

Walk No 13.1: WB to Ruddington (The Green)

Walk/Photos taken 3-9 Sept, 2020

Walk No 13 takes the Old Road to Ruddington, where it explores the history of the village and also Rushcliffe Country Park, returning via Compton Acres.

There are a lot of things to see and places to visit in Ruddington. To do it all in one walk may be too much, so an option would be: walking one way and then returning by bus and then, another day, go by bus and walk back. Or, do most of the walk and then another day go again, by bus or car, to see more of the village, country park, museums, etc. *The NCT 10 goes to the village centre. 10X (less frequent) goes to country park (or use 10 to The Green and walk).*

To make it easier to do a part walk, I have split the description into 3 sections:

13.1 WB to Ruddington (The Green), about 5kms;

13.2 Rushcliffe Country Park, starting and finishing at The Green, about 3.5kms;

13.3 Ruddington (The Green) to WB, about 7.5kms;

plus.....

13A - Addendum to the walk:

'Framework Knitting in Nottinghamshire – from invention to dissension'

So, this is 13.1 or the start of all 3 (16km) if you are feeling energetic.

Ruddington has a lot of history and interesting stories, far too much for me to include here. If you want to learn more, the Ruddington Parish Council website is a great place to look.



To simplify the actual walk description I have put some of the more detailed history at the end, numbered in red in the main text.

Starting on Musters Road, go south (up the hill).

As usual, I checked up on the ewe at the junction with Sherborne Road – it seemed she was intending going out – heading for the gate, mask on.....



Turn right into Malvern Road, over Harrow Road and then left onto Repton Road. After No 104, turn right into the alley which comes out on Loughborough Road opposite the Fire Station.

As you may have gathered from earlier walks, I like to look at old maps. This one was published in 1901 but was surveyed in 1879-83. This was a time of fast expansion with the population of West Bridgford in 1891 being 2,502 but by 1901 it had grown to 6,797.

Loughborough Road is on the left of the map, from, at the top, its junction with Chantrey Road and, at the bottom, the bend where Boundary Road is now. The obvious difference from today is the lack of housing and the dominance of the Midland Railway (Nottingham to Melton Mowbray) – now the Green Line walk; see Walk No 4.

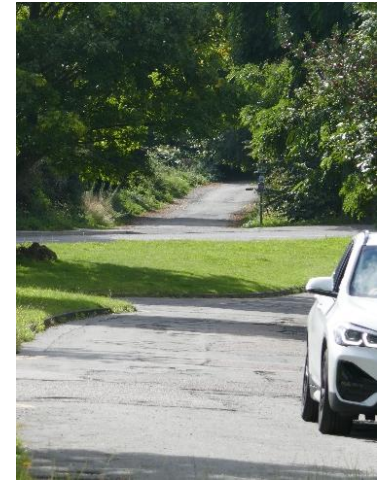
Musters Road only came to just south of Chaworth Road. The bridge at Devonshire Road is there but instead of houses on Devonshire, Musters, Kingston, Bromley, Wordsworth and Hampton Roads there is Beckfield Gardens. (The present allotment gardens are to the west of these.)



Where the alley from Repton Road joins Loughborough Road the map shows Willow Farm! No sign of a farm now.



Go up Loughborough Road towards the bend. On the right, there is a short stub of road serving the properties on that side. This was a previous alignment of Loughborough Road, before the junction with Boundary Road was improved.



The old alignment more or less lines up with the track up alongside the cemetery.

Referring, as I have before, to Robert Mellors' *Old Nottingham suburbs: then and now* [West Bridgford] (1914) <http://www.nottshistory.org.uk>, we learn that in the early 1700s Loughborough Road was "almost impassable" and to enable improvements a Turnpike Act was passed in 1739 and tolls were charged (see Walk No10 for a bit of Turnpike history).

Back then, there was no bend in Loughborough Road here – it went straight on – and that is the route of the walk: up Wilford Hill along what is named 'Old Road' (but there is no street nameplate here). On the right is the Southern Cemetery (opened in 1919 so does not appear on these old maps). It is a pleasant, well used walk between the trees.



