

13A. Beeston, Beeston Lock & Attenborough Nature Reserve Appendix – Further Information on Sites along the Walk

The walk routes are drawn using Open Street Maps from the internet <https://www.openstreetmap.org>, with some use of Google Maps <https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-e&q=google+maps>, and old maps are from Old Maps Online <https://www.oldmapsonline.org/en/England> and National Library of Scotland, Ordnance Survey Maps <https://maps.nls.uk/os/6inch-england-and-wales/>

Facts, descriptions, old photographs and historical information used in the walks are from sources openly available on the internet. The sources are recorded with links – readers can use the links (available at time of writing – 2025) to obtain further information.

1. Beeston Centre

Beeston largely owes its existence to the development of a Saxon village close to the Trent. The earliest name of the settlement was Bestune, recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086. The village was surrounded by pasture and grazing land from which comes the Old English origin of its name (bēos – bent rye grass and tūn – settlement or farmstead). The origin of this ancient name is still preserved in the name Beeston Rylands, to the south of the town.

There is a view, popular locally, that the name derives from the Old English bēo (bee), but this is unlikely as the plural form of bēo would be bēon, not bēos. The "bee" derivation encouraged the notion of Beeston as a "hive of industry" and the bee was adopted as the emblem of the town council. Beehives appear carved in the brick of the town-hall exterior, and in 1959 three bees were included in the coat of arms adopted by Beeston and Stapleford Urban District Council and retained in later Councils. However, the College of Arms included long grasses entwined with meadow crocuses in the arms, reflecting on the likelier origin as "farmstead where bent-grass grows." Nonetheless, the bee tradition continues – litter bins and other street furniture in the High Road are decorated in black and gold with a bee symbol on each. There is a sculpture in the High Road of a man sitting next to a beehive, popularly known as the "Bee-man", "the man of Beeston", etc., though officially called "The Beeston Seat." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beeston,_Nottinghamshire

Some four centuries of settlement followed the development of the village, interrupted and influenced by incursions by Danish and Norman invaders. The Domesday Survey of 1086 marked the start of the Medieval period noted for the influence of the Church and the Lord of the Manor. Beeston was ecclesiastically under the control of Lenton Priory and the main overlordship was in the hands of William Peveril and eventually granted to Hugh de Beauchamp. <http://www.beeston-notts.co.uk/topics.shtml>



Like most towns, Beeston has undergone many changes over the centuries. Some of the most obvious relatively recent changes have been in the vicinity of the tram stop, as shown in the old maps above. The 1884 map shows the area was fields, with two schools (see 2) on one side. At the northern end of this area

were cottages known as 'The Poor Row'. These simply built homes were given to the poor of the parish where they could live rent free. The cottages were demolished in 1844/45.

By 1947, the fields were gone, replaced by Styring Street – now the route of the tram.

Beeston saw one of its greatest changes in the early 19th century. It was at this time with the growth of the weaving industry that Beeston's status changed from village to town. The first silk mill was built in the 'new town' in 1826 but the mill was burnt down (along with Nottingham Castle) in the Reform Bill riots of 1831. With the decline of the silk industry, many former mills gained light industrial uses in the early 20th century, for example the Beeston Boiler Company. Another manufacturer of the town's past was Thomas Humber and partners who made bicycles and eventually motor-cycles and cars at a factory at the junction of what are now Queens Road and Humber Road from 1880 to 1907 when the firm moved to Coventry.

The cycle of demolition and rebuilding continued. A Bestonian article in 2016 notes that "*Changes to the places where people live are inevitable. Sometimes change is a slow evolution and is hardly noticed. At other times, as with the trams, the change is sudden and dramatic and has a huge impact*".

<https://beestonian.com/beestons-changing-times/>

In the 1960's shops were built in the Square and also a Bus Station and Multi-storey Car Park.

