

Walk No 9: The Meadows.

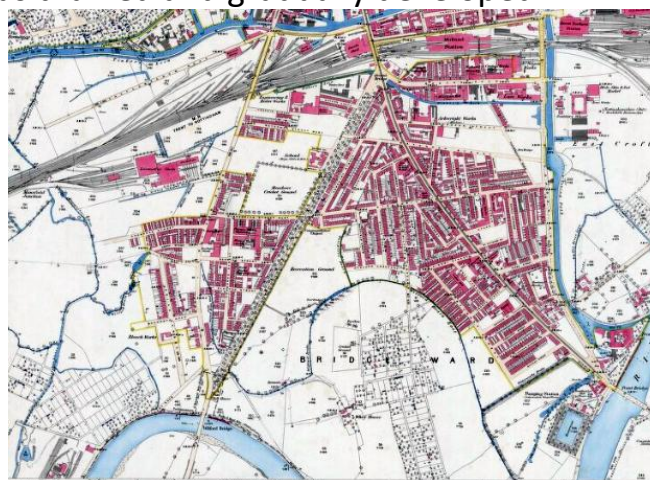
Walk/Photos taken 30th June & 7th July 2020

Much of this walk description is about the great changes that have occurred in the relatively short history (c160 years) of The Meadows as an urban area, impacted by rapid growth from open space to dense housing, dominant railway infrastructure and, later, partial demolition and rebuild. So, before we embark on the walk, let us go back to the early C19th when the Meadows was a very different place.



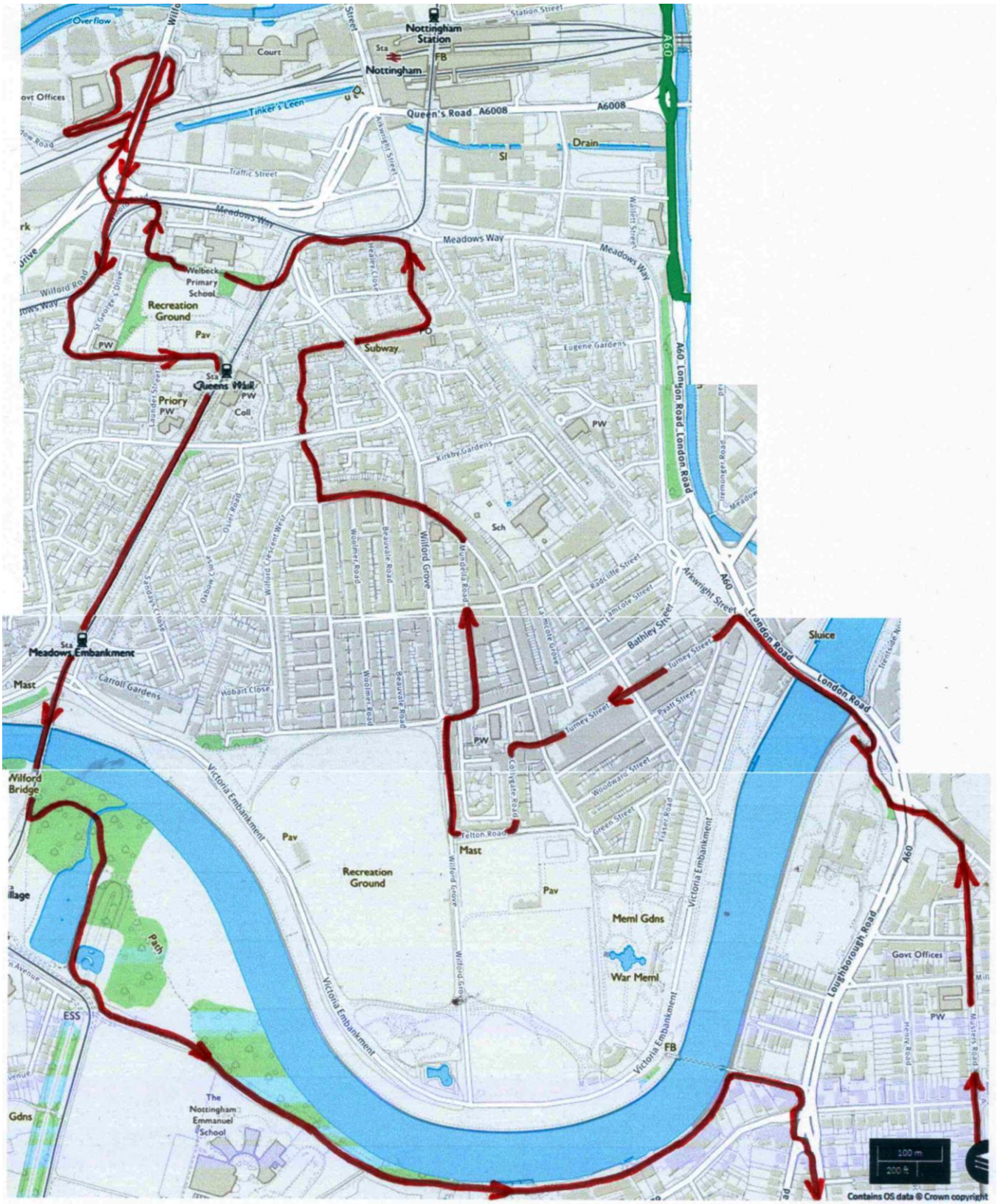
This old map (1832) shows that, what is now The Meadows was indeed that – meadows and wetland/floodplain. As mentioned in Walk No 5, part of Wilford Parish was north of the Trent, including the area of The Meadows below the red line which was anciently called Wilford Pasture. The northern meadow was known as the King's Meadow due to it having been owned by Nottingham Castle. By the time of the map below (1880), the 'second industrialisation' was advancing and the railways were having a massive impact – lines and sidings dominating the top of the map. The need for housing became desperate as the population boomed, so the wetland was drained and gradually developed.

