

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.

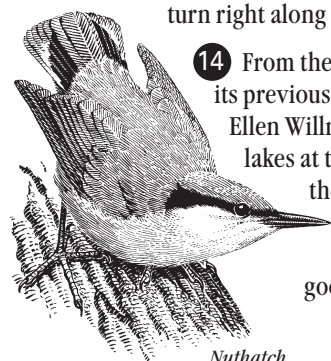
10 Next to the nursery beds is a narrow half-moon shaped pond and beyond it is a brick-sided reservoir similar to the one at post 8. Moorhens nest here regularly. Nearby is an iron gate that was found in the reservoir and has been re-hung on its original post.

11 The walled garden probably dates from the 17th century. Much of what is here is the result of Miss Willmott's planting. There is a fine ginkgo tree, a few magnolias and two palms; smaller plants to look for include Solomon's seal, comfrey and Welsh poppy. Here you can visit the information room.

12 The house was demolished in 1939 and much of the ground floor has fallen into the cellars. The small building, now used as a Volunteers 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. Several different 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.

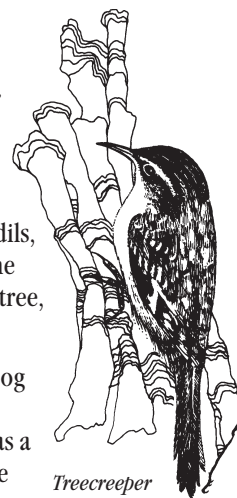
Now follow the path along the remains of the herbaceous border, beside the restored south wall of the walled garden. At the end of this path at post 18, for a shorter walk, missing the steep slopes of the daffodil bank, turn left. Otherwise turn right along the terrace.



Nuthatch

14 From the terrace (mostly restored from its previous dilapidated state) there was in Ellen Willmott's day a clearer view of the lakes at the bottom of the slope than there is now. Follow the higher or lower path here and continue down the slope, which affords a good view of the daffodil bank.

15 Bluebells can be seen on both sides of the path and then a very large turkey oak. 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.



Treecreeper

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, the rail on which the boats were moored can still be seen.

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. St Paul's Cathedral, the London Eye, the Shard, Canary Wharf and the O2 Arena can all be seen. As you walk on, note on your left the partially restored summer house and the holm oaks.



Badger

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. Just before the bridge a spur path leads to a hide overlooking South Pond. Alongside this path in late spring, 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 and this completes the circular tour of the reserve.

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Trail Guide to the nature reserve



Warley Place

Brentwood CM13 3HU

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 of the old garden show how a once carefully tended area 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.

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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.

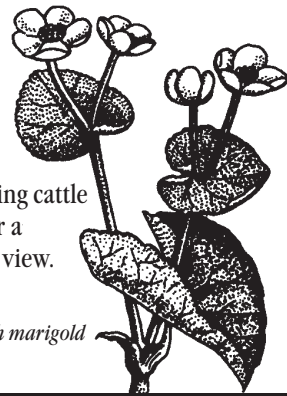
Please keep to the footpaths, including the path across the East Meadow, and follow the marked trail. The botanically rich East and West Meadows are leased to a local farmer for grazing in summer.

1 The drive from the gate to the car park borders the East Meadow. This is one of the few sites in Britain where the early English crocus grows naturally. On the left is South Lodge, not now part of the reserve but where Ellen Willmott's skilful alpine gardener lived for thirty of his forty years' employment with her.

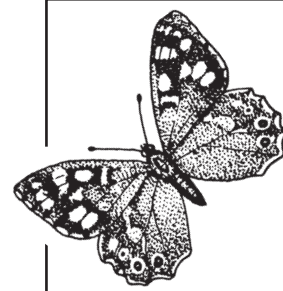
2 The South Pond is all that remains of the medieval water point for Great Warley village. The main coloniser is common reed, but yellow flag and marsh marigold are among other water plants. The path from the car park across the meadows to the gates and on through the reserve was the drive to the house and before that the main road from Great Warley to Brentwood. The road was moved to its present position in 1866.

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 East Meadow. The ditch and wall kept grazing cattle out of the garden without the need for a hedge, which would have blocked the view.

