The Richard the Third Trail

Document *R3T B*: *Supplementary Information about Leicester*, PDF B

NB: We are reluctant to recommend WIKIPEDIA as a source of information, and have avoided it below. WIKIPEDIA is not a peer reviewed site and the quality of its entries is very variable. It may be used for a general history of Leicester, and information about Richard III, with suitable caution. Both entries are detailed, with source citations. Needless to say, literary versions, including Shakespeare's, of Richard's physical appearance, life and behaviour, should not be taken as historically accurate. Where Leicester is concerned, here is a useful website for starters: ***www.storyofleicester.info***

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Having arrived across country into the suburban area of Leicester (Manor Road Extension), our *R3T: B* document attempts to alert walkers to things of interest as we progress to Leicester Cathedral and the *King Richard III Visitor Centre*, before proceeding out of the city along the *Great Central Way* to pass through Narborough. As our main directions indicate, it is possible to detour slightly from the designated route to explore a few notable features. It is therefore worth repeating (see our **Introduction** in ***R3T A: Directions***) that advance planning is advisable, in view of the length of the journey through Leicester, and the time necessary to make best use of the information provided here.

Manor Road and Stoneygate

Manor Road is historically one of the wealthiest areas of Leicester and contains some fine properties. It is part of a conservation area. We have provided a useful 2005 survey for walkers to use as a guide through this part of the city. See ***Oadby Hill Top and Meadowcourt Conservation Area***, which can also be downloaded from Leicester County Council's *Richard the Third Trail* section of their 'Choose How You Move' website. Additional Information about the area near London Road is contained in two guides for Stoneygate which include useful maps. These can be found within this link:

www.stoneygateconservation.org/?page_id=472

The Botanic Gardens

The walk along Manor Road accommodates a slight detour along Glebe Road to visit Leicester's Botanic Gardens – full title the *University of Leicester Botanic Garden & Attenborough Arboretum*. Further information can be found at ***www2.le.ac.uk/institution/botanic-garden***

Those interested in matters botanical may also like to visit the website of the *Leicestershire and Rutland Gardens Trust* at ***www.lrgt.org***

Leicester Botanic Gardens.
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Victoria Park

Victoria Park extends over 69 acres. It was the site of the city's racecourse until 1883. (The present racecourse is now just off the A6 on the edge of Oadby, over the road from the Botanic Gardens.) The park was part of a network of green spaces extending down to Saffron Lane and Aylestone Road (see **Aylestone Meadows** below), though the old Freemen's Common was built over in the late 1960s and is now an unattractive industrial estate, opposite Leicester City's football ground (the *King Power Stadium* at the time of writing). Between these two areas lies the *Raw Dykes*: the remains of a Roman aqueduct.

Items of interest in and around Victoria Park include:

1. The University of Leicester

As you take the footpath across the Park (see ***R3T: A***), looking to your left up ahead you can see some of the buildings of the University of Leicester. We quote from the University's website:

> The University was founded as Leicestershire and Rutland University College in 1921. The site for the University was donated by a local textile manufacturer, Thomas Fielding Johnson, in order to create a living memorial for those who lost their lives in the First World War. This is reflected in the University's motto *Ut Vitam Habeant* – 'so that they may have life'. Students were first admitted to the College in 1921. In 1927, after it became University College, Leicester, students sat the examinations for external degrees of the University of London. In 1957 the College was granted its Royal Charter, and has since then had the status of a University with the right to award its own degrees.
>
> The University won the first ever series of University Challenge, in 1963.
>
> The very compact campus contains a wide range of twentieth century architecture, though the oldest building, the Fielding Johnson Building, dates from 1837 [and houses] the University's administration offices and Leicester Law School. This was formerly the Leicestershire and Rutland Lunatic Asylum. Adjacent to the Fielding Johnson Building are the Astley Clarke Building, home to the School of Economics, and the Danielle Brown Sports Centre. The skyline of Leicester University is punctuated by three distinctive, towering, buildings from the 1960s: the Engineering Building, the Attenborough Tower and the Charles Wilson Building. The University's Engineering Building of 1963 was the first major building by important British architect Sir James Stirling. The 18-storey Attenborough Tower, housing several departments within the College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, has one of the very few remaining paternosters in the UK. The Ken Edwards Building, built in 1995, lies adjacent to the Fielding Johnson Building and is home to the School of Management. Built in 1957, the Percy Gee Building is home to Leicester University's Students' Union. The David Wilson Library was opened by Queen Elizabeth II in December 2008, following an extensive refurbishment.

The University site contains the childhood home of Richard and David Attenborough, which later became part of the Department of Mathematics. (See also our entry for the Leicester Museum and Art Gallery below.)

University of Leicester: The Engineering Building (James Stirling, 1963) from Victoria Park.
The building can be viewed from within the University campus in the context of its surroundings.