Terraced housing, public houses, factories, warehouses and public buildings such as libraries and baths were built. But, the southern part, separated by a dyke (which later became the route of Wilford Crescent), was still open land. Note that Queen's Walk is marked but the Great Central Railway (Great Central Main Line) had yet to be built.



By the early C20th (map of 1915) the urban Meadows had fully expanded with the Great Central Railway dominating the southern part adjacent to Queens Walk.

With this urban development history in mind, let us embark on the walk.



The walk is about 10km.

As usual, it starts on Musters Road – go down towards Trent Bridge but, before crossing it, go just onto the grass area to the left side of the bridge. The view across the Trent is of the Town Arms. This has had many names – Riverbank, Casa, Bridges, Aviary, and now Brewhouse & Kitchen – but was originally the Town Arms, built in 1869-71.



Below is a similar view across the Trent; this one is from 1863, painted by artist Thomas Cooper Moore (1827 - 1901). It shows the Town Arms with what was a flour mill (Trent Bridge Mills) to its left. On the right is the old bridge which, as noted in Walk 6, was built from 1156. The current Trent Bridge was built from 1868, five years after Moore's painting. (When the photo was taken, there were maintenance works on Trent Bridge)

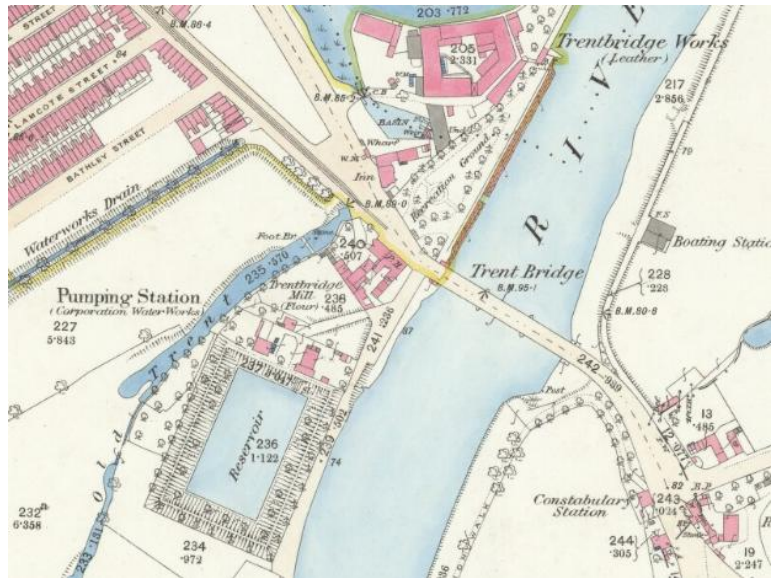


Cross Trent Bridge, admiring the view to the left.

On the other side, pause and look at the Town Arms (Brewhouse & Kitchen). On the pub's front wall there is the Arms of the Town of Nottingham (hence 'Town Arms'), which was described by the College of Arms in 1898 as "*Gules, issuant from the base a ragged cross couped vert between two ducal coronets in chief, and the lower limb of the cross enfiled with a like coronet*".



The Town Arms, flour mill and a corporation pumping station and reservoir are marked on this 1880 map. Behind these, about where Victoria Embankment road now is, there is a length of water labelled Old Trent which must have been a previous alignment of the river. Note also that there are no streets or houses shown south of Bathley Street, so before the building of Turney St, Pyatt St, Fraser Road, etc. Also before the Embankment itself, which was built in 1901 as a 1¼ mile long flood defence engineering works with a promenade and carriage-way. It is also worth noting that, across London Road, although the Turney Brothers leather works (see Walk 6) is shown, the building that still exists alongside London Road was not yet built.



