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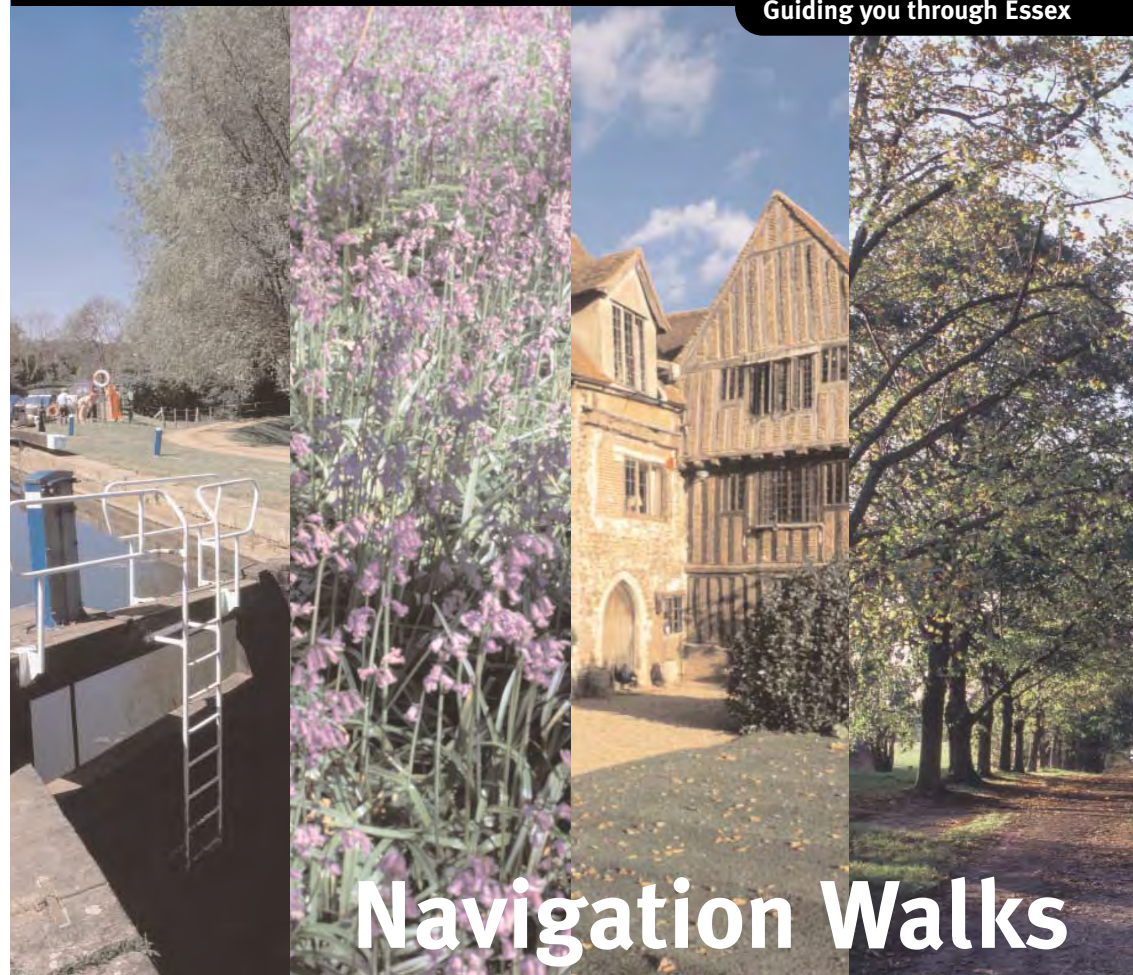
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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

DSO4 436



Navigation Walks

Along and around the Chelmer and Blackwater



Essex County Council

Ricketts
Lock

Langford Cut
River Blackwater

Beeleigh
Lock

Beeleigh and Ulting walk

see maps on pages 40-43

circular walk five

A feast of features awaits you in this walk, beginning at the Museum of Power with its original steam driven pumps. Both the building and the engines are now Scheduled Ancient Monuments. Open to the public every day except Monday and run by volunteers. You have the chance to admire the magnificent steam engines that pumped the water supply to Southend-on-Sea from the River Blackwater. The work of the museum involves exhibitions and demonstrations of all types of power and movement. The museum is always looking for volunteers for restoration and general help. You may park there if you are walking, but check first with the staff.

