

Walk No 15.1: Clifton Estate, Part 1

Walk/Photos taken 28th October – 4th November 2020

This walk is just under 14km (or 12.5km if you choose route B).

A shorter walk of a 7km (or 5.5km for B) loop in and around Clifton Estate can be done by:

- either taking a NET tram to Clifton Centre, joining the walk route where it crosses Southchurch Drive and 15.1 becomes 15.2 ,
- or taking a NCT No1 bus to Nottingham Trent Clifton Campus, joining the route at the A453/Glapton Lane junction
- or drive and park.

Once again, I have split the walk into two documents (to manage file size) – 15.1 goes from W.B. to Southchurch Drive, in the centre of Clifton, and 15.2 continues back to W.B.



From Musters Road, the walk follows the route of some earlier Walks (3A, 5 & 10) along Eton and Rugby Roads, right towards Rushcliffe Arena and David Lloyd. Just before the Arena car park, take the path left, then right and then left and along past the first pond.

No water birds on this pond on my walk this time but a nice robin on the fence nearby.



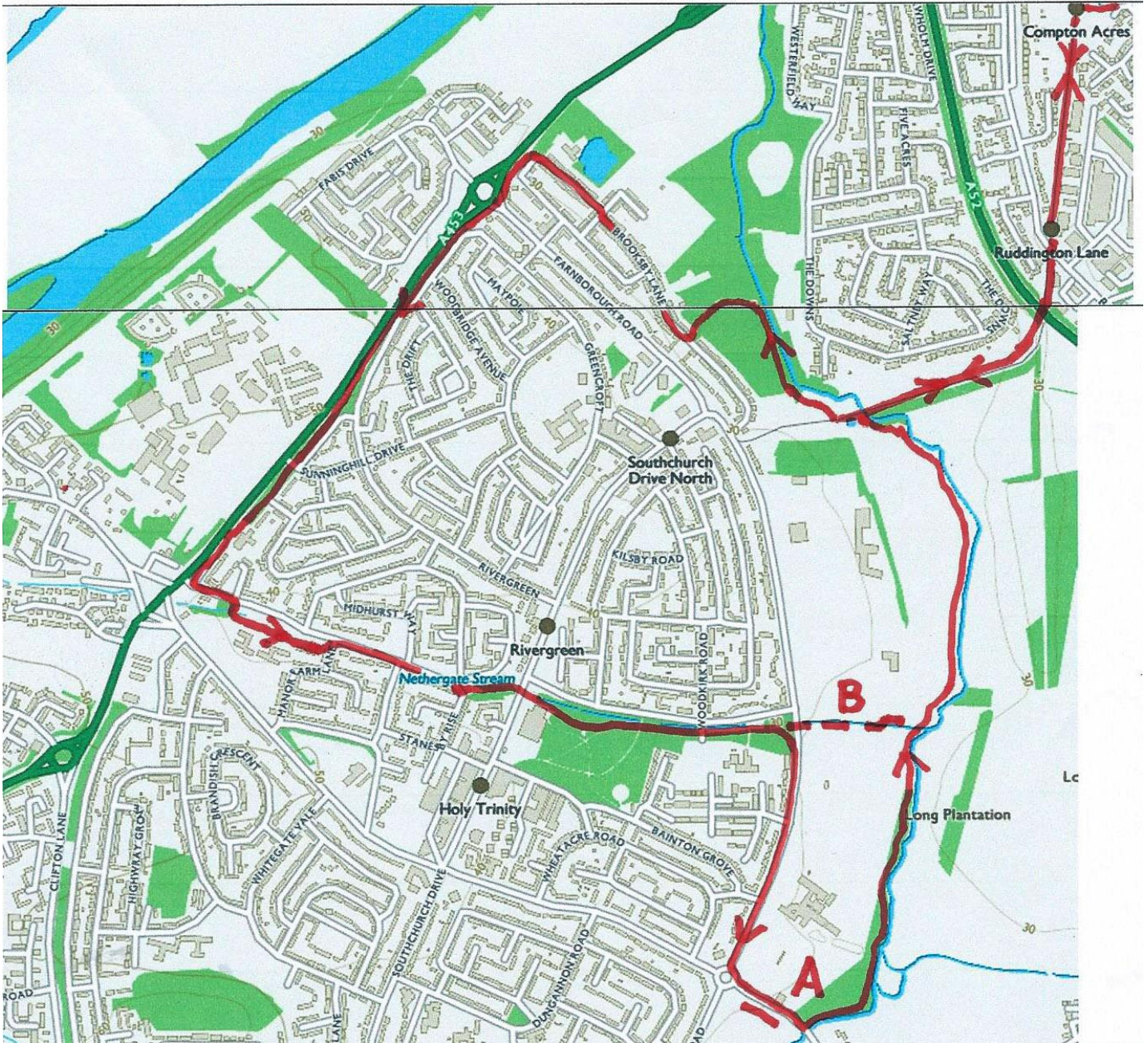
A short distance after passing the pond turn right, over the bridge, and immediately left. Continue to and across Compton Acres road and go to the left of the second pond. Plenty of ducks around but also a heron – I haven't seen it on the viewing side of the fence before! Almost close enough to touch and not at all fazed by my presence.



