

FOREST FIELDS HISTORIC TRAIL



A historical circular walk exploring the area known as Forest Fields and The Forest Recreation Ground.

Walk No 16

Cover images l-r, Foxhall Business Centre 'superior class villa', Forest Fields Primary School, Madni Masjid Mosque, View from Forest Recreation Ground, Norris Alms Houses

ABOUT THE TRAIL

Situated to the North of Nottingham, within walking distance of the city centre via the main Mansfield Road (A60). A historical walking trail consisting of two distinct halves the Forest Recreation Area and Cemetery, and the late Victorian urban development to the north of Gregory Boulevard, known as Forest Fields. Surprisingly the whole area is almost devoid of trees, in spite of its name. The recreation ground was the home of Nottingham Races and Nottingham Forest F.C. and is still a most popular leisure area. Forest Fields encompasses an area which was known as the "Forest Ville" estate in 1882 when it was sold by the Gregory family to Thomas Isaac Birkin, a local lace manufacturer. Birkin received planning permission to develop the land into a residential area. He also named three of the area's streets after his children: Stanley Road (Thomas Stanley), Russell Road (Alexander Russell) and Leslie Road (Richard Leslie). The Trail reveals a wealth of interesting background concerning architecture, commerce, and a taste of Victorian attitudes. The link with the Lace Industry has a strong trace throughout the Trail. The Trail begins at the Djanogly City Academy and at a leisurely stroll will take about one hour to two hours to complete.

THE FACTS

Area	Forest Recreation Ground and surrounding streets
Distance	c 2 miles (3.2km)
Duration	c 1 – 2 hours
Maps	As leaflet, street map or OS Explorer 1:25000 Map 260
Travel Information	Tram and bus services to The Forest Recreation Ground (see www.nctx.co.uk and www.traveleastmidlands.co.uk)
Parking	Some parking on nearby streets. Check any parking restrictions/signage for parking terms.
Terrain	Pavements, foot paths, parks, some gentle slopes, step free. Suitable for wheelchairs and mobility scooters
Start/ Finish	Djanogly City Academy, 11-14, Centre, Gregory Boulevard, Nottingham NG7 6ND
Refreshments	Shops on route, Café & toilets in Forest Recreation Ground Pavilion subject to opening times.
Shorter Walk option	This trail can be completed as two separate walks.

Produced by the Nottingham Local Access Forum with the support of Nottingham City Council. June 2023

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THE ROUTE

1. The Djanogly City Academy opened in 2003 on the former site of the Manning School for Girls (shown in the archive picture), which was a sister school of High Pavement Boys Grammar School. Constructed in 1931 the building later became the Forest Comprehensive School in 1982, closing in 2002. The new building is named after the Djanogly family who contributed to the founding of many venues in their home town of Nottingham.



2. Continue along Gregory Boulevard, crossing Leslie Road and passing Val Roberts House, home of Framework (housing charity). Cross Premier Road and look at the building on the corner housing the Foxhall Business Centre. It was built in the mid 1880's as a 'superior class villa' and was designed by Gilbert J. Doughty for a local lace manufacturer, Joseph Billyeald.

3. Continue along Gregory Boulevard and turn left and walk up Foxhall Road. On the corner is another impressive villa, now also part of the Foxhall Business Centre. Notice the exterior terracotta decorations. On the opposite corner is 'The Ridge,' a former residence for students of Nottingham Polytechnic which is now apartments. Its corner turret was well sited for observing the horse racing and recreation ground.



4. Buildings on Foxhall Road, within 500 feet of Gregory Boulevard had to be purely residential. Depending on their proximity to Gregory Boulevard, they could be built as detached, semi-detached or blocks of four houses. They were originally priced from £1000 to £200 each. Birkin was not to allow "the trade of a Tripe Boiler, Fell Monger, Soap Boiler, Starch Manufacturer, Bone Grinder, Slaughterer of cattle or any noisome, noxious or offensive trade or occupation."

