

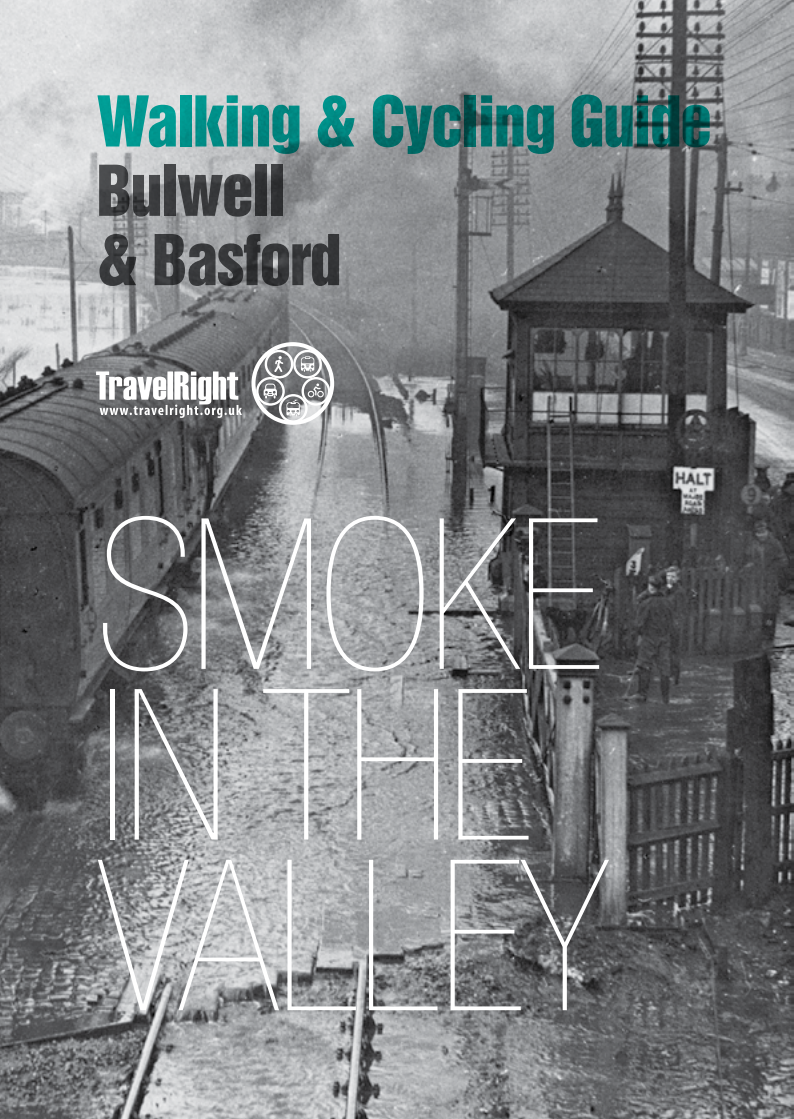
# Walking & Cycling Guide

## Bulwell & Basford

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# SMOKE IN THE VALLEY



# SMOKE IN THE VALLEY

“The furnaces flared in a red blotch over Bulwell; the black clouds were like a low ceiling”

DH Lawrence, *Sons & Lovers*, 1913

Bulwell and Basford are the best places in north Nottingham to witness the changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution. In contrast with Bilborough, Aspley and Bestwood, which are mostly spacious twentieth century suburbs built upon hills, this area grew from an industrial valley with manufacturing and terraces in close proximity. Running through this hive of activity has always been the River Leen, an important source of water and power. The characteristic medieval street pattern radiates from its key crossing points and



the Leen Valley is home to some of the oldest industries in the city, especially milling, quarrying, bleaching and framework knitting.

The railways arrived in the 1840s – a revolution in communication – at first following the river and later criss-crossing the valley with competing lines. The small workshops were upgraded to factories and as the population expanded rows of red-brick terraces and chapels spread up the valley. Huge social changes were also taking place: in religion, recreation, social services, entertainment and local democracy.