Continue to the Compton Acres tramstop – where the new housing development is nearing completion.



Turn left and follow the tram route up to and across Ruddington Lane, under the A52 and along to the bridge over Fairham Brook.



After the bridge turn right along the path towards the Southchurch Court tower block (20 storeys, 130 flats, built by Wimpy, completed in 1969)....

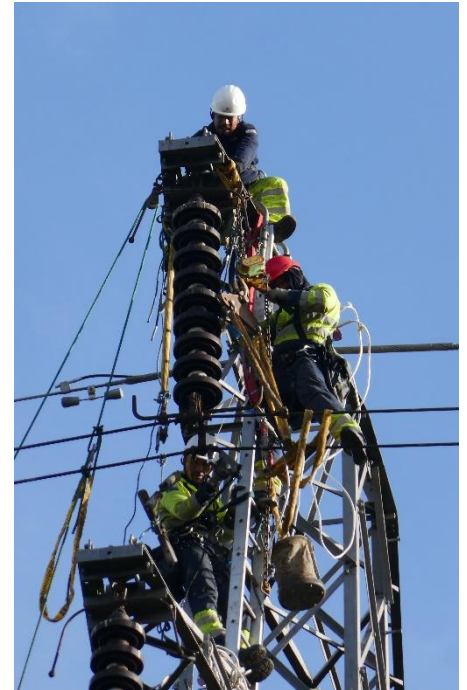
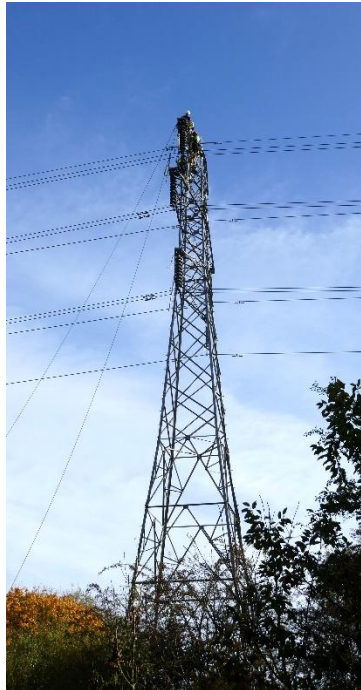
.....and then turn right again and go along the path through the trees beside Fairham Brook



Last time I walked here I saw a Grey Wagtail (Walk No.10)....

.... but not this time....

.... just three men up a pole
...and a Halloween pumpkin in the trees.



Follow the path around to the left, with views of Southchurch Court flats as a reminder of where we are, and then turn right, along Brooksby Lane.

This is the northern edge of the Clifton Estate.



