

Welcome to Cymbeline Meadows Local Wildlife Site

HISTORY AND WILDLIFE

The site is a quiet, peaceful place to enjoy walks and picnics located in easy reach of the town centre. The site was formerly part of a commercial arable farm called Lexden Lodge Farm. The Council acquired the land in 1988.

Previously the riverside meadows were cultivated with cereal crops. In the 1990s they were sown with a mixture of wildflowers and grasses to provide pasture. Cattle now graze these meadows in the spring, summer and autumn.

The main area of woodland in the North East corner of the site is called Charter Wood. It is an area of about 8ha of mixed deciduous woodland. The wood was planted in 1992 to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the granting of the Charter to the Borough by Richard I.

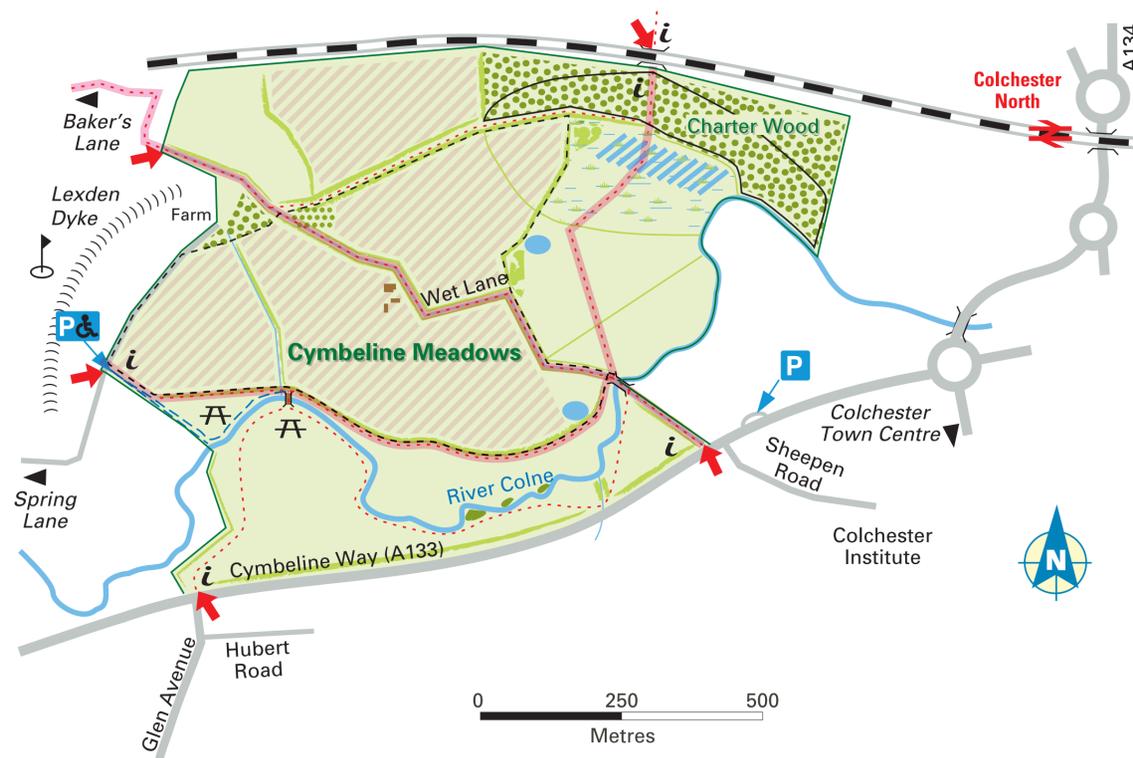
Along the vehicle entrance drive look out for one of Colchester's most interesting archaeological features, the Lexden Dyke, a bank and ditch system built to defend Iron Age Camulodunum around 2000 years ago.