The beautiful Beeleigh Falls are one of the best kept secrets of Essex.



Langford steam pumps

The weir system controls the point where the Rivers Chelmer and Blackwater meet the sea. Below the weirs the river is tidal and the brackish water provides a valuable reed bed habitat. Above the weir the fresh water is perfect for Kingfishers who can often be seen in the area.



Beeleigh Falls in flood

The remains of Beeleigh mill can be seen next to Beeleigh Falls House. In 1875 the five-storey building was destroyed in a fire that could be seen from Chelmsford and Colchester. The flow of the Chelmer ran underneath the mill in those days as barges with grain pulled up to unload their cargo. The milling gear, Wentworth steam engine and 'Elephant' boiler are still intact. Viewing details can be found at the nearby museum. The lovely Beeleigh Falls House with its wrought iron veranda conjures up images of a more genteel age.

It is a worthwhile detour to catch a glimpse of the 13th century Beeleigh Abbey, home of the late Christina Foyle of the world renowned Foyles Bookshop. The Abbey was founded in 1180 although most of the remains are 13th century. The Abbey is not currently open to the public but can be viewed from the footpath.



Beeleigh Abbey

Follow the gentle landscape of the Chelmer through fields and woodlands to Hoe Mill Bridge taking time to watch the activity at the lock.



Ulting Church

Ulting Church is set exquisitely on the bank of the navigation. Built in the 13th century the little church was restored in 1873. Only accessible on foot from the village, this is a Grade II listed building.

The extensive restoration of the church occurred in a period of ecclesiastical and spiritual revival inspired by the romantic movement. During this time many new churches were built imitating the Gothic style and many original examples benefited from renewed interest.

You could be forgiven for passing by the little gravestones in this churchyard when taking in the beauty of the surroundings. Weathered and almost lost are a few touching poems of remembrance from around 1800.

*She that lies here we hope at rest,
With her infant at her brest,
A loving wife and mother dear,
Such was she that lieth here*

*Husband and children be content,
for unto you I was but lent,
My debt is paid my grave to see,
Wait but a while and you'll follow me.*

*A daughter dear lies sleeping here,
To keep us fresh in mind,
For die we must and turn to dust,
And leave this world behind.*



Ulting Church graveyard

Notice the little carved mouse on the lychgate and the ornate cast ironwork on the grave of John Sampson Piggott (died 1877 aged 31). His family were major contributors to the restoration of the church.



