

THE TRANSFORMATION OF GREEN SPACE IN OLD AND NEW NOTTINGHAM

by

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In his book, *Old and New Nottingham* published in 1853, William Howie Wylie, a former editor of the *Nottingham Journal*, wrote

Before the passing of the Inclosure Bill, the belt of commonable ground between the town and its suburbs, while it compassed the town itself as with a close-fitting and unexpandable envelope, yet provided a green and air-breathing spot. The recreation walks then encircling the town afforded a promenade ten miles in extent.¹

Wylie's 'Old' Nottingham was the densely populated centre bounded by the Meadows to the south, the Castle on the west, Parliament Street to the north and Sneinton on the east. It has been calculated that the perimeter of the old town was about a mile and three-quarters, a distance that could be walked in forty minutes at a gentle stroll.² It was also a very over-crowded town with a population that had increased from approximately 11,000 in 1750 to 57,000 in 1850, while its footprint enlarged by only one third in the same period.³ The result was overcrowding, squalor and a high mortality rate.⁴

'New' Nottingham refers to the rapid expansion of the town, intended to relieve this overcrowding, across what had formerly been common fields to the north and south. Such expansion was only possible after the passing of an Enclosure Act; something that was fiercely opposed by the burgesses for over fifty years. When it was finally enacted in 1845 not only was common land released for building development but, in order to comply with a Parliamentary Standing Order, land was set aside to provide public green space and utilities. By the time Wylie's book was published almost all of these had been laid out and are described by him:

But now, with the Bill and all its attendant benefits, there has been laid aside for the people's use, the RACE-COURSE, the QUEEN'S WALK – a right royal avenue in the meadows, the RECREATION WALKS – a delightful series of wooded paths opened in 1851 by the Corporation, and which include Toadhole Hill, the site of the Bellevue reservoir; and in addition to all this, the ARBORETUM, which was opened on the 11th of May, 1852.⁵

This change in the use of space and the creation of new Nottingham raises a number of questions. Where were the recreational walks around old Nottingham? How far did the walks and other recreational areas of new Nottingham resemble or differ from them? And finally, why was enclosure opposed so fiercely, and by whom?

THE PRE-ENCLOSURE GREEN SPACE

Pre-enclosure Nottingham was compact and densely populated but it was surrounded by almost 1450 acres of green space. The town sat in a hollow between two cliffs: on the western cliff was the Castle with its Park – then undeveloped parkland – owned by the Duke of Newcastle; on the eastern promontory was St Mary's Church and beyond that the boundary with Sneinton. To the south, the lowest part of Nottingham abutted the canal. Between the canal and the River Trent were the Meadows, part of the common field system. From the canal the town climbed gradually northwards to just beyond the Market Place, where it joined the Sandfield and the Clayfield, names which reflect the underlying geology. Here the land sloped downward then rose steeply again to a high ridge, a situation exploited by a number of windmills built along this exposed location. It then dropped again, down

to another relatively flat area where Nottingham's race course and cricket ground had been built on what was considered to be the last remnants of Sherwood Forest. The undulating nature of these fields, particularly to the north east, is reflected in the place names: Mars Hill, Toad Hole Hill, Hungar Hills, Blue Bell Hill and Mapperley Hill. These fields, however, were not public, unused open space. Rather they were privately owned agricultural lands; many 19th century maps show the field boundaries which would have been marked on the ground by hedges, ditches or fences. Field names such as Ryehill, Peas (or Pease – as in pease pudding) Hill and Meadow Platt suggest some of the crops grown there.

Possession of the land was divided between private landowners and the town's Corporation in its traditional capacity of the Lord of the Manor. The majority of land owned by the Corporation was further divided into 'burgess plots' leased to elderly burgesses and their widows, thus providing them with an income in their later years. What made the land 'common' was that for a few weeks each year the fences and hedges had to be opened up or broken down to allow the burgesses, also called freemen, to graze their sheep or cattle. The situation is epitomised by Matthew Barker who, writing in 1835, described the Meadows as being 'commonable' by burgesses who were each allowed to keep three head of cattle between 6 July and 13 August (Lammas, when animals grazed on hay stubble), or to overwinter 45 head of sheep after Martinmas (11 November).⁶ The non-burgess townspeople probably took advantage of these weeks to access the now more open fields. Cricket, for example, a passion in Victorian society that has been described as 'a ritual as well as recreation, a spiritual as well as a sporting experience' was regularly played in the Meadows.⁷ Even so, some games may not have been officially sanctioned; in 1843 the *Nottingham Journal* reported that a court action between the cow keepers and publicans over the rights of townsmen to play cricket on the Meadows had been settled by compromise.⁸ Probably the only freely accessible public space to the south of Nottingham was the pathway leading from town across the Meadows to a point on the Trent where there was a ferry across the river.

In 1848 a map drawn up by the Borough Surveyor, Henry Moses Wood, was published. Although it post-dates the Enclosure Act, it clearly refers to a pre-enclosure Nottingham as it depicts the intense housing development surrounded by Wylie's unexpandable envelope of commonable fields. One of the copies of this map, held in Nottingham Local Studies Library, was extensively annotated by Wood to show field ownership. Unfortunately as these notations were in pencil they now barely legible (a small portion can be seen in the corner of Fig. 1). Below the dedication, however, Wood used black ink to divide the common fields into three categories and calculate their acreages; this annotation vividly illustrates both the amount of agricultural land that surrounded Nottingham, and the restrictions it placed on urban expansion and public recreation (see Map 1 for locations).

The first category of land is

Ancient "Entire Lands" ie Lands not recently subject to Common rights – they are the Sole property of the Municipal Corporation ... and are in parts optionally allotted at nominal rents (under the denomination of Burgess parts) to the Freemen of Nottingham & their Widows⁹

These 'entire lands' totalled just over 372 acres. As burgess parts or plots let at a nominal rent, with no customary common rights, they were closed off from all public access throughout the whole year.

The second category was 'Lands subject to Common rights by the freemen of Nottingham during various parts of the year'. These fields totalled over 888 acres and made up the majority of the land surrounding the town. The common rights meant that, like the Meadows, the Sandfield and the Clayfield had to be opened up for grazing between 12 August and 12 November, and East Croft was only available for use by the burgesses between 19 September and 23 November.

Over and above these fields was the Forest which in the mid 19th century comprised 124 acres, and a further fifty-seven acres on Mapperley Hill; both were owned by the Corporation and were, according to Wood, open to the public all year round. While classed as common waste – that is undeveloped

