

The Itinerary.

The pieces of land are more or less linked up already, except for Queens Walk, which is separated from most of the remainder which are on a northern semicircle of the old town. Queens Walk has been eroded by, first, the rebuilding of the Meadows which involved cutting off about a quarter of its length at the station end, and then the extension of the tram taking the centre of the walk for its tracks. So the fine view from the station to the riverside as the first glimpse for travellers to Nottingham was removed, and the view back to the church of St. Mary's made more difficult.

After Queens Walk Park, which is next to the Walk, the old town must be crossed to reach the next A.R.G. This one is Victoria Park, which had started life as Meadow Platt Cricket Ground, but later in the century it was refashioned as Victoria Park with attractions for the numerous children roundabout, trees and a drinking fountain. It is next door to an old cemetery, known as the cholera cemetery, where Bendigo's monument can be seen. This last, however is not part of the A.R.G.s but the wall between has now been opened, the tombstones removed to create additional green space.

After following St. Anns Well Road to the bottom of Robin Hood Chase, the route is almost continuous. From The Chase to Corporation Oaks, St. Ann's Hill, Elm Avenue, the Arboretum, The General Cemetery, Waterloo Promenade and the Forest the only break is from the top of the cemetery at Canning Circus to Forest Road West, and the backstreets between these have their own historic and visual interest.

We decided to finish the Inclosure Walk at the Inclosure Oak, which commemorates the final Award of the Act, partly because it seems an appropriate place to do so and partly because the Rock Cemetery, just beyond, is one step too far for most walkers. In 2015 a second Inclosure Oak was planted ceremoniously by the secretary of the Open Spaces Society, to celebrate the passing of 150 years since the planting of the first oak, with a visit from the "Sheffield Giants" and a Morris Team.

Both cemeteries are part of the A.R.G.s because each had an extra 4 acres added from the 130 acres, and both are laid out as park cemeteries with the Victorian idea that they would be used for pleasurable walks, much as the Parks themselves are.

The two cemeteries have many interesting interments and their own histories to tell, so that a couple of hours is not too long for a visit. There are specific visits with historical talks arranged over the summer by other organisations for each cemetery, so we can recommend these to those whose appetites are whetted by our quick visit.

Those who would like to do this walk by themselves will find an informative and picturesque guide on sale at the Five Leaves Bookshop, north of the Council House.

THE GREAT NOTTINGHAM INCLOSURE WALK

Its Origins.

When the 'Friends of the Forest' was first set up in 2001 we were naturally concerned with our own park, but as we cast around for facts to support our hopes for the future appreciation of this great, and at that time much neglected and derided, open space the 1845 Inclosure Act, Nottingham, St. Mary's Parish, began to have greater significance.

Like most people in Nottingham, we had vaguely heard of it but did not yet appreciate its current legality in controlling what happened on not just our park, the Forest, but on 130 acres of open space around the city centre, allotted recreation grounds, ARGs.

It turned out that these had been planned by the city fathers of those days to provide room to move and fresh air to breathe in the newly developing but still smoke-ridden and crowded town. The old town had been very small for its population and extremely densely inhabited, so that land taken from round the edge of the town was still within easy reach on foot.

At first it was planned to make effectively a circular Walk around the old town, with a few recreation grounds where most required. Plans changed as new ideas appeared and an Arboretum to match, or surpass, Derby's new arboretum was soon a key requirement.

The Walks were reduced to a length of three miles, still passing by, or through, the other parks. With two gaps caused by crossing the old town and along St. Anns Well Road, it is still possible to walk mostly on grass and under trees for five miles from by the river Trent near Wilford Bridge to the Inclosure Oak on the Forest.

As the Act was signed by Queen Victoria at the end of June 1845, we hold the Walk on a Sunday near that date, avoiding major competing events as far as possible.

Our Intention

Having discovered what an amazing heritage Nottingham has, and that most people, including ourselves, most councillors and council officials, were quite ignorant of it, we decided that we should try to link up with the other A.R.G.s in the city and do something about it. Those other parts of the country who were allotted recreation ground in their Inclosure acts were lucky if they received one or two acres. Many got none, and it was quoted at an enquiry later on that Eastwood, which was famed for its 15-acre cricket ground lost it all. Why? Because all those who might have complained were employed by the landowner or his friends and lived in their houses.

We worked out an itinerary and tried it out one Sunday morning, and set about organising a free public event to show and explain this land to our fellow citizens. And we have been doing it annually ever since.