Next beyond the Brewhouse & Kitchen are some of the first buildings on Victoria Embankment which date from the c1900s/1910s (now commercial premises)



The next building, on the other side of Turney Street, is the Embankment pub, a Grade II listed building. Designed by Albert Nelson Bromley, the architect behind some of the most distinctive Boots pharmacy buildings, it used to be a Boots dispensary; indeed it was opened by Jesse Boot in 1907 as 'Boots Store 2'.

In 1919 the Boots Social Club was formed on the same site and became so popular it soon expanded throughout the building and, following the closure of Boots Store 2 in 1979, used the whole site.

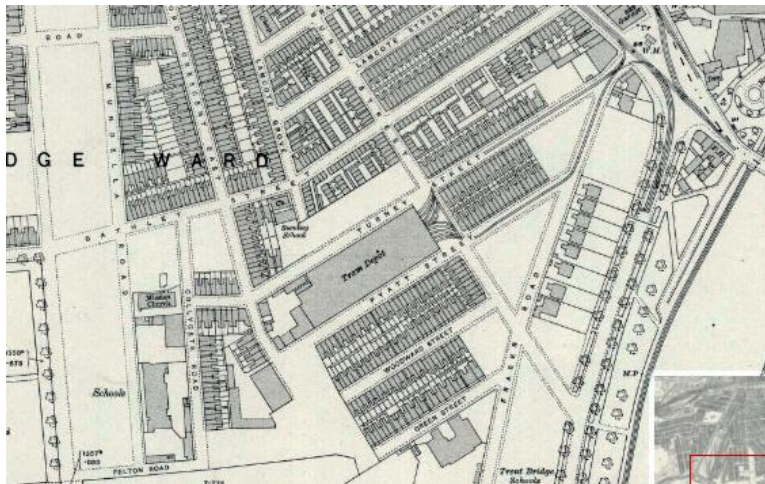
Castle Brewery took over the site in 2015 and have provided interesting history of the site. What was the shop now houses The Dispensary, a real ale and craft beer bar with a nod to the medicinal history of the site. Upstairs, Jesse Boot's office remains as it always has; a beautiful Arts and Crafts style wood-clad room with a gallery view of the main bar – it is said Jessie Boot would keep an eye on his employees' behaviour from here.

Jesse Boot (1850-1931) was born in Nottingham. His father, John Boot, had been an agricultural labourer in Radcliffe-on-Trent but due to ill health he became a purveyor of herbal medicines in Nottingham, helped by his wife Mary. After John's death, Jesse began

to assist his mother and by the age of twenty-one he became a partner and the business was known as 'Mary & Jesse Boot – Herbalists'. Jesse's ethos was to sell large quantities of stock as cheaply as possible and he also branched out into non-medicinal products. After Mary's retirement in the late 1870s, Jesse took sole charge of the business, expanding it first in Nottingham and then nationally. He and his wife Florence also took a keen interest in the welfare of their employees, providing works canteens where they could obtain food at reasonable prices and organising activities outside working hours. He was known for his philanthropic activities in Nottingham, such as giving £50,000 to the Nottingham General Hospital and donating land on which to establish Nottingham University. He also built the Dorothy Boot Homes alms-houses we saw on Walk 5 in Wilford. In 1920, Jesse Boot purchased a large area of land within the Embankment adjacent to the Trent and then bequeathed it to the citizens of Nottingham in perpetuity for recreational use and memorial. This included the memorial gardens, playing fields, war memorial (foundation stone laid by Prince of Wales 1923), bandstand (1937) and two sports pavilions, all of which survive today.

In 1909 Jesse Boot received a knighthood in recognition of his outstanding success and in 1928 he became a peer of the realm, assuming the title of Lord Trent.

As I am writing this, it has just been announced that Boots plans to make 4000 job redundancies, as part of action to mitigate the "significant impact" of Covid-19. The largest impact will be at its Nottingham HQ – not the positive outlook of the Jesse Boot years.



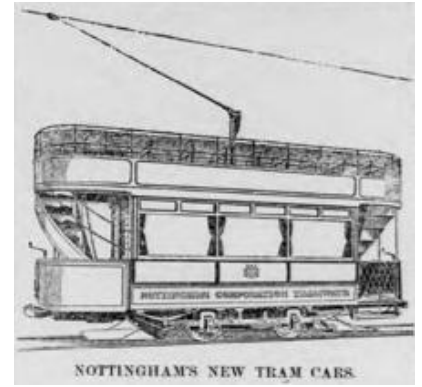
Leaving The Embankment pub, go down Turney Street, which is on the map by 1913. Note that there are black lines along the streets in the top right part of the map – these are tram lines and, along Turney Street to its junction with Bunbury St, they led to the tram depot, now a Nottingham City Transport bus depot.

