

**9** The fallen ivy-covered stump on the right was a sycamore tree which lived for about 140 years. It was used as a nesting and roosting site by tawny owls until it fell down. On the opposite side of the path are nursery beds with brick-edged paths between them. The three cornered leek grows prolifically here.

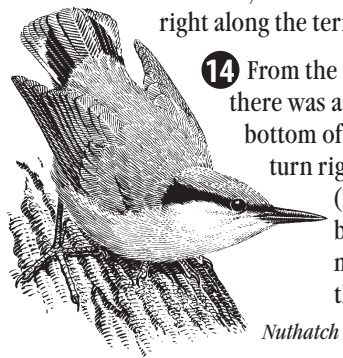
**10** Next to the nursery beds is a narrow half-moon shaped pond and beyond it is a brick-sided reservoir similar to the one at post 8. Moorhens nest here regularly. One wall of the reservoir was broken down by a falling tree in the 1987 storm.

**11** The walled garden probably dates from the 17th century. However, much of what is here is the result of Miss Willmott's planting. There is a fine ginkgo tree, a few magnolias and a palm. Smaller plants to look for include anemones, Solomon's seal, comfrey and Welsh poppy.

**12** The house was demolished in 1939 and much of the ground floor has fallen into the cellars. Mosaic flooring can be seen in places. The small building, now used as an information room, was a cloakroom and WC. From outside the far door of this room, one can see the white glazed bricks of the kitchen, which was below the butler's and housekeeper's rooms. A variety of ferns flourish in the cellars.

**13** The Conservatory was part of the house and it still stands. It was stabilised in 2006 and can now be entered from all four directions. The large window looks out over what was the lawn and bowling green.

Now follow the path along the remains of the herbaceous border, beside the newly-restored south wall of the walled garden. For a shorter walk, missing the steep slopes of the daffodil bank, turn left to post 18. Otherwise turn right along the terrace.



Nuthatch

**14** From the terrace (recently restored) there was a clear view of the lakes at the bottom of the slope. Go down the steps, turn right along part of the cattle run (made to allow cattle to move between the west and north meadows) and then left onto the daffodil bank.

**15** Bluebells can be seen on the left and then a very large turkey oak beside the path. One of its branches has a 'witches broom', a growth caused by a fungus. In spring the bank produces a beautiful display of daffodils, followed by rosebay willow herb later in the year. Half way down on the right is a large tree, a Caucasian wing-nut.

**16** The lower tree-covered area was the bog garden and a concrete-edged boating lake. The lake floor now hardly shows so much as a puddle, even in the wettest weather. On the right of the path is the massive earth bank, erected by Miss Willmott to retain the lake. At the far end of the lake, where the path turns to the left, there is the wall of the boat house with a rail still in position.

**17** The hide overlooks the North Pond, which is reputed to have been a carp pond when the estate belonged to the nuns of Barking Abbey. Plants here include purple loosestrife, yellow iris, club rush, great reedmace and common reed. Nuthatches and treecreepers are among the many birds to be seen.

**18** The Spanish or sweet chestnuts were reputed to have been planted by the diarist John Evelyn in the 17th century, but although Evelyn owned part of the manor of Great Warley for six years he never lived at Warley Place. In spring the small cyclamen daffodil grows beneath the chestnuts. The view over London on a clear day is magnificent. Telecom Tower, St Paul's, Canary Wharf and the Millennium Dome can all be seen. As you walk on, note on your left the partially restored summer house and the holm oaks.



Badger



Treecreeper

**19** The large beech tree on the left was planted in around 1810. It was originally pollarded, but it 'grew out' to such a height that the top had to be cut off to render it safe. Beyond it the heaps of sandy soil indicate entrances to a deserted badger sett. Just before the bridge a spur path leads to a hide overlooking South Pond. Alongside this path in late spring and summer, patches of purple toothwort can be seen. It is an introduced parasitic plant with no leaves, gaining nourishment by suckers which penetrate the roots of surrounding trees.

