath-making workshop. Includes all materials and mulled wine and mince pies. All abilities welcome. Suitable for 16-years-old and over. Price: Tickets £65.00. [www.hedinghamcastle.co.uk/events/festive-wreath-workshop](http://www.hedinghamcastle.co.uk/events/festive-wreath-workshop)

#### Murder on the Dancefloor: Murder Mystery Dining Experience

Thursday 11, Friday 12 and  
Saturday 13 December: 6.30pm

Festive dining with a twist. Crack the clues to find the killer in this fun and immersive evening, perfect for groups of friends or colleagues to celebrate the Christmas season. Suitable for 18-years-old and over. Price: Tickets £95.00. [www.hedinghamcastle.co.uk/events/murder-mystery-evening](http://www.hedinghamcastle.co.uk/events/murder-mystery-evening)

#### Pop Up Panto: Goldilocks and the Three Bears

Monday 22 and Tuesday 23  
December: Various times

When the villainous Sir Cuss kidnaps Daddy Bear and makes him join the circus, Mummy Bear and Goldilocks will stop at nothing to save him. Plus, a special visit and gift from Mr and Mrs Claus. Suitable for all



ages. Price: Tickets from £14.00.  
[www.hedinghamcastle.co.uk/events/panto](http://www.hedinghamcastle.co.uk/events/panto)

### Hylands Estate

#### Open Estate Day

Sunday 12 October, Sunday 9 November and Sunday 14 December: 10.00am to 3.00pm

Explore Hylands Estate and enjoy at your leisure, with free family activities to keep everyone entertained. With a special Christmas themed event in December, you may even see a special guest visiting us before the big festive day. Suitable for all ages. Price: Free. [www.hylandsestate.co.uk/explore/openestate](http://www.hylandsestate.co.uk/explore/openestate)

#### Dressmaking Workshops: Organised by Cosimas

Wednesday 15 and Wednesday 22 October: 6.00pm to 9.00pm

Join Sue from Cosimas and learn to use a commercial pattern to make either a simple skirt, blouse or dress of your choice. Suitable for beginners. Price: £45 per person. [www.hylandsestate.co.uk/organiser/cosimas](http://www.hylandsestate.co.uk/organiser/cosimas)

#### Jewellery Making Workshops: Organised by Tanya Krackowizer

Various dates. All workshops 10.00am to 2.00pm

If you love the idea of making your own jewellery or perhaps designing your own wedding rings, these workshops could be perfect for you. Suitable for 18-years-old and over. Price: £85.00 per person. [www.hylandsestate.co.uk/organiser/tanya-krackowizer](http://www.hylandsestate.co.uk/organiser/tanya-krackowizer)

#### Beginners Glass Workshops: Organised by Mona Marnell

Various dates. All sessions 10.00am to 4.00pm

Spend a fun day learning a new skill and creating your own glass

creations with artist Mona Marnell who will take you through the process to make your own pieces to take away. Suitable for 18-years-old and over. Price: £120 per person. [www.hylandsestate.co.uk/organiser/mona-marnell](http://www.hylandsestate.co.uk/organiser/mona-marnell)

#### Stained Glass Five Week Short Course: Organised by Mona Marnell

Mondays 3 November to Monday 1 December: 7.00pm to 9.00pm

In this small, focused group of just five participants, you'll further develop your expertise in the Tiffany method, mastering advanced cutting, and more, to create beautiful stained glass pieces. Suitable for 18-years-old and over. Price: £120.00 per person. [www.hylandsestate.co.uk/organiser/mona-marnell](http://www.hylandsestate.co.uk/organiser/mona-marnell)

#### Pottery Clubs: Organised by Ceramics by Alex

From Thursday 6 November over six weeks

Design and create your own pottery in these workshops by learning ceramic hand building techniques in a relaxed and fun environment. You can choose what you would like to make each week using the techniques shown. Suitable for 18-years-old and over and beginners. Price: £180 per person. [www.hylandsestate.co.uk/organiser/ceramics-by-alex](http://www.hylandsestate.co.uk/organiser/ceramics-by-alex)

#### Christmas at The Stables

Wednesday 26 November: 5.00pm to 9.00pm

Whether you are yet to start on your Christmas shopping, fancy a festive refresh of your decoration collection - Christmas at The Stables will have everything you need to make your festive season extra special. Suitable for all ages. Price: Free. [www.hylandsestate.co.uk/events/category/christmas](http://www.hylandsestate.co.uk/events/category/christmas)

### Enlightened

Friday 28 November to Saturday 3 January 2026

Enlightened returns to Hylands, bringing a bigger, brighter and even more magical light trail experience. From twinkling tunnels of light to dazzling laser projections, every step along the trail is designed to captivate and amaze. Suitable for all ages. Price: £8.50 to £21.50. [www.enlightenmoments.co.uk/events/hylands-2025](http://www.enlightenmoments.co.uk/events/hylands-2025)