Plans for tramways in the town of Nottingham started at least as early as 1870 and, in 1872, the Nottingham Tramways Company was established by several prominent business men. In 1875 it changed its name to Nottingham and District Tramways Company Limited and over the next few years plans for three routes, going north to Carrington, north-west to Basford and south to Trent Bridge, were proposed and powers gained for their construction. The southern route was from St Peter's Square, down Albert Street, Lister Gate and Carrington Street and then east along Station Street and south along Arkwright Street to London Rd at Trent Bridge. The tramway, using horse drawn cars, was formally opened on 17 September 1878.



Horse Tram outside St. Peter's Church

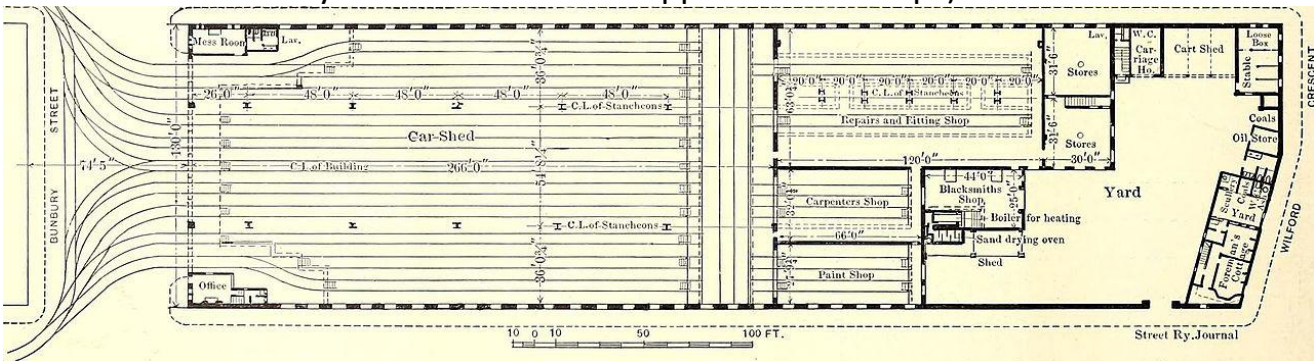
Tram Stables on Muskham Street – 1880 map



In 1897, Nottingham Corporation purchased the tramway and all vehicles were re-painted in maroon and cream with 'Nottingham Corporation Tramways' replacing the company name.

The system continued to grow and, in 1899, powers were obtained to construct and operate electric trams. The proposed new tram cars were shown to the public by Nottingham Evening Post on 17 October 1900 and the first electric trams ran between Sherwood and the Market Place on 1st January 1901.

In October 1901 the Trent Bridge route was electrified and construction of a new tram depot was started on the site of the old Nottingham Forest Football Club's Town Ground on Bathley Street (near its junction with Bunbury St and alongside what is now Turney St), where the last game played by Forest had been April 1898. (The Town Ground only existed for about 10 years and it does not appear on the maps).



Layout of the Bunbury Street depot



The tram sheds today – used by NCT buses

An additional tram shed was built on the opposite side of Turney Street in 1920.

The tram system eventually reached nearly 26 miles, with over 100 trams, but, in 1927, some routes started to be operated with trolleybuses (and a green and cream livery was adopted for all vehicles, replacing maroon and cream).

By 1935 the diesel bus had become the vehicle of choice, there were no more conversions from tram to trolleybus and the last tram ran on 6th September 1936.

Nottingham City Transport have continued to use the depot and, in August 2019, they wanted to "modernise" facilities and planned to demolish two buildings at the rear of the depot. Heritage concerns about this resulted in the building being granted Grade II Listing in January this year, so will not be demolished.

Continue to walk down Turney Street to its junction with Collygate Road.

To the right is St Faith's Church. The church was opened on 16 October 1915 by the Bishop of Southwell. It remained an Anglican parish church until 1981. The building was then adopted by an Elim Pentecostal Church and later it was taken over by the Full Gospel Revival Church.



Go the other way (turning left out of Turney St) along Collygate Rd and note the building on the right. It is now the Meadows Muslim Centre but used to be part of the Mundella School buildings



Mundella Higher Grade School & School of Science, later becoming Mundella Grammar School, 'built to meet the growing and advanced educational needs of the City of Nottingham', was a splendid Victorian building opened in 1899.