5. Numbers 65-95 were designed in 1901 by a famous local architect, **Watson Fothergill**. He was born in 1841 in Mansfield and was the son of a lace merchant. He planned this terrace of sixteen houses for a Mr. Willatt. They are typical of Fothergill's style, having red-orange Nottingham bricks with blue-black courses and interesting roof features.



6. At the junction with the shops turn right and walk along Berridge Road East. Notice the individual chimney stacks and wrought iron work at roof level on the houses on the left of the road.



7. At the corner of Berridge Road East and Sherwood Rise are the Norris Alms Houses, another very interesting building designed by Watson Fothergill. It was erected in 1893 as 8 alms houses for use by upper class educated ladies, over sixty years of age and of "reduced circumstances." The work was commissioned by a Miss Mary S. Norris (1827-1904) in memory of her brother,



John Smith Norris. The following features are of a particular interest: A wooden bell cote below a terracotta dragon; a golden cockerel on the weather vane; the stone plaque commemorating the erection of the building; the six overhanging gables; the ornate chimneys; the sundial in the front garden and the foundation stone depicting Watson Fothergill's name.



8. Having turned left into Sherwood Rise notice the Victorian letter-box set into the wall opposite in front of the First Enterprise building.

9. From Sherwood Rise, turn left into Alberta Terrace and notice Alexandra Villas. Locate a circular plaque between the first and second storey of a late Victorian terraced villa.



10. Further along the street notice the Madni Masjid Mosque on the right-hand side. This was originally built as a Primitive Methodist Church. The building later became Sherwood Rise Methodist Church and is now a mosque, reflecting the continually changing needs of the community.



11. Turning right up Foxhall Road and left along Beech Avenue you will see various individual styles and ages of buildings. We would draw your attention to the large Victorian semis facing you at the end of Albany Road and Hedley Street.

12. Proceed down Hedley Street until you reach Hedley Villas park. This



area is a green respite from the redbrick family homes which surround it. The park is the home of the annual Stuff of Life Festival which honours the heritage of three factories in the vicinity with a bread competition. Another feature is the urban art of John Newling reading "...know you are loved..." which looks over the park.

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13. Retrace your steps back to Beech Avenue and turn right. Notice an early Victorian detached house, 80 Beech Avenue which stands proudly in its own grounds opposite the factory.

14. The new housing complex was built on the site of St. Augustine's Infant School, New Basford, which closed in 1987.



15. Opposite the new houses is the famous **Guy Birkin** factory, one of the oldest lace manufacturing firms in the world. Now derelict and fire damaged the building known as the

Maville Works dates from 1896 and temporarily served as the Infirm Department of Nottingham Union Workhouse. The large windows were purpose built to enable plenty of light to enter the working area. According to insurance plans of the 1890's the various smaller buildings adjoining were part of Newball and Mason Manufacturing Druggists. There are plans to convert the building into flats.

16. At the junction for Mount Street look right and you will see the prominent Papyrus Works which were formerly the warehouse and machine rooms of Birkin's lace factory. The building directly opposite the end of Beech Avenue was originally the dye house, now called Studio House it is an apartment complex.





Adjoining directly behind may be glimpsed the original factory founded by Richard Birkin in 1827. The building around the corner on Gladstone Street was also part of the complex. On a number of occasions the firm has been visited by royalty. In June 1914, by King George V and Queen Mary, in 1923 by Edward, Prince of Wales and in

1955 when H. M. Queen Elizabeth II and H. R. H. The Duke of Edinburgh toured the factory.

17. As you turn left down Mount Street away from the complex of factories, look out for the building with blue windows on the corner of Stanley Road. It was built in 1888 as Stanley Road Infant School and was designed by a notable Nottingham architect, T. C. Hine. From 1935 - 1965 the premises were the Stanley Road Boys School. Afterwards it was part of the High Pavement Boys' School until 1983 when it became a Community Centre. Turn right onto Gladstone Street.