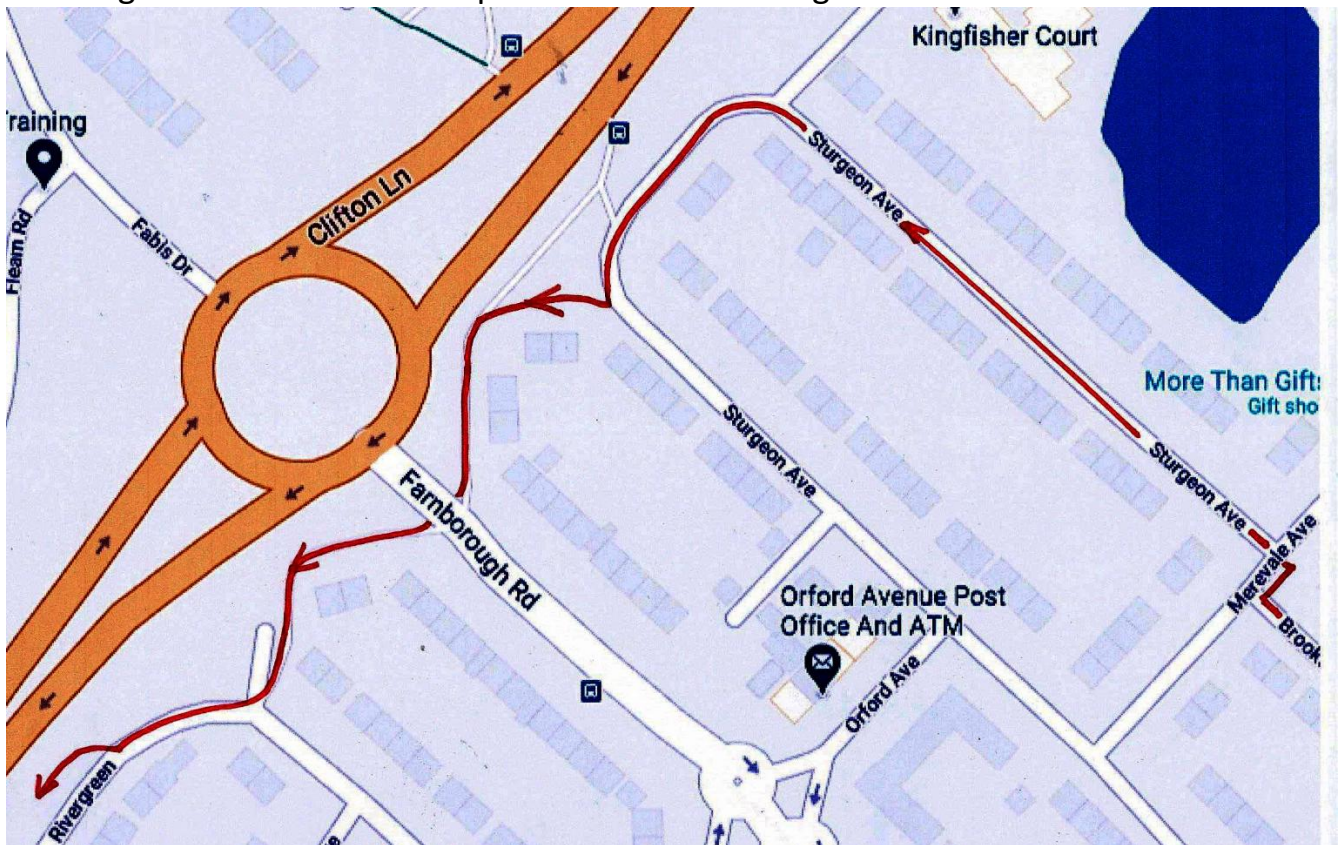
At the end of Brooksby Lane go right and immediately left into Sturgeon Avenue. At its end, to the right, is the entrance to Kingfisher Court Care Home.



Its website describes *"A conservatory and terrace overlooking the lake provide a lovely area ... for residents to sit on sunny mornings watching and listening to the wildlife of birds, ducks and geese that live on or around the lake"*. As shown on this 1885 map, this site used to be a brickyard with the lake being the clay pit.