2. The Arch of Remembrance

This structure is a Grade I Listed War Memorial (ref: 1074786). The Listing states:

> Historic interest: as an eloquent witness to the tragic impacts of world events on this community, and the sacrifices it made in the conflicts of the C20th. Architect: the nationally renowned…Sir Edwin Landseer Lutyens (1869-1944), who designed 58 memorials at home and abroad including the Cenotaph in Whitehall… Architectural interest: the most imposing of Lutyens's English war memorials, a monumental Arch of Remembrance in a railed enclosure… Group value: with the gates (listed Grade II) designed by Lutyens on the approach to the memorial from University Road. The memorial stands within the registered Victoria Park (Grade II); the main gates and entrance lodges (all listed Grade II) on London Road are also by Lutyens.

Sir Edwin Lutyens: Memorial Arch, Victoria Park.

3. The De Montfort Hall

The De Montfort Hall is Leicester's premier concert location. Designed by Shirley Harrison (1876-1961), it was built in 1913 by the Corporation of Leicester, and is owned by the City Council. Currently the Hall seats around 2000 people. It is notable for its splendid pipe organ of 1914, which may be the only surviving example of a type built by Stephen Taylor and Sons of Leicester. It contains 6000 pipes. The Hall's shoe box shape is acoustically favourable for orchestral concerts. (Chamber music has been staged in one of the side rooms off the main auditorium.) The famous conductor Sir John Barbirolli (1899-1970) preferred it to the Free Trade Hall in Manchester, home at that time to the Hallé Orchestra, which often visited Leicester. The Hall can be surprisingly sympathetic to amplified concerts, provided volume levels are carefully managed.

**De Montfort Hall, Leicester. Exterior and interior views,
the latter showing the stage and historic pipe organ.**

New Walk

New Walk is Leicester's most delightful pedestrianized thoroughfare, which leads from the edge of Victoria Park to the city centre, running parallel with London Road. In his description in the 1960 Leicestershire edition of *The Buildings of England*, Pevsner remarks:

> It was [when built] outside the town…houses grew up around it and fronting on it [yet it] has remained a promenade…and it is unique in England in this respect. For it is now right in the middle of the town, and yet has successfully resisted the intrusion of wheeled traffic. One can still walk here unharassed under trees.

Formerly a residential area, it is now largely given over to business premises, though a few homes remain. New Walk is Grade II Listed (ref: 1000963), as 'A public walk established in 1785, extending for 1.1km from the C18th fashionable quarter of Leicester to the town's racecourse, now Victoria Park'. The citation continues:

> In 1785 the Corporation proposed to establish a public walk, to be called Queen's Walk, extending from the fashionable Pocklington's Walk area to the racecourse [now Victoria Park]. The New Walk, as it in fact came to be known, began at the junction of a newly built street with the Welford turnpike, which had been created about twenty years earlier. It was laid out just within the South Fields of St Margaret's parish, close to the boundary hedge which separated the open field land from the enclosed land beyond. The Corporation paid for the labour involved in its construction and supplied the gravel, while a public subscription of £250 paid for the trees and shrubs planted along it. Wide and pleasing views were enjoyed from almost everywhere along its length, across the unenclosed South Fields. Although in due course fashionable development spread along its length, until 1812 its character was entirely rural. The start of building was facilitated by the enclosure of the South Fields by Act of 1804 and Award of 1811, with part of the expenses thereof being defrayed by the sale of small lots along the line of the Walk. In fact, until 1824 there was very little building, and the Corporation restricted development to the north side of the Walk and entirely prohibited it on the south, which was reserved for gardens. In 1824 the Corporation gave permission for residential development of a type which would preserve the pedestrian character of the Walk, with covenants which stated that buildings had to be set back ten yards from it, and their gardens fronted with iron palisading. Gas lighting was installed in 1832, perhaps a recognition of the Walk's increasingly residential character. Even so the take up of plots was slow - only sixty had been built on by 1847 - and it was not until the 1860s that larger-scale development began. It was only in the late C19 that development reached Victoria Park…created at the end of the Walk by the Corporation in 1883 on the site of the racecourse. In 1969 the Walk was designated as a Conservation Area; since then many properties along its length have been renovated and there has been some renewal of trees and street furniture.
>
> In 1840 a tunnel for the south-bound railway was cut through underneath the centre of the New Walk, and in the early 1970s Waterloo Way, a new road, was cut beneath the Walk on the west side of the railway. [DAW: The original plan was to run Waterloo Way through New Walk, cutting it in half. The present continuity was maintained following vigorous protests by a local environmental action group.]

…New Walk remains a traffic-free public walk. It is c. 10m wide and tree lined, while the private houses and other buildings which line it are set back, according to the Corporation ordinances of 1824, by at least 9m and have no vehicular access off it. Many, particularly north-west of De Montford Square, are listed. Along the south side of New Walk are three open spaces: Museum Square, which contains the Museum (listed grade II), a large neo-classical building with pedimented portico, opened in 1849 in what had been built in 1836 to a design by J. A. Hansom as a Nonconformist Proprietary School; the much larger De Montfort Square, grassed, and with a statue (listed grade II) of 1870 of Robert Hall (d. 1831), Baptist preacher, advocate of press freedom and supporter of Joseph Priestly, by J. Birnie Philip; and the railed Oval, grass with some specimen trees. Public buildings along the Walk include the Roman Catholic Chapel (Joseph Ireland 1817-19) and St. Stephen's church (A. R. G. Fenning 1893). There is much cast-iron street furniture along the New Walk, notably lamp standards and arches supporting a central light. It is of a pattern seen in Paris in 1895 by Alderman Faire. Whether any of the original ironwork remains is unknown; lights of the same pattern were installed in the 1960s, and the whole of the south side of the walk was lit with columns of the same pattern imported from France in the 1990s.