18. Turning left onto Bradgate Road, you approach Forest Fields Primary School. Look across the school's playground and locate a tall impressive building with distinctive pinnacle towers. This was originally the High Pavement School built in 1895 and designed by Albert Nelson Bromley to replace the previous foundation of 1788. This building became a Boys' Grammar School in



1931, coinciding with the opening of the Manning Girls' School. Eventually the High Pavement School moved to Bestwood in the 1950's and this building became Forest Fields Grammar School, which in turn moved to the site of the Manning School in 1983, becoming Forest Comprehensive.

19. Turn right onto Berridge Road. As no shops or business premises were allowed in the original plans, all shops date from the turn of the century. According to Wright's Directory, 1910-1911, along Berridge Road Central there were seven Grocers, four Butchers, two Fish Friers, two Boot Repairers, a Baker, a Confectioner, Tobacconist, Draper, Hairdresser, Cycle Repairer, Beer Retailer and Pawnbroker.

20. Turn left onto Burford Road and note the style of houses. In 1884 Birkin sold a parcel of land to John Bugg, a Nottingham Builder. Bugg was permitted to build only private detached houses costing at least £700 or semi-detached at £1,200 per pair. No house was to be built within ten feet of another. Another builder, Henry John Osborne was allowed to put up twenty-four



houses and three pairs of villas. His work is in the form of three storeyed semis or houses in blocks of four. Notice the small front gardens of these houses with their Bulwell stone walls; the absence of the original iron railing on many garden walls; the continuous porches with original wooden supports and the intricate stone decorations at the gateways.



21. At the end of Burford Road is the wide thoroughfare of Gregory Boulevard. It was completed in 1883 and it takes its name from the Gregory family, former owners of the surrounding area. Gregory Boulevard is sixty feet wide and one mile in length. It connects the old Nottingham/Mansfield turnpike (Mansfield Road) and the Nottingham/Newhaven turnpike (Alfreton Road).

22. Turn left along Gregory Boulevard crossing Russell Road. As you return to the start point in front of Djanogly City Academy you can either end the walk here or use the next pedestrian crossing to cross Gregory Boulevard and continue.

23. From the pedestrian crossing turn right, then take the entrance on the left into Forest Recreation Ground. The recreation ground is the oldest of its type in the city and covers 27.5 hectares north of the city centre. Horse Racing was held here over two centuries until 1890, when the races moved to Colwick. It was on the Recreation Ground that Nottingham Forest F. C. played its first matches. The Forest Sports Zone with football pitches is located near the playground. Look up at the ridge enclosing the Forest Site (Forest Road East). Along this ridge stood a row of thirteen windmills c.1800. The 'Forest' remains a centre for leisure activity. The annual Goose Fair held during the first weekend in October moved to the 'Forest' in 1927 from its previous position in the Market Square.

Proceed straight ahead on the paved path towards the tree lined path.

Crossing the junction take the paved path heading diagonally uphill to the left, keeping the playground to your left towards Forest Road East. Take a moment to look back at the Birkin's 'Forest Ville.' You will see the Birkin Lace Factories on the skyline, the rows of terraced houses to the left, Forest Fields Primary School building and Djanogly City Academy bordering Gregory Boulevard.



24. At the top, note the information board, then bear left to follow the tree lined path in an easterly direction and you will see the Church (Rock) Cemetery on your right. It covers thirteen acres, made up of 4 acres allotted by the Inclosure act and a further 9 acres which was purchased for this use in 1855. The cemetery contains many "stately monuments recording the names and works of some of Nottingham's noblest sons and daughters" e.g Watson Fothergill (1925) and the Rt. Hon. A. J. Mundella (1897). The cemetery entrance is on the corner of Mansfield Road and Forest Road East.

Of particular interest is the network of caves within the cemetery boundaries and the circular depression on the northern perimeter visible from the footpath. This is called St. Ann's Valley but is also referred to as the 'punch bowl' or 'bull ring.'

Thousands of tons of earth were removed from here to form mounds elsewhere
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in the cemetery. Over a thousand vaults or brick lined graves were excavated from the Bunter sandstone strata, the deepest vault being twenty-six feet. In all there are over thirteen thousand graves in the cemetery and since 1856 over forty-three thousand people have been buried there.