Perhaps the car has not been as kind to the Leen Valley as the railways: new expressways bypassed old streets with little regard to the neighbourhoods they ran through, or the details of their architecture. However, since the 1980s a new emphasis on safety as well as sustainable and public transport, coupled with the Bulwellian spirit of fighting for access to their green spaces, has resulted in a number of changes. People now enjoy the NET tram route and River Leen Greenway – a car free route all the way from Bulwell to Basford and soon to be extended much further.



Images from top to bottom: Strelley House\*, The ruins of Bulwell Hall stables with ST Cooper's initials, Basford House\*, The Prince of Wales Brewery\*

# 1. Ancient River



St Leodigarius\*

After establishing Nottingham by the seventh century, the Anglo Saxons followed the course of the River Leen and found new settlements on its banks. The ford, belonging to an Anglo Saxon named 'Basa', was to become Basford and the early streets radiated from its three principle crossings: David Lane, Nottingham Road and Church Street. Amid these streets are the Medieval walls of a religious cell (1) and the impressive church of St Leodegarius (2) dating from at least 1086 (excellent slate headstones can be found scatted about the churchyard). Between them ran Lincoln St, the centre of village life until the later twentieth century. Notice the Fox and Crown pub (3) and the various Bulwell stone workshops and forges (4), all originating from the Georgian period. Also from the same period

is the 1730 manor, Basford House, (5) built by local landowner Thomas Langford, Mayor of Nottingham. By the end of the eighteenth century it housed the historian and hosiery merchant Thomas Bailey.

A mile or so further north the Anglo Saxons found suitable grazing land to keep their bulls adjacent to a spring – probably at Moorbridge pond. This became Bulwell and again near the principle crossing – this time at Station St – is where you will find the oldest buildings such as the former grammar school on Corporation Rd (6). Built in 1667 by a descendent of the great Strelley family, Strelley House is among the earliest brick structures in the city. Notice also the impressive Bulwell stone barn at the rear, both similar in structure and date as the c.1800 houses on Main St (7) and Cinderhill Road (8). Overseeing all this were the church and the landowners and though the church of St Mary's (9) was completely rebuilt in the 1850s its ancient position serves to remind us how religion dominated local life. Meanwhile the local gentry was housed in a large manor at Bulwell Hall (10) – today only the Victorian stables remain.

## 2. Industrial Origins



Forge Mill

If the Industrial Revolution is said to have begun during the latter half of the Georgian period, then Bulwell and Basford were certainly a part of it. Not only was this a landscape of stone forges but also along the fast flowing course of the River Leen were countless mills. Forge Mill (11) was one of a number of cotton spinning mills built by the Robinson brothers who were also early pioneers in the application of steam engines. Mills such as Mill St Mill (12) were also used for grinding corn, while others were used for bleaching textiles. This was a major part of the local economy, which required not only chloride from the local limestone but also the wide open spaces at Mill Street park to bleach the material in sunlight. Nearby, Cinderhill takes its name from the burning embers left by the lime kilns.

This same limestone was also known as ‘Bulwell Stone’ and it was first quarried off Corporation Rd – originally named Quarry Lane – where you can still spot various traces of this activity. One example is at the rear of the listed St John’s Church (13), which is also built from the local stone. Another is the oldest crossing over the Leen (14), a bridge built in the 1830s, financed by the gentry at Bulwell Hall (S.T. Cooper) and built by a local stone mason named George Holmes – his initials are on the northern keystone. This accessible and busy atmosphere drew framework knitters who were manufacturing hosiery and recalled by Lord Byron in 1812 during a speech on the Luddite protests, “Such marchings and counter marchings! From Nottingham to Bulwell, from Bulwell to Basford ...” The early nineteenth century Pear Tree Pub, (15) reminds us that Bulwell Lane was the original thoroughfare between these locations.

### 3. The Railways Arrive

The Midland Railway arrived in 1849 following the floodplain of the Leen, feeding not only on the commerce of the growing towns but also nearby coal mines. Thanks to the reopening of the 'Robin Hood Line' in 1993 and NET tram in 2004 this route survives today and you can still enjoy the restored Edwardian iron pedestrian bridge at David Lane (16). Yet these are only fragments of the numerous competing company lines which were mostly axed in the 1960s. Like some lost civilisation, curious earthworks and bits of blue engineering brick are scattered over the landscape, such as the Great Central route beside the Bulwell Forest Golf Course (17) and Great Northern embankments as viewed from Leonard Street (18). The Catchems Corner Pub (19) was so called because you could "catch 'em both ways"; take either the GNR train from the Bulwell & Basford Station at Park Lane, or the nearby trams. The tramways and Vernon Rd with its huge wall (20) were built in the 1880s. At first the early trams were pulled by horses and so this wall was required to shield them from the fright of passing steam engines.