One of Leicester's prized areas: New Walk, looking south back down our route.

Plaque in New Walk just before Welford Place, which has proved to be too unobtrusive for some cyclists!

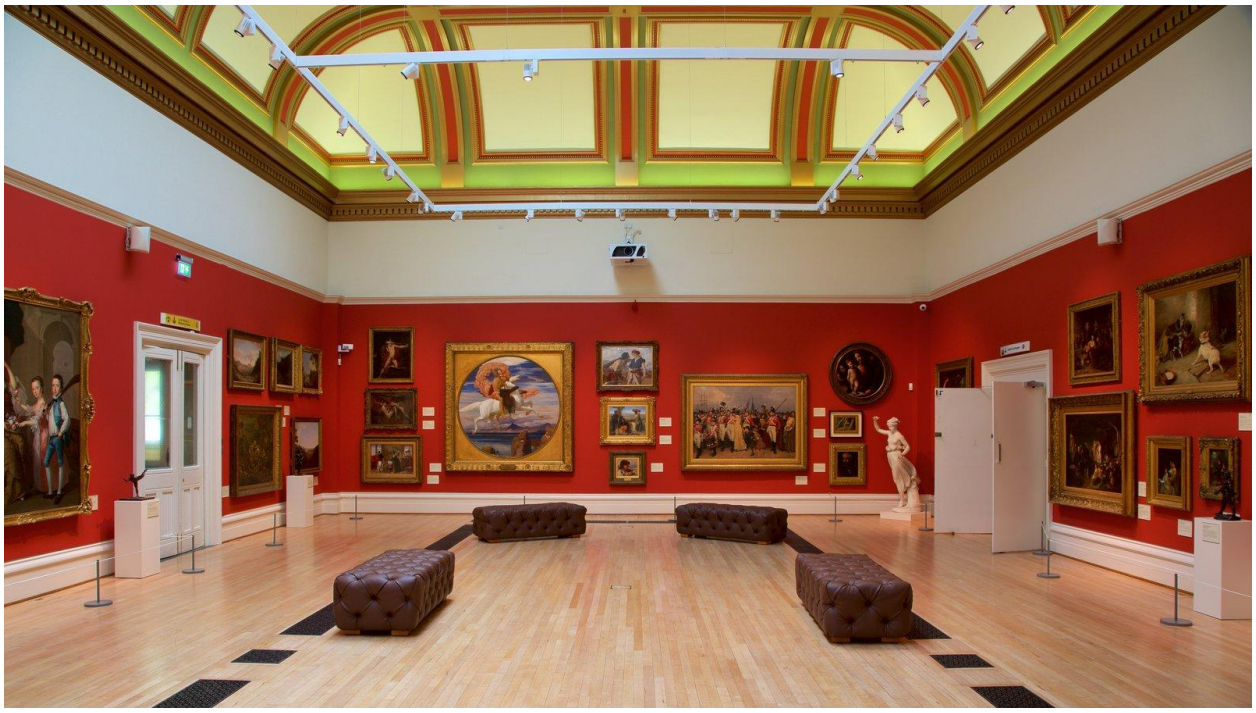
Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, New Walk

Among its other treasures, this building houses an important collection of German Expressionist art, and a large collection of Picasso ceramics, bequeathed by Sir Richard Attenborough. It also hosts chamber and instrumental concerts, including the Leicester International Music Festival, in one of its most attractive galleries. Concerts have presented world class performers and are often sold out. For more information visit

www.leicester.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/museums-and-galleries

and

www.leicesterinternationalmusicfestival.org.uk



Leicester Museum and Art Gallery. This space doubles for the chamber and instrumental music concerts. (View is from the stage, without concert seating.)

As you leave New Walk you will pass the statue of John Biggs (1801-71) on the traffic island at Welford Place. This was originally made in 1873 of white marble and stood at the end of New Walk, which you have just left. It was damaged beyond repair after being hit by a tram in 1928. The present statue is of bronze. Biggs was a Chartist who campaigned for, and established in his own hosiery firm, a more humane regime for working people. He brought to attention the conditions in which framework knitters were exploited, and lobbied for the regulation of children's employment. While still a young man Biggs was active in the founding of the Leicester and Leicestershire Political Union. He became Mayor of Leicester in 1840, 1847 and 1855, playing a significant part in establishing local amenities, to include a water supply, a sewerage system, a museum and a cemetery for the city. He stood successfully as a Liberal candidate for Leicester in the 1856 by-election, being re-elected in the General Elections of 1857 and 1859. It has been suggested that his business interests eventually failed in 1861 because he concentrated too much on politics. He moved to a terraced house at 46 West Street, and died there. He is buried in Welford Road Cemetery, which is on the other side of University Road, beyond and to the left of the Lutyens Memorial Arch from our route into the city centre (see **Victoria Park**, above).

More information about Biggs and his family can be found online.