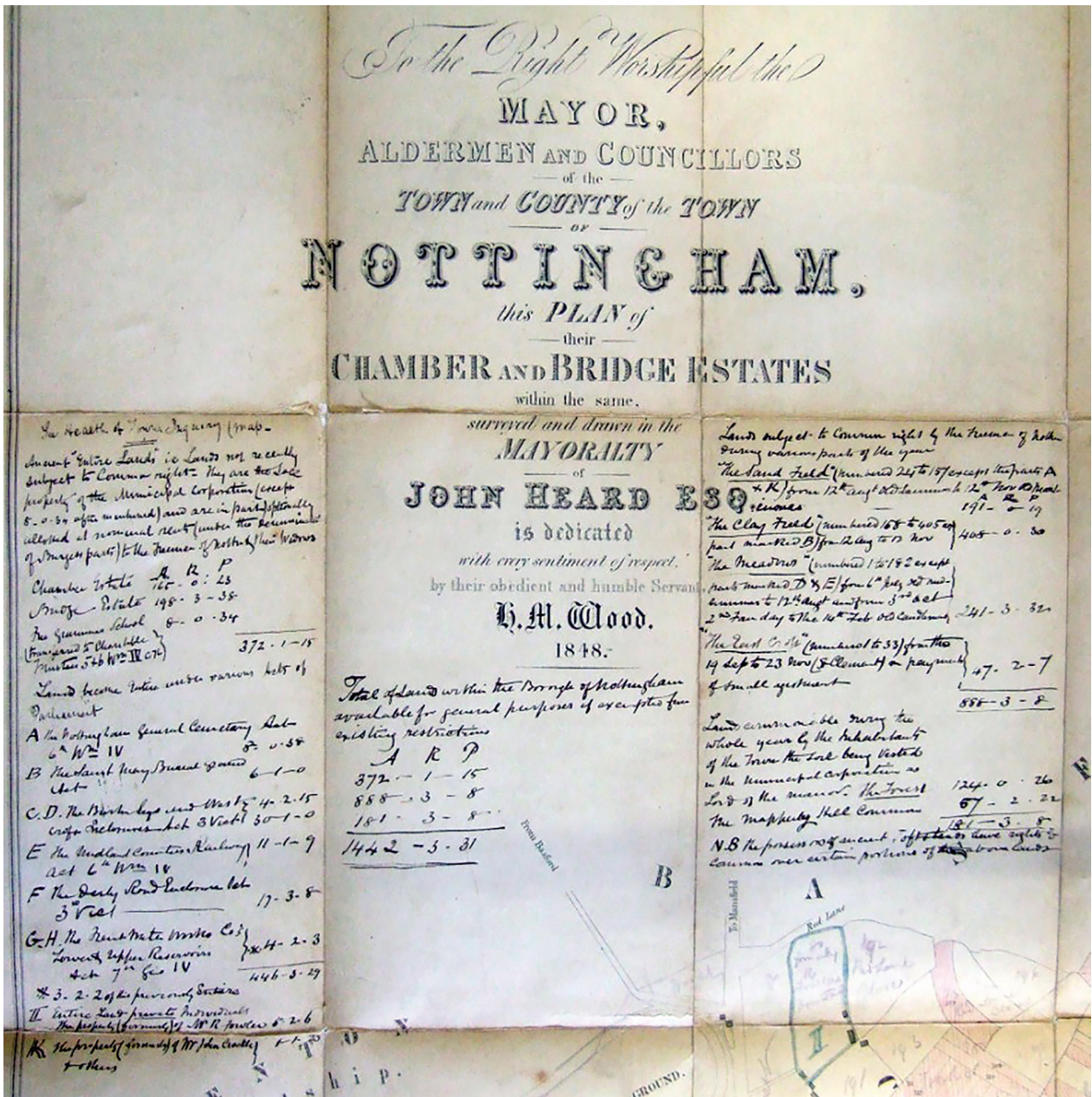


FIG 1: Notes by Henry Moses Wood indicating size and type of 'common' land. Reproduced courtesy of Nottingham Local Studies Library

land – the Forest was far from empty as it was the site of Nottingham’s Race Course. Inside the track was a grandstand, the military training ground and one of Nottingham’s four cricket grounds which Wylie claims were on the Forest, in the Meadows, on the Clayfield and at Trent Bridge¹⁰. The cricket

ground on the Forest, improved in 1843, was bounded by strong posts and rails and surrounded by an elevated spectators’ platform eight feet wide, clearly a reflection of the reverence given to the sport.¹¹ Furthermore, each year the same group of men and women, usually bakers or millers, were

fined for owning windmills that encroached on the Forest.¹² And these were not the only infringements; fines were imposed for erecting dwelling houses, creating gardens, forming pathways and diverting the footpath.¹³ In 1841 it was agreed that all the encroachments should be entered in the town's Chamber Estates as 'Tenant on Sufferance', paying a rent instead of a regular fine.¹⁴ In the same year it was reported that considerable damage was being done to the Forest through the excavation of sand and a man was appointed to collect an appropriate payment.¹⁵ The other open area, Hungar Hills and Mapperley Hill, to the north-east of Nottingham was just beginning to be developed. In 1836 Mapperley Hill was connected to St Ann's by a private road lined with lime trees with toll gates at each end and a lake to 'picturesquely' water the land.¹⁶ At about the same time, the surrounding fields were converted to gardens, similar to modern allotments but each bordered by high hedges or fences; a small proportion still remain and are a rare example of detached town gardens.¹⁷ Although rented to townspeople for a reasonable sum the sometimes precipitous landscape in this area may not always have been conducive to recreation or even gardening; in 1842 the garden tenants asked for a rent reduction because of the north-east wind that blew down the valley from St Ann's.¹⁸ Together these three categories of land totalled 1442 acres which Wood says were 'available for general purposes if exempted from existing restrictions', that is, available for new housing subject to an enclosure act being granted.¹⁹

There was a fourth category of land which Wood refers to as lands that have 'become Entire under various Acts of Parliament' comprising several small parcels that, between 1827 and 1839, had been split off from the common fields to provide specific civic utilities. These included four acres to create reservoirs, six acres for an additional burial ground to deal with the 1832 cholera epidemic and a further eight acres for a new public or general cemetery. In both cases, the initial plots of land were donated by Samuel Fox, a wealthy grocer, Quaker and benefactor to the town.²⁰ Although the General Cemetery was created from three 'windmill closes' belonging to Fox, in 1836 the Council received £251 1s 4d to extinguish the common rights over

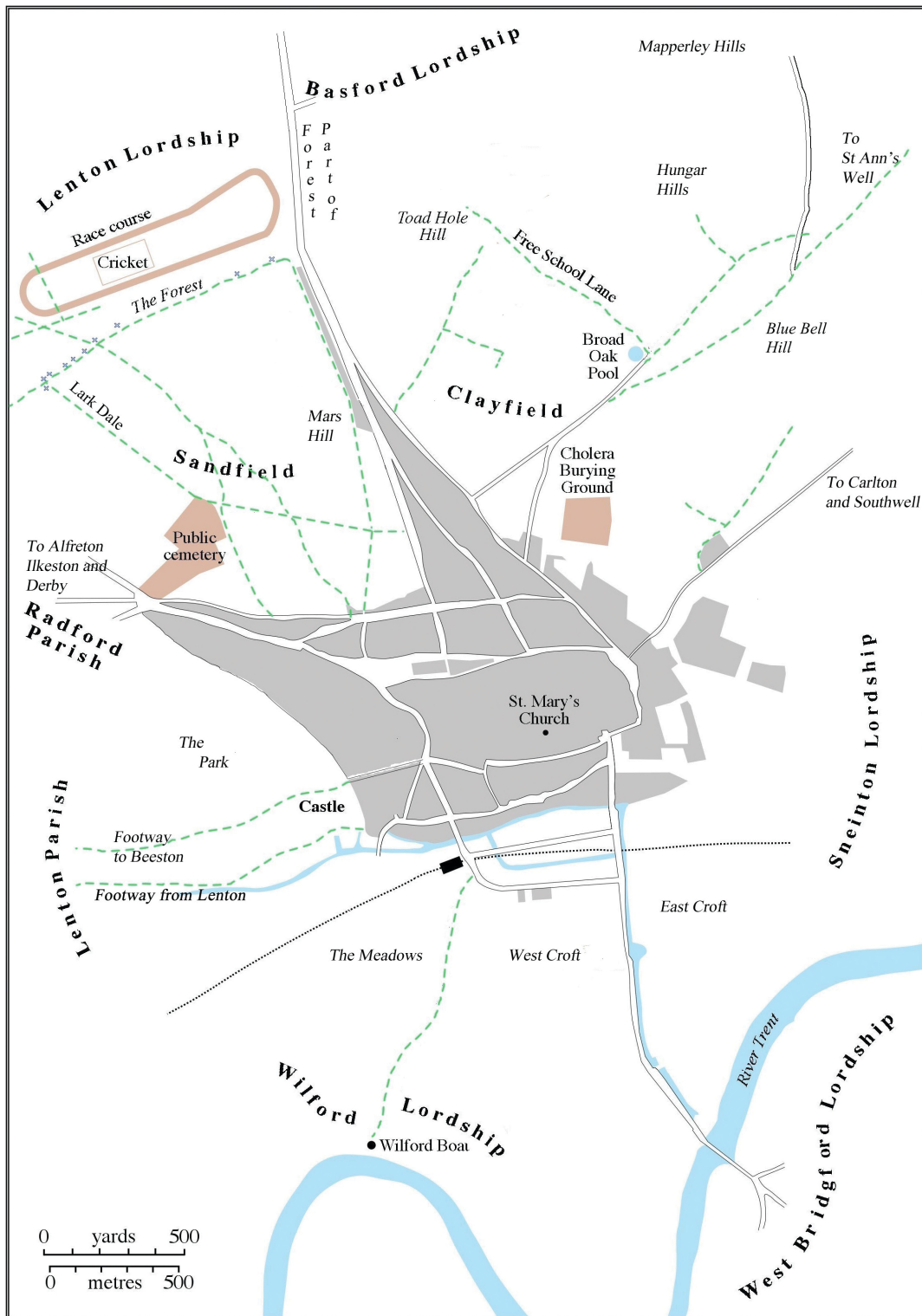
the land.²¹ Four years later, a further £131 14s 4d was paid to extinguish the rights over a three acre extension to provide

