

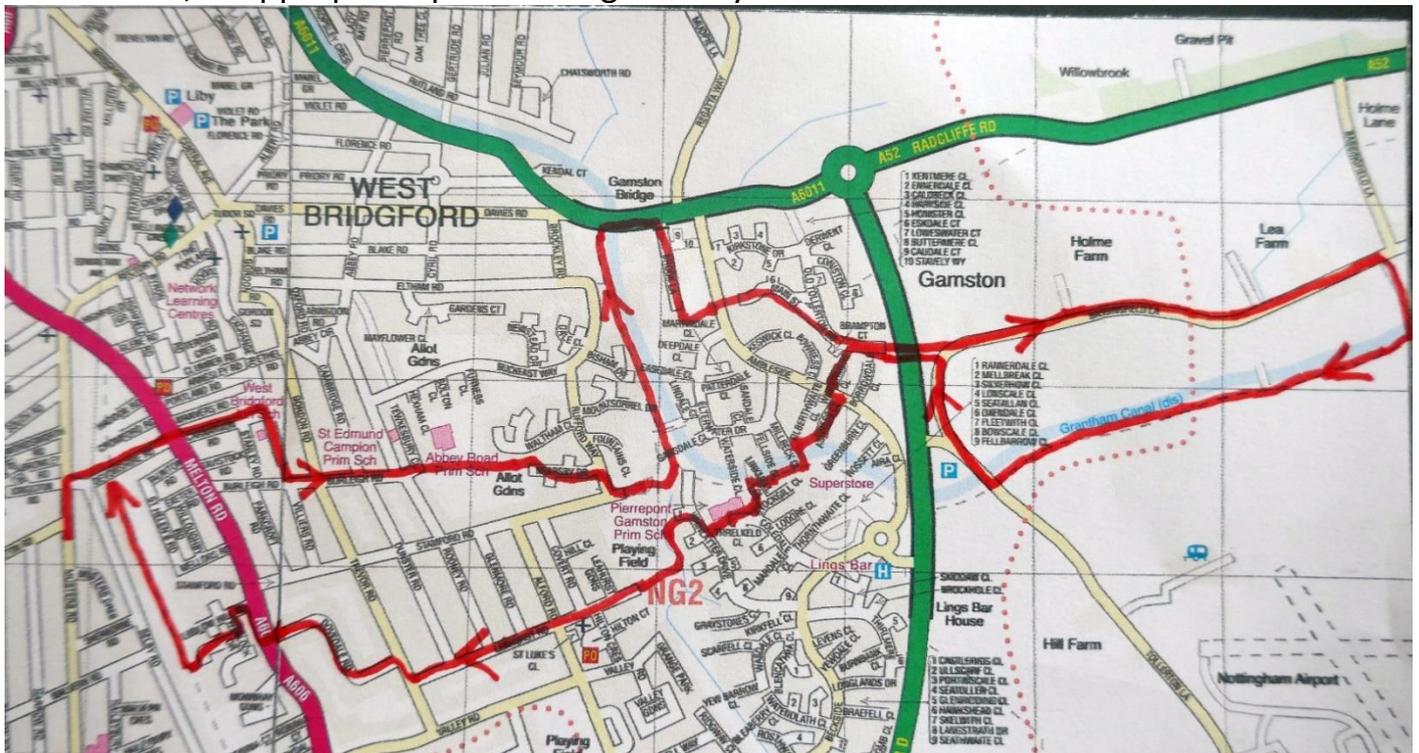
Walk No 11: Gamston & Bassingfield

Walk/Photos taken 11th July, 1st – 6th August 2020

The route to Gamston will be familiar to those who have read (and walked!) Walk No 2, on its way to Lady Bay.

This walk (12km) turns off at Radcliffe Road and then goes through the older parts of Gamston, then goes to Bassingfield, returning along the Grantham Canal, and then takes a different route back through West Bridgford. A shorter route excludes Bassingfield.

The map below provides the general directions of the walk but there will be local maps, at a better scale, at appropriate points along the way.



Starting from Musters Road, go along Devonshire Road, across Melton Road, along Carnarvon Road, right at Exchange Road, through the passage at the end and turn left on Burleigh Road.



At Abbey Road School go straight on, along the path ahead, between the allotments and, at the end, turn right and left onto Nearsby Drive. At Rufford Way turn right, past The Willow Tree PH, and left along the track, over the little bridge and left again along the path to the canal.