Beyond the care home entrance Sturgeon Avenue bends left for a few yards, parallel with the A453 (Clifton Lane), and then bends left again. At the second bend take the footpath which goes to the right and then alongside Clifton Lane to its junction with Farnborough Road. Cross Farnborough Road and follow the path round onto Rivergreen



The Rivergreen housing is on the left but there is a path through the trees running along the right side – take this and keep going, with the main road and Nottingham Trent University Clifton Campus to your right. (See: [Further Info 1. NTU Clifton Campus](#))



Continue through the trees, keeping a watch for any wildlife (I saw at least 6 squirrels on my walk through the Estate) ...



The path through the trees eventually turns out onto the side of Clifton Lane. Continue along and, just before the junction with Village Street and Green Lane, turn left onto Glapton Lane



As noted in Walk 14, the manor of Clifton is recorded in the Domesday book as 'Clifton-cum-Glapton'. Glapton was a small hamlet which existed before the Clifton Estate was developed as shown on this map of the 1890s, which has Glapton Lane going SE from the Clifton Lane junction.

To appreciate the scale of the Clifton Estate upon this map of open fields: west to east the housing today stretches from Clifton Lane to about the point where Colley Moor Leys Lane turns north – approximately where Farnborough Road now is. (The bendy line along the lower right of the map is Fairham Brook.) North to south the housing would extend well beyond the edges of the map. (See: [Further Info 2. The Development of Clifton Estate](#)) And there are proposals for further expansion to the south of the Estate, to be known as Fairham Pastures (see [Further Info 3. Future Expansion of Clifton](#)).



The first building on the right along Glapton Lane is marked on the 1890s map as 'Smithy'. It is one of very few buildings from the old Glapton that still exist. Now named 'The Forge', it was within the estate of the Clifton family and is marked 'HRC 1879' (presumably for Henry Robert Clifton, the head of the family from 1869 to 1896). The property is included in a list of 'Local Heritage Assets of the City of Nottingham' (2013).



The street of 1950s housing opposite is named 'Smithy Close'

Continue along Glapton Lane and turn right, over the first of the bridges across the Nethergate Stream, and take the path to the left, alongside the stream.



On the right of this green area is Glapton Academy (school).

About half way along this stretch of the stream, look across to Glapton Lane and there is another building (No.47) from the old village. This one has a plaque saying 'HB 1899' – so built in 1899 when Sir Hervey Jukes Lloyd Bruce was the 'Clifton' of the manor (from 1896 to 1919).



The stream goes underground after a few more yards. Continue along the path, rejoining the footway on Glapton Lane at its junction with Manor Farm Lane. Immediately on the right, there is a terrace of 3 properties from the old Glapton – these are marked ‘PRG 1926’ – Lt-Col. Percy Robert Clifton (the ‘head’ Clifton from 1919 to 1944).



I am not aware of any more buildings remaining from the old hamlet of Glapton.

However, there are recollections of the past in some street names, e.g. we have just passed Manor Farm Lane and a little further along on the left is Bridge Farm Lane – both presumably referencing farms in the hamlet. Perhaps one of these was the home of the Gadd family who, you will recall from Walk No 8, were given Chestnut Farm in Tollerton as compensation for the loss of their property when the Clifton Estate was built.

Turn along Bridge Farm Lane and then take the path on the right, alongside the Nethergate Stream which has re-emerged.

This leads to Southchurch Drive – along which the tram line runs on its way through the centre of Clifton – to the right is the main shopping area.



This is where 15.1 stops. Go to 15.2 for the remainder of the walk.

Further Information on Sites along the Walk

1. NTU Clifton Campus

Nottingham Trent University (NTU) was formed by the amalgamation of a number of separate institutions of higher education. It originated from the Nottingham Government School of Design founded in 1843.

In 1945, the Nottingham and District Technical College was established. In 1958, Nottingham Regional College of Technology opened and in 1964, Nottingham Regional College was opened.

In 1966, the original Nottingham College of Design was linked with the Regional College. Together they merged and the institution was upgraded to Polytechnic status in 1970 to become 'Trent Polytechnic'.