**20** The bridge spans the gorge which Miss Willmott had excavated as part of her Alpine Garden. Water flowed through it from a pond at the top, down into the South Pond below. All the rocks were brought from Yorkshire by the company which did the work. The path leads down some steps to join the old drive near to the stile, and this completes the circular tour of the reserve.

Warden: Jim Jarmy, 6 Felsted Road, Billericay. 01277 654318

Assistant Warden: Len Dewell

Chair of Management Committee: Fiona Agassiz, 01277 230436

## Join us Today!

The support of over 32,000 members enables the Trust to look after Warley Place and other reserves in Essex. Call us for a free guide!

**Telephone 01621 862960**

**Website [www.essexwt.org.uk](http://www.essexwt.org.uk)**

Support the Trust by becoming a member. Subscriptions: Single £24, Joint £30. We will send your membership card, current publications *Essex Wildlife* and *Natural World* and details of our Visitor Centres and Nature Reserves.

**Bennetts**  
FUNERAL DIRECTORS

*Essex Wildlife Trust are grateful to Bennetts Funerals of Brentwood and Billericay for their contribution towards the production of this trail guide.*

Illustrations English Nature



**ESSEX**  
Wildlife Trust

The Joan Elliot  
Visitor Centre at  
Abbotts Hall Farm  
Great Wigborough  
Colchester  
CO5 7RZ  
Telephone  
01621 862960  
Email  
[admin@essexwt.org.uk](mailto:admin@essexwt.org.uk)  
Website  
[www.essexwt.org.uk](http://www.essexwt.org.uk)

Registered Charity  
No. 210065

## Trail Guide to the Nature Reserve



# Warley Place

**Brentwood**

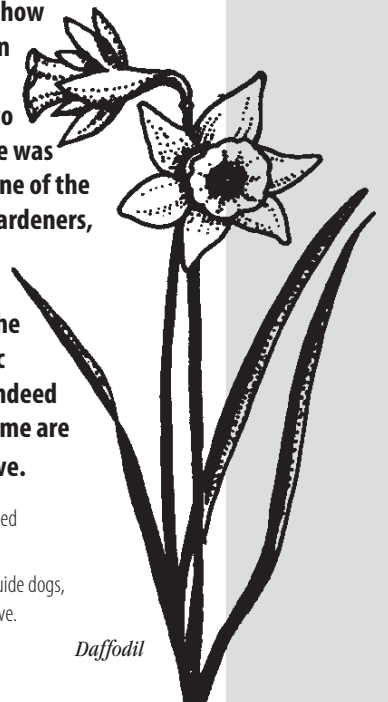
Map ref TQ 583907

The entrance gate is next to the Thatchers Arms in Great Warley

**Warley Place is leased to Essex Wildlife Trust as a nature reserve. The sixteen acres beyond the stile show how a neglected garden will rapidly become overgrown and revert to woodland. Warley Place was formerly the home of one of the most famous women gardeners, Miss Ellen Willmott, who died in 1934. A keen horticulturist, she introduced many exotic plants to Warley, and indeed to Britain generally. Some are still found on the reserve.**

The route of the trail may be changed temporarily from time to time.

Please note that no dogs, except guide dogs, are allowed anywhere on the reserve.



Daffodil

First Floor Design 01206 273301

# Welcome to Warley Place

*We hope you enjoy your visit*

The aim of Essex Wildlife Trust at Warley Place is to improve the different habitats for the benefit of the wildlife while retaining those parts of the garden that have survived. Some parts of the reserve are dangerous because of hidden cellars, water holes and decaying walls.

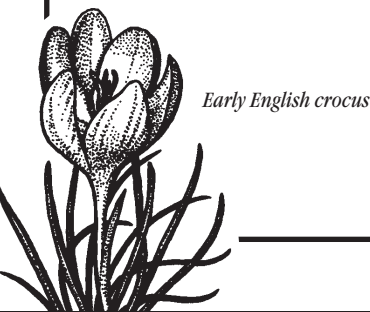
Please keep to the footpaths, including the path across the East Meadow and follow the marked trail. The botanically rich East and West Meadows are leased to a local farmer for grazing in summer.