NB: As you stand next to the statue in Welford Place, Welford Road is the multi-laned highway which runs down to Leicester Prison on the left, and the Leicester Royal Infirmary complex on the right of the one-way system. (These days the view is dominated by Leicester Tigers' grandstand, just beyond the site of the old Granby Halls.) Biggs's house is on the corner of West Street and Lancaster Road, opposite what is now Nelson Mandela Park, on the left beyond the prison.

To Leicester Cathedral

Our approach to the Cathedral takes us along Pocklington's Walk. This street appears in C. P. Snow's novel *The Sleep of Reason* (1968). C. P. (Lord) Snow (1905-80) is a son of Leicester who is now probably best remembered for his comments about the mutual non-recognition of the 'two cultures' of science and the arts: he was critical of an educational system that, as he saw it, had since Victorian times promoted the latter at the expense of the former. He held positions in the Civil Service and Government, and had associations with the University of Cambridge (he was appointed Fellow of Christ's College in 1930), Wesleyan University (Fellow in the Centre for Advanced Studies, 1961-2), and delivered the Godkin Lectures at Harvard University in 1960. *The Sleep of Reason* is a grim, though rather plodding, tale. Its title is taken from Goya's etching *El sueño de la razón produce monstruos*, where the word *sueño* carries a double translation (*The sleep/dream of reason produces monsters*). Chapter One of the novel describes a bus journey from Leicester London Road Station by Sir Lewis Eliot and his son to see Eliot's father. Though the novel doesn't name them, it will be clear to anyone who knows the area that Eliot and son travel along the Aylestone Road, alight at Cavendish Road, and walk up Richmond Road to Eliot senior's house. Presumably this is a representation of Snow's birthplace, since a Blue Plaque can now be seen on the side wall opposite No 40.

Written in the first person, Eliot says on the novel's first page:

> You could still, it you knew your way about, trace some of the streets of the old market town: narrow harsh streets with homely names like Pocklington's Walk, along which I had gone to

work forty years before, craving not to be unknown, craving to get out of here. That I did not explain to my son Charles, who was discreetly puzzled as to why we were wandering through a quarter which, to any unbeglamoured eye, was sombre and quite unusually lacking in romance. (London: World Books, 1969.)

The Cathedral is the site of Richard III's reburial (see below). Though the building is not on the scale of the great English Cathedrals it frames an attractive space, and Richard's simple monument is tastefully designed. Readers of the *Leicestershire and Rutland* (1960) volume of *The Buildings of England* will note that the nearby church of St. Mary de Castro, in Castle Yard (which can be visited as part of the walk through this part of Leicester to the *Great Central Way* – **see R3T: PDF A, Leicester Section,**) receives more attention as far as architectural merit is concerned. In fact, until 1927 the Cathedral was the parish church of St. Martin. Externally the aspect is Victorian; the tower and spire (1861 and 1867) ape Early English manners (Pevsner: 'the detail is all correct'). Inside there are older remnants, including a displaced Norman frieze, but the entire effect is composite, as in so many churches the Victorians adapted to their own signatures.

Leicester Cathedral: the reburial tomb of Richard III. This is made from Swaledale fossil stone, quarried in North Yorkshire, standing on a marble plinth suitable for inscriptions. The coat of arms is made of marble and semi-precious stones. Reproduced by permission of van Heyningen & Haward Architects / Photograph by Carlo Draisci.

Leicester Cathedral.

Across the road from the Cathedral we have –

The King Richard III Visitor Centre

kriii.com/about-the-centre

Here it may be worth reminding walkers of the history of Richard III's association with Leicester, in view of highly publicized arguments about his final resting place, following the discovery of his remains beneath a nearby car park in 2012. Richard III (Richard of Gloucester, 1452-85) was the last of the Plantagenet dynasty, and final king of the House of York. He was born at Fotheringhay Castle, the start of our walk, and died at the Battle of Bosworth Field, in Leicestershire. (**See R3T: A** on **Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre,** and **Market Bosworth**.) He was buried in Leicester's Greyfriars church, the site of which became the now famous car park. Various locations for his reburial were suggested, including York Minster, Westminster Abbey, Middleham parish church, Barnard Castle chapel, and Fotheringhay College (search *Where should Richard III be buried?* for relevant websites). His descendents objected to Leicester and initiated a Judicial Review, which failed to establish their case.

Down the alley to the left of the Cathedral (looked at from the front elevation) stands the **Leicester Guildhall**, the earliest part of which dates from c. 1390. The building was previously Leicester's Town Hall until the present building was completed in 1876. Most of the structure dates from the 15th century. Among its other uses it functioned as a courtroom, a public library (the third oldest in England), a police station (Leicester's first police force, 1836), and staged theatrical performances. According to historian Michael Wood, Shakespeare may have acted here. There is no evidence to support the claim that Shakespeare discovered the tale of King Lear in Leicester, though the legend of the King is philologically associated with the city through a debatable account of the history of Britain by Geoffrey of Monmouth in the 12th century. According to A. D. Mills's *Dictionary of British Place Names* (Oxford, 2003) the name 'Leicester' derives from *Ligeraceaster* (early 10th century), *Ledecestre* (Doomsday Book, 1086), with a Roman connection as 'Roman town of the people called Ligore'.