The top is known as Spinney Hill or Wilford Hill or just 'the Spinney', but in the C18th, as shown here (John Chapman's Map of Nottinghamshire 1774), it was named as Ruddington Hill.

Just before the top there is a path up the bank on the left, round a magnificent oak tree, and out onto a field with a path across to Sharphill Wood



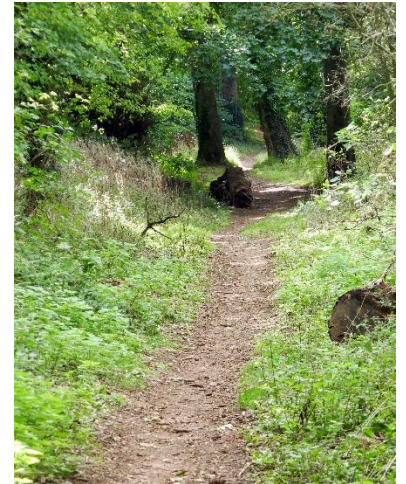
But that is another walk – this one continues ahead ...



...past lots more rose hips, but the blackberries are over...



...and down the other side of the hill.



At the bottom of the hill, cross over the A52, using the fenced (for horse crossing – the path is a bridleway) central reservation.

On the other side, go down the path and cross Landmere Lane.

At this point, those wanting a shorter walk could go left along Landmere Lane, go under the A52 and up through Sharphill Wood (part of Walk No1), or go right along Landmere Lane, cross the A52 at the Nottingham Knight roundabout and go back along Loughborough Road.



But this is a walk to Ruddington, so continue ahead on Old Road (at last, the old road does have a nameplate).



See [Further Info 1. Micklebarrow Hill](#)

The area of housing south of the A52 (Old Road, Landmere Lane and L'boro Road (as well as the small area near the Ruddington Grange Golf Club on Wilford Lane) is known as Ruddington Grange. There are some large properties, of varied age and appearance.



At the top is a very large house, incongruously named Hall Cottage. Just after this the tarmac road ends but the route continues, on the right, down a rough path through the trees.



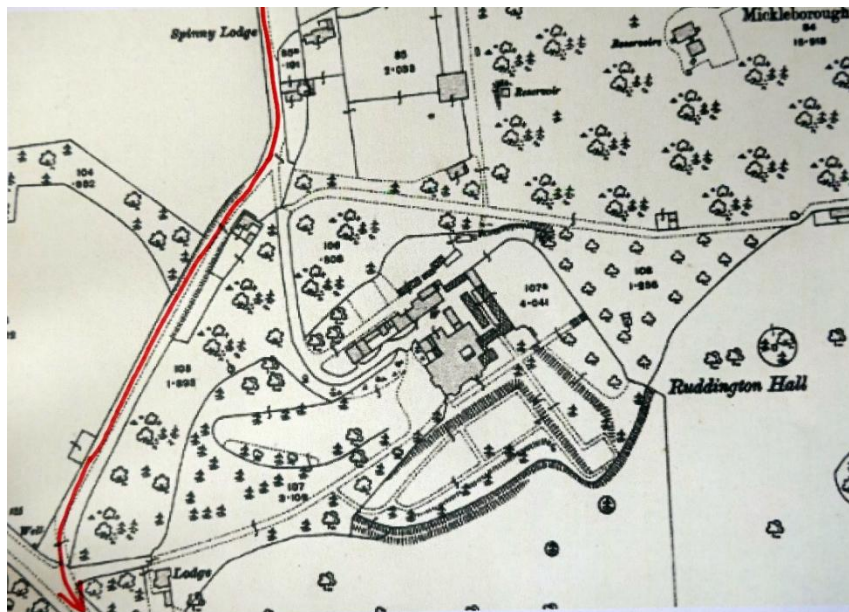
On the left, is White Lodge. The path used to be the rear drive into Ruddington Hall (below) and this was the lodge/staff accommodation.



A little way down the path there is a gap up the bank on the right – and a view across the fields to Clifton (Corpus Christi Church) and Ratcliffe-on-Soar Power Station.



On the left, hidden in the trees, is Ruddington Hall



1914 map

The hall was built in 1860 as a country retreat for a wealthy industrialist. Over the years, it has served as a private house, convalescent hospital and office premises, and is now the headquarters for Midlands Software Ltd.