room for separate graves for each poor family desiring to have one – the number of the poorer classes interred in the Cemetery have greatly exceeded the expectations originally formed – the part of the present ground allowed and fitted for the lowest scale of payment is nearly already filled and as the rest of the ground is near the Sand rock it cannot be excavated for a price which the poor can pay.²²

This demand for graves reflects the higher than average mortality rate suffered by Nottingham in the first half of the 19th century.

Also in 1836 forty-five acres were allocated for a railway and in 1839 a precedent for the later General Enclosure Act was set when the Lammas fields on the west side of town, between the main road to Derby and the boundary of the Castle, were enclosed for a prestigious housing development, taking another seventeen acres from the common fields.

With all these restrictions it is hard to envisage where the ten miles of recreation walks boasted of by Wylie were located, though it is possible to deduce where they might have been. Map 1, based on Wood's 1848 plan augmented by information from other maps such as Dearden's 1844 plan of Nottingham, shows not only the footpath across the Meadows, but a network of other footpaths – marked by dotted lines – which crossed the open fields.²³ Further clues are given in Matthew Barker's book, published in 1835, which describes recreational walks around Nottingham, and Wylie himself mentions a few favourite destinations. Most of the routes described by Barker take the walker several miles outside the town boundary but he does suggest three short walks, all identifiable on Map 1, that he says are 'of a pleasing character' on an 'early Summer's morn, or the coolness and quiet of the lovely Summer's eve'.²⁴ Both Barker and Wylie commend the walk to St Ann's Well along a path 'by the side of the stream through a pleasant lane'.²⁵ Wood's map depicts this as a minor road, but the 1832 Boundary Commission map lists it as a Bridle Road, in other words a path suitable for horse riders



MAP 1: Plan of pre-Enclosure Nottingham, showing common fields and footpaths.

but not vehicles.²⁶ Another walk suggested by both Barker and Wylie is to the west of Nottingham through the Park adjacent to the Castle. Though the property of the Duke of Newcastle, and therefore outside the town boundary, Wylie describes this as ‘one of the chief lungs of the lace metropolis’, while Barker says that it is ‘a charming and healthy spot for recreation’.²⁷ In 1818 the Duke of Newcastle offered to release some of the Park for building and was criticised for ‘curtailing the townfolks’ rights’ to a health giving promenade.²⁸ Barker’s third and longest ‘short’ walk was to Bestwood, about four miles from the town centre, or an eight mile round-trip, though Barker recommends a return route by the side of the Trent as being ‘the longest and most pleasant’.²⁹ As an alternative, Wylie suggests that the ‘pale inhabitant of the town’ could follow the path to Beeston marked on Map 1. Like the walk to Bestwood this would have been an eight-mile trip and neither can really be described as leisurely walks.

Map 1 suggests some other shorter walks which were probably very popular because of their proximity to the town-centre. The first is across the Meadows to the Trent, along the footpath to the Wilford ferry. Barker describes this as the opening stage of a much longer walk either along the Trent particularly in the ‘solemn twilight hour’, or alternatively continuing over the river to Wilford and Clifton, before going on to Attenborough, about six miles away. Wilford and Clifton were both beauty spots much celebrated by a group of romantic writers such as the Nottingham poet Henry Kirk White, known as the Sherwood Forest poets. Wylie also extolled the virtues of Wilford and Clifton, but writing almost twenty years later, lamented that to reach them ‘by the common route’ – presumably the footpath to the ferry – ‘the pilgrim must pass through the Meadows in which public works and dwellings are now quickly rising’.³⁰

Another walk was the footpath to the Forest marked on Map 1 as Lark Dell, or Dale. Again it is described by Barker as the first stage of a longer walk, but it would have been a popular route as it led to the race course and cricket ground. Before reaching the Forest, however, the path passed through the closed fields on the Sandfield, so

that this path was ‘most delightful ... [when] ... Lammas has thrown open the gaps in the hedges and the wild fields are free to the wanderer’s feet’.³¹ Barker describes the end of Lark Dale as being ‘completely embowered’ and in a vivid pen-portrait that contrasts the overcrowded town with this open space in a way that echoes the early-century belief in the power of the common fields to counteract the pollution of the industrialised town.

Oh! How sweet it is to quit the close and murky atmosphere of narrow streets, gas pipes and steam engines, to revel in the clear pure air that sweeps along the upland meadow; there is no spot in England that in this respect possesses equal advantage with Nottingham.³²

A number of other footpaths are suggested on Map 1. Not mentioned by Barker and only in passing by Wylie, is the trail to Hungar Hills and Mapperley Hill Common, which Dearden labels as a footway.³³ Free School Lane, which led to Toad Hole Hill, is a pathway frequently named during the planning stages for the public walks of new Nottingham, one of which was built along the same route. It is not identified by Wood, but fields held by the Free School Trust are marked on his map, and a lane is just about discernible on a plan of 1801.³⁴ There were probably many similar paths and tracks along field boundaries. What Map 1 clearly illustrates is that rather than encircling the town, as Wylie claimed, the main routes radiated from the centre of Nottingham like spokes on a wheel, though they were probably connected by smaller paths, such as Free School Lane or the trail to Hungar Hills, thus making a circuit of most of the northern half of Nottingham possible, especially if paths through the Public Cemetery, Park and along the canal were used.

THE 1845 ENCLOSURE ACT

The debate about enclosure, like any discussion that persisted for fifty years, is inevitably complicated and has been described in detail by, for example, Duncan Gray, Malcolm Thomis, John Beckett and Ken Brand.³⁵ At its simplest level, there were three contending parties. On one hand were the freemen who were keen to guard their

special status of burgess and the privileges that this brought, including their grazing rights. Before the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act, burgesses were the only men permitted to vote for or become councillors in the town's closed Council. Even after 1835 they were a powerful lobby as the Act only extended the right to vote to ratepayers, thus excluding the majority of Nottingham's working men. Consequently although only a minority – approximately 3000 men – as a group they were a wealthy and powerful lobby within the town.³⁶

On the other hand were the landowners, also called free holders. Their ability to use their land was restricted to agricultural purposes because of the burgesses' grazing rights which required them to open their fields. They supported enclosure as this would allow them to sell their land for building at a considerable profit, or develop it in some other way. In between was the town Council. As Lord of the Manor, the Council leased burgess plots to elderly burgesses and their widows as a kind of pension, simultaneously generating a regular income into the town's treasury. The sale of land for building would have injected large sums of money into the town's economy but it would also negate the Council's traditional role. Over and above these complicated relationships was the problem of the health of the town. Implicit in Wylie's statement and more explicitly in Barker's exaltation of the Forest, was the belief held by many at the beginning of the 19th century that the healthy air generated by the green space surrounding Nottingham counteracted the bad air – the miasma that carried disease – of the congested, overcrowded town. Eventually, this belief was overturned to a two-pronged approach: evidence given to a House of Commons Select Committee by Thomas Hawksley, Nottingham's water engineer, led to a damning report on living conditions in the town while locally the *Nottingham Review* promoted the concept that the high rates of disease and death experienced in Nottingham were the result of its severe overcrowding.³⁷ Finally, an Enclosure Act was possible.