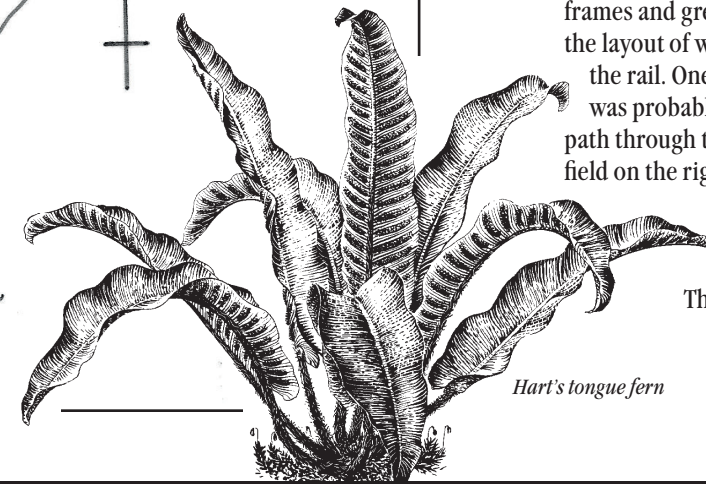
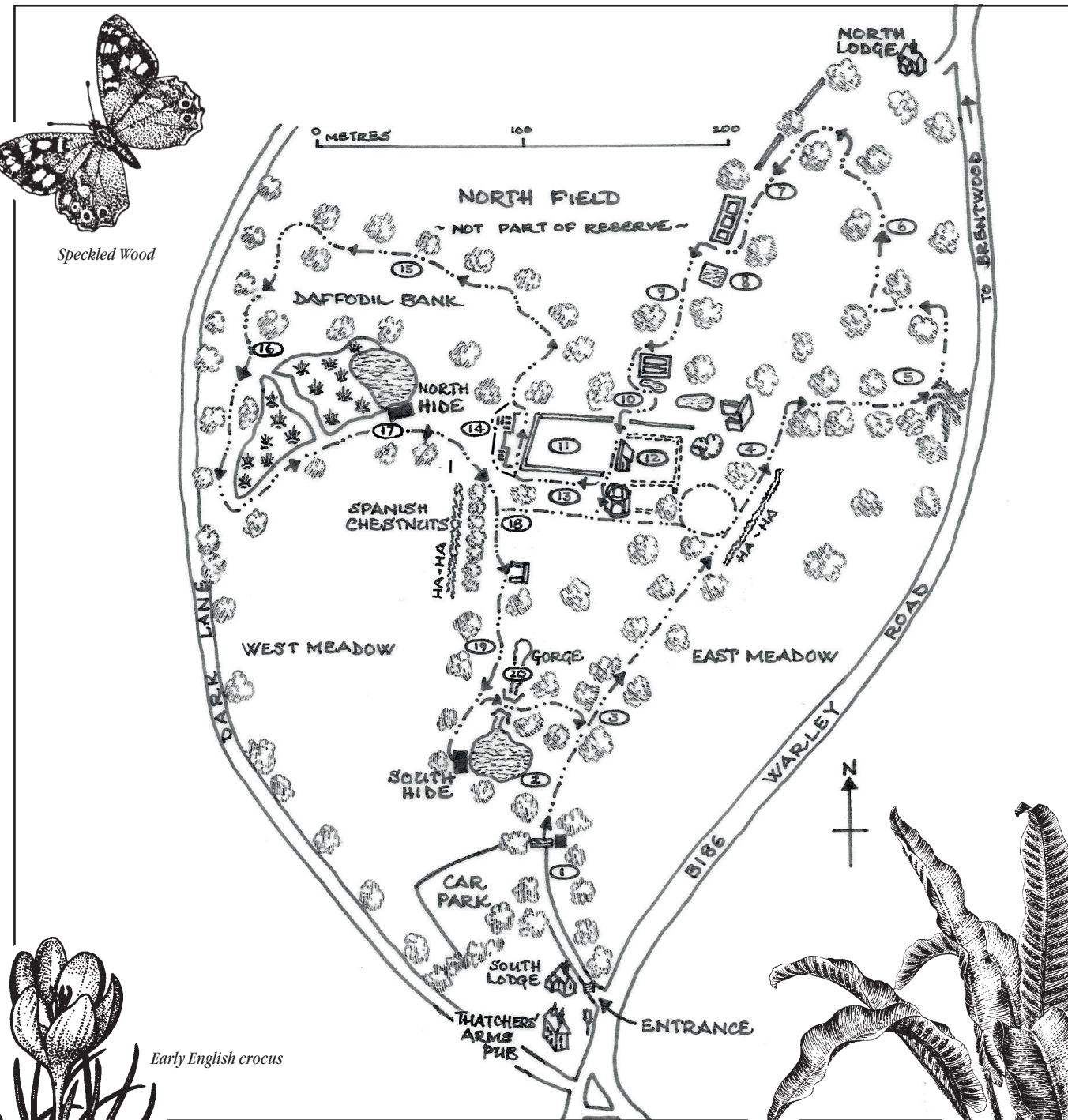
Marsh marigold



Early English crocus



Speckled Wood



Hart's tongue fern

4 Notice the remains of the coach house on the left. There is a barrier across the old drive here. Take the path up the slope, and notice the old rockery, with its winding sunken paths, on both sides of you.

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. 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 This area was at one time overrun with bramble and bamboo, but our hard-working volunteers now manage to keep them in check. The two Trees of Heaven growing each side of the path here are descendents of a huge old tree that once grew among the bamboo. 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.

This field was part of Ellen Willmott's estate.



Great-spotted Woodpecker