See [Further Info 2. Ruddington Hall](#)

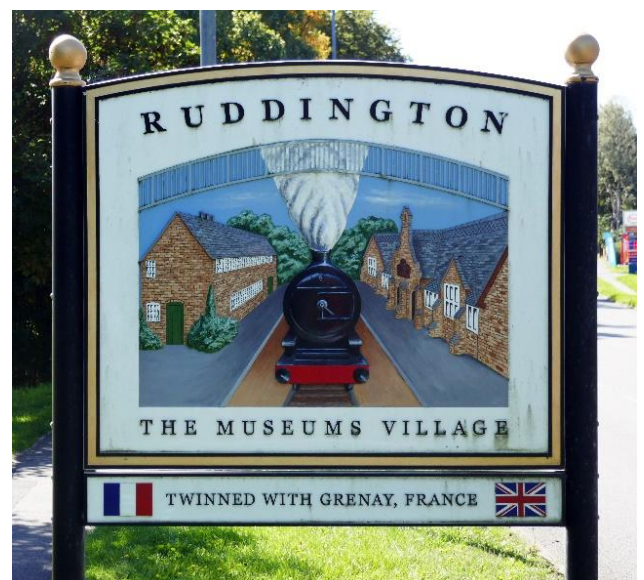
The gateway and gatehouse (with security officer) to the Hall is at the bottom of the path, where it joins the old Loughborough Road. The Hall itself is completely hidden from view by the many trees.



At this point there is another option to return back to Bridgford – turn right along Loughborough Road and at the end, bear left along a path to the Nottingham Knight roundabout.

But, for Ruddington, turn left. (On the left at the junction with the A60 is a track which goes around the Hall estate and on towards Notcutts Wheatcroft and Sharphill Wood – Walk No 1)

Continuing south on the A60, after a few yards there is a village sign, one of five ordered by the Parish Council in 2017. The signs were designed by local firm WigWag, who moved into Martindale House on Church Street/The Green in 2016 (see Walk 13.3), and are placed on the roads into the village announcing Ruddington as 'The Museum Village'. This is because the village has three museums; the Framework Knitters' Museum, the Village Museum and the GCRN (Great Central Railway – Nottingham). Clearly, the village has a significant history of which it is rightly proud.



For a very brief history, to set the scene before entering the village, go to

[Further Info 3. Ruddington's past, from C1st to C20th](#)

On recent outings I have noticed a lot of fallen fruit. Not only me, it seems – this ‘cheeky’ guy was in the verge and froze on my approach, presumably hoping I wouldn’t notice him or the two fruits he was carrying away – does this make him a scrumping squirrel?



Continuing along Loughborough Road, on the left is Easthorpe House, a Grade II Listed Georgian detached house, one of 22 Grade II listings in the village. It is now offices, currently for sale (was NHS Rushcliffe Clinical Commissioning Group which combined into a county wide CCG on 1/4/2020 and now based at Park Row, Nottm).



At the entrance is ‘The Gatehouse’ (shown as ‘Lodge’ on old maps), now Cherubs Day Nursery



And to rear is the ‘Coach House’, now a private residence.



The walk now enters the main part of the village and a better map is needed....



Turn right along Easthorpe Street. On the right, an 1884 map shows a Pinfold – a pound for stray animals, as seen on Walk 8.2 at Tollerton. Long after the map was surveyed, houses have been built (Havelock Cottages in 1910 and Philo Cottages in 1912) and there is no trace of the pinfold today.



Easthorpe Street has a mixture of properties of various styles and ages, with a number of grand buildings, such as Orchard House (opposite Rufford Road, now a care home) and Oxford House (further along), and a number of former farm buildings and cottages.

Were the road narrow, there are a number of older buildings. Number 42, (on the left side as you walk but on the right in the photo, taken looking back), is a Grade II Listed mid C17 house, with later C19 alterations.



A little further there is a line of old terrace houses and, next door, the large square Oxford House, now offices of an IT company, all shown on a 1913 map.