The date plaque on the school said 1897 but the construction of the school was delayed by floods.

The school's name came from Anthony John Mundella, the son of an Italian political refugee and an English mother. Born in 1825, he left school at the age of nine yet went on to become an important hosiery manufacturer and later Liberal MP for Sheffield. Mundella and Hines factory, built on Station St in 1851, was the first steam-powered factory in Nottingham. The building later became Boots main offices before they moved to Beeston in 1969.



Mundella School buildings were demolished in 1985.



The school pupils transferred to the Roland Green Comprehensive School in Wilford, which became the Wilford Meadows School, was later closed and then re-opened as the Nottingham Emmanuel School.



Walk to the end of Collygate Road, turn right and right again, thus around what was the Mundella site, now redeveloped as houses – River View and, appropriately, School Close.



The school opening plaque is mounted on a wall on River View

Continue up to Bathley Street, turn right and then left onto Mundella Road. The street is interesting because of the very different style of housing on each side.

The early housing in the Meadows was terraced, constructed mainly for those that worked on the railways and in the factories.



Much of it was basic 2-story terraced houses, as here on Allport Street, off Waterway Street.

But some were 3-story, as these, dating from the early 1900s, on the right hand side of Mundella Road »



On the left side of Mundella Road are semi-detached houses of an unusual design – 1920s or 30s (?)

There are a few more interesting buildings remaining from the older Meadows

Continue along Mundella Road and on the left, just after the Play Area is Mundella Works (Nottingham Paper Bag Co. Ltd). Possibly an old warehouse.



At Wilford Crescent turn left and at the next junction (Wilford Grove) is Meadows library, built in 1925 with a donation from the Carnegie Foundation. It is Grade II Listed.



Continue along Wilford Crescent East and note its crescent structure – not up to the Royal Crescent in Bath, but still quite distinctive.

Wilford Crescent (East and West) follows the line of a watercourse - the Wilford Drain - which remained uncovered until the area was developed in the late 1880s.

Another old warehouse, which is actually called “The Warehouse”, has 1897 carved on the front. It is now SB Modelmakers Ltd, specialists in architectural models.



At the junction with Woolmer Road there are examples of a common feature of areas of terraced housing – the end properties were once ‘corner shops’ serving the local population. Now converted to extra home space.



The next street on the left is Glapton Road and this is the last of the terraced streets in this area. Beyond is much newer housing, dating from after the late 1960s.

As this 1915 map shows, between here and Queens Walk, the whole area used to be occupied by railway lines, goods yards, engine sheds, sidings, etc – the Great Central Railway (Great Central Main Line - GCML) which was built in 1899.



The GCML was the last main line railway to be built in Britain during the Victorian period. It extended an existing Manchester - Sheffield line south via Nottingham, Leicester and Rugby to London Marylebone.

Its construction through Nottingham involved over 2km of tunnelling, under the city centre, north to Carrington, and almost 1.6 km of viaduct, from below High Pavement to the River Trent.

The site for Nottingham Victoria railway station required the demolition of 1,300 houses and 20 public houses. The route south crossed the Meadows, with a station at Arkwright Street, passed through the Bridgeway centre and, on a route roughly parallel to Queens Walk, 120m to the east, it went over the Trent just east of Wilford Toll Bridge.



Nottingham Victoria railway station in 1903

In the 1960s, the line was considered by Dr Beeching as an unnecessary duplication of other lines that served the same places, especially the Midland Main Line, and most of the route was closed between 1966 and 1969.

Most of the following photos are by Nigel Tout (<http://www.gcrleicester.info/html/nottingham>) during demolition of the line in 1975.



Bridge over Arkwright Street, looking north



Arkwright Street station (being demolished, the platforms already removed).



This 1938 map, and the previous photos, show how the railway would have dominated parts of the Meadows. The viaduct ran right next to the terraced streets.

The closure of the railway enabled housing to be built on land that was once the railway sidings, etc. (bottom left corner of the map) and it is this area of housing that starts beyond the terraced streets at the west end of Wilford Crescent West.



But DON'T go this way – take the alleyway to the right just before the junction; the railway would have been to the left of this photo.

Today there is absolutely no trace of any part of the Great Central Railway in the Meadows and all the housing on this next section of the walk has been built after its closure.

Indeed, in the 1970s, almost all the housing shown on the 1880 map in the introduction to this walk was deemed unsuitable by the council and was demolished to make way for the development of modern council housing.



Photo taken with a panorama camera (so with distorted perspective), looking east, of the viaduct which supported the railway. All of the terraced housing in this area was demolished as part of the large redevelopment.