Pearson's bleachworks, beside the Leen\*

With such improvements in communication local commerce grew in strength. The fine buildings and former shop fronts which surround Bulwell Market, Main St, Commercial Rd and Lincoln St are telling reminders. There was even a local architect in the Edwardian period and today you can see his handsome design for a former doctor's surgery (21). At Old Basford this pattern of late nineteenth and early twentieth century prosperity was repeated in the local industry: Pearson's Bleach works (22) beside the river, the magnificent Prince of Wales Brewery (23) and the sophisticated E Sallis Hosiery works (24). At Church St Cemetery (25) the decaying monuments to key Victorian entrepreneurs can still be made out: Thomas North (coal mining) and Charles Cox (bleaching).

## 4. Social Change



A Bulwell Stone former chapel, Main St

Standards of living in the nineteenth century was a tale of two halves. Since the Napoleonic Wars there had been a slump in the hosiery trade, and framework knitters, undercut by rising rents and low skilled labour, took to smashing their masters' machinery. The response from the authorities was less than helpful – a workhouse was built in 1815. Nothing survives of the actual building apart from a perimeter wall (26) but it is still enough to give the impression of a prison for the unemployed. For a time the working class could not find much solace in the established church, building their own “nonconformist” chapels scattered throughout the Leen Valley (27) – the earliest on Handel St is dated 1811 (28).



Old Bulwell library and St Mary's Church

The c. 1880 iron footbridge (29) and the Battle of the Bogs marks the turning point for social change along the Leen Valley – a victory for local democracy against the wishes of a private landowner (Percy Cooper of Bulwell Hall) who wished to enclose the park. It was also a legal success for the Corporation of Nottingham, which was then bringing Bulwell and Basford within its bounds. The libraries of Bulwell (30) and Basford (31), Bulwell Forest Golf Course (32), Vernon Park (33), North Street Baths (34) and the council houses of Highbury Vale and Whitemoor are testament to that great historical theme of municipal enterprise from the 1870s to the late 1930s.