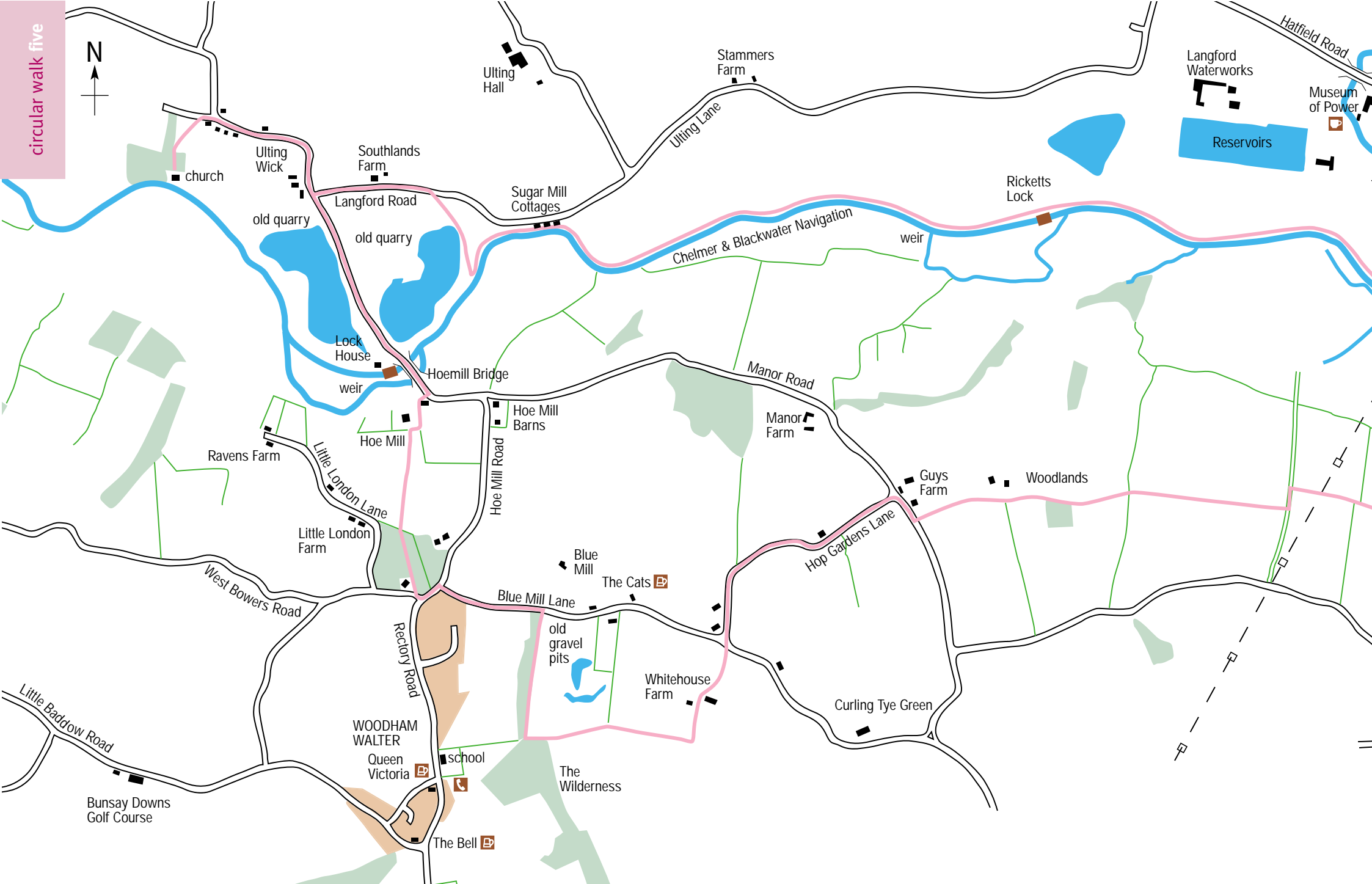
Ulting Church lychgate

Four little houses known as Sugar Baker's Cottages nestle close to the water by the old pipeline across the river. Nothing remains today except the name, but in 1832 it was the site of a courageous attempt to begin a new industry by producing sugar from sugar beet.