The new development was based on the Radburn model of planning which consisted of segregating traffic and pedestrians by constructing cul-de-sacs, feeder roads and underpasses.

Some of this is evident as the walk continues under Robin Hood Way and alongside Houseman Gardens. (In the first half of the C20th the railway would have been above, on a viaduct, with terraced streets either side).

When the path reaches a T, turn right (Kirke White Walk) and then go under Sheriff's Way to the Bridgeway Shopping Centre, a significant part of the new Meadows.



Over the years major issues were identified with the layout of cul-de-sacs, etc.

Nottingham City Council recognised that *"the problems associated with the layout of the New Meadows Radburn style layout... contribute to the anti-social behaviour and crime in the area"* and plans were put forward to make changes, partly to be funded by central government. This involved removing some buildings, including blocks of four storey deck access maisonettes that were unpopular with residents and the police, and constructing new family sized housing (as noted along Arkwright Street on Walk No 6.) and also the removal of two underpasses.

In November 2010, the government announced that, as part of its austerity package, a £200 million grant to redevelop the neighbourhood was cancelled. However, the city council has continued with a more limited scheme.

On the left side of the Bridgeway Shopping Centre is a pub called the Poets Corner. This is a replacement for the nearby Victorian pub of the same name on Kirke White Street which was demolished in 1975, one of many pubs lost at that time.

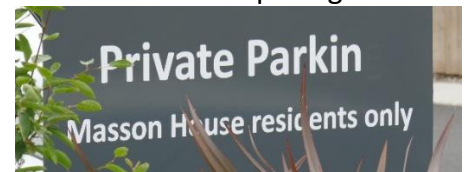


The original pub took its name, as did the street, from the poet, Henry Kirke White, who lived in Wilford (see Walk No 5)

Turn left after the pub along the path, passing one of the new buildings (Masson House, part of The Edge development).



Note the spelling!



The path comes out at Meadows Way – at about the position Arkwright St Station would have been, up on the GCML viaduct which crossed here on its way towards the bridge over Nottingham Midland Station (now the new tram bridge, in the distance on the right of the photo).

Turn left, but don't miss the tree trunk carved with 'Welcome to the Meadows' (will explain later), then continue along Meadows Way, following the NET tram route, and at the point where the Clifton tram route and the Beeston & Toton route separate, turn left into Queens Walk.

Queen's Walk follows an ancient pathway that ran from the River Trent ferry crossing at Wilford into the centre of Nottingham. In early times it crossed wet and boggy ground and its route was marked by white posts.



c1920

The path was laid out formally in 1850 and named Queen's Walk in commemoration of Queen Victoria's visit to Nottingham in 1843. In 1927, when the walkway was opened to traffic, the name was changed to Queen's Drive but reverted to its original name following the redevelopment of the area in the 1970s and 1980s.

The walk is characterised by its avenue of Lime trees and when this route was chosen for the NET Phase Two line to Clifton it was recognised that some trees would have to be felled. Those that were cut down have been given to the community for reuse and the Meadows Tree Project was formed. Twelve of the trees have been carved into 'Story Poles' that now line Queen's Walk (except the one near the Arkwright Walk/Meadows Way junction). The story pole carvers worked with over 200 people of all ages to create

these works of art, which are themed around the activities and communities past and present in the immediate neighbourhood. Other felled trees were given to other woodcarving projects, while replacement lime trees have been planted on Queen's Walk to maintain the avenue.

The walk passes many of the story poles, both at the northern end and then when the walk rejoins Queens Walk further south.

For more about the story poles, including a map of their locations, go to:

[www.thetram.net/Userfiles/PDFs/50067 NET%20STORYPOLES%206PP%20DL_3-7-15FINAL.pdf](http://www.thetram.net/Userfiles/PDFs/50067_NET%20STORYPOLES%206PP%20DL_3-7-15FINAL.pdf)

Near Arkwright
Walk/Meadows Way

11 poles are located along Queens Walk, from north to south

Welcome



Queen Victoria



Youth



Green



Sport



Friendship



Faith



Industry

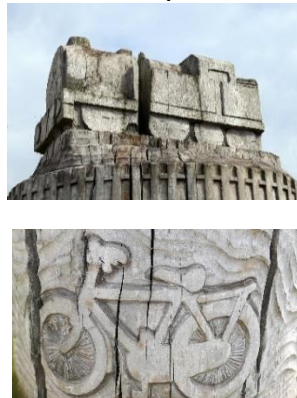


OK – my bias
here!

Old Meadows



Transport



Armed Forces



River



Go a short distance along Queens Walk and on the right is a primary school. This is the site of Queen's Walk Junior School, which was known in later years as Welbeck School. The original building (photo right) was demolished in 1971 and replaced with the modern Welbeck Primary School.