The delay in reaching an agreement over enclosure meant that by the time the Act was finally drafted a Parliamentary Standing Order ensured that provision had to be made to retain some space for

recreation to improve the health of the population, particularly the working classes. Consequently, two clauses in Nottingham's Enclosure Act dealt with the allotment of land for green space. The first of these allocated between forty-five and fifty acres in the Clayfield, the Meadows and East Croft for public use. Most of this land was to be used as public walks though the Council was allowed up to five acres for public baths with their accompanying outbuildings thus reducing the amount of available space. Any land left over after the walks and baths had been formed was to be used for 'public recreation' though what sort of recreation is not described.³⁸ A further eighty acres were to be taken from either the Forest or Mapperley Hills but as the Act stipulated that those acres were to include the race course, cricket ground and military training ground already on the Forest, and much of Mapperley Hills was given over to detached gardens, there was little choice about where this space could be.

The next clause is more specific in its instructions as it allowed for between eight and twelve acres as a public cemetery. Half of this area was to be 'appropriated for Burials according to the Rites of the Church of *England*, and the other Half Part for the Interment of Persons dissenting from that Church, or not buried according to its Rites'.³⁹ As these acres had to be taken from the total 130 acres set aside for public use, this provision again reduced the amount of land available for pure 'recreation'. The cemetery or cemeteries had to be more than three hundred yards from existing buildings unless written consent had been obtained from all the residents. The details of the Act were written into the Enclosure Commissioners Minute Book where, against this clause, written in red ink there is a prophetic note that says 'Be careful not to tell Dunn that may interfere with cemetery'.⁴⁰

The prominence given in the Enclosure Act to public walks over forms of recreation and by Barker and Wylie in their books reflected the social mores and the belief in the need for 'rational recreation' of the early part of the 19th century. The purpose of rational recreation was to counteract the vices of the working classes by promoting libraries, museums and the study of subjects such as natural history as worthy alternatives to the attractions of

the public house, gambling and free-for-all games. In June 1833, only two years before Barker's book was published and possibly the inspiration for its production, a Select Committee on Public Walks recommended the creation of 'properly regulated' public walks for the 'middle and humbler classes' in order to improve 'their cleanliness, neatness and personal appearance' and provide a venue for a man to show-off his wife and well-behaved children. Otherwise the only recreational recourse of the occupants of the

narrow courts and alleys (in which so many of the humble classes reside) will be those drinking-shops, where, in short-lived excitement, they may forget their toil, but where they waste the means of their families and too often destroy their health.⁴¹

Such walks would also benefit the nation's industry. The gentle occupation of walking, in contrast to rowdy, unregulated games of football for example was, it was believed, more likely to lead to hard work and commitment during the week since the working man needed to rest and recuperate on his day off, not rush round in sporting pursuits.⁴²

There was another economic argument in favour of walks that argued that

The maidservant and the mechanic's daughter took as much pride in displaying her rich ribbons, as a lady her fine equipage, or a duchess her diamonds. ... If such persons had no opportunity of appearing in public walks, they lost a great stimulus to industry, and that industry would always increase in proportion as it afforded the means of indulging in such becoming luxuries.⁴³

The following year, a Select Committee on Drunkenness recommended the provision of public walks and open spaces for healthy exercise together with those other facets of rational recreation, libraries, museums and reading rooms, as remedies for the problem of excessive alcohol consumption. In 1840 the Committee on the Health of Towns called for provisions that ensured that all future enclosure acts preserved open space for 'public walks, essential to the health and comfort of the poorer classes'.⁴⁴ The form these walks should take was comparatively simple. The Public Walks Report of 1833 suggested that walks could be a broad path around the perimeter of a dry field, next

to a turnpike road but not so secluded that they put off the working classes. Alternately, taking continental cities as an example, walks might be created alongside public roads, rivers or canals 'one side at least, enough for a broad ample Walk, with two rows of Trees and room for Seats'.⁴⁵ Parks or other larger recreational spaces where sport could be played were not on the menu, though the *Westminster Review*, contrary to the established view and ahead of its time, suggested that

one game of cricket or football would, to the young and active, be worth more than fifty solemn walks on a path beyond which they must not tread ... Public grounds, not walks are the things wanted; and the sooner these, together with public bathing places, are provided, the better for the comfort, the health, the morals of the people and the credit of the rulers.⁴⁶

While the motivation for public walks was health and the reformation of manners there was a secondary benefit to be derived from the advantages they would confer on any surrounding building development. When the Council enclosed the Lammas fields near Derby Road in 1839, it held a competition for the best design of 'ample spaces for Public Walks and places of recreation'.⁴⁷ The prize for the best plan was 20 guineas, with 10 guineas for the second best, though none of the four plans received was considered suitable and the final design was produced by Moses Wood.⁴⁸ His design is a regular grid of streets that led to a circus planted with trees and shrubs, similar to some of the squares and circuses found in London.⁴⁹ The post-1845 development, though intended to relieve overcrowding within the town was, like the Lammas fields project, planned to provide houses for the middle-classes. The provision of green space close by can only have enhanced its attraction to the right buyer.

Although the Act stipulated how much land was to be given to public walks and general recreation, it did not specify their exact location. This was left to the discretion of the Town Council but it had to work in cooperation with the three Enclosure Commissioners appointed by the Act to oversee the laying out of building plots, roads and sewers who were responsible for deciding boundaries and providing the initial fencing of the green spaces.

THE PLANNING STAGES

It took almost two years of negotiation between the Town Council and Enclosure Commissioners, some indecision and a certain amount of public pressure, to identify where the open spaces should be located, and what they were to be used for. Between 1846 and 1848 at least six proposals were put forward and according to the Commissioners' Notes and Town Council Minute Books, several sketch-plans drawn up. Unfortunately, none of the sketches has survived so that what is left is a series of sometimes imprecise written descriptions. Maps 2–5 provide an overview of the evolution of the spaces, though given the rather vague nature of some of the descriptions most are only 'best guesses'. The walks and open spaces are numbered according to the order in which they are listed in either the Commissioners' Minute Books or the Minutes of the Town Council.

The process which generated these individual plans was, at times, tortuous. It began on 3 February 1846, seven months after the Enclosure Act had been signed, when the Enclosure Commissioners wrote to the Mayor and Council asking what land they wanted to be allocated for public walks and other facilities. The request for information is very specific; the commissioners wished to know

The proposed site or sites selected.

The excess determined upon beyond 45 acres.

The quantity proposed to be appropriated for Public walks.

The proposed direction and extent of such walks.

Whether any Land is proposed to be appropriated for Baths, and Gardens. If so the proposed sites and extent thereof.