As you walk along this path look out for circular indents which represent Windmills. The Windmills stood along the ridge and not down this slope. The 1845 Inclosure Act meant the mills had to be removed. Mostly built in the 19th



century with some 18th century they would have been wooden post mills the earliest type of European windmill where the whole body of the mill was mounted on a single vertical post, around which the mill turned so that the sails faced the wind. Staveley and Wood's map of 1830 and Sanderson's map of 1835 shows the line of mills along the hill, with thirteen windmills drawn.

25. Having passed the cemetery you will now see the [Forest Recreation Ground Community Garden](#) on your right.

26. In front of you stands the Forest Lodge adjacent to Mansfield Road. This was built in 1857 for the keeper of the grounds of the Forest Site and the race course. The architect was the Borough Surveyor, Henry Moses Wood. At the time of its erection, the Lodge caused quite a stir: "...then to view Moses Wood's latest absurdity. It is a cruciform



Grecian Temple built of brick and will be all columns and stucco. The town council ought to be ashamed of spending the town's money in such a manner."- Samuel Collison (1812-1890) writing in 1857. The Lodge was last occupied by a superintendent of the Forest Site in 1969. Having seen the Lodge, enjoy a retrospective view of Forest Fields itself in the distance.

27. Head over to the green Inclosure Oak information board. In 1851 a number of people from the Nottingham Corporation visited the Great Exhibition and Windsor Great Park and returned with some acorns from the park. The Oak tree marked with the plaque was planted by Edmund Patchitt in 1865 to commemorate the 1845 Inclosure Act was grown from one of these acorns. The second Oak tree to the right of this tree was planted by Kate Ashbrook of the O.S.S. in 2015 to celebrate these unique parks was grown from an acorn from the Major Oak in Sherwood Forest.



28. From the Inclosure Oak head down the main tree lined walkway with its elegant lamp posts to the Forest Pavilion. This beautiful building at the centre of the Forest contains sports changing rooms, a café and toilets.

The trail ends here, to return to the start point follow the path across the Forest Recreation Ground to return to Djanogly City Academy.

For more information about the Inclosure Act and walk which the Forest Recreation Ground is part of see the walk leaflet [here](#).



Watson Fothergill was born in 1841 in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire. His work dates from 1863 to around 1912 and in that time he mainly worked in and around Nottingham. In 1892 he switched his name around by deed poll, in order to carry on his mother's family name. He received a large inheritance from his father-in-law, Samuel Hage, one of the founding partners in Mansfield Brewery, and being comfortably off never saw the need to venture much beyond the county boundaries. He was well connected locally with a half-brother on the Mansfield Improvements Commission and the influential Brunts' Charity, which led to several building projects. The charity is still a going concern, with Almshouses in the Mansfield area. For more information visit the website <https://www.watsonfothergill.co.uk/>



The **Guy Birkin** lace business was founded in 1825, by the late Mr. Richard Birkin. After the retirement in 1856 of the Founder, his sons jointly carried on the concern until 1862, in which year Mr. Richard Birkin junior retired. **Mr. T. I. Birkin** (pictured) was then appointed as head of affairs. The year 1869 is a memorable one in the firm's annals, for it was then that the manufacture of lace curtains was entered upon at the purpose built Maville Works with 42 lace curtain machines in operation.

Acknowledgements and further reading:

This information in trail is based on the original "Forest Fields Trail" leaflet published by Nottinghamshire County Council, 1990.

Pictures taken by Nigel Sarsfield & Liz Cordle Local Access Forum. Archive Pictures, Nottingham City Council/Picture the Past