There are 7 pubs in Ruddington; the first one we pass is The Three Crowns which takes its name from its triple chimney pots. It is known locally as the “Top House” due to its position at the top of the street of three pubs – the other two are The Red Heart and The Red Lion.



At the end of Easthorpe Street turn left onto High Street. A short way along on the right is a row of shops, the buildings probably built in the Edwardian period from 1901 to 1910.



On the opposite side, between 11 and 13 High Street, is an alley signed to....



This is in a building which is a former framework knitters' workshop and is Grade II Listed. This is one of a number of former framework knitters' workshops, which provide a definite theme within the village.



At the junction of High Street with Kirk Lane is the Frame Breakers pub. Historically called The Bricklayers Arms, it was refurbished, renamed and relaunched by new owners, The Nottingham Brewery, in November 2015 as the Frame Breakers – in tribute to Ruddington’s framework knitting and Luddite heritage.



Go along High Street to the corner of Ruddington Green.

If that is all you wish to do today, go to the bus stop on the edge of the Green.

If you want to continue to the Country Park, go to ‘**13.2 Rushcliffe Country Park**’.

If you don’t want to include the park but want to continue walking round the village and back to West Bridgford, go to **13.3 Ruddington (The Green) to WB** – the walk continues (minus the Country Park) from outside the old Wesleyan Chapel, near the north-east corner of the Green.

Further Information on Sites along the Walk

1. Micklebarrow Hill

The A52 as we know it today only came here after Clifton Bridge was built in 1958 and the second bridge and dualling in the 1970s, so the old Loughborough turnpike road just crossed Landmere Lane and continued up over Micklebarrow Hill towards Ruddington. By the time of Sanderson's Map of 1835 there was a new road from Ruddington to Landmere Lane (and on to Wilford) west of Old Road. This is now Loughborough Road which runs parallel to the A60 south of the Nottingham Knight roundabout.



Old Road continues south up the side of Mickleborough Hill (or Micklebarrow Hill on the 1835 map). The name Mickleborough is derived from the pre-C7th Olde English word "micel" meaning large and "burgh", which may mean 'a hill', but thought more likely to be 'a fortified place upon a hill'.

Extracts from a record of the Flawford excavation site on <http://flawford.org.uk> tell us that in C9th Nottinghamshire was part of the Kingdom of Mercia and it was invaded by the Danes and in 868 AD they had captured the town of Nottingham. In 919 AD the English King, Edward the Elder, raised a powerful army and recaptured Nottingham. In 924 AD Edward revisited Nottingham and had a bridge built on the site of the ancient ford, hence 'Bridged-ford'. It is also recorded that he built a burgh on the south bank of the Trent. This would have been a fortified outpost sited so as to defend the town against an attack from the south.

The following passage referring to this burgh comes from 'Bygone Nottinghamshire' by Wm Stevenson in 1893:

'Wilford Hill - two miles south of the bridge over the Trent on the ancient north road from Leicester via Nottingham, Bawtry and Doncaster to York. The south and highest portion of this eminence is figured in the Ordnance Survey charts as Mickleborough Hill.... the site of the burgh on the south side of the Trent, constructed by Edward the Elder in 924 AD to guard the crossing of the Trent on the south bank

This ancient road [Old Road] is cut or worn deeply into the high land from which cause it had fallen into disuse and is now a green lane o'ershaded by a group of tall but picturesque firs. The modern road [Loughborough Road] is a diversion to the west, constructed to avoid this narrow way climbing over the hills.'

2. Ruddington Hall

Ruddington Hall was built in 1860. It was designed as a country retreat for Thomas Cross, a wealthy industrialist, banker and Justice of the Peace from Bolton. Together with his wife and some nine servants, he lived there until his death in 1879.

Ruddington was a centre for the production of the world-famous Nottingham lace (see later) and in 1880 the hall was purchased by Philo Laos Mills, an American merchant, hosiery

manufacturer, pedigree stock breeder and, from 1897, High Sheriff of Nottinghamshire. He died in 1905.



