1. If you have parked in Top Road, walk to the main street running through the village (Rectory Road) and turn left. After 80 yards (having passed the village stores and primary school), turn right onto the signed footpath. On entering a wooded area, ignore the footpath going right. In 10 yards, after crossing a footbridge, turn left onto a footpath. Eventually, this footpath will reach a lane (Blue Mill Lane); turn right and walk along the lane. 300 yards down the lane, you will pass the Cats pub; turn left onto the footpath for 200 yards after the pub. After another 50 yards, the footpath turns right to follow the edge of a field. After 250 yards, the path reaches another lane (Hop Gardens Lane) by some cottages; turn left along the lane.

2. After 1/3 mile, you reach a T junction; turn right along Manor Road, passing Guy’s Farm. After 100 yards, turn left onto a footpath (in a gap in the high hedge) and take the path across a field. After passing Woodlands House, then skirting a wooded area and crossing two fields (the path is generally going in an easterly direction), you will reach a field edge where the path meets a track. Turn left here, then after 60 yards, the footpath turns right into a field; take this well-defined path which heads through the middle of the field. After nearly 200 yards, the path enters another field. Follow the path until it reaches a lane (Abbey Turning).

3. The walk turns left here; however, a short detour to the right into the next lane on your left brings you to the front entrance of Beeleigh Abbey, originally a 12th century monastery. Continuing on the walk, the lane heads past Beeleigh Grange Farm, Kingfisher Cottage and Beeleigh Falls House. Once past Beeleigh Falls House, look out for the kissing gate ahead of you. Go through this and head for Beeleigh Falls. This elaborate system of weirs controls the point where the rivers Chelmer and Blackwater meet the sea. Cross the long wooden footbridge, then follow the path around the edge of the weir. On reaching the path by the navigation, cross the footbridge by Beeleigh Lock and then turn left here to follow the navigation footpath for 2 miles. You will pass Ricketts Lock and Sugar Mill Cottages along the way.

4. 350 yards after Sugar Mill Cottages, you will see a footpath heading away from the navigation. Follow this path away from the navigation. This becomes a grassy track and soon skirts around the edge of a lake (once a quarry). 250 yards after leaving the navigation towpath, there is a fork in the track. Look to your right (over to the line of trees and heading away from the lake); 40 yards away, you should see a yellow footpath marker and a written notice saying ‘public footpath’. Head for these signs and follow the path into the trees. Shortly after crossing a footbridge, you will reach a lane (Ulting Lane). Cross over the lane, then follow the path opposite (to the right of the entrance to the house called “The Paddock”). After 300 yards the path comes to the left-hand corner of a field; there is a junction of paths here. Cross the footbridge, then take the footpath to your left.

Follow the ill-defined path which zigzags around the field edge, until you reach the point where power lines head across the field. Cross the field, heading for a gap in the fence just to the right of the power lines. After going across the section of lowered fence, turn left on the track, going around the green metal gate to reach a road. Turn right onto this road and go through the hamlet of Utling, ignoring the lane which leads to the church. After nearly 1/3 mile, where the main road takes a left and right bend, take the Bumfords Lane off to the left. Follow this lane for 1/2 mile, then turn left onto the footpath where Bumfords takes a sharp right bend towards Cardfield’s Farm, this footpath heads back towards the navigation. Cross the footbridge which spans the navigation, turning left onto the towpath. Continue for 1 1/4 miles, passing Rushes Lock and Utling Church. When you reach the line of moored boats at the end of weir for Hoe Mill Lock, cross the footbridge and continue on the towpath to reach Hoe Mill House. Go through the metal kissing gate and turn right along the road.

**BOTH ROUTES**

5. 100 yards after the bridge over the navigation (where the road bends sharply to the left), turn right onto the gravel track leading up to Hoe Mill House. Take the footpath to the left just before the main gates to the house. The path zigzags around the grounds of Hoe Mill House, then heads southwards along the left-hand edge of a large field. At the far left-hand corner of the field, go over the stile and turn right. After 15 yards, turn left (ignoring a path which goes straight ahead) along the footpath between fields. After 200 yards, and after crossing another stile, the path comes to a lane (West Bowers Road). Turn left up to the junction with Rectory Road; turn right here to head back towards Woodham Walter. There is a footpath on the left-hand side of the road all the way back into the village. After passing the school you will see the “Queen Victoria” pub and Top Road on your right, where you started the walk.
This very attractive walk provides a good opportunity to sample some of the delights of the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation, such as the scenic Beeleigh Falls and Hoe Mill Lock. The full version of this walk allows you to pass the beautifully situated 13th century church at Ulting.