Highway alterations to take the tramway across Station Road were quite significant and followed on from major changes required for the construction of the Tesco supermarket on the corner. The whole area between Station Road and Styring Street has changed out of all recognition. The Fire Station had already gone (relocated to Hassocks Lane) and NET works required the removal of the very poorly laid out bus station, part of the multi-storey car park and some 13 retail units next to and within the Beeston Square complex, including the Wilko Hardware store – the management saying there was nowhere else in Beeston where they could relocate so the store was gone for good, much to the great complaint of many.

In the event, Broxtowe Borough decided the multi-storey wasn't needed anyway so the whole lot came down and, after much fuss, a new Wilko store has opened (but closed in 2023 when most Wilko stores nationally closed), together with other new stores in the Henry Boot redevelopment of Beeston Square. The bus station was incorporated into the tram stop area, providing immediate interchange.

Significant re-development of the Beeston Square area has occurred since the tram arrived and is still happening – a new students accommodation under construction in 2025.



2. Bromley House

Formerly Church Street School, opened in 1883.

The school comprised a two story building on Church Street for mixed infants and junior girls and a single-story building for the junior boys on Church Lane. A caretaker's house was included and each building had its own playground bounded by walls and railings.

Old photo from c1950s <https://www.nottinghampost.com/news/local-news/gallery/looking-back-life-beeston-3189843>



On 13th October 1952, the Church Street Schools changed their names to Beeston Manor County infants'/junior girls'/junior boys' Schools. On 30th July 1953, the junior boys moved into the two-storey

building to join the girls and form a mixed junior school – Beeston Manor County Junior School. The infants moved into the single-story building - Beeston Manor County Infants' School. In January 1958, the junior and infant schools amalgamated to form the Beeston County Primary School.

The school buildings were used by Broxtowe College from 1980 to 2005 for youth training programmes. The buildings were then sold and work began to renovate the outside of the two-storey building and convert it into apartments in 2011. New buildings were erected on the boys' school playground.

<https://h2g2.com/entry/A24325913>

3. St John the Baptist Church

The church is medieval and the chancel remains, but the remainder was heavily restored and rebuilt in 1842. Grade II listed.

The first definite evidence of a church does not appear until the end of the 12th Century. Over the centuries this was to be rebuilt several times, notably in the 16th century. In 1842 the medieval church was surveyed and, with the exception of the chancel, found to be unsafe. Demolition of the old church was completed by 1843 and re-building around the medieval chancel completed by 1844. A few fragments from earlier structures can still be found there.

In 1538, a third of Beeston's population of between 300 and 350 died as a result of the plague. Their bodies were interred in a communal grave on the east side of the Churchyard. This was later to be known as 'the plague hole'.

<http://www.beeston-notts.co.uk/topics.shtml>

4. Arthur Cossons

An enthusiastic historian and pioneer in local history, Arthur Cossons (1893-1963) was born in Somerset and grew up in Chippenham before starting work in 1907 in various outfitters' shops. In WW1 he enlisted in the Royal Army Medical Corps, serving at home and overseas.

Back in civilian life, Arthur started training as a teacher, matriculating in 1921. In the following year he was appointed a teacher at Church Street Boys School, Beeston, and in 1930 as headmaster of Lenton Abbey Junior School (which was replaced by Beeston Fields Junior School in 1932). From 1932 to retirement in 1958 he was headmaster of Church Street Junior Boys School. His interest was clearly in history, but with a particular passion for local history and its teaching, mainly focused on the Beeston area. He set up a unique school museum of local finds, encouraging children to go on expeditions and contribute to the museum's collections.

He wrote prolifically for newspapers, popular and academic journals, and books. He had a special interest in turnpikes, writing *The Turnpike Roads of Nottinghamshire* in 1934 and following it with similar studies on five other counties. He was an untiring protagonist for adult education, a keen conservationist and for many years the Honorary Secretary of the Nottinghamshire Branch of the Historical Association; but, above all, in the words of his son Sir Neil Cossons, he was 'a natural teacher'.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/30120216@N07/53059515549>

5. Crown Inn

The building probably became associated with beer sometime between about 1835 and 1841, although the building itself probably dates from about 1800. It is believed that a Mr Samuel Starr established the pub.