On the right of the path there is almost a hedge of wild roses and by August these were a mass of large rose hips which reminded me of my childhood, living in Yorkshire in the 1950s. We used to collect the rose hips, which were sent off for the making of rose hip syrup.



Rose hips are one of the richest plant sources of vitamin C. During the Second World War they were collected by school children organised by the local Women's Institute.

'Rosehip Syrup' was sold commercially in the UK after the war by a company called Delrosa. Apparently, children were paid 3d per lb for picking the fruit – I don't remember that! It was the norm to give children a spoon of rose hip syrup to top up their vitamin levels and ward off colds. At some time later, rose hip syrup vanished from the shelves due to the outcry that it was too sweet and damaging children's teeth, but apparently it is available now. As well as the rose hips, this walk provides many opportunities to enjoy some blackberries. After that sweet diversion..... back to the walk.

Continue alongside the canal.

Even though this path is frequented by dog walkers - one was just ahead of me – this swan family were quite unperturbed, sitting in the sun and pecking at the undergrowth.



On an earlier visit, the swans were on the canal further along towards Radcliffe Road where the still water is covered with bright green algae.

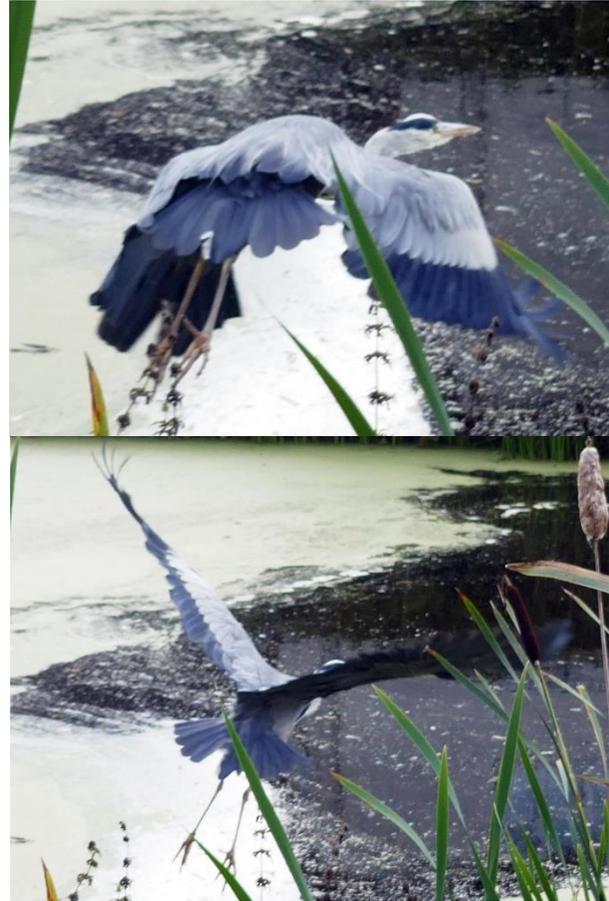


Ducks, rapidly paddling to get out of the swans' way, make tracks in the algae.



At the Radcliffe Road end of the path there is a tree stump at the edge of the canal and on a number of visits this has been a perch for a heron.....

...but there is a limit to its tolerance of a human, up close.



At the bridge carrying Radcliffe Road, go up the steps, turn right and cross the bridge.

In this 1882 map the bridge is labelled as a Turnpike Bridge.

On the Nottinghamshire History website – www.nottshistory.org.uk – there

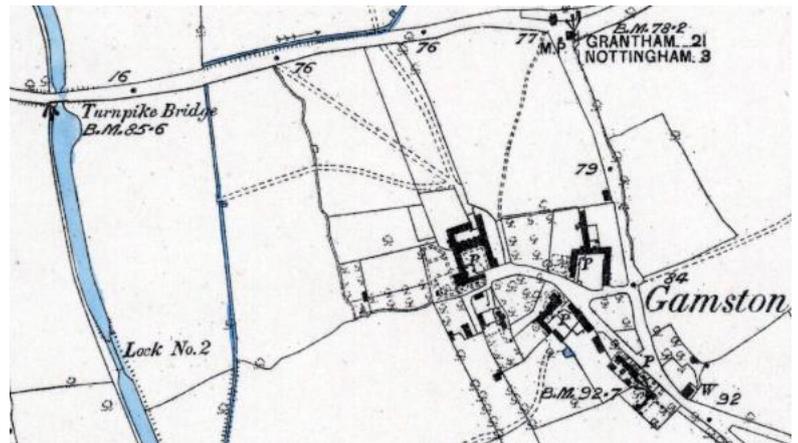
is an interesting history of local Turnpike roads: *Robert Mellors, Old Nottingham suburbs: then and now*

[West Bridgford] (1914). This explains that 'Nearly two hundred years ago [i.e. early 1700s] Turnpike

Trusts began to be formed; that is, a number of gentlemen banded themselves together, and obtained an Act of Parliament for

making a road, charging tolls on all conveyances, and cattle passing. Thereupon each promoter subscribed for, say, £100 of "stock," to make the roads, build toll houses, gates, etc.