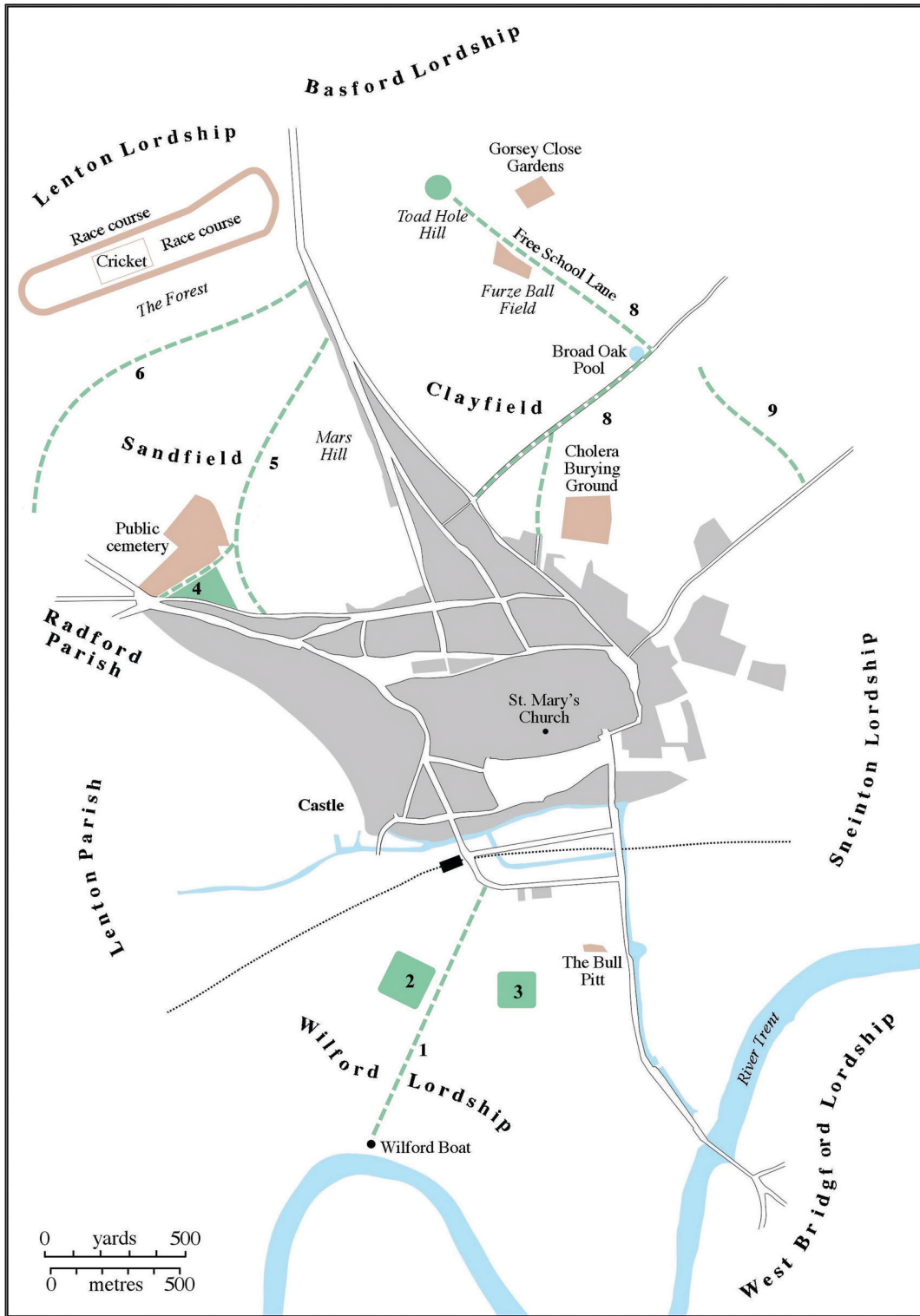
Whether it is proposed to form a Cemetery. If so the site or sites and extent thereof.⁵⁰

On 9 March 1846, the Commissioners met with a delegation from the Council comprising the Mayor, the Town Clerk (William Enfield), the Borough Surveyor (Henry Moses Wood) and three Councillors. According to the Commissioners' Minute Book, Enfield opened the meeting by saying 'It is desirable the open spaces and roads should be set out and selected by the Town Council in Cooperation with the Commissioners' but this was

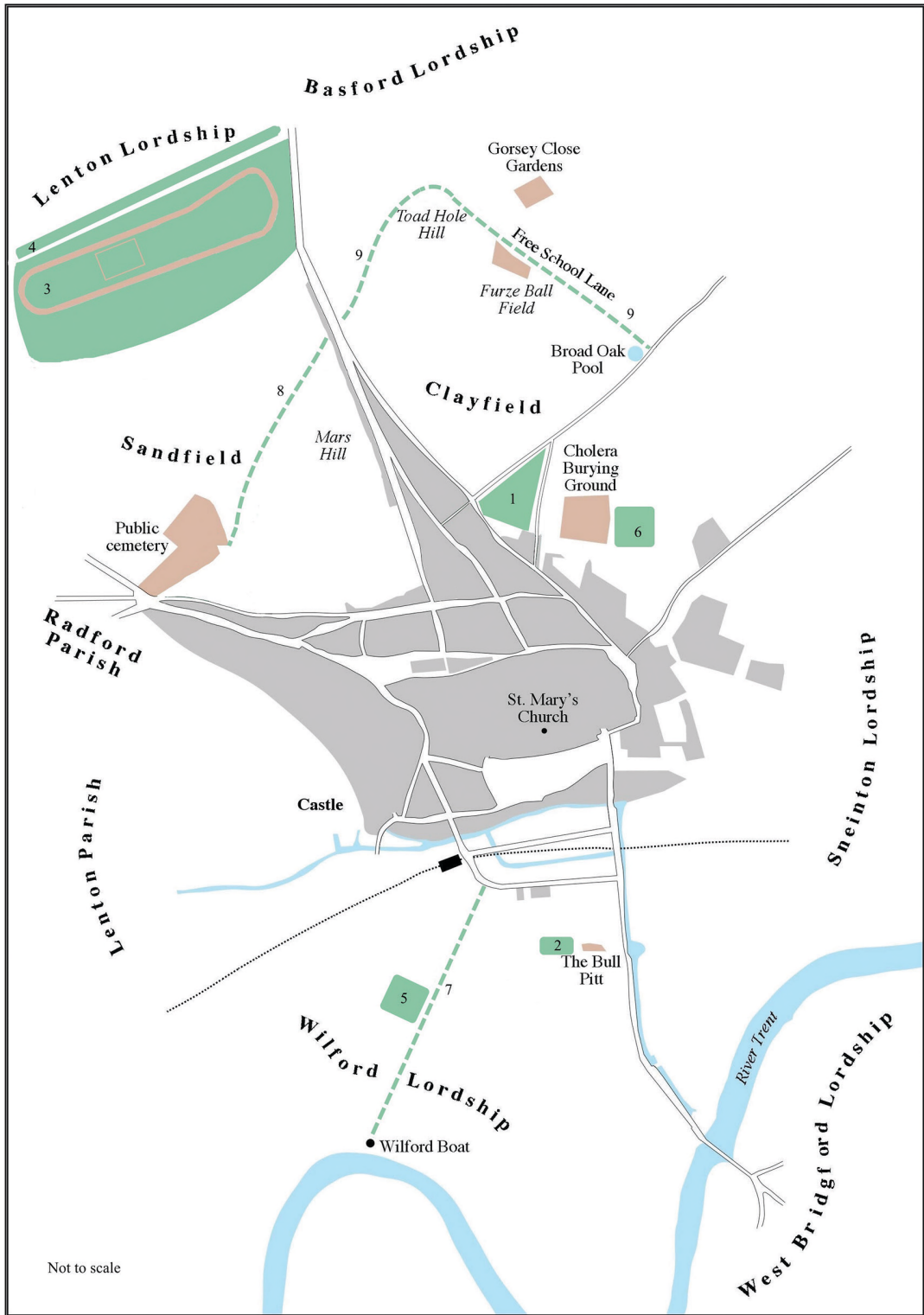
not a general view as one of the Councillors thought that the Commissioners 'might probably first set out the roads and the open spaces might then be put by the sides'.⁵¹

Such disagreement within the Council was probably not a good starting point. What followed appears, from the sketchy nature of the meeting notes, to be a brainstorming session which concentrated on identifying where roads as well as walks should be situated. Only the route across the Meadows along the existing footpath is designated as a public walk (No. 1 on Map 2). The other routes, many of which echo the paths and bridleways of the pre-enclosure town, were suggested as either walks or roads. The walk to Toad Hole Hill along Free School Lane had two possible starting points on the edge of town (No. 8), as did one of the routes across the Sandfield (No.5). The second trail across the Sandfield probably followed the path by the windmills (No. 6). The proposed walk or road to the east of Nottingham had three possible starts and three end-points, only one of which is possible to locate from existing plans (No. 9). It is noticeable that only two recreational spaces are discussed: one on the Meadows where cricket was regularly played and one near the prestigious Derby Road development (Nos. 2 and 4). The allocation of up to eighty acres on either the Forest or Mapperley Hill was not discussed, though it may have been taken for granted that this would be entirely on the Forest as the space had to include the race course and cricket ground.