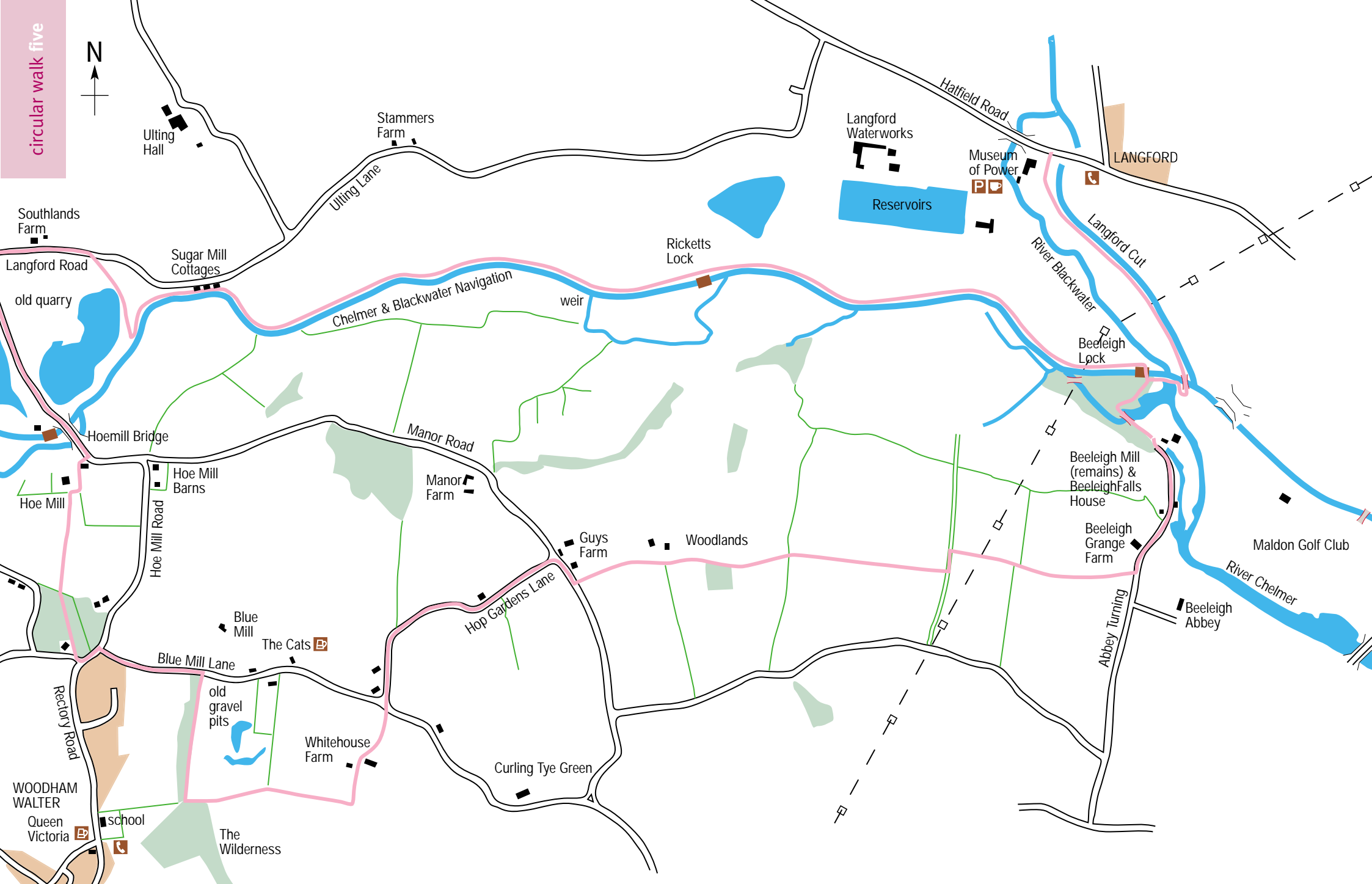
In the 1800s all of Britain's sugar came from the West Indian colonies and slavery was the cornerstone of the West Indian sugar trade. Robert Marriage, a devout Quaker, attempted to develop the new process, not in competition with the cane industry but in opposition to slavery. Complainants convinced Parliament that the new process could destabilise the social order and it was heavily taxed, which sadly contributed to its failure. Ironically in less than 200 years the majority of the UK sugar supply comes from East Anglian sugar beet.



Ulting Wick Bridge



Beeleigh and Ulting walk



Beeleigh and Ulting walk continued