He had been brewing beer on the premises since at least 1841. As a 'common brewer' he would have sold his beer to anyone wishing to purchase it for consumption at home. http://www.beeston-notts.co.uk/landmark_pubs2.shtml

The building is Grade-II listed. In 2010 it was the regional winner of CAMRA's 'Pub of the Year' competition.

6. Middle Street

The ancient centre of the old village was once around the crossroads of Middle Street, Dovecote Lane and Church Street, close to the Manor House. It was here that the **medieval cross** once stood, probably where the War Memorial now stands. Although there are no written records, it is likely that the cross was the focus for a busy and thriving market.

The cross was taken down in 1860 and its stones used in a nearby wall. Here it remained until 1926 and its chance discovery by local historian and headmaster, Arthur Cossons (4). Cossons had the fractured stump of the 14th century cross shaft re-erected close to his beloved school on Church Street, where it still stands, now marked with a 'Blue Plaque'. <https://beestonian.com/beestons-changing-times/>

The Manor House was originally timber-framed but was rebuilt in brick in both 1675 and 1725.

The first family to own the house was the Strey Family, who were lay impropriators [someone who is not a member of the clergy but holds a position of authority in a church]. They were considered to be an important local family. The Strey's held lordship from the 16th century until the 19th century.

The last Strey family member to live in the Manor was Richard Strey. He died in 1797 and the house was passed on to a cousin. In 1840, the Manor House was bought by a surgeon named John Orton, who gave the Manor to his daughter when she married Benjamin Baker Venn in 1866.

The Venn's, a family who had lace making and hosiery interests, occupied the house up until 1978.

The current owners developed what used to be the Manor's old garage and horse stables, into Manor Arts dance school.

<https://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMXG3V>

7. The Victoria

In 1840 a small hotel was built by Samuel Herrick Surplice on Station Villas (down to the left, just before the pub yard), and named in honour of Queen Victoria who was crowned three years earlier. The Victoria provided refreshments, accommodation and stabling for travellers between Nottingham & Derby.

In 1868, the hotel was rebuilt on a new site opposite the Beeston Brewery (see below). At this time, the Brewery was located on land alongside the railway to the south-west of the hotel, accessed from Dovecote Lane but then this road was named Rylands Road, presumably reflecting the area known as Beeston Rylands.

Ownership of the hotel later transferred to the Burton-on-Trent based Ind Coope & Co.

In the 1890s Ind Coope prepared plans to rebuild the Victoria for a third time. The proposals include the creation of 12 letting rooms, a dining room, a large recreation room to be used as a Billiard Room, pleasure gardens, stabling and a coach house. The new building was opened in 1899 as the Victoria Commercial Hotel with Sarah Lawton as the advertised proprietor. Sarah had been running the previous hotel and was to remain at the Victoria for the next 27 years



In 1925, Rylands Road was renamed Dovecote Lane. By this time George Augustus Lawton, presumably Sarah's son, had taken over the mantle of proprietor, but both had left the premises by the following year. By late 1980's The Victoria Hotel had fallen on hard times, and several prospective buyers failed to see any great potential for the property and in 1994 The Victoria was acquired by Tynemill Ltd (now Castle Rock) in March. Improvements were implemented and the partially restored Victoria was re-opened in 1994 and remains a popular pub today. <https://vichotelbeeston.co.uk/>

Beeston Brewery



The Beeston Brewery Company was formed in the late 1870s, and a brewery was built in 1880 alongside the Midland Railway line between Nottingham and Derby. The company had its own railroad sidings running off the mainline.



The company had both malting and brewery functions on the same site. It was the first brewery in England to have pneumatic maltings. Pneumatic malting, first developed in the late nineteenth century, enabled the more precise control of temperature and moisture in the germination stage of the process and reduced labour costs.