# Walking & Cycling Map

## Bulwell, Highbury Vale & Basford

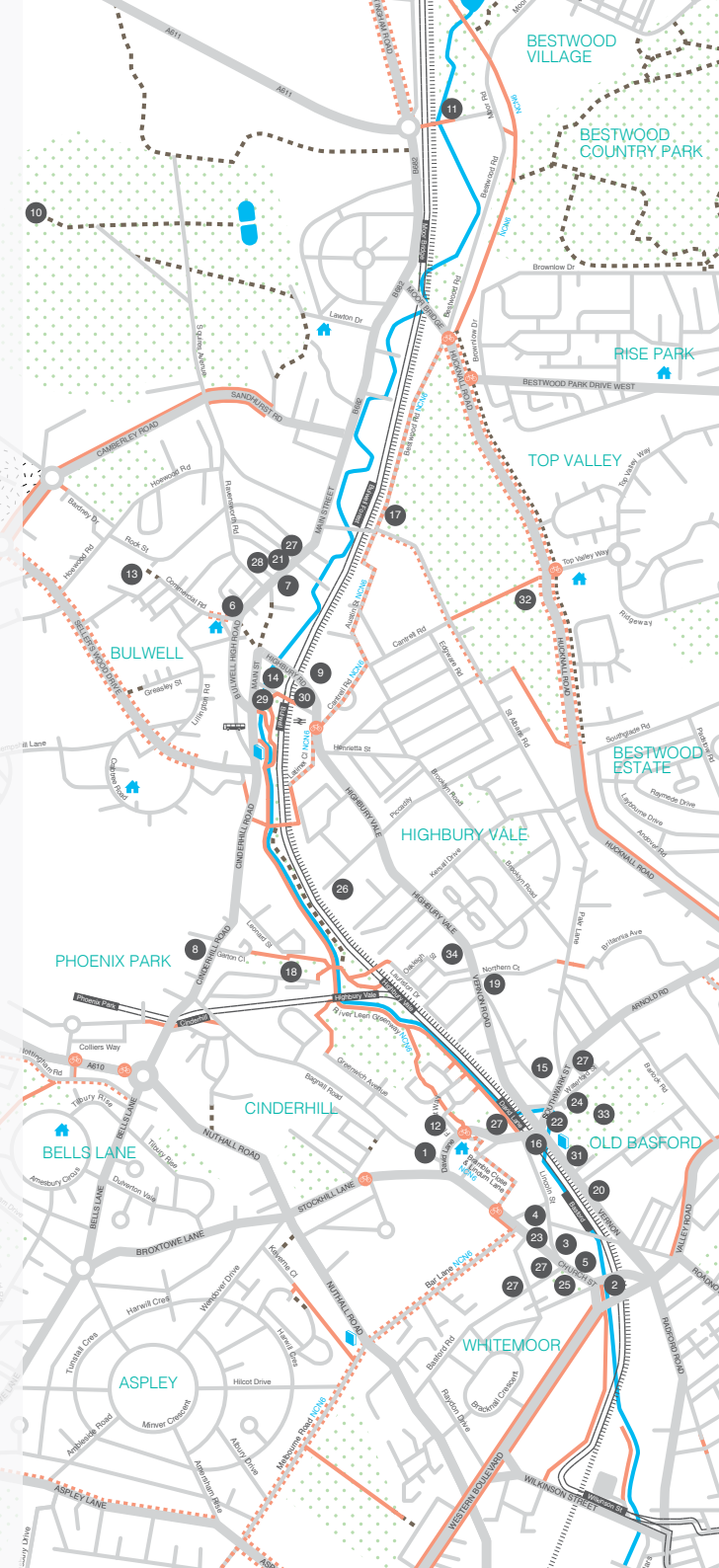
### Key

- Cycle / Pedestrian Path
- Pedestrians Only
- Off Road Cycle Lane
- On Road Cycle Lane
- Bus & Cycle Lane
- Signposted Cycle Route
- National Cycle Route
- Major Road
- Minor Road (recommended for cycling)
- Motorway
- Rail Line
- Station
- Tram Line
- Tram Stop
- Bus Station
- Park / Countryside
- Industrial Estate
- Toucan Crossing
- River Leen
- Library
- Leisure Centre
- Community Centre



### History

- 1 Medieval Cell
- 2 Church of St Leodegarius
- 3 Fox and Crown pub
- 4 Bulwell Stone Forge
- 5 Basford House
- 6 Strelley House
- 7 c.1800 Cottages Main St
- 8 c.1800 Cottages Cinderhill Rd
- 9 St Mary's Church
- 10 Bulwell Hall Stables
- 11 Forge Mill
- 12 Mill Street Mill
- 13 St John's Church & Quarry
- 14 Bulwell Stone bridge
- 15 Pear Tree Pub
- 16 Edwardian Pedestrian Bridge
- 17 Great Central Railway remains
- 18 Great Northern Railway remains
- 19 The Catches Corner pub
- 20 Vernon Rd Wall
- 21 Towe Country Park
- 22 Former Doctor's Surgery
- 23 Pearsons Bleach Works
- 24 Prince of Wales Brewery
- 25 E Salis Hosiery Works
- 26 Church St Cemetery
- 27 Basford Workhouse
- 28 Nonconformist Chapels
- 29 1811 Methodist Chapel
- 30 Bulwell Bogs
- 31 1920s Bulwell Library
- 32 1920s Basford Library
- 33 Bulwell Forest Golf Course
- 34 Vernon Park
- 35 North Street Baths





# Bulwell & Basford

Welcome to the free walking and cycling guide for Bulwell and Basford. 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/bulwell](http://www.travelright.org.uk/bulwell)



**Nottingham**  
**City Council**

Written and designed by Chris Matthews on behalf of TravelRight. TravelRight is being delivered as part of Nottingham City Council's successful Local Sustainable Transport Fund programme of activities.

Printed by Russell Press, Bulwell Lane, Basford

**Cover image**

River Leen in flood at David Lane, 1947\*

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