Ruddington Hall in 1900

The tradition of ownership by self-made men was continued in 1907 by a Major John Ashworth who developed a flourishing timber importing business and also apparently was renowned as one of the finest riflemen in the country. Ashworth Kirk and Co Ltd – timber merchants, saw miller, joinery and moulding manufacturer – was originally on Parkinson Street (which ran off Trent St, south of the canal, behind what is now Trent House, Station St.) from 1842 and moved to London Road (next to the railway, now Jurys Inn) in 1890 – presumably changing from timber being transported by canal, to by rail).

In 1931, Ruddington Hall was purchased by Dorothea Kate Forman-Hardy, a member of Nottingham's newspaper and printing dynasty. In 1938, she added a major new extension to the rear, and in September 1940 offered the hall to the Red Cross for use as a wartime convalescent hospital. It accommodated seventy-five patients.

It continued as a hospital after the war, and in 1980 was purchased and converted into office premises and was owned by British Gypsum until 1991. In 1992, it was acquired by Midland Software Ltd, an HR and payroll software and services company.



3. Ruddington's past, from C5 to C20

It is likely that the current location of Ruddington was first settled by the Saxons in around 550 AD. The name Ruddington comes from the Saxon for homestead (ton) of Ruddingas (Rudda's people).

It had a recorded population of 42 households (probably less than 250 people) in 1086, putting it in the largest 20% of settlements recorded in the Domesday Book, where it is listed under 4 owners: Giselbert de Gand (of Ghent and a kinsman of Matilda of Flanders, wife of William the Conqueror) Alain le Roux (of Brittany), Roger de Busli (Bully, near Neufchatel-en-Bray), and Robert Malet (from Gravelle St Honorine, near Le Havre); all part of William the Conqueror's entourage during the Norman Conquest and rewarded by being gifted ownership of hundreds of properties across England. In 1066, the owners were listed as Leofgeat, Godric; Wulfheah, Ulf and Azur; all English landowners.

In 1497 the army of Henry VII camped at Ruddington on the eve of the Battle of East Stoke – the last battle of the War of the Roses.

During the Middle Ages land would have been farmed on the open field system. This continued into the 17th Century and by 1600 the population was around 320. There were 4 large fields: Micklebarrow field, Mill field, Collicross field and Thornditch field; each would have been divided into narrow strips which would have been divided amongst the villagers. In 1698 there was a partial enclosure of the Thornditch field which became pasture land. In 1767 there was a Parliamentary enclosure which resulted in the large fields being split into smaller fields and enclosed with hedgerows.

Ruddington remained small for centuries, with agriculture the main source of employment, as shown on Sanderson's 1835 Map



It grew rapidly during the Industrial Revolution with the framework knitting industry being a key factor in the development of the village. By the second half of the C19th, about 50% of all households in the village were engaged in the industry in some way.

Because of the importance of the knitting industry in Ruddington, and the wider Nottingham area, I have prepared an **Addendum (13A)** to this walk: **'Framework Knitting in Nottinghamshire – from invention to dissension'**.

By 1801 the population was 868 and over the next century the population grew to 2500. This period of growth resulted in many of the small terraces which characterise the centre of Ruddington and resulted in a number of Schools and Methodist chapels being built.



This 1884 map shows that new housing, within the main village and to the north and south at The Leys and Savages Row, had been built to accommodate the frame knitters families and those involved in subsidiary trades such as framesmiths, needle makers, sink makers, seamers and bobbin-boys. There were also large houses, such as Ruddington Hall and Easthorpe House; the homes of those made wealthy by the rise of industry.



Framework knitting in the village declined towards the end of the 19th century as steam-powered machines developed and factories provided large-scale competition to the manual methods still being employed by the villagers.

This change was accelerated by the arrival of the Great Central Main Line railway (built in 1899 and shown on this map, surveyed in 1913).

The arrival of the railway and the opening of Ruddington Station attracted the building of a number of textile factories, indicating the change from small knitting workshops to larger work places predominantly for lace, and also a number of large commuter properties such as those on Manor Park and Clifton Road (west of the station).

Ruddington expanded further between the wars as new housing estates were built at the edge of the village. The Ordnance Supply and Disposal Depot opened at the start of World War II and occupied a large area on the southern outskirts of the village (see Walk 13.2).

Today the Ordnance Depot and the lace factories are gone and Ruddington is mainly a residential area, with a population of 7,216 (2011 Census) – but some of its history remains...