An extension to the brewery was made in 1884 and a new barley store was added in 1898. In 1889 a fire destroyed part of the complex including the pneumatic maltings, but the brewery part of the complex was saved by the local fire brigade.

The company was taken over by James Shipstone and Sons Limited in 1922. Brewing ceased and in 1924 Shipstones converted the buildings to a maltings. The last maltings were done in 2000, after which the buildings were mothballed.

The remaining buildings survived until 2012 when demolition started. The site was cleared early in 2013 and is now The Maltings housing development.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beeston_Brewery_Company

8. Beeston Station



The station in 1840

The station was built in 1839 for the Midland Counties Railway; services began on 4 June 1839. In 1844, the Midland Counties Railway joined with the North Midland Railway and the Birmingham and Derby Junction Railway to form the Midland Railway.

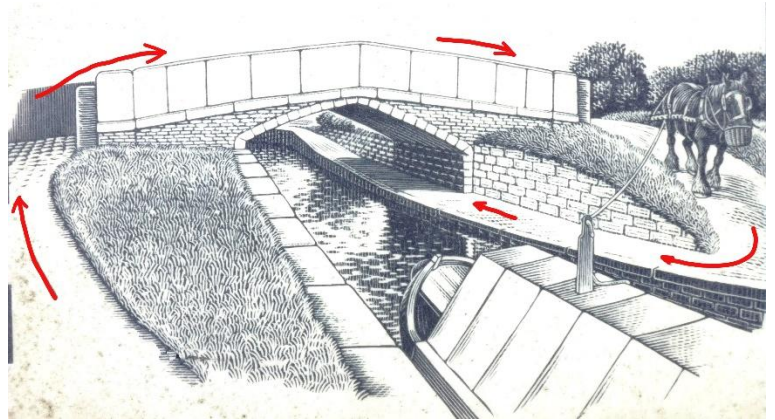
The original station building, which was little more than a cottage, was replaced in 1847 with the substantially larger white brick building with ashlar trimmings which still exists

The line was originally crossed by a level crossing and a lattice footbridge. In 1969, Beeston and Stapleford Urban District Council built a road bridge (Station Bridge) across the railway to ease traffic delays caused by the frequent closure of the level crossing. This effectively replaced the footbridge between the two platforms. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beeston_railway_station

9. Turnover Bridge

Turnover bridges enabled a horse pulling a canal boat to cross the canal when the towpath moved from one side to the other.

The tow rope remained connected during this manoeuvre and the iron bollards at each end of the bridge show grooves made by the towing ropes over many years.



10. Heritage Centre, Beeston Lock & Weir

The Canalside Heritage Centre is a vibrant hub for visitors to explore, with an interpretation centre, as well as gardens and with fantastic views across the River Trent. The historic quartet of canal workers' cottages were some of the first buildings in the local area, built as part of the Beeston Cut in 1796. Lived in successively by families and evolving over the years to suit their current needs, by 1980 they were abandoned and derelict.

The Nottingham & Beeston Canal opened in 1796, connecting collieries at Wollaton and Bilborough to Langley Mill, and from there to the Cromford Canal. Beeston Lock is where the canal bypasses unnavigable parts of the River Trent, enabling coal to be transported into Nottingham city centre. The canal then takes boaters through Castle Lock before returning them to the River Trent at Trent Bridge.

Today it is still used by boaters to bypass the tricky shallows of the Trent.

Beeston Weir and Power Station was built in 1999. The hydro-electric plant uses river flow to generate enough electricity for 2,000 homes.