The Council's lack of any clear plan for the green spaces is epitomized by the debate at the end of the meeting when the practicality of setting out the roads but allowing extra width at the side for walks was discussed, a proposal very similar to one of the suggestions in the 1833 Select Committee report. Classed as part of the land allocated for recreation, this would have created green-lined streets catering for both horse-drawn carriages and walkers and, in all likelihood, would have increase the attraction and value of the houses to be built alongside. What these first proposals do construct is a roughly semi-circular route around and across the northern part of 'new' Nottingham, which mirrors some of the pathways of the pre-enclosure town.



MAP 2: 9 March 1846



MAP 3: 30 March 1846

Three weeks later a written set of recommendations was submitted to the Commissioners, though the accompanying letter states that they are the result of being ‘pressed’ by the Commissioners, and are only suggestions.⁵² Map 3 shows these recommendations and a comparison with Map 2 reveals obvious differences. The two walks or roads across the Sandfield were reduced to one walk (No. 8); the discarded route later became Forest Road. There is a new walk from Mansfield Road up to Toad Hole Hill, similar to the one shown on Map 1; which connected to the walk down the other side which now terminated at Broad Oak Pool (no. 9), while the bridleway to St Ann’s was to become a fully-fledged carriage-way. Instead of a walk or road to the east of the town, it was now proposed to build the cemetery next to the Cholera Burial Ground (No. 1). Also next to the Burial ground was a recreational space, designated as a cricket ground (No. 6). Wylie notes that there was a cricket ground on the Clayfield so it is possible that the new ground was on or close to the traditional location.⁵³ The Forest, omitted from the previous discussion, was included in this list and parallel to it was a smaller strip of land, possibly with the intention of running a road between the two spaces (Nos. 3 and 4). Washhouses were to be situated next to an area of the Meadows known as The Bull Pit (No. 2). The only unchanged spaces were the cricket ground and walk across the Meadow which, apart from minor amendments to size, remained unchanged in all the subsequent plans.

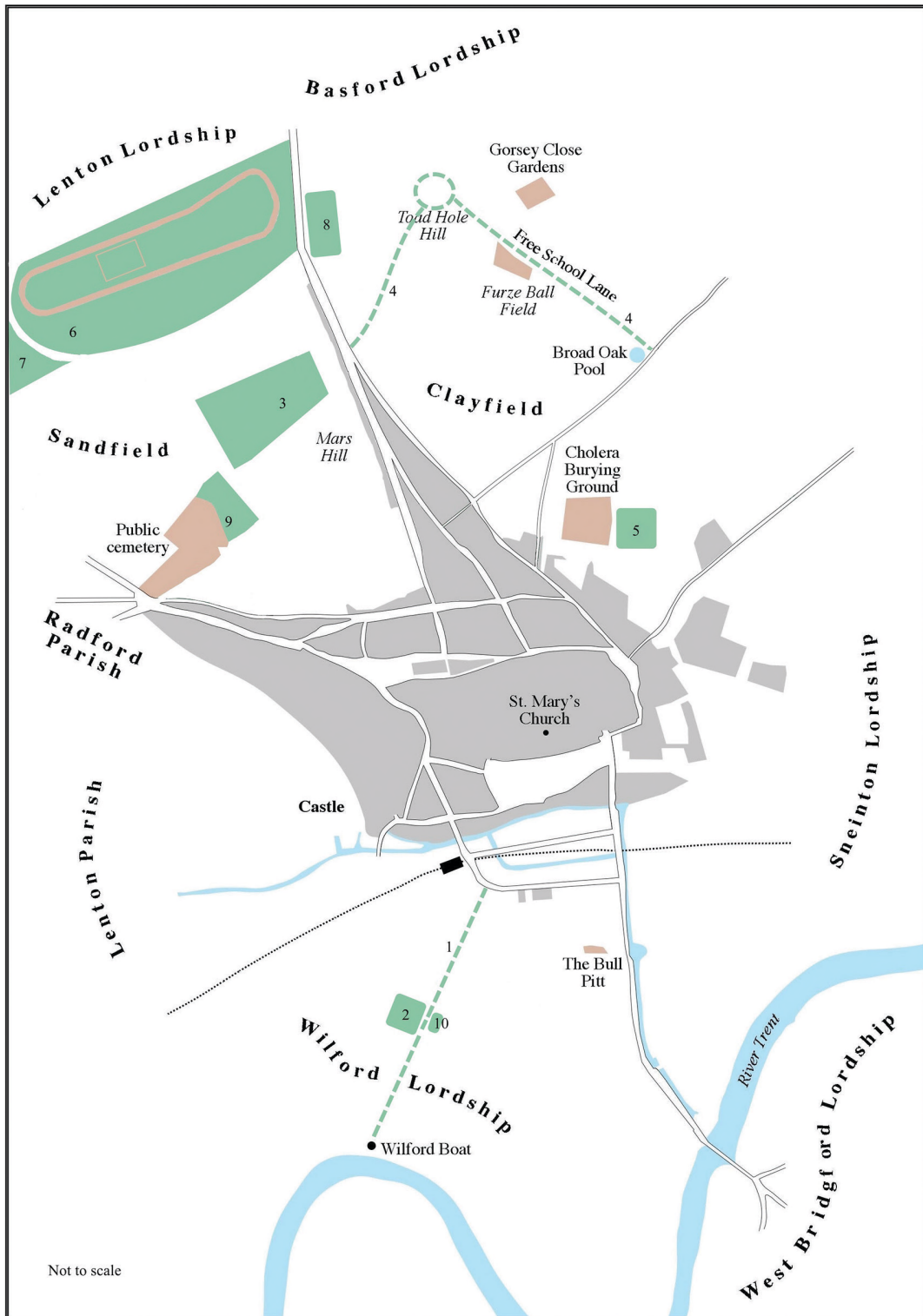
Despite these recommendations, the Council continued ask the Commissioners to lay out the roads first.

it is not desirable that any of the scites [*sic*] for the open spaces Public Walks Cemetery or Baths should be finally fixed, or any order made thereon by the Council until the Commissioners have stated the Streets and Public Roads which they propose to set out and form.⁵⁴

And the Commissioners were similarly uncommitted, insisting that the Council had to select the recreational spaces before roads could be marked out. At the beginning of June 1846, at the request of the Commissioners, the Town Clerk produced a sketch plan, but again asserted that the Commissioners must agree the road layout before any walks or open spaces could be finalised because

‘so many considerations present themselves’.⁵⁵ One of those considerations was the position of the cemeteries which was still uncertain due to the restriction that they could not be located within 300 yards of domestic housing which, as anticipated, was causing problems. Another was that the Waterworks Company now wanted two acres at the top of Toad Hole Hill for a reservoir. Perhaps the most radical consideration was the formation of an Arboretum, resulting from public pressure that culminating in a petition presented to the Council. There were many motivations behind this proposal. One must have been civic pride and rivalry: Derby Arboretum had opened in 1840 and proved to be something of a tourist attraction. William Parsons, a Town Councillor and member of the Enclosure Committee reported in his diary that in July 1846 he went to Derby for the anniversary of the opening of the Arboretum where ‘There was a great Concourse chiefly of the middle classes dressed out in their best all apparently happy and full of enjoyment of their holyday.’⁵⁶ Another was the influence of the Sherwood Forest poets beloved of Wylie and others whose passion for nature led them to advocate, as part of the agenda for rational recreation, the creation of public walks and open spaces to promote the study of natural history.⁵⁷ As a feature not previously contemplated, the Town Clerk pointed out that an arboretum would alter the ‘extent and direction of the suggested Walk in the Sandfield’.⁵⁸ The plans for the walks had to be re-thought.