During the English Civil War the Guildhall hosted a discussion about an ultimatum issued to the city, which stalled for time until Prince Rupert attacked on 30th May 1645, with the Royalists overrunning any defence and entering the building to loot desired items. This was only two weeks before the Royalists were defeated by Oliver Cromwell's New Model Army at the Battle of Naseby. The coat of arms of King Charles I can be seen inside the Mayor's Parlour. Our *Market Harborough Round* passes through the area of the Naseby Battle Field, between Sibbertoft and Welford. Michael Wood is mentioned in that Round in connection with Kibworth.

De Montfort University

De Montfort University occupies an extensive site near *The Newarke*. The Leicester School of Art was established in 1870, expanding later with the introduction of engineering, building and machine drawing elements to become The Leicester Colleges of Art and Technology. Further expansion led to the creation of Leicester Polytechnic until under provisions of the Education Reform Act of 1988 this became a Higher Education Corporation. This institution became de Montfort University in accordance with the Further

and Higher Education Act, 1992, which gave the right to the University to award its own degrees. The name derives from Simon de Montfort, a 13th century Earl of Leicester who has been credited with establishing the first parliament in 1265. In the 1990s the University pursued an expansionist policy through the East Midlands, acquiring a campus in Milton Keynes, taking over the HE activities at Bedford College, and absorbing Colleges of Art, and of Agriculture and Horticulture, in Lincolnshire. It also absorbed the Charles Frears College of Nursing and Midwifery in Leicester. All these acquisitions were subsequently sold off, and the city campus considerably expanded.

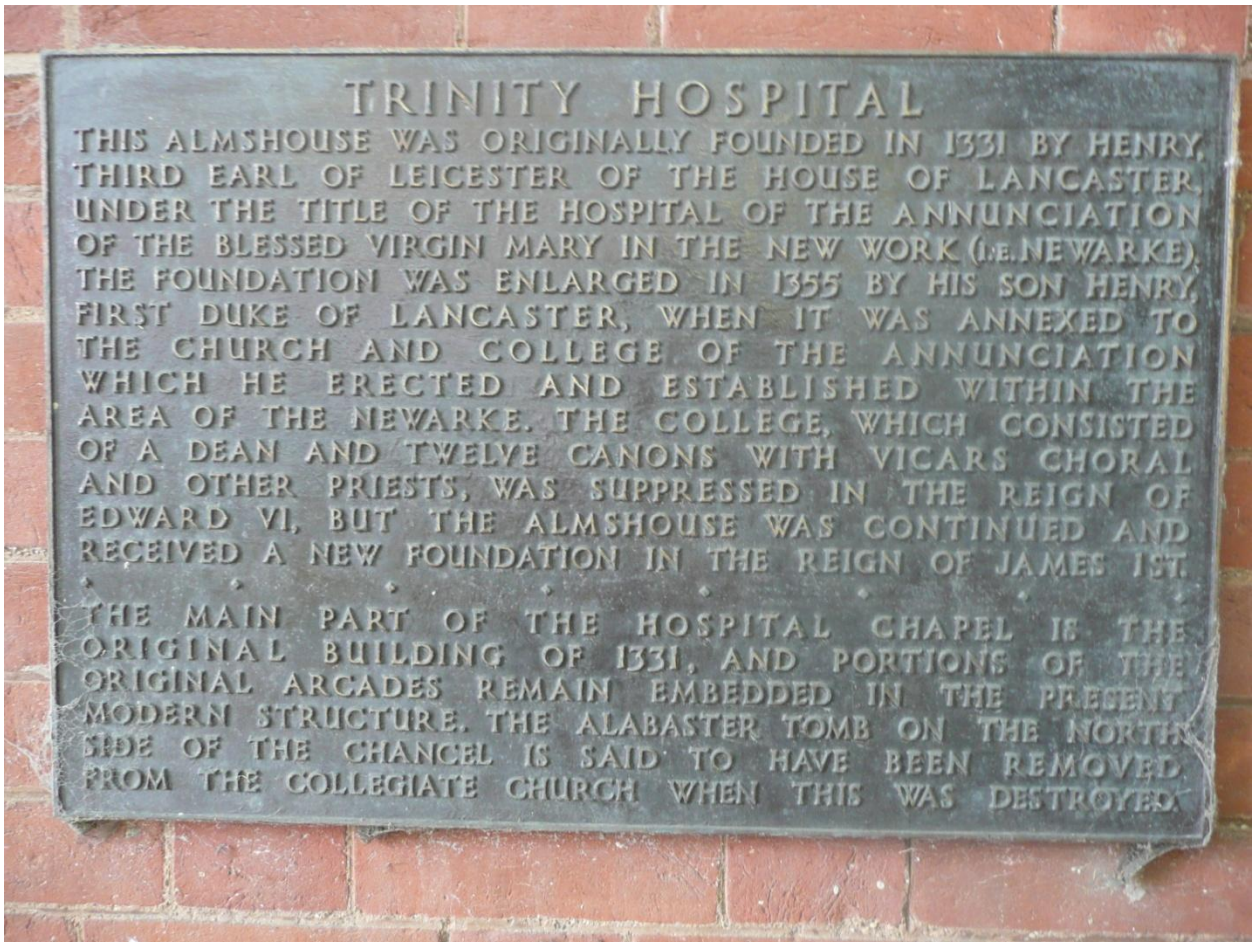
The campus lies near to Leicester Castle in a precinct built by the Earls and Dukes of Lancaster, known as *The Newarke*, whose name survives. The area includes the Newarke Gateway. Listed buildings include Trinity House (rebuilt 1901) which contains part of the 14th century Hospital of the Annunciation. The Hawthorn Building contains the ruins of the Church of the Annunciation of Our Lady of the Newarke (1353). Richard III's remains were reportedly displayed here before being buried at Greyfriars. The *De Montfort University Heritage Centre*, opened in 2015, features these ruins.