Clifton was originally home to the Nottingham College of Education which began in 1959. It amalgamated with Trent Polytechnic in 1975. The Polytechnic changed its name to 'Nottingham Polytechnic' in 1988.

Under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 all Polytechnics and some higher education colleges became eligible for full university status; at this point, Nottingham Polytechnic officially became 'Nottingham Trent University'

NTU now has over 33,000 students of which over 8,000 are based at the Clifton Campus. In addition to the School of Education, this houses the School of Arts and Humanities and the School of Science and Technology. The Clifton campus also hosts an Anthony Nolan Trust Cord Blood Bank, the John van Geest Cancer Research Centre, the Lee Westwood Sports Centre and student accommodation.

NTU has won a number of prestigious awards in recent years, including:



'University of the Year 2017' in the Times Higher Education awards

'Modern University of the Year' in The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2018

'University of the Year 2019' in The Guardian University Awards

2. The Development of Clifton Estate

Until the 20th century, Clifton had been what the Village website describes as a 'close' village - a village managed at every level by the holders of the manor house, in this case the Clifton Family. This meant that all the residents, their occupations and the buildings they lived and worked in were entirely subject to the Cliftons' approval.

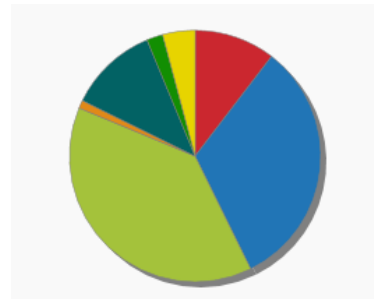
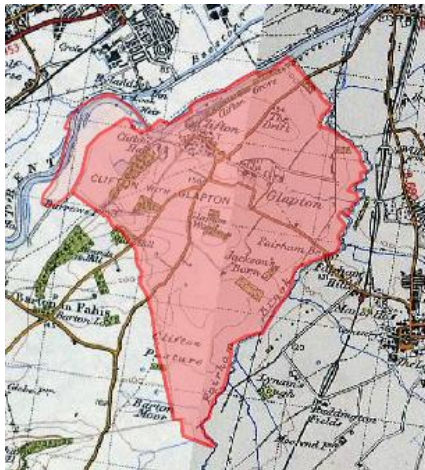
The Cliftons appear to have followed a policy of retaining a static population. The number of people living in the area hardly changed at all throughout hundreds of years. For example in 1801, 381 people lived in Clifton and a century later the number had risen to just 383. As children in the area grew older they were ultimately forced to leave in search of work and places to live. Many left for nearby villages or the growing Nottingham.

In contrast to Clifton, the population of Ruddington grew to three times its size over the same hundred year period, mainly due to the knitting industry.

By comparison, the parish of Clifton with Glapton was undeveloped and the great majority of the resident population were involved in agriculture:

Boundary map of the parish of Clifton with Glapton, 1830s

Males aged 20+, in 9 occupational categories, 1831
(From: www.visionofbritain.org.uk)



- Farmers employing Labourers
- Farmers not employing Labourers
- Agricultural Labourers
- Manufacturing
- Retail and Handicrafts
- Capitalists, Professionals
- Servants



Little had changed by the middle of the C20th but the situation was to change dramatically in the 1950s with the development of the Clifton council estate.

Council house building was an important part of Nottingham's growth in the first half of the C20th, with the city's oldest council housing, the Stockhill Lane estate, starting in 1919. Despite substantial further building across many parts of Nottingham, by the end of WW2 there was an acute shortage of houses. There was a housing waiting list of 10,500 people resulting from a combination of the demobilization of servicemen and women and slum clearance initiatives – and there was little land available to meet this demand within the city boundary.

Nottingham Corporation decided to look elsewhere and, in 1947, backed by the threat of a compulsory purchase order, bought 944 acres of land from the Clifton family for £83,000. Although the parish was technically within the boundaries of the old Basford

Rural District Council, Nottingham sought planning permission for housing development and this was eventually granted in 1950 by the Minister of Housing and Local Government. The area formally became part of the City of Nottingham in 1951.