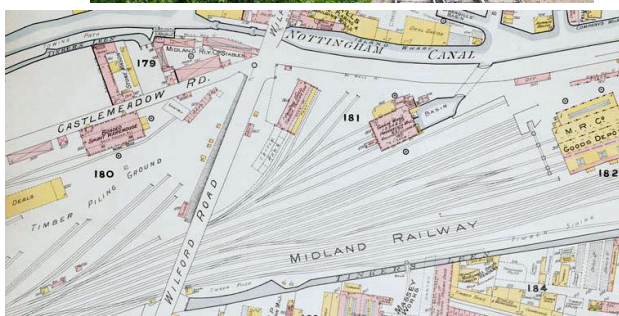
The old school is marked on the map below. Next to the school is the Queens Walk Recreation Ground.

The Meadows was a traditional place for playing cricket and to make sure this could continue after the fields were developed for housing, the Meadows Cricket Ground was created. It was extremely well used with many club matches being played there during the season, well into the 20th century. As football grew in popularity, the cricket pitches doubled as football pitches. Today the recreation ground has a play area, bowling green, sensory garden and a small field for football.



Meadows Cricket ground in 1884.

Cross the recreation ground and exit, towards the rear of the school, at the gate onto Castlefields and turn right and then through the alley to Meadows Way. Turn left and continue to the junction with Queens Drive-Wilford Road, cross over and then cross the Wilford Road bridge (on the left side) – look over the bridge parapet – below are four railway tracks. On the left is the Castle Park industrial estate and on the right is Castle Meadow business park; unsurprisingly today, neither have rail connections.



Very different from the situation at the end of the C19th – this 1892 map indicates that the view from the bridge would be of around 20 tracks (main line and sidings) with most of the industrial premises connected (Midland Main Line – the earliest section opened between Nottingham and Derby on 4 June 1839).

Continue over the bridge and turn left into Castle Meadow Business Park, built on a small part of the formerly extensive Midland Railway goods yard and currently offices for the Inland Revenue (HMRC) and the law firm Browne Jacobson. Described by the main occupants as the Inland Revenue Centre Campus, this is a multi award winning complex of offices designed for 1,800 staff along with amenities, completed in September 1994. It is comprised of seven separate buildings that create tree-lined boulevards with sports and

recreational facilities, a creche, and staff restaurant. The main amenity building has a fabric roof suspended from four raking steel masts. All buildings are naturally ventilated using both thermal mass and thermal towers and is designed to maximize energy efficiency.



Walk down one of the streets and look back to the castle on its steep bluff. It is, of course, correct to look up to the castle having just walked across the King's Meadow.



Leave the business park at its southern end onto Castle Meadow Road (which did not exist at the time of the railways peak), turning left and going under the Wilford Road bridge. Two of the original railway arches are now a road and a footpath.

Go up and back across the bridge and look across to the Courts, station and new Unity Square building (HMRC are expected to move here when their lease at the Castle Meadow site runs out in 2021– the future of those offices is undecided but it has been suggested they could be converted into flats!)



Cross back over Meadows Way and go south and then left into Gritley Mews. On the left is a cleared site. This was a pub called the Three Bridges which was built around 1985 by Mansfield brewery to replace one of the many demolished pubs in this redeveloped area of the Meadows.



After a few years the pub started to gain a rough reputation and it was finally closed down around 2004 and has since been demolished. All that remains is the old sign.



Turn left and pass St George in the Meadows church which is Grade II listed. The foundation stone was laid on 8 July 1887.



Continue to the right of the church, alongside the recreation ground, and re-join Queens Walk at the tramstop of that name. Turn right towards the river.

Alongside the tramstop is the Pilgrim Church and Queen's Walk Community Centre

The Pilgrim Church was formerly a Congregational Chapel. In 1869 a small Congregational mission church was established in an old warehouse in the Meadows. It was an outpost of the main Congregational church in Castle Gate.

The mission church was soon thriving but suffered from poor accommodation – one report says that the flooring of the warehouse was so rotten that a visiting minister was unfortunate enough to fall through the floor!

Eventually the church was re-housed in a new building – what is today the Pilgrim Church.

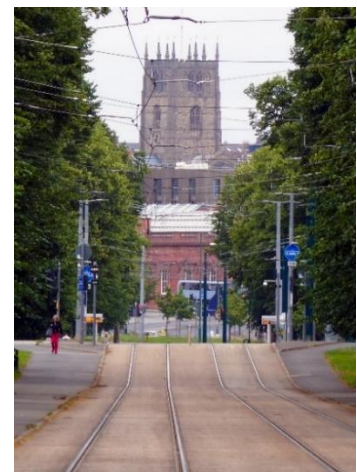


The Queen's Walk Community Centre was formerly the Central Railway Goods Office.

