

# Walking & Cycling Guide

## Beechdale, Bilborough & Strelley

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A NEW  
WORLD

## Beechdale, Bilborough & Strelley



BISF housing, Caincross Road

This area continued some of the Garden City ideals of Aspley, but here the outlook was altogether more like a 'New Town'. It was mainly built during late 1940s & early 50s, an era christened as a 'New World', when innovation and optimism were needed to re-build Britain in the years immediately after the Second World War. Many of the schools and council houses were built with the latest technology in pre-fabrication and Bilborough received royalty and cabinet ministers who were keen to see the important changes being made. The church of St John is most characteristic of the post-war period, while the nuclear bunker at Chalfont Drive is a stark reminder of that fading optimism. A part of the



St Martin's Church Door

old Bilborough village can still be seen today, nestled around the medieval church of St Martin.

Nearby, evidence of the pre-industrial world of agriculture survives at Strelley Village. It is here where the city ends and the Green Belt begins: a ring of countryside earmarked to contain the city and conserve the countryside. Yet the treasure trove of medieval and Georgian buildings which survive here actually derived their wealth from one of the earliest coalfields in Nottinghamshire, where the seams rise close to the surface and shallow 'bell-pits' have left pock marks on the land.

## 1. A New World

The area of Bilborough, Beechdale and Strelley was planned with its own industries, a sports centre, a grammar school (now a college) and modernist schools and churches. Shops were conveniently planned in centres such as Bracebridge Drive (1), while Glaisdale Drive became one of the largest industrial estates in the city, with perhaps the most impressive structure originally built by Farrands the retail grocers (2). Built in 1955 Harvey Hadden (3) quickly became the most important athletics ground in the city. Nearby, the former bus depot was complete only a few years before (4) and is a reminder of the city's ambitions for an expanding bus network. Schools such as Robert Shaw Primary (5) broke with tradition and were built with curved lines and flat roofs. The churches however are the most modern, even the old Bilborough St Martin (6) didn't escape the times. This was painted with a mural by the artist Evelyn Gibbs, founder of the acclaimed Midland Group. Bilborough St John The Baptist (7) is perhaps the city's finest example of the



Bilborough St John

1951 Festival of Britain style, designed by local architects Broadhead & Royle. It features wonderful mosaics, which were actually early Christian symbols found in the ruins of Coventry. The original parish of St John migrated from Narrow Marsh after it was bombed in 1941. Nearby the Catholic Church of St Hugh features an impressive parabolic (strong curve) roof (8) designed by John Rochford and Partners, who were also responsible for the structurally adventurous St Teresa's in Aspley (9). Both were complete during the 1960s. Yet that post-war optimism quickly faded as the cold war developed; the 50s concrete bunker "RSG3" at Chalfont Drive was one of 13 regional government bunkers to be built in case of nuclear fall-out (10).

## 2. Pre-fabrication

In the late 1940s pre-fabrication was necessary because 11,000 people were on the council's waiting list while materials and labour were scarce. So much in fact that prisoners of war were employed on-site for a time.

Among the first to be built were the aluminium bungalows on the west side of Wigman Road (11). These houses could be mass produced at a factory and then erected within a week.



Tarran Newland housing



Portland Primary, an aluminium school

Accompanying these came a thousand houses manufactured by the British Iron and Steel Federation (12), which were all-steel houses with a concrete base. These were being let by late 1947, by which time the order for "No Fines" houses was well underway (13). These were poured concrete houses made from a special concrete containing no fine aggregates (hence the name) and manufactured by Wimpey, at first on the upper part of Wigman Road. In the far west of the estate around Cockington Road are the Terran Newland houses (14), a prefabricated concrete panel house made by a firm based at Hull. Today most of these houses have been refaced with brick, but the original proportions (and some features) remain.

Even some of the schools were ready made; Portland School (15) was built by the Bristol Aeroplane Company, which specialised in aluminium buildings. Strelley housing estate (16) meanwhile was built of brick in the early 50s and marks the point where materials were no longer as scarce.

## 3. Old Bilborough

Situated off the beaten track is the original Bilborough village, an important historic reminder of agricultural life before the surrounding council houses were built. A number of buildings are listed, among the earliest being St Martin's Cottages (17) and dating from at least the eighteenth century. Forge Cottages (18) as its name suggests was the local blacksmith's from circa 1800, while the rectory (19) is a somewhat grander building, built in 1842 to house the Rector of St Martin's.