Lock cottages and Weir; old photos from the Heritage Centre



<https://www.steamheritage.co.uk/museums-and-attractions/entry/canalside-heritage-centre-beeston>

https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/media/document/az_2-pe74rP40Pj0UI4SXA/OTUXSsnwglInAFDAyl2OfNgfQuTSvnyrlo3lt6nfqw/aHROcHM6Ly9jcnRwcm9kY21zdWtzMDEuYmxvYi5jb3JlLndpbmRvd3MuYmV0L2RvY3VtZW50Lw/018f38ed-a133-75c3-9e7c-e39d79420db9.pdf



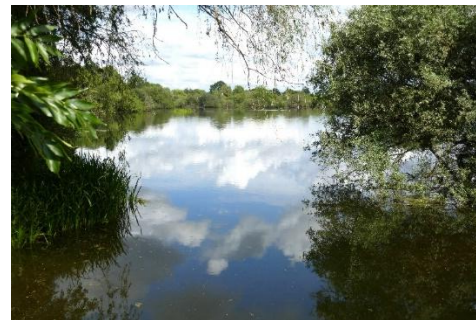
An aerial view of the River Trent c1927. Beeston Canal lock and weir are top right.

<https://www.nottinghampost.com/news/local-news/gallery/looking-back-life-beeston-3189843>

11. Attenborough Nature Reserve

Attenborough Nature Reserve is owned and managed by Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, supported by Broxtowe Borough Council, following its purchase from Cemex UK, a gravel extraction company, in December 2020. The site was used as gravel pits between 1929 and 1967. As sections of the site were worked out they were restored as wetland. The reserve was established at the completion of an earlier phase of workings in 1966 and was opened by the naturalist and broadcaster Sir David Attenborough, whose family came from the area (see 12).

The reserve now covers 145 hectares of lakes, wetland, grassland and scrub. It is part of an area designated as the Attenborough Gravel Pits Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The gravel pits are significant for the numbers of wintering shoveler and bitterns, as well as the numbers of breeding birds.



The walk does not go as far as the main lakes and the nature centre (which has won a Gold award for eco-tourism) and café, all worth a visit. Best to go via the main entrance, accessed from Attenborough. The centre was completed in 2005 and, almost 40 years after he opened the reserve itself, Sir David Attenborough returned to open the centre.

One path through the reserve is closed due to an old bridge, known as the Works Bridge, being closed in 2023 as it was considered unsafe to use. Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust have been working to secure funds to replace the bridge. The trust have yet to set a date for the installation of the new bridge but, in April 2025, said the next steps would include submitting a planning application to the local authority.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attenborough_Nature_Reserve <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c98556040k0o>

12. Attenborough Village

The village of Attenborough has a rich history, with evidence of human settlement dating back to the Bronze Age. It was known in Saxon times as Addensburgh, the name meaning “at the fortified place”, and later Attenborrow.

It was the home village of Henry Ireton (1611 –1651), an English general in the army of Parliament during the English Civil War and an MP. He met and befriended Oliver Cromwell and later married Cromwell’s eldest daughter, Bridget.

The village church, St Mary's, dates back to the 13th century. In the graveyard, there is a memorial to the 134 people killed on 1 July 1918 in an explosion in the shell factory in nearby Chilwell. This death toll remains the largest number of deaths caused by a single explosion in mainland Britain.

One website states that the village of Attenborough was named after the Attenborough family, who owned the land in the area for over 400 years. I think this is doubtful. Another website states the family name is derived from the village name, which seems more likely. The Attenborough family, famous today for the brothers Richard, actor and film director, and David, naturalist and broadcaster, originate in Nottinghamshire. Records of their ancestors, the Attenborrows, start with the family living at Clifton around the year 1500 and then moving, in the 1600s, to Stapleford.

<https://www.townandvillageguide.com/Nottinghamshire/Attenborough.html?County=Nottinghamshire&Town=Attenborough>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attenborough,_Nottinghamshire
<https://selectsurnames.com/attenborough/>

13. The Hop Pole

Two-roomed pub dating back to 1870 (the building was 1847) that straddles the Chilwell/Beeston border offering six cask ales and three box dispensed real ciders. Popular with locals, with an emphasis on beer in a friendly environment. The pub features original beams while the fireplace in the back bar keeps the visitor warm in winter. A small beer garden with bench seating is towards the rear. <https://camra.org.uk/pubs/>