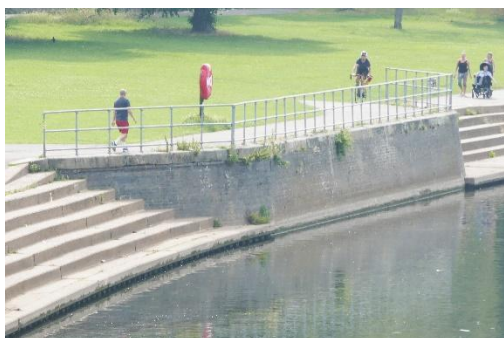
Although there is no date stone on the building, it is believed to have opened in 1901 to coincide with the opening of the railway sidings behind it.

Continue along Queens Walk, watching out for more Story Poles.

Also, look back to see how the Queens Walk avenue lines up with the Church of St Mary the Virgin in the Lace Market.



Continue down to the Wilford Toll Bridge.



Looking downstream from the bridge and on the Nottingham side of the river can be seen the position of the end of the former viaduct of the Great Central railway and the bridge which was demolished in October 1985 (as seen below)



Immediately on the other side turn left down a path through the grass. (If there has been heavy rain, this route can be flooded so keep to the tram route).

Looking back to the left there is good view of Wilford Bridge



The path crosses a small bridge and then reaches the old railway embankment, with a wall at its base to protect the earthwork from river flooding.



Go right alongside the Iremongers Pond (see Walk No 3) – look out for the wildlife..



At the end of the pond, climb up to the left and take the riverside path passing (on the right) the buildings of the Becket School (see reference later) and the Nottingham Emmanuel School (link to Mundella mentioned earlier), both opened in 2009



...and (on the left), the river with its birds



A little further along is an interesting mix of buildings, old and new....



See Addendum below



... and (photo left) River View Court, built in 2016 on the site of the old Becket Grammar School (2010 photo above). The Becket was founded in 1929, initially for boys only, before combining with the Corpus Christi School which used to be on Ruddington Lane, Wilford.

Continue to The Suspension Bridge and then back via Melton Road to Musters Road and the end of this walk.

Addendum to Walk No 9.

I have since learned that a similar period house next door (on right of 1st photo) was called 'Plaisance' (Middle English meaning 'pleasure or a source of pleasure') and was Jesse Boot's summer house. Built around the end of the C19th, it was demolished in 1960 when Rivermead was built.

The remaining building has been used as offices but is currently for sale as a development plot with planning permission (Rushcliffe Borough Council, 27/03/2020) for 'Demolition of disused office building, erection of two new buildings comprising a total of five apartments'.

Source of photos: Geocaching website www.geocaching.com WB #8 Then and Now - Jesse Boot's Plaisance Summer House



1920



1960



Planning Application: Illustrative Streetscene View from Victoria Embankment.

Red dashed lines indicate the building to be demolished.

Jesse Boot and 'Plaisance': Extracts from the book 'Jesse Boot of Boots the Chemists' by Stanley Chapman, 1973.

'Up to his late forties, Jessie Boot was a strong, well-built man who loved the country and strenuous physical exercise'. However, in his early 50s he developed rheumatoid arthritis, initially in his legs. This 'was cumulative and gradually paralysed him. By 1908 he had to be moved about in a wheel chair and had a Rolls-Royce limousine specially fitted to accommodate the chair. His leisure was confined to week-ends on a couch at 'Plaisance', watching the river run by.'

Early in his illness, Boot 'acquired some land by the River Trent a few hundred yards from Trent Bridge, built a pavilion in stone and wood and laid out a recreation ground with tennis courts, summer house and children's amusements. He called it 'Plaisance', and took his family there almost every week-end in the summer....[his wife] Florence Boot loved entertaining and, regally dressed, moved easily among a large company of guests, while Boot sat in his bath chair on the verandah dressed in his immaculate brown velvet jacket and surveyed a sequence of convivial occasions with paternal satisfaction'.

Boots employees were invited to Plaisance on 'several carefully-planned dates each year....[with entertainment from] Boots Plaisance Brass Band ...and Boots Choral Union. Boots Athletic Club...held their meetings at 'Plaisance', and Boots Baden-Powel Boy Scouts held parades, inspections and demonstrations there. [There were] athletics, water polo and swimming races [and] in the evening, the dance hall....or fire-work displays....became the centre of attraction....The employees thoroughly enjoyed the fun and cherished the memories for years afterwards.'