The result of this was that Bridgford obtained better roads than many villages, but although it was not a city it had "gates" on every side; it was not protected, but it was the best "barred" village in the county, for opposite to the Town Arms Inn there was a gate, to collect a toll for crossing the bridge ...; and north thereof on London Road, against Meadow lane, was a bar;



near to Wilford lane was another, commanding that road, and Loughborough and Melton Roads. Near the end of Rectory Road, and at Lady Bay Canal bridge were side bars, and at Gamston lane end was another, with gates to guard both roads'. The one here on Radcliffe Road was brought into effect by the Grantham Turnpike Act in 1729.

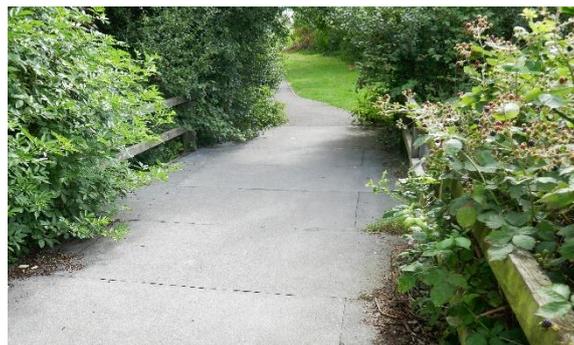
Mellors continues: 'Then gradually crept in the evil of speculators combining in the bidding at auctions for the tolls, thus making great profits, and starving the roads. This, together with the introduction of railways, led parliament to abolish turnpike trusts, and under acts passed [between 1873 and 1880], the toll bars were removed, and the cost of maintenance thrown on the district'.

The walk continues along Radcliffe Road, past the Nottingham Pet Crematorium and then turn right (where a sign says 'Emergency vehicles only') into Stavely Way. Go ahead along the path with trees and a small stream (Gamston Brook) on the left. Behind this are the premises of Pedigree Wholesale Ltd, manufacturer and supplier of pet food and other pet products (all pet needs met in this part of Gamston!).

When the path opens out, turn left, over the brook, and continue to Ambleside.



By the flats on the right side of the path I noticed this removal van parked....
I know just the job....please!



Cross over Ambleside and go along the path to the right of the childrens play area – but do note the cow and, under the trees, a seat carved in the shape of a dragonfly.



Continue along the path which comes out onto Main Street – this is the original part of Gamston with some of the old buildings remaining.

Most of the homes in Gamston were built since the 1980s as part of the expansion of West Bridgford. Its population now is over 2,100 but the 1882 map (2 pages back) shows that Gamston was much smaller at that time, with the censuses of 1801 and 1901 indicating a population of around 100.

In 1870-72 John Marius Wilson's Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales described Gamston as: *'a township in West Bridgford parish, Notts; on the Grantham canal, 3 miles SE of Nottingham. It includes part of the village of Bassingfield. Pop., 110. Houses, 18'*.

A similar picture is given a century later in The Nottinghamshire Village Book, written by members of the Nottinghamshire Federation of Women's Institutes: *'Gamston and Bassingfield were really two tiny hamlets (total population just over 100 before the Second World War) with a little lane connecting the two places. There were five farms in Gamston and four in Bassingfield and all the local people worked on the farms producing milk, eggs, fat cattle and pigs along with crops. There was once a village green with a pump where every householder had to get their own water, there was no street lighting and gas was not introduced until 1930. A Victorian letter box still stands.....There are no farms in Gamston at all now and only two in Bassingfield'*.

But the history of Gamston is older than that and, in the telephone kiosk beside the village green (a little further along), there is an excellent display of old photos and typed sheets giving lots of very interesting village history.

This tells of an archeological dig in 1987 which found large quantities of prehistoric pottery and Roman domestic pottery, dating from the 1st century BC to the 1st century AD. There was evidence of a Bronze Age or early Iron Age enclosed settlement, with pottery remains, weaving objects and also evidence of farming, both grain and animal stock. The site is now buried under the new housing development.