The Church of St Martin (20) dates from the late fourteenth century, and houses some historic relics which are important in Nottinghamshire history. The Helwys memorial, dated from the 1590s, commemorates a family which founded the Baptist Church, while the Thomas Barber plaque reminds us of the origins of one of the big coal mining dynasties. The church itself is similar to St Patrick's Nuthall with an impressive porch, gravestones from the eighteenth century and Victorian fittings.



Bilborough St Martin



St Martin's Cottages

Surrounding the village there are further reminders of Bilborough's agricultural past, such as Manor Farm (21), and the Sheila Russell Community Centre (22), which both date from the nineteenth century. Spring Bank Cottages (23) also dates from that time, while the site of Grange Farm has much older origins, possibly the middle ages (24).



## 4. Strelley & The Green Belt

As the new housing estates spread out from the city in the 1920s and 30s, people became concerned about sprawl and the loss of farming land. In 1947 The Town & Country Planning Act designated areas of land known as a 'green belt', which could not be built on and would limit the spread of British cities. Strelley village marks the point when the Nottingham green belt begins and despite the M1 motorway (built during the 1960s) it is still surrounded by agricultural fields.

Yet the ancient buildings and monuments here were also financed through coal mining. From the fourteenth to the seventeenth century the profits gained from mining were managed by the Strelley family, who built the Church

of All Saints - one of the finest medieval churches in the county (25). Strelley was one of the earliest coal fields in Notts with the remains of old bell pits visible from the field gate adjacent Broad Oak Farm House (26) and south of the business park (27). Supposedly a pilgrimage path, Monks Way was more likely a packhorse route for distributing coal (28).

From the late seventeenth century the estate was looked after by the Edge family. In the 1790s T. W. Edge built Strelley Hall (29), which features an excellent cantilever staircase. For the sake of improvement, he also demolished the old village towards the church, built the present one (30) and landscaped the grounds. This was a common practice known as 'emparking'.



The grounds of Strelley Hall



The Kennels, a Georgian cottage emparked

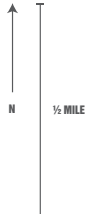
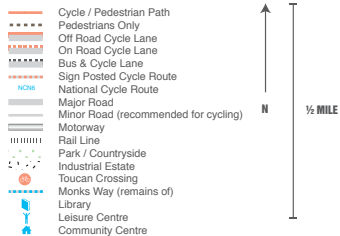


From top left to right: Bilborough St John interior; Bilborough St John mosaic, ancient sign representing man; aluminium bungalows, Wigman Rd\*; All Saints Church, near the remains of the medieval Strelley village; Wimpey No Fines houses, Bracebridge Drive; the parabolic roof of St Teresa, Aspley; sign on the old forge, St Martin's Lane.