### Great Expectations

Tuesday 9 and Wednesday 10 December: 5.00pm and 8.00pm

Experience the timeless tale of Great Expectations – a heart-warming, magical stage adaptation of Charles Dickens beloved classic, performed in the stunning Banqueting Room at Hylands House. Bought to Chelmsford by This is My Theatre. Suitable for all ages. Price: £22.38 (includes a booking fee). [www.hylandsestate.co.uk/events/category/theatre](http://www.hylandsestate.co.uk/events/category/theatre)

### The Snow Queen

Saturday 13 December: 11.30am and 3.00pm

With songs, music and projection, Michael Whitmore's enchanting adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's 'The Snow Queen' is both funny and poignant. Blending fantasy, fable and the enduring power of love, this magical tale makes for a heartwarming Christmas classic. Suitable for all ages. Price: £16.96 adults, £11.55 concessions (includes booking fees). [www.hylandsestate.co.uk/events/category/theatre](http://www.hylandsestate.co.uk/events/category/theatre)

### Hylands History and Garden Tour

Available all year round

Introducing a complimentary multimedia tour which shares the rich history of Hylands House and the extensive gardens. The

tour is free to explore seven days a week. Suitable for eight-years-old and over. Price: Free. [www.hylandsestate.co.uk/explore/historyandgardentour](http://www.hylandsestate.co.uk/explore/historyandgardentour)

## Mercury Theatre

### Mother Goose

Saturday 22 November to  
Sunday 18 January 2026

Roll up for the greatest show on earth. To celebrate ten golden years of the legendary duo Antony Stuart-Hicks and Dale Superville, the Mercury Theatre present the mother of all pantos – Mother Goose. Suitable for five-years-old and over. Price: From £10.00. [www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/event/mother-goose](http://www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/event/mother-goose)

### The Ho Ho Ho! Mrs Christmas Show

Tuesday 2 to Wednesday  
24 December

From the team behind The Ho Ho Ho! Christmas Show comes a new enchanting show about thankfulness. Full of fun, magic and wonder it's the perfect festive treat for all the family to enjoy. Suitable for three-years-old and over. Price: From £10.50. [www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/event/the-ho-ho-ho-mrs-christmas-show](http://www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/event/the-ho-ho-ho-mrs-christmas-show)

### Santa's Grotto

Tuesday 2 to  
Wednesday 24 December

Join us for a heart warming festive adventure as you and your group journey to Lapland, where the magic of Christmas comes alive in Santa's cosy grotto. Suitable for all ages. Price: £15.00. [www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/event/santas-grotto](http://www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/event/santas-grotto)

## Museum of Chelmsford

### Shifting Perspectives: Exploring Art Together

Now until Sunday 2 November:  
10.00am to 5.00pm

We invited people living with dementia and their companions to explore works of art by women artists from our collection. Share your own thoughts on the 'Share Your Wonder' wall, devised by artist Elaine Tribley. 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/)

### The Contortionist

Now until Monday 24 November  
2025: 10.00am to 5.00pm

Raised and twisted arms work their way across the printed page in 'The Caregiver as a Contortionist', a Riso print. Suitable for all the family. 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! Kes Gray: Chelmsford Born and Read

Saturday 29 November to  
Sunday 21 June 2026

A family friendly and interactive 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/)

### Object Handling

See website for a full list of  
dates and themes

Join the museum volunteers in the Victorian Hall to view items from the museum collection up close. You will be able to handle the objects on display and talk to our volunteers to learn more about their history.

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/)

### Boris Bear Cubs

Every other Thursday during  
term time until Thursday 18  
December: 10.30am to 12.00pm

Each 90-minute session will follow a topic related to the museum displays and collections and include fun play areas, activities, story and song times. Suitable for under five-years-old and grown-ups. Price: £6.00 per child (£5.00 for members), one adult goes free with admission included. [www.chelmsford.gov.uk/museums/whats-on/](http://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/museums/whats-on/)

### Memory Café

Monday 10 November and  
Monday 8 December:  
10.30am to 12.00pm

Drop in to explore museum objects with curators and volunteers, share your stories and enjoy a cup of tea. This session is designed for those who are living with dementia to attend with their families, friends and loved ones. Suitable for families and those living with dementia. 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)

## Saffron Hall

### London Philharmonic Orchestra

Friday 24 October: 7.30pm

A richly varied and emotionally charged programme contrasts Rachmaninov's Symphony number two with the many faces of Mozart. Suitable for seven-years-old and over. Price: Tickets £27.00 to £63.00. [www.saffronhall.com/whats-on/view/london-philharmonic-orchestra-11](http://www.saffronhall.com/whats-on/view/london-philharmonic-orchestra-11)



**Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story**

Tuesday 28 October to  
Saturday 1 November

This sensational multi award-winning West End show triumphantly visits Saffron Hall as part of its 2025-2026 UK Tour. Book now for the most successful Rock and Roll musical of all time. Suitable for seven-years-old and over. Price: Tickets £26.00 to £51.00. [www.saffronhall.com/whats-on/view/buddy-the-buddy-holly-story](http://www.saffronhall.com/whats-on/view/buddy-the-buddy-holly-story)