The history also tells about the origin of the village name. As referred to on a previous walk (Edwalton), an incoming settler, in this case thought to be a Dane, would lay claim to an area and name it for himself using his personal name plus the English word 'tun' meaning farm or village. Here, it was Gamul who laid claim to a hamlet and farm and named it Gamulstun. The name changed over time and in the Domesday Book (1086) it is named Gamalstune and listed under the land of William Peveril (or Peverel/Peverell) a Norman knight who was a favourite of William the Conqueror and was greatly honoured after the Norman Conquest, receiving 162 manors, forming collectively the Honour of Peverel, in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, including Nottingham Castle and Peveril Castle (Derbyshire).

There is a lot more to read in the telephone kiosk and some old photos (1940s) of the farmers and villagers.

The farms referred to were along Main Street; Manor Farm on the left, now Manor Farm House, with cottages and converted barns and stables.



Whitelambs Farm is opposite Manor Farm



Next to that is what looks like a manor house but is just named Oak Tree Cottage



A little further along on the left is Hall Farm House

And on the right is Grange Farm House



There is then a row of cottages, the first one is named Village Post Barn – the Victorian letter box, mentioned above (in The Nottinghamshire Village Book) is attached to the wall to the right.



The water pump referred to earlier was sited near the letter box.

Behind the cottages are converted farm buildings from the Grange Farm



Village Green is opposite, with the Village Hall and also the telephone kiosk and its history.



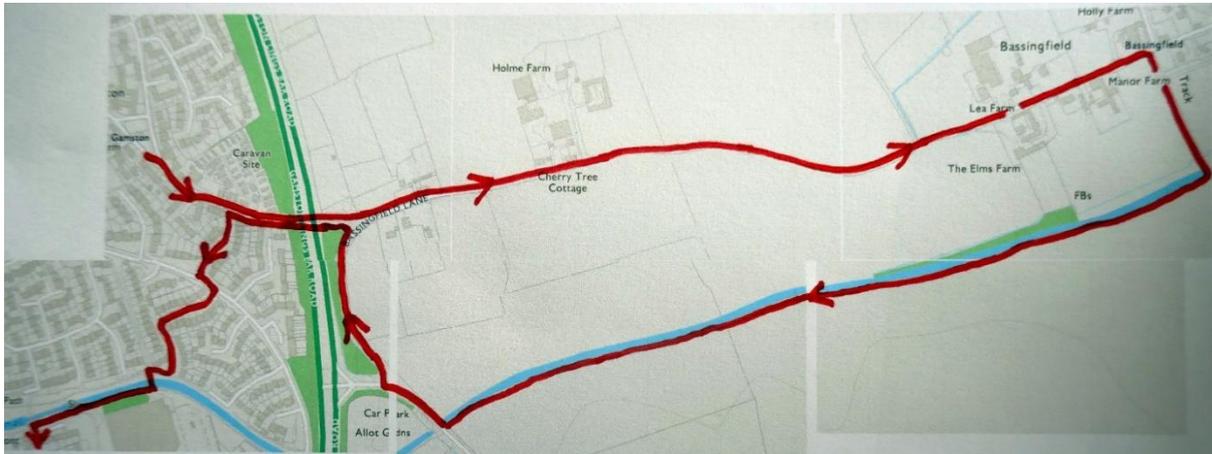
The history says the village hall was erected here in 1948 but previously this was the site of Mrs Edith Blackshaw's shop.



Main Street goes into Old Tollerton Road and there are more cottages, the last one named Field View – but now there is no field and the ‘view’ is of the many new houses that make up the ‘new’ Gamston.



The road then becomes Bassingfield Lane and on the left is the Bell Air ‘mobile home’ park – with some interesting gardens.



For those wanting a shorter walk, turn right along the passageway signed to ‘Gamston shops’. **Directions back from here will come later.**



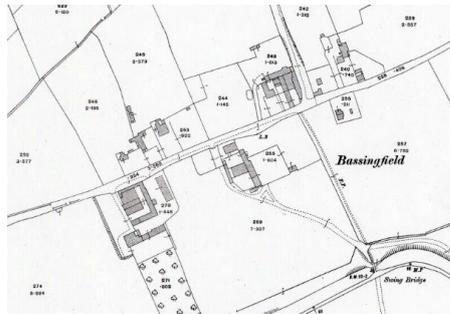
For those wishing to go on to Bassingfield, continue ahead and use the signalled crossing over the Gamston-Lings Bar Road (A52) and then along Bassingfield Lane – it has no footway but traffic is low and mainly considerate.

