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Colchester Borough Council

THE COLCHESTER ORBITAL

The Colchester Orbital is a 14-15-mile circular route around town, connecting some of our loveliest green spaces. The route is mapped in 3 sections (East, South and West). Route guides and information on route accessibility are downloadable from the Orbital website:

www.walkcolchester.org.uk/the-colchester-orbital

COLCHESTER ORBITAL (SOUTH)

Wivenhoe Park to Shrub End, via the Hythe, Bourne Valley, Colchester Cemetery (South A) or Middlewick Ranges (South B).

About this route...

Start point: Meadows Shop/Café, Annan Road (University of Essex).

Grid ref: TM 02272 24190

End point: Norman Way (South), off Shrub End Road

Distance: South A: 4.2 South B: 4.6 miles

Bus routes (start point):

61, 62, 62B, 74B, 75B, 97, 98

Facilities at start: general store with outdoor seating.



1

THE ORBITAL SOUTH STARTS HERE

From Meadows Pavilion shop and cafe (University of Essex), head south on Annan Rd & over the ramped railway bridge. Continue straight on through the University 'Quays' until the path meets the Colne river. Go right along the quayside, until the path reaches a junction with Colne Causeway. Cross at the pedestrian crossing, go left along the Causeway & cross the river. At the roundabout beyond, go right on to Hythe Quay, signposted to the Town Centre, & almost immediately, cross with caution at the designated crossing point (mouth of the roundabout).

2

On Hythe Quay continue past 'Assembly Directmail' & (before the Spinnaker Inn) look for a left turn on to a footpath signposted (via yellow arrow) to Recreation Rd & Hythe Hill. The short section of the Orbital that follows has very steep gradients & mixed terrain. The lower end has been improved by a stretch of wooden boardwalk. Beyond this, the path begins a long, steep ascent. At a junction of footpaths at Parson's Lane (marked by a staggered barrier & red litter bin), go left & continue (metal fence to the left, steep bank of trees to the right).

3

The footpath ends as Recreation Rd (to the right) begins. Follow Recreation Rd for approximately 100m to Old Heath Recreation Ground (right), then go left on to Scarletts Rd (note, G04's 'Café on the Rec' offering refreshments & public toilets here). Follow Scarletts Rd down to a T-junction with Old Heath Rd. Look leftwards for a black weather-boarded building (Butterfly Barns Day Nursery) a short distance along on the far side, with adjacent bus stop. Cross with caution.

4

Take the earthen footpath that runs along the right-hand side of the barn, towards Bourne Valley. A wooden chicane marks the entrance (& likewise exit at Bourne Pond). Access is in part via a raised wooden boardwalk that meanders for approx. 500m along the undulating, largely level, bottom of the valley, interspersed with some earthen sections. At the end of the valley, exit via the second chicane and take the footpath left, up to Stalin Road.

5A

THE ORBITAL SOUTH A

(Bourne Valley to the Garrison, via Colchester Cemetery)

At Stalin Rd go right keeping to the grass verge (there is no pavement). Walk around the back of the long parking bay ahead, & look for a steep foot-worn path cutting a channel down into the woods. The terrain is earthen, & the path steep at first with a significant camber, but levels out & winds gently downhill to the exit at Mersea Rd. Exit the woods here, opposite the lower entrance to Colchester Cemetery. Cross with caution.

6A

Enter the cemetery via the entrance on the far side of the Mersea Rd. From the entrance follow the main path straight ahead, past a red brick toilet block with accessible facility on the right. As the path heads gently upwards, pass a turning off to the left. Shortly afterwards, reach the Starlight Florists & Tea Room, housed in a chapel on the right as the path levels out. Beyond the chapel, continue, crossing over the first junction of paths. At the second, go right. Continue straight over the third & then go left at the keeper's cottage. At the next junction, go right and keep straight on to the exit gates on the far side of the cemetery.

7A

At the exit, go left along the outer perimeter of the cemetery. Follow this footpath to the far outer corner of the cemetery (approx. 300m), & then around a sharp right turn at Willows allotment. After a short distance, a path on the left marks the point at which the Orbital South B (below) re-joins the South A. Continue straight on past.

8

THE FINAL SECTION

Head towards the flyover. Immediately in advance of it, a foot/cycle path merging from the right offers a mostly off-road route into town (via Abbey Field), & acts as one of the Orbital's 'spokes'. Go under the flyover & continue parallel to Berechurch Rd for approx. 350m to a junction with a foot/cycle path (signposted left to the Garrison's Physical & Recreational Training Area; straight ahead to Friday Woods). Go right, signposted 'Layer Rd' and continue for approx. 1 km on this off-road walk/cycle path, crossing Fallowfield Rd at Garrison entrance. Cross the Layer Rd at traffic lights & take Boadicea Way (opposite to the left).

5B

THE ORBITAL SOUTH B

(Bourne Valley to the Garrison, via Middlewick Ranges)

At Stalin Rd go left, and continue, crossing Roosevelt Way, to a T-junction with Churchill Way. Go right, cross, and shortly after, take a lane (left) towards garages. At the end, bear left on to Jackson Walk & continue until Abbot's Rd. Go left, cross & take the stile opposite on to Middlewick Ranges (Garrison land, occasionally used for army training). Follow a foot-worn path diagonally across the grassland to the tree line ahead. Continue through the trees & emerge onto further grassland, close to the Mersea Rd on the right. Shortly after, exit the Ranges at the main gate & go left on Mersea Rd. Cross over and continue for approx. 200m until open greensward on the right.

6B

Heading away from the Mersea Rd, keep on straight across greensward for approx. 500m in total, crossing Queen Elizabeth Way and then School Rd (keeping school buildings to the right). Then continue onward via a metal barrier, and further greensward with blue outdoor courts (right), with high surround blue fencing. Immediately beyond, at the second school entrance, bear left towards a small roundabout (marking the entrance to the school site from Monkwick Avenue).

7B

Instead of exiting here, go diagonally across the roundabout & take a footpath on the far side for a short distance through the tree line to a T-junction with a shared foot/cycle path, with the new Garrison buildings visible ahead. Go right, then follow path around the perimeter of the Garrison until a further T-junction of paths (approx. 450m). At this point the Orbital South A & B routes merge once again. Go left here (Cemetery to the right).

9

Continue on Boadicea Way for approx. 800m, around the perimeter of Shrub End Playing Field & West End Sports Ground, until Shrub End Rd. Cross at the traffic lights & continue straight over on to Norman Way, which reaches a dead end shortly afterwards just past The Commons (left), at the entrance to Irvine Rd allotments & cut-through to adjacent greensward at Landseer Rd.

THE ORBITAL SOUTH ENDS HERE