De Montfort University, Magazine Square, with the Hugh Aston Building and the medieval Magazine Gateway. The latter is now unfortunately situated next to a very busy thoroughfare.
(Used under Creative Commons, attrib: *NotFromUtrecht talk|contribs*.)

The **Newarke Houses Museum** stands just opposite the above photograph. Aside from any intrinsic interest, walkers should not miss the secluded garden to the rear which can be found just inside Castle Walk through a small gate on the right. This is a little oasis amid the surrounding bustle. St. Mary de Castro, mentioned above, can be found further along Castle Walk.

Further information on the museum can be found at:

www.storyofleicester.info/media/1123/newarke-houses-leaflet-v2b.pdf



Plaque to commemorate Trinity Hospital, The Newarke.

The text reads:

This almshouse was originally founded in 1331 by Henry, Third Earl of Leicester of the House of Lancaster, under the title of the Hospital of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the New Work (i.e. Newarke). The Foundation was enlarged in 1355 by his son Henry, First Duke of Lancaster, when it was annexed to the Church and College of the Annunciation which he erected and established within the area of The Newarke. The College, which consisted of a Dean and Twelve Canons with Vicars Choral and other priests, was suppressed in the reign of Edward VI, but the almshouse was

continued and received a new Foundation in the reign of James 1st. The main part of the Hospital Chapel is the original building of 1331, and portions of the original arcades remain embedded in the present modern structure. The alabaster tomb on the north side of the chancel is said to have been removed from the collegiate church when this was destroyed.

The Castle Gardens

The Gardens are situated just off *The Newarke*, and the area is a scheduled monument. This is the original site of Leicester Castle, though its only original remains are the mound of its base. St Mary de Castro has already been mentioned. The site gives access to the River Soar and includes moorings for canal boats on the Grand Union Canal (see **Riverside Central** map). The Gardens extend over four acres, and include a statue of Richard III. There is a yearly festival, celebrating the history of the Castle and its gardens.

The Gardens are an attractive place to pause before moving on to the *Great Central Way*.

Leicester Castle Gardens, looking back down the route.

The building on the left of the above photograph is the rear of the Grade I Listed Leicester Castle, an important historical structure, and one of the reference points in this very interesting and attractive area of the city.

A downloadable PDF, which contains useful basic information about the Castle, can be found at:

www.storyofleicester.info/media/1126/castle_leaflet-revised-june-13-1.pdf

View from the bridge (see next photograph). The Castle Gardens are on the left. This is the Grand Union Canal. The Canal and the River Soar become components of Aylestone Meadows as our route moves towards Narborough on the *Great Central Way*. See *R3T: A Leicester* for information about maps which can be downloaded to customize a way through this area, starting here.