# Walking & Cycling Map

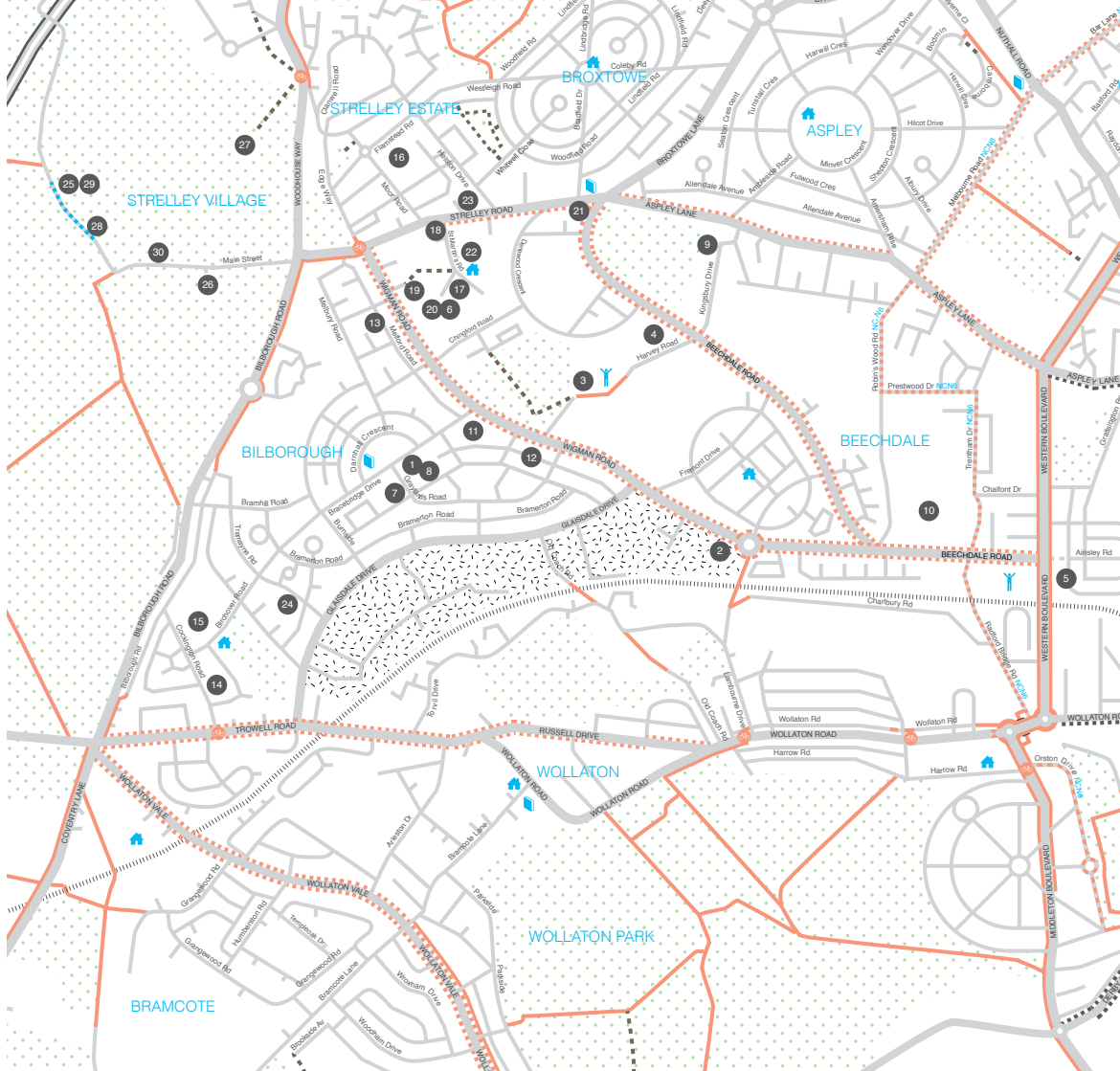
## Beechdale, Bilborough & Strelley

### Key



### History

- |                               |                          |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Bracebridge Drive Shops     | 16 Strelley Estate       |
| 2 Farrands                    | 17 St Martin's Cottages  |
| 3 Harvey Hadden Stadium       | 18 Forge Cottage         |
| 4 Former Bus Depot            | 19 The Rectory           |
| 5 Robert Shaw Primary         | 20 St Martin's Church    |
| 6 Evelyn Gibbs Mural          | 21 Manor Farm            |
| 7 Bilborough St John          | 22 Sheila Russell Centre |
| 8 Church of St Hugh           | 23 Spring Bank Cottages  |
| 9 Church of St Teresa         | 24 Old Grange Farm       |
| 10 Nuclear Bunker (No Access) | 25 All Saints Church     |
| 11 Bungalows                  | 26 Site of Bell Pits     |
| 12 BISF Houses                | 27 Bell Pit              |
| 13 Wimpey 'No Fines' Houses   | 28 Monks Way             |
| 14 Tarrand Newland Houses     | 29 Strelley Hall         |
| 15 Portland Primary School    | 30 Strelley Village      |



# Beechdale, Bilborough & Strelley

Welcome to the free walking and cycling guide for the Beechdale, Bilborough and Strelley suburbs. We're delighted to bring you this unique insight into the history of this part of Nottingham. If you'd like to find out more about walking or cycling, organised rides and walks or how to plan your journey, then visit [www.travelright.org.uk](http://www.travelright.org.uk) or call 0115 883 3732.

You can download this map by visiting [www.travelright.org.uk/bilborough/](http://www.travelright.org.uk/bilborough/)



**Nottingham**  
**City Council**

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**Cover image**

Harvey Hadden Stadium, Bilborough\*

\*image courtesy [www.picturethepast.co.uk](http://www.picturethepast.co.uk)