Once over the A52 the scenery becomes rural. There are a few C20th properties (i.e. not shown on a 1914 map but are on the current map) at the start of Bassingfield Lane and then Cherry Tree Cottage and Holme Farm.



The hamlet of Bassingfield was historically located within the wapentake (equivalent to a hundred) of Bingham. The wapentake covered a number of parishes including Holme Pierrepont within which Bassingfield formed part of its civil parish. The 1794 John Cary’s map of Nottinghamshire records Bassingfield and depicts the settlement as having four buildings located to either side of the junction between what is today Bassingfield Lane where it meets Nathans lane and turns north. In the 1830s the land is recorded as being in the ownership of Lord Manvers – Charles Herbert Pierrepont, 2nd Earl Manvers (1778 - 1860) was an English nobleman, naval officer and MP and owner of Holme Pierrepont Hall and Thoresby Hall.

Bassingfield remains a hamlet, with little development evident between the 1914 and 2020 maps, except some properties to the north-east and Lea Farm. Some farm buildings have been converted to residential.



1914



2020

As you enter the village, on the right is The Elms Farm described as 'a country house' by estate agents.

The farm buildings are now Elms Court



On the left is Lea Farm, now home to Bassingfield Woodyard Ltd, a timber company established 50 years ago that used to be at Holly Farm.



There are a number of properties at Manor Farm



Holly Farm is interesting, with a large house, currently not occupied, and old farm buildings around a cobbled yard – with what appear to be gas lamps on the roof.



In 2019 there was a planning application for the demolition of Holly Farm and associated buildings and the erection of 7 dwellings. It was refused but is currently subject to an appeal.

At this point, turn right along a track. The buildings on the left are Holly Cottages, built in 1910.



Beyond these, the view is definitely rural.



After about 200yds, cross the canal – according to the 1914 map this used to be a swing bridge (known as Hallam’s Swing Bridge) when the canal was a functioning transport link between Nottingham and Grantham.

On the other side, turn right along the tow path.



The Grantham Canal opened in 1797, having cost £118,500 (equivalent to £15m today) and ran for 33 miles from Grantham through 18 locks to West Bridgford, where it joined the River Trent. It was built primarily for the transportation of coal to Grantham and agricultural products from Lincolnshire to Nottingham. Also, ‘night-soil’ from Nottingham was carried in barges, referred to as ‘sani-boats’, and used as fertiliser for fields alongside the canal. Fragments of old white clay smoking pipes can apparently still be found in the fields – they came with the night-soil.

The canal’s profitability steadily increased until 1841 when it was sold to a railway company. It subsequently declined and was commercially abandoned in the 1920s. The formal Closure Act of the Grantham Canal was passed in 1936 but it was not entirely abandoned and later was placed into a ‘remaindered’ state. This involved maintenance of the water level to support agricultural water supply needs and required general maintenance of the line, although bridges were lowered. In some cases, such as at the Gamston-Lings Bar Road, the east bound carriageway of Radcliffe Road at Gamston and the Radcliffe Road/Lady Bay Bridge junction, the highway works, with canal bridges replaced by concrete pipe culverts, preclude any realistic possibility of reopening the route for canal craft.

According to the Grantham Canal Society, a proposal was mooted in the late 1960s to use the canal through West Bridgford/Gamston as a linear rubbish tip (really??!!). The response by the Canal Society was to adopt a policy of full restoration as the best option to save and preserve it. Because it's original line is not a practical option an alternative proposal is to follow the line of the Polser Brook. The brook flows from Tollerton, goes under the canal east of Bassingfield, runs almost due north towards the A52 where it passes under the road via a three-section bridge and, skirting gravel pits adjacent to The National Water Sports Centre, then flows into the River Trent. A rough alignment of the possible canal route is indicated on this map. As the Canal Society admits, *'there are unanswered (and many unknown) questions yet to be addressed'*. For more information, go to: www.granthamcanal.org/trent-link/



Back to Bassingfield and the canal tow path; it is a pleasant walk alongside the canal back towards Gamston.



Horses grazing and the ducks finding convenient logs on which to have a nap



There are good views over the fields to the south.