**The Elixir of Love**

Friday 7 November: 7.00pm

English Touring Opera presents Donizetti's sparkling 'The Elixir of Love'. Complete with exquisite music played by a 16-piece orchestra, 'The Elixir of Love' is one of Donizetti's most frequently staged operas. Suitable for 12-years-old and over. Price: Tickets £16.00 to £48.00. [www.saffronhall.com/whats-on/view/the-elixir-of-love](http://www.saffronhall.com/whats-on/view/the-elixir-of-love)

**Tanita Tikaram**

Sunday 16 November: 7.30pm

Tanita Tikaram's vibrant blend of folk, pop, jazz and blues is a captivating experience. The album 'Ancient Heart' made Tanita Tikaram a star whilst still in her teens, its hit single 'Twist in My Sobriety' an ever-present soundtrack to the late 1980s. Suitable for seven-years-old and over. Price: Tickets £18.00 to £38.00. [www.saffronhall.com/whats-on/view/tanita-tikaram](http://www.saffronhall.com/whats-on/view/tanita-tikaram)

**Courtney Pine**

Friday 21 November: 7.30pm

No musician more embodies the dramatic transformation in the British jazz scene over the past thirty years than the legendary saxophonist Courtney Pine. Suitable for seven-years-old and over. Price: Tickets £20.00 to £35.00. [www.saffronhall.com/whats-on/view/](http://www.saffronhall.com/whats-on/view/)

**courtney-pine-4**

Christmas with the Chamber  
Choir of London

Saturday 6 December: 7.30pm

Dominic Ellis-Peckham's professional chamber choir heralds the coming of Christmas with a compendium of carols old and new, from familiar congregational favourites to modern classics. Suitable for 16-years-old and over. Price: Tickets £25.00 to £45.00. [www.saffronhall.com/whats-on/view/chamber-choir-of-london](http://www.saffronhall.com/whats-on/view/chamber-choir-of-london)

**Glenn Miller Orchestra**

Sunday 7 December: 3.30pm

The Glenn Miller Orchestra capture the spirit of festive cheer with a string of seasonal favourites. Led by Ray McVay, with vocal harmonies of the Moonlight Serenaders and the Miller-era size of band and vocalists, they bring a nostalgia and authenticity to a winter wonderland of sparkling hits made famous by the incomparable band leader. Suitable for seven-years-old and over. Price: Tickets £18.00 to £38.00. [www.saffronhall.com/whats-on/view/glenn-miller-orchestra-4](http://www.saffronhall.com/whats-on/view/glenn-miller-orchestra-4)

**Jess Gillam Ensemble**

Friday 12 December: 7.30pm

A Christmas celebration with star saxophonist Jess Gillam and her ensemble. A concert from Jess and her musical friends is always a special occasion. Suitable for seven-years-old and over. Price: Tickets £20.00 to £40.00. [www.saffronhall.com/whats-on/view/jess-gillam-ensemble-2](http://www.saffronhall.com/whats-on/view/jess-gillam-ensemble-2)

**Bach's Christmas Oratorio**

Saturday 13 December: 7.30pm

Bach's sequence of sacred choral cantatas encapsulates the contrasts of the Christmas story, with Britten Sinfonia and Polyphony. Suitable for seven-years-old and over. Price:

Tickets £20.00 to £60.00. [www.saffronhall.com/whats-on/view/christmas-oratorio](http://www.saffronhall.com/whats-on/view/christmas-oratorio)

**The Young'uns**

Sunday 14 December: 3.00pm

The three-time BBC Radio 2 Folk Award winners make their Saffron Hall debut. In this festive set they bring Christmas songs old and new with their trademark harmony, heart and humour. Suitable for see website. Price: Tickets £19.00 to £25.00. [www.saffronhall.com/whats-on/view/the-younguns](http://www.saffronhall.com/whats-on/view/the-younguns)

**Dick Whittington**

Sunday 21 to  
Monday 29 December

Step into a world of fun, laughter, and adventure as Dick Whittington sets out to seek his fortune and make the streets 'paved with gold' a reality. Suitable for all ages. Price: Tickets £16.00 to £26.00. [www.saffronhall.com/whats-on/view/dick-whittington](http://www.saffronhall.com/whats-on/view/dick-whittington)

**Southend Palace Theatre**

It's a Beautiful Noise Orchestral  
Edition with Fisher Stevens

Saturday 22 November: 7.00pm

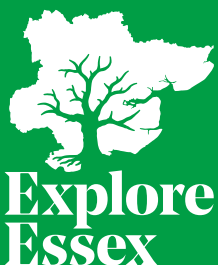
The brand new 2025 Orchestral Edition production of the much-loved Neil Diamond tribute show 'It's a Beautiful Noise' comes to town. Suitable for: See website. Price: See website. [www.trafalgartickets.com/palace-theatre-southend/en-GB](http://www.trafalgartickets.com/palace-theatre-southend/en-GB)

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PRE-SCHOOL



HOME EDUCATION

# Pre-school and Home Educated Forest School

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