The Clifton estate was designed by planning officer Bill Dennis who had grown up in Finkhill Street (Broadmarsh), a high-density slum area demolished to build Maid Marian Way. Apparently he wanted to recreate the neighbourhood spirit of such areas but in an open, greener environment. This would involve dividing the estate into distinct neighbourhoods, each with 600 to 1,500 homes, shops, open spaces and primary schools.

Construction started in September 1950. The majority of the houses are made of "no fines" concrete (concrete which only has large aggregate included). This leaves air filled voids which add thermal insulation. The blocks enabled rapid construction – 30 homes a week. The first residents entered their new homes in September 1951 and by 1953 the population had rocketed from 383 in 1901 to 6,000 people living in 1,838 houses.

The estate grew to a population of over 20,000, becoming the largest council estate in Europe.

The increased population here was one of the factors causing more traffic crossing Trent Bridge into Nottingham. It soon became apparent a new bridge would need to relieve the pressure – the Clifton Bridge was constructed in 1955.



A 'Nottinghamshire Live' article in 2018 says that in the early days life was not easy. Much of what Bill Dennis had hoped for was not achieved. Clifton was to become no stranger to protests, bitter divisions and controversy. Residents complained about the lack of facilities such as shops and places of entertainment to accommodate the massive population increase and particularly for young people.

To compare with The Meadows, where, as seen on Walk No.9, almost every street used to have a 'corner shop', this was not the case in Clifton. The site was so large, uniform and depressing in its design that a community spirit failed to materialize. The focal point for the criticisms came from a program broadcast in 1958 which profiled the estate as a '*hell on earth*' and a '*soul-less, heartless dormitory*'.

The estate was a regular feature in the Nottingham papers throughout the sixties and seventies with the same issues recurring over and over again. The lack of facilities, the drabness and the lack of community spirit.

In 1976 the residents objected to further building by pointing out that the estate '*already suffered from inadequate social amenities*' and highlighted increasing '*crime rate, child problems...*' A local newspaper described the situation as '*A gloomy picture of life on*

Clifton Estate was painted at the public inquiry ... vandalism is rife ..., truancy and crime rates are rising and there is a general lack of facilities for the community ... it is an area of major social stress ... Clifton ... the size of a town ... had a population of 26,000 in 1971' – and still the building projects continued. In 1978 the Clifton vicar described the estate as a 'dormitory' rather than a 'community'. At about the same time the Evening Post ran an article outlining the area as 'in terms of planning and architecture it is a monument to mediocrity. Not that it makes it different from any other housing estate. It's just that Clifton is ... perhaps the biggest in Europe.'

However, over time community campaigns did help to forge a Clifton spirit and some improvements were made, with more shops, sports and other facilities.

The 'Right to Buy' scheme must also have had some effect on the population and uniformity of the look of the housing (see photos below), with more people being home owners or in private rentals. (Since the scheme's introduction by the Thatcher government in 1980, the number of available council houses in Nottingham has fallen from 55,000 to 26,000.)

Uniformity of house frontages



An early Right to Buy house: notice a new brick wall, window, door and the faux stonework



A few notable people from Clifton:

Jake Bugg, musician

Brendan Clarke-Smith, politician

Karl Collins, actor

Samantha Morton, actress

Jayne Torvill, ice skater, Olympic gold medallist

Viv Anderson, footballer

Darren Huckerby, footballer

Jermaine Jenas, footballer

Graham Dury, comic creator



Aerial view of houses on Clifton Council Housing Estate 1971. (Image: NOTTINGHAM POST)

3. Future Expansion of Clifton

There are currently plans for housing on farm land south of Clifton, to be known as Fairham Pastures. The Nottingham City Local Plan includes the following description:

FAIRHAM PASTURES - LAND SOUTH OF CLIFTON

Local Plan Core Strategy for up to 3000 new homes, plus employment land, primary schools, and a new local centre.