**1** The drive from the gate to the car park borders the crocus field (East Meadow), which, in spring, used to be a sea of purple flowers. Some crocuses can still be seen in the field and in the border to the drive, but most do not now flower, apparently because of grazing by rabbits. This is one of the few sites in Britain where the early English crocus grows naturally.

**2** The South Pond is all that remains of the medieval water point for Great Warley village. The main coloniser is common reed, but yellow flag and marsh marigold are among other water plants. The path from the car park to the stile and on through the reserve was the drive to the house and before that the main road from Great Warley to Brentwood. The road was moved to its present position in the 19th century.

**3** In late winter, snowdrops of many varieties can be seen bordering the path. Beyond here, on your right, is a large lime tree that was blown down across the drive in the 1987 storm. Notice the large up-ended root plate and the vertical branches that have grown from the trunk. Near the top of the slope, on the left, is where the house stood until it was demolished in 1939; the turning circle is still visible. Opposite, on the right, a ha-ha borders the crocus field. The ditch and wall kept grazing cattle out of the garden without the need for a hedge, which would have blocked the view.

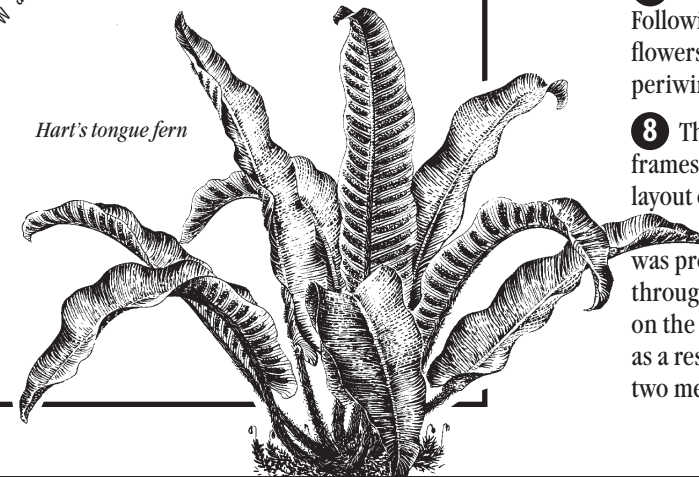
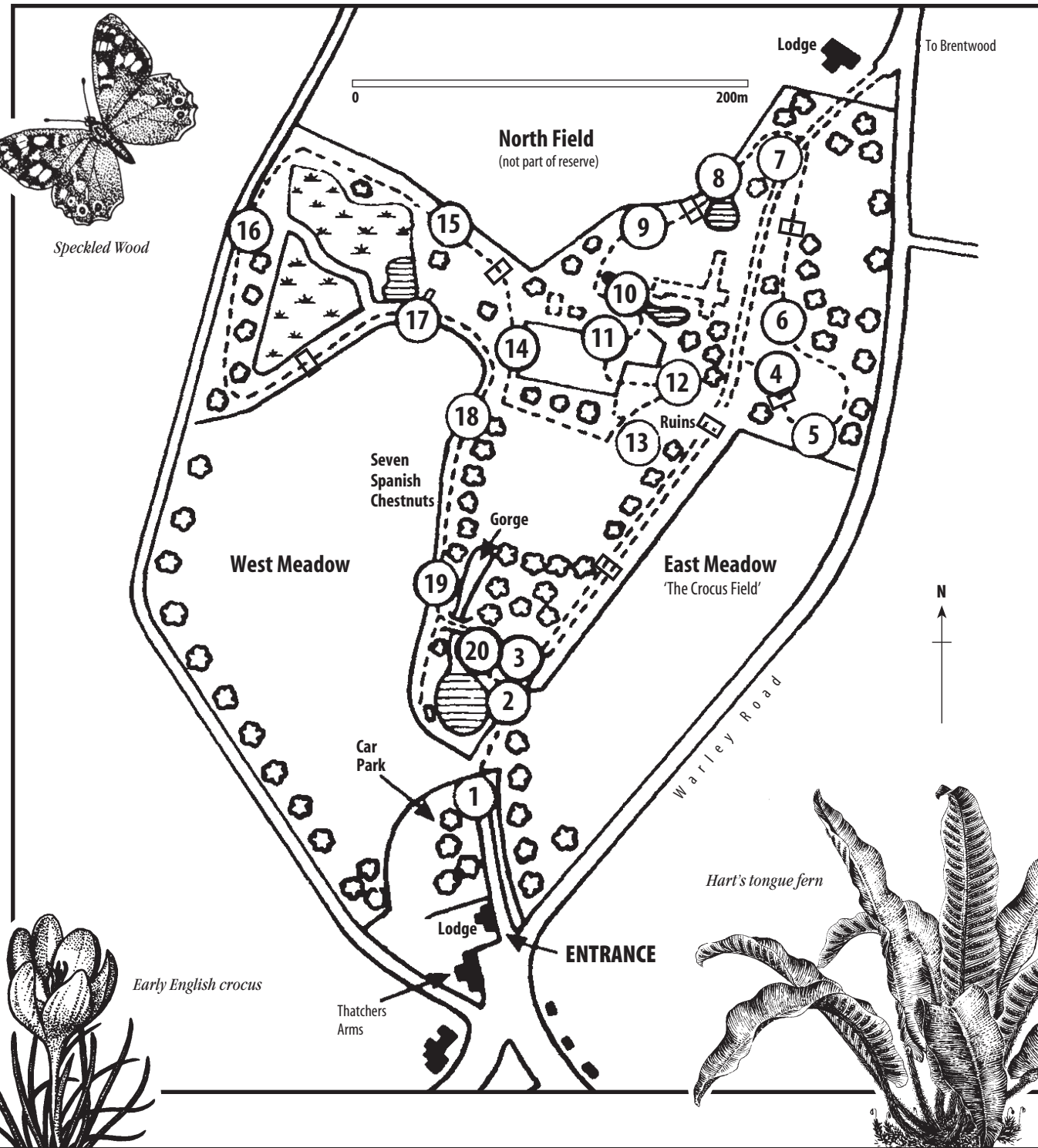
Marsh marigold