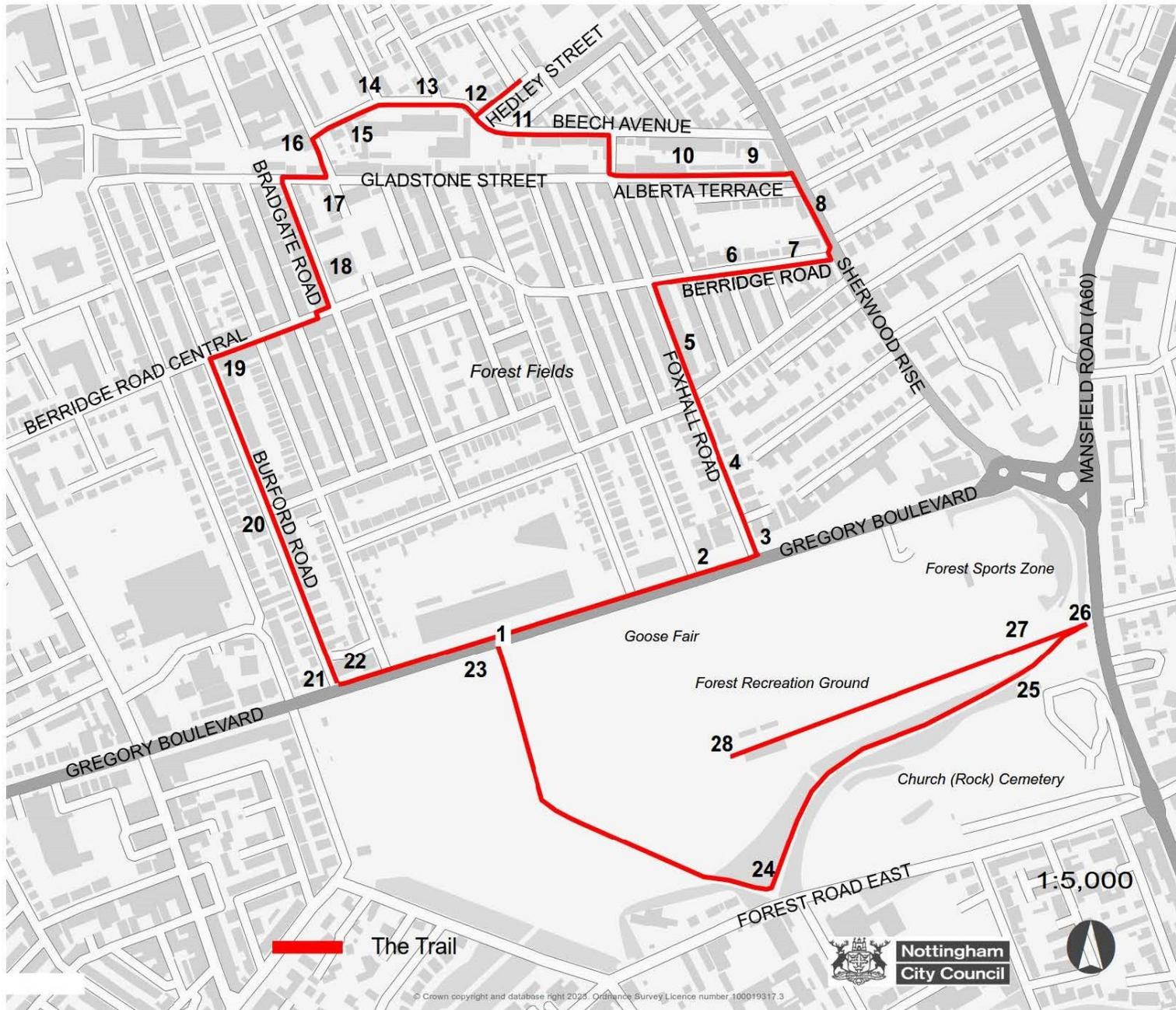
"The Growth of an inner urban housing development: Forest Fields, Nottingham, 1883-1914." Copyright Christopher Weir and the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire from VOL. LXXXIX of the transactions of the Thoroton Society, 1985.

"The Church (Rock) Cemetery" by Robert Peck, Cemetery Superintendent from the Park Residents Association Magazine, 1988.

"Victorian Nottingham - A study in pictures" VOL 10 by R. Iliffe and W. Baguley.

"Growing up in Forest Fields" ed. Ian McHugh and Pauline Harris, Forest Fields Neighbourhood Centre.

Forest Recreation Ground Heritage Trail, Nottingham City Council
Inclosure: 1845-1865 of Nottinghamshire's Fields by June Perry



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