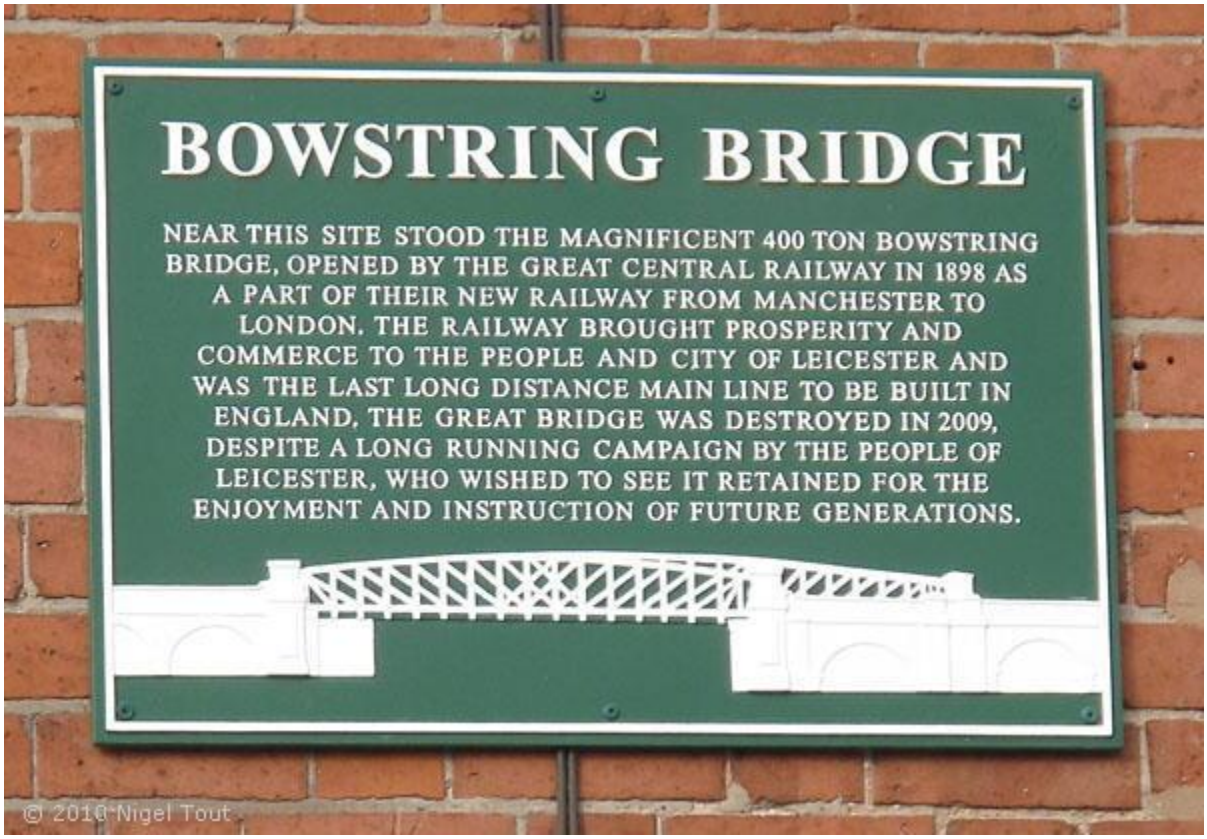
Walking the other way would lead you towards Frog Island and Abbey Park. In this direction it is possible from the Canal towpath to see the line of the old Great Central Railway running north through the city on a viaduct.

Castle Gardens, showing the bridge you must cross to find the *Great Central Way*.
See previous photograph.

The Great Central Way

The *Great Central Way* (*GCW*), proceeds along the track bed of the defunct Great Central Railway line, which ran from Nottingham Victoria station, though Leicester, to London Marylebone. It was the final main line railway to be built (and to a high standard), opening in 1898. It was closed in 1969. What remains of the typical CGR station, with its island platform, can be found at Great Central Street, just off the inner ring road, close to the start of the *GCW*. The line was notable for its series of viaducts along the approach from Nottingham, and a number of bridges leaving Leicester. Sad to say, the fine Braunston Gate ('Bowstring') Bridge has been demolished to make way for De Montfort University's expansion.

The impressive Braunston Gate Bowstring Bridge, demolished in 2009.
Reproduced by permission of Nigel Tout.



Reproduced by permission of Nigel Tout.

The ruins of history, at the entrance to the *Great Central Way* (which can be seen on the left). Part of the southern abutment of the Bowstring Bridge, with the Grand Union Canal. The location of this abutment appears on the right hand side of the photograph of the bridge, above.

Yet part of the GCR survives as a heritage railway; the only one in the country where steam can be seen operating along double tracks from a new halt in Birstall, north of the city, to the intact station at Loughborough. (There are also heritage stations at Rothley and Quorn along the line.) At the time of writing plans are well advanced to connect this eight mile section to that presently called the Great Central Railway Nottingham, which runs to Ruddington just outside Nottingham. (The re-established connection will run by a bridge over the current main line from Nottingham's only remaining station to London St. Pancras.) This would provide a through heritage route of around 18 miles.

For more information on the current *GCR* see: ***www.gcrailway.co.uk*** and for *GCRN*: ***www.gcrn.co.uk***

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There are a number of interesting landmarks along the *GCW*. Leicester City Council has published three very useful information leaflets to help visitors, which can be downloaded from the LCC website as *Riverside north*, *Riverside central*, and *Riverside south*. We have included the latter two as part of the

documents for our *Trail*. As our main directions make clear, it is possible to walk part of the route to Narborough along the Grand Union Canal towpath, or adjoining sections of the River Soar, at walkers' own initiatives. (See maps for possible routes.)

Part of the *Great Central Way*, with one of the bridge structures still intact and maintained.

The *GCW* runs roughly parallel to the Grand Union Canal for some distance, passing quite near to the *King Power Stadium*, home to Leicester City Football Club (the other side of Freemen's Lock on the map – Filbert Street was the name of the now demolished ground, since built over), and the two sites of Leicestershire Country Cricket Club. The first of these, used between the wars, is now partly occupied by blocks of flats (though the old pavilion still stands), the second is the current home of the Club at Grace Road. The inter-war ground used to be overshadowed by two huge cooling towers serving the Electricity Works. A little further along, our route passes behind the gasworks (now British Gas) which used to house a couple of gasometers, whose rise and fall could be seen from nearby locations. A proposal to List them as historically significant structures, following concerns raised by the City Mayor, was unsuccessful. The current site houses the National Gas Museum, which is well worth a visit. (Check opening hours at ***www.nationalgasmuseum.org.uk***). It stands below the 'Gas Clock', a local landmark, and next to the 'Gas Houses', a series of three-storey terraces built for gas workers in 1879. They are Grade II Listed (ref: 1381187) as numbers 201-247 Aylestone Road.