Some consensus was, however, becoming apparent and two months later the Council was able to approve a set of recommendations for green spaces, plotted on Map 4. Many of the proposals were the same as the earlier recommendations, with some minor refinements such as reducing the width of the walk through the Meadows from 100 to ninety feet and the washhouses moved close to the cricket ground to ensure they were properly supervised. By this time some of the indecision over the position of the cemeteries had, seemingly, also been resolved as four acres on the east side of Mansfield Road was allotted for the Church of England Cemetery, while the remaining four acres formed an extension of the General Cemetery specifically for dissenters, again on land acquired through an arrangement with Samuel Fox (Nos. 8 and 9).⁵⁹ Bowing to



MAP 4: 4 August 1846

public pressure – and probably civic sympathies – provision had been made for an Arboretum (No. 3). Although this broke the continuity of the public walks, the proximity of the Cemetery extension with the boundary of the Arboretum did provide a route through these new spaces around the western side of town.

By 1846, the Council Minutes (Fig. 2) show that 129 of the 130 acres allowed for green space had been allocated for walks, parkland, cricket grounds, cemeteries and other amenities leaving one acre spare, which the Council placed at the disposal of the Commissioners. This agreement, however, does not mean that the townspeople were completely happy with the new arrangements. An article in the *Nottingham Journal* of October 1846 posed some ‘Public Questions’

I. By whom has it been arranged on behalf of Churchmen that they shall be buried – if buried in a cemetery at all – on the top of Mansfield Road! And why were not the poor, whether churchmen or dissenters, of the South side of the town thought of, and provided for nearer their

*dwelling*s, viz. at the Ryelands or some other part of the Meadows? Will it not be a great tax on both churchmen and dissenters to remove their dead from the lower parts of the town (Leenside, Brewhouse Yard, &c) to the top of the hill on the North side of the town?

II. Public Baths and wash-houses – why are no convenient places secured during the inclosure for public baths and wash-houses (one or both) on the South – the East (for Meadow Platts &c) – and the North of this large town? Are we always to lag behind in such improvements and conveniences!⁶⁰

Furthermore, nine months after the full Council had approved the proposals for walks and recreation grounds, the boundaries had still not been laid out and the Council’s hesitancy was again, at least partially, at the root of the problem. The

Your Committee annex to this Report a statement of the contents of the walks places of recreation and other grounds here recommended to be selected, and also Plan thereof.

Contents of the Lands under the Nottingham Inclosure act to be set apart for Public walks

	Tobacco Hill and Forest		Forest	
	A.	R. P.	A.	R. P.
Promenade towards Hilford				
Beat 30 yards wide	6	1	0	
Cricket Ground near de	7	0	0	
The Pleasure grounds or Arboretum in Bowling Alley	12	0	0	
field and the approaches thereto				
The walk from the Mansfield Road round Tod Hole Hill	10	3	0	
to the road near Broad oak				
Pool 30 yards wide				
Cricket and Play ground in Meadow Platt closes	3	7	0	0
Carried over	43	0	0	0

17/2

11th August 1846.

	A.	R.	P.	A.	R.	P.
Brought over	43	0	0			
Race Course, Cricket Ground						
Exercise Ground and part of Forest				70	0	0
Recreation ground near Radford				6	0	0
The land for the church of England				14	0	0
The Cemetery for Dissenters	4	0	0			
Baths and Washhouses	2	0	0			
Land proposed to be placed at the disposal of Commissioners	1	0	0			
Total	50	0	0	80	0	0

Mr William Page produces a Petition from the Inhabitants of this Town suggesting that from the quantity of land to be devoted to Public walks to part be appropriated to form an Arboretum and moves that the Petition be referred to the General Inclosure Committee which is seconded by Mr Alderman Cullen and being put to the vote is carried

Ordered on the motion of Mr Mackfield seconded by Mr William Page that the above Report of the General Inclosure Committee be adopted and that the said Committee be and they are hereby authorized to

FIG. 2: CA 3605: Minutes of Town Council, 11 August 1846, listing the recreational and public amenities to be provided. Reproduced courtesy of Nottinghamshire Archives.

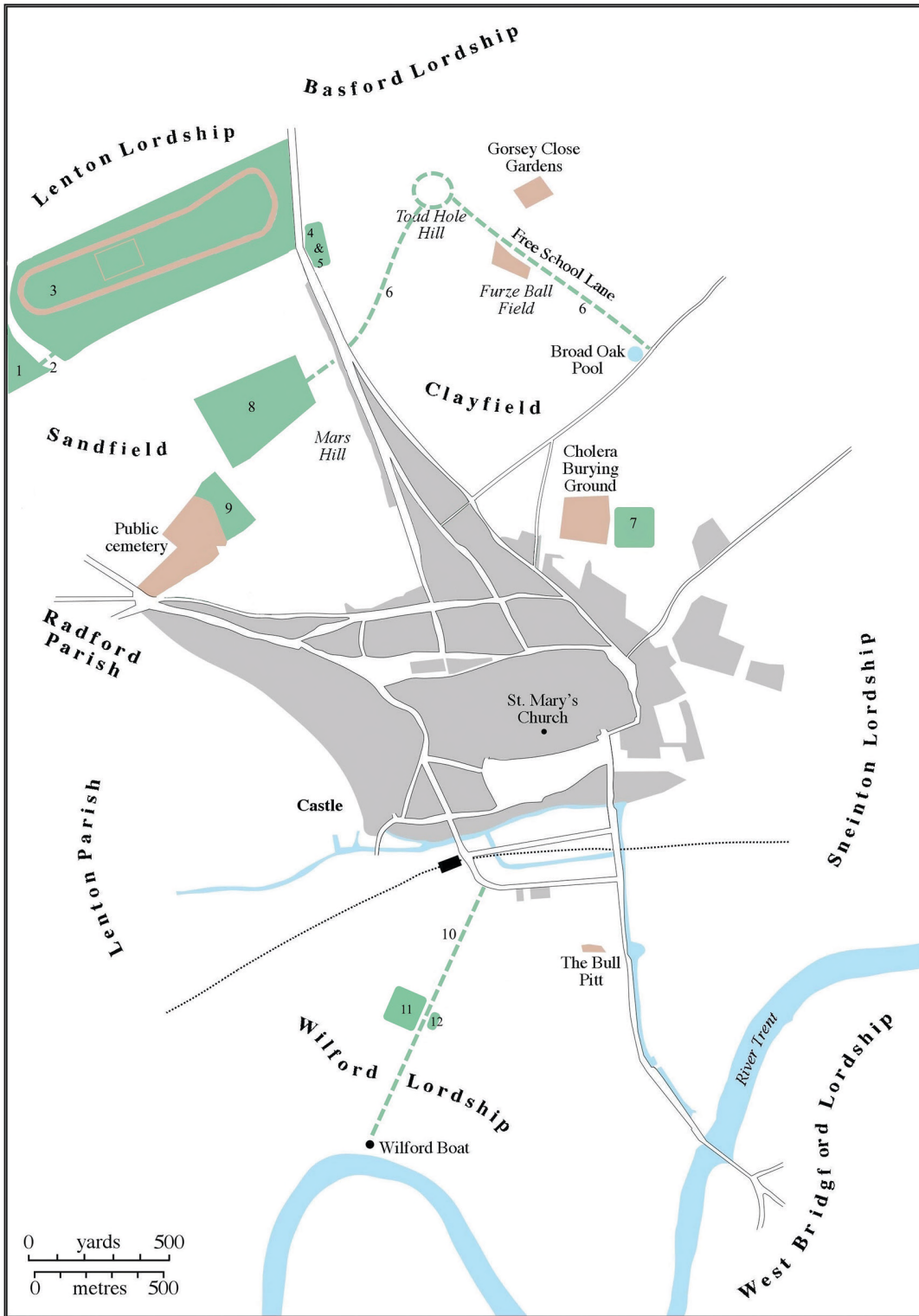
Commissioners' Minute book records that on 19 May 1847 the Commissioners spent the whole day preparing sketches and plans for building plots, roads and green spaces for a meeting with the Council's Enclosure sub-committee.⁶¹ The following day, these proposals were put to the full Council. While the schemes for the Forest and Toad Hole Hill were approved there was a difference of opinion on the position of the recreation ground on the Clay Field.⁶² There were also technical issues. When the Town Clerk viewed the proposed space on the Forest he discovered a discrepancy between the Commissioners' plan and the boundary with the adjoining parish of Basford which had 'existed for several years past without dispute and said to be held under a verbal arrangement with the Earl of Chesterfield'.⁶³