The site is rich in wildlife; **otter, water vole** and **kingfisher** are found on the river, with **snipe** in the wet meadows. **Nightingale** can be heard in the spring on the edge of Charter Wood and **whitethroat** and **yellowhammer** can often be seen perched on the tops of hedgerows. **Buzzard** regularly glide on thermals over the site, listen out for their high pitch mewing call. **Noctule bats** feed over the arable fields on summer evenings. Evidence of **woodmice** can be found in Charter Wood in the form of gnawed sloe stones. Other mammals include **badger, muntjac, rabbit and fox**. The river and ponds on site provide breeding places for a fantastic array of aquatic insects including **banded demoiselle, brown hawker, scarce chaser. Black poplar** trees have been planted alongside the river as part of a project to help this species. According to the Forestry Commission, Black poplar is the most endangered native timber tree in Britain. Threats to the species include disease, habitat loss, poor natural regeneration and hybridisation with non-native poplars. The Black poplars have fencing around them to protect them from grazing. Common plants on site include **teasel, purple loosestrife, wild carrot, the aquatic arrowhead and flowering rush. Cowslips** appear in the meadows in spring, with **creeping buttercup, oxeye daisy and knapweed** putting on an amazing display later in the year. 21 **butterfly** species of have been recorded on site. Moth surveys have been carried out and the most numerous species were **common swift, green carpet and heart and dart**.

Photo credit: P Beard, S Lindsell, J Dobson, William Little.

This is a 74ha working farm owned by Colchester Borough Council. It's an area of peaceful countryside surprisingly close to the heart of Colchester where you can enjoy quiet walks through a variety of wildlife habitats including grazing meadows, arable fields, hedgerows, woodland and along the meandering picturesque River Colne.

Key to map		
Vegetation	Facilities	Features
grassland	picnic area	hedgerow
scrub	parking area	footbridge
mature woodland	station	building
planted woodland	entrance	railway line
marsh/fen	information point	road
arable	Paths	Lexden dyke
marsh area	foot only	
Water bodies	wheelchair	
Site boundary	PROW	
	farm trail	
	woodland trail	



FACILITIES AND ACCESS

- **Free parking:** space for 4 cars in the small car park on wet lane just past the sports ground.
- **Picnic area:** there is a short section of surfaced path (wheelchair accessible) that leads from the car park to the picnic area where there are 5 picnic benches located near to the river.
- **Way-marked walking routes:**
 - **Farm Trail** 2.6km, mostly on unsurfaced grass paths which can be muddy (leaflet available on line, search Colchester Borough Council, Cymbeline Meadows).
 - **Woodland Trail** 1km, path is not surfaced and can be muddy.
- Public rights of ways (PROW) cross the site.
- Benches are located at intervals along all walking trails.
- Dog waste bins are available at the car park, at the entrance on Cymbeline Way nearest to the Sheepen Rd junction and at the subway entrance into Charter Wood.

OUR WORK

Hedgerows are trimmed and periodically coppiced to invigorate new growth and gaps in hedgerows are planted up. It's important to maintain hedgerows as they provide habitat corridors for birds, small mammals etc. Margins of wild flowers and rough grassland are left on the arable field edges to provide refuges for insects which are important for pollination and pest control within the crops. Charter Wood is thinned and some areas have been coppiced to provide a varied woodland habitat for wildlife. Woodland glades are maintained which are excellent areas for insects. The riverside is fenced in places to stop cattle accessing the water and eroding the river banks.

PLEASE BE AWARE

Cattle graze the riverside meadows in spring, summer and autumn. Please keep dogs under very close control at all times and ensure you pick up after your dog as dog faeces can spread disease to cattle. The river side meadows do flood after prolonged heavy rain. Some walking routes will be inaccessible at these times. The site is a working farm so heavy machinery is often moving around on site.

SITE RULES

- No camping
- No fires
- No BBQs
- No quad bikes or motor bikes
- No fly tipping or littering
- No hunting or trapping
- No metal detecting
- No drones without permission



Contact details
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