Aylestone Meadows

After passing behind the old gasworks, Aylestone Meadows can be found to the east of the *GCW*, with access points as shown on the *Riverside Central* map. DAW grew up near here and can remember when this area consisted largely of open use playing fields and the city refuse dump (easily accessible to kids), which stank. The site runs roughly parallel to Aylestone Road and the Grand Union Canal, whose towpath has been incorporated into the Meadows. This is a large area, sandwiched between Aylestone Road and Narborough Road, though part of it now contains a private football pitch. At the time of writing there are no refreshment or toilet facilities.

The image below is an untitled and undated watercolour, painted by DAW's grandfather, Arthur Harris (1890-1962), who retired as a sign writer for *Pickfords Removals and Storage*, still in existence at the time of writing. It shows an idealized river landscape which may well be based on a view south towards St. Andrew's church, Aylestone (the spire seems accurate), from a point in Aylestone Meadows.

Collection of Sue and David Wragg.

A view of the Grand Union Canal at Freeman's Lock, demonstrating an 'edgelands' profile. (See text below, under 'Narborough'.) Reproduced by permission.

The *Great Central Way* is atop this fine bridge over the Grand Union Canal in Aylestone Meadows. Reproduced by permission.

Narborough

Narborough is a satellite village of Leicester, gradually absorbed from the city's hinterlands, though separated by open spaces and what have been described as 'edgelands' – those fringe areas with somewhat liminal identities which are neither town nor countryside. Given its location, Aylestone Meadows might be described as an edgeland, not least because its management by Leicester City Council is distinct from the kind of commercial operations we find in farming. At the same time, the Council's preservation of the area for recreational pursuits is a check on urban expansion, and a haven for wildlife. Edgelands are important sites, not least because of the political ramifications of conservation issues. See, for example, Richard Mabey: *The Unofficial Countryside* (1973), Marion Shoard: *Edgelands* (2002 - Shoard first coined the term in her book), and Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts: *Edgelands* (2012). Coventry Road in Narborough is part of the Fosse Way, one of the most important Roman roads in the country, running from Lincoln to Exeter, via Leicester (including parts of the A46) and Bath. Our walk passes Narborough Station, which is part of the Leicester to Birmingham line, notable for its surviving Victorian buildings. There is a signal box and level crossing. The

station survives by popular demand, after being closed for a couple of years by British Railways in 1968. It was originally opened in 1864 and became part of the London and North Western Railway in 1867.

For those who would like to view its architecture, All Saints church can be found along our route on Church Lane. The building is an example of the Perpendicular style, with a chancel of 1887. Pevsner likes the south doorway.

The mid-17th century syenite Narborough Hall can be found at 19, Coventry Road.

This train didn't stop here…but Narborough Station was re-opened after pressure from local residents. Its Victorian buildings have so far survived (2017).

Narborough Hall, Coventry Road. Reproduced from Wikimedia Commons.

Possible Detours in Leicester, close to the route.

New Walk: Leicester London Road Station Frontage

Leicester London Road Station frontage. ©Keith Cooper, Northlight Images, used with permission.

Leicester London Road Station can be found by turning right just before the Museum – London Road runs parallel to New Walk. The station opened in 1840, and is the only main line station remaining in the city (the line terminates at London St. Pancras), following closures in the 1960s of the Great Central Station (see The Great Central Way above) and Belgrave Road Station, serving routes to the east – the latter's booking hall is now the site of an overpass. The platform buildings and the interior of the booking hall of London Road were replaced in 1978, but thankfully the entrance structure has survived. It was designed by Charles Trubshaw as part of a re-building of the original Campbell Street station between 1892 and 1894.

From Pocklington's Walk: Town Hall and Square

Leicester Town Hall and its square, remain a major focus of the city. The Town Hall was built between 1874 and 1876, designed by Francis Hames. It is a Grade II Listed structure in Queen Anne style. The fountain was unveiled in 1879. It is made of granite, and cast iron, painted bronze. The fountain was a gift from a former Mayor, Sir Israel Hart (1835-1911). The Town Hall Square is a popular place for people needing a rest from the city's bustle. As one might expect, pigeons are numerous.

From Leicester Cathedral and the King Richard III Visitor Centre: Jewry Wall Museum

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The Jewry Wall is part of Roman Leicester, overseen by *English Heritage*. It stands 9 metres (30 feet) high, making it one of the tallest surviving Roman masonry sections in Britain. It is the only part of Leicester's Roman baths still standing above Roman floor level. Its site is a short walk from Leicester Cathedral. For more information, see:

www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/jewry-wall

We cannot detail Leicester's Roman history in this document. Discoveries are still being made. For example, in February 2017 the *Leicester Mercury* announced the finding of

> **…the largest Roman mosaic floor found in Leicester in the past 30 years. The excavations in the city centre, being carried out by a team from the University of Leicester, offer a unique insight into everyday life more than 1,500 years ago in the then town of Ratae. The project, on the corner of Highcross Street and Vaughan Way, next to the John Lewis car park, has been running since November [2016]. It is taking place before the site is developed into apartments.**

Those interested in developments can look online, where websites and entries come and go.