Early English crocus



Speckled Wood



Hart's tongue fern



Great spotted woodpecker

**4** Notice the remains of the coach house on the left. There is a barrier across the old drive here and two smaller paths lead off to the right. Beyond the barrier is 'the butterfly ride', an open area with flowering shrubs and nettles to attract butterflies. Take the further path on the right, which, after the bend, leads through a patch of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob *Trachystemon orientalis*, a relic of the garden. Close by is a crater made by a bomb in World War II. On reaching the junction with the first path, turn left.

**5** In spring and summer the characteristic smell of onions at this point indicates ramsons or wild garlic which is well established. On the left are many garden plants such as the white, red or purple flowers of *Corydalis*. Several hart's tongue ferns are present. Humps at the far end are the remains of cold frames. Large strap shaped leaves are those of meadow saffron and in the autumn after they have died back tall, rosy mauve crocus-like flowers appear, sometimes called naked-ladies. This plant is poisonous.

**6** Until recently this area was overrun with bramble and bamboo, but our hard-working volunteers now manage to keep them in check. The large tree on the right is a Tree of Heaven *Ailanthus* and there are several smaller ones here which have originated as its suckers. The path leads through an archway of yew trees before crossing the old drive. On the left, after a sharp bend, are a gnarled red horse chestnut tree and several bushes of spotted laurel *Aucuba*.

**7** This was the main cold frame area of the garden. Following the removal of sycamores and ivy, many attractive flowers appear each year. At the far end a large patch of periwinkle blooms from early spring to late summer.

**8** The artificial pond was a reservoir for watering the cold frames and greenhouses. Next is a group of greenhouses, the layout of which can be seen from the plan attached to the rail. One of these houses has a 1.5m deep pool which was probably for ornamental fish. Before following the path through the relics of a double hedge of yew, look at the field on the right. It has been treated to improve the grazing, and as a result supports fewer species of wild flower than the two meadows which are part of the reserve.