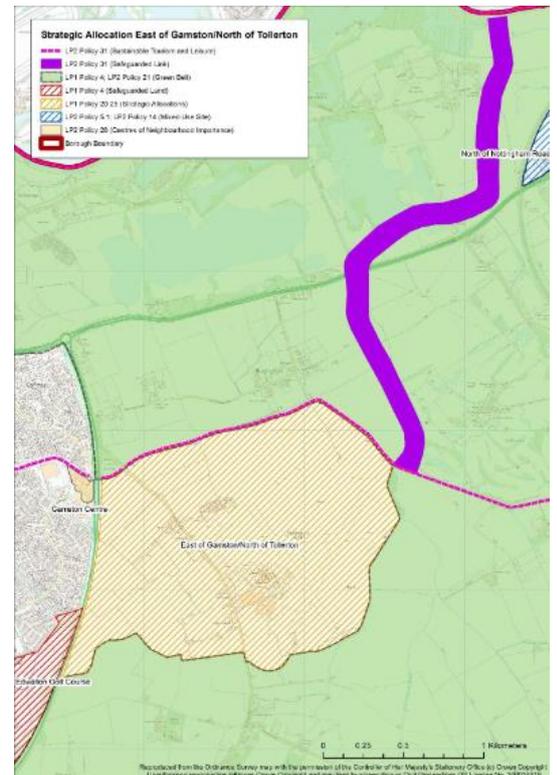


And you can see across Tollerton Airfield to Jubilee Wood (Walk No 8.2)

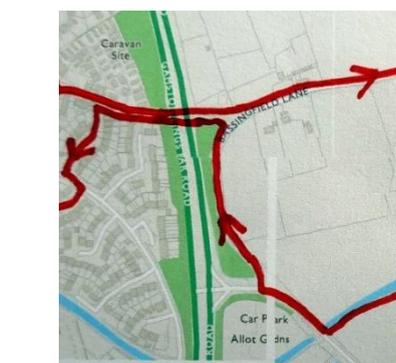


But these views may not be there for ever. Rushcliffe Borough Council Adopted Local Plan 2019 identifies 'land East of Gamston/North of Tollerton' – which lies immediately south of the canal (see map; the area shaded yellow) – as a strategic housing site (i.e. detailed plans yet to be determined) for around 2,500 houses up to 2028 with up to a further 1,500 homes post 2028, around 20 hectares of employment development, a neighbourhood centre and other community facilities as appropriate.

Nonetheless, RBC supports the restoration of the Grantham Canal, including the proposed link between the canal and River Trent which is safeguarded for this purpose and identified in the Policies Map - the thick purple line



When the canal path reaches Tollerton Lane, I do not advise continuing along the path as crossing the Gamston-Lings Bar Road where it cuts the canal is not easy, due to the amount and speed of traffic and having to cross over the crash barriers.



Instead, turn right along Tollerton Lane, then right again into Bassingfield Lane and then left, along the path to the signal controlled crossing used on the way out to Bassingfield.



Continue ahead and then take the path on the left, through to Windermere Close.

For those who chose the shorter, Gamston only walk, this is where the return directions start.



Windermere Close goes to Ambleside, turn left and then right onto Ashness Close, follow it round to the left and at the end take the path to the right and then left, up the fenced slope and over the canal – with Morrisons ahead – but turn right alongside the canal



This section of the canal is another one frequented by the swan family – in the old lock...

...or beside the path



On another visit, any chance of a sit-down on the bench was clearly 'down the swanny'.



At this point, turn left and go along Lingmell Close, turn right at Stockgill Close and right again on Coledale, past Pierrepont Gamston Primary School. At Whinlatter Drive turn right and then left into Mellbreak Close and through to the grass area...



...take the right fork path...



...and cross the bridge onto Leahurst Road



Leahurst Road is typical of West Bridgford in that, over the years, a mixture of housing has been built to meet a wide range of needs:

modern semis



council housing



detached



Go to the top of Leahurst, to an area where the houses get bigger, and turn right on Trevor Road and left into Dovedale Road. Here the 'suburban mock-Tudor' becomes more pronounced with tall brick chimney stacks dominating, some with spiraling tiles – perhaps a case of 'my stack's better than your stack'.



Continue along Dovedale to Melton Road and turn right and then left into Ludlow Hill Road and then left again into The Square (the site of the old Smarts Brickworks mentioned in Walk No 4)



Turn right along Whitcliffe Gardens and through to the Green Line, and turn right...



...and you can gorge yourself on lovely ripe blackberries



Finally, go down the steps to Devonshire Road and back to Musters Road – blackberry feast or not, I hope you enjoy the walk.

...er, perhaps not by the time you read this and get out on the walk – sorry!