Nevertheless, during the summer of 1847 the sites for the recreation grounds were surveyed and only tweaking of final details, such as reducing the size of the cricket ground on Meadow Platts to allow the walk across the Meadows to be 90 feet wide, remained to be agreed.⁶⁴ On 21 October 1847, the Council gave its approval to what was, almost,

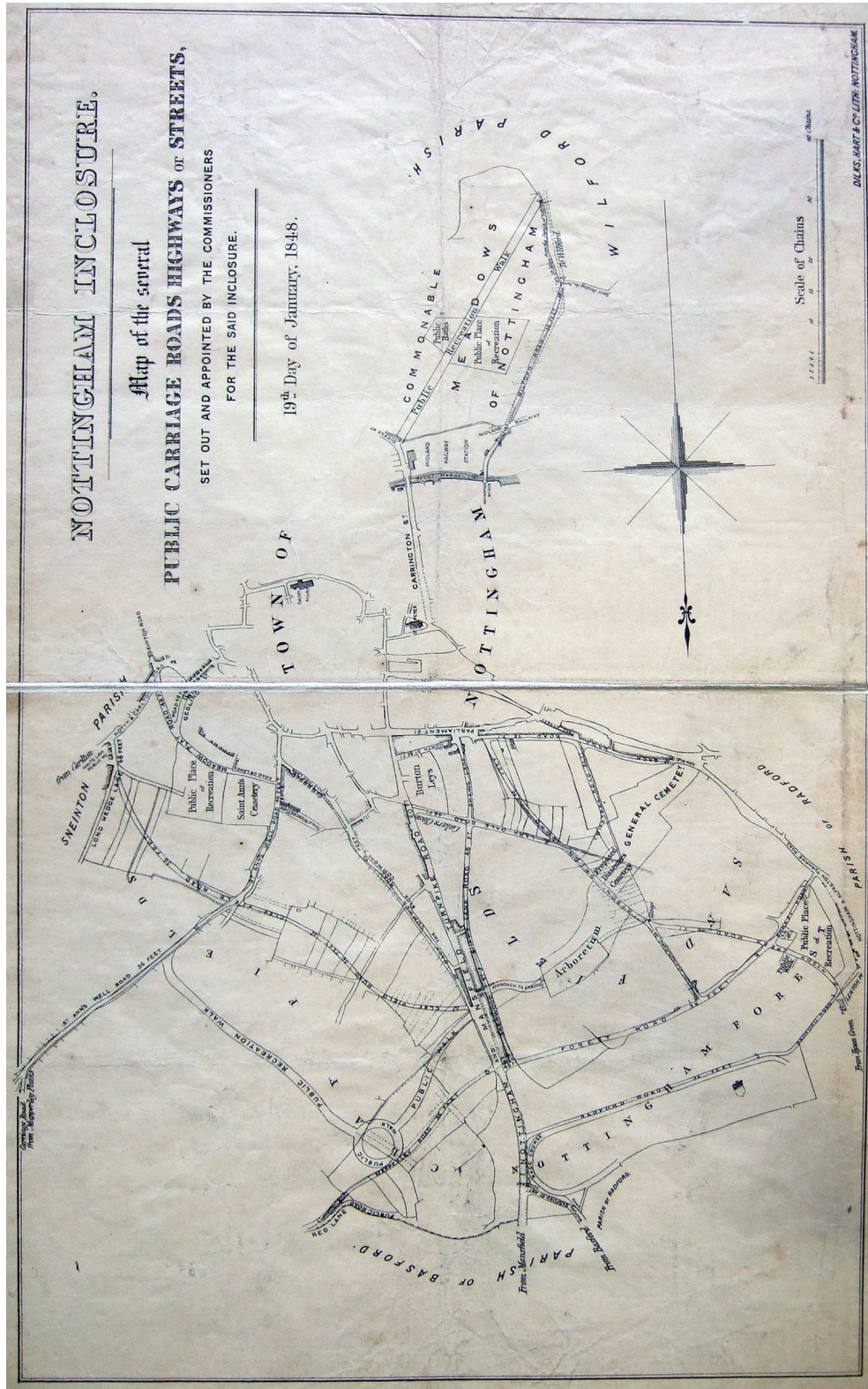
the final allocation of land (the positions are shown on Map 5 and indicated by the number in square brackets in the table below).

The uncertainty seemed to be at an end as an 'Inclosure Map' (Map 6), distributed in February 1848 to all subscribers to the *Nottingham Review*, publicised the layout of the new roads and carriage ways, and the position of the green spaces. In many ways these resembled the pre-enclosure layout (Map 1) and the proposals that came out of the first meeting between the Council and Enclosure Commissioners (Map 2), though the myriad of footpaths and bridleways had been replaced by roads. The 'embowered' Lark Dale was now a road, as was the bridle path to St Ann's. Forest Road ran along the ridge where the windmills used to stand and other roads crossed the Clayfield and Sandfield, probably following traditional pathways and property boundaries. The commentary to the Enclosure plan extols the advantages of the new arrangements. The walk around the reservoir 'from its elevated site and position, will command a delightful N.E. view of the town'. The Arboretum promised to rival that of Derby, the new cemeteries

On the Forest	a	r	p
Recreation Ground near Aspley Terrace [1]	7	0	35
Public Walk connecting the above with the Race Course &c [2]	2	5	5
Race Course Cricket Ground, Cavalry Ground and Forest in 2 parts [3]	67	0	30
Forest East of Mansfield Road for Church of England Cemetery [4]	2	3	10
In the Clay Field			
For Church of England Cemetery (to make 4 acres) [5]	1	0	30
Broad Walk from Mansfield Road to and round Toad Hill and thence to St Anns Road (ab ^t 80 ft wide) [6]	10	0	27
Cricket Ground in the Meadow Platts [7]	7	0	55
At the disposal of the Commissioners	1	0	0
In the Sand Field			
For the Arboretum and Broad Walk connecting it with Chatham St [8]	12	0	0
For the Dissenters Cemetery [9]	4	0	0
In the Meadows			
Broad Walk, 90 feet wide from Queens Road towards Wilford Ferry [10]	6	0	28
Cricket Ground on Little Rye Hill [11]	6	1	0
Public Baths near D ^o [12]	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>



MAP 5: 21 October 1847



MAP 6: Nottingham Enclosure Map, 1850. Reproduced courtesy of Nottingham Local Studies Library.

would relieve the overcrowding of the burial places in town. On the Forest, ‘the recreation grounds ... will be of great utility to the neighbouring population’, as would be the new cricket ground near the Cholera Burial Ground.⁶⁵

A PERAMBULATION OF NEW NOTTINGHAM⁶⁶

With the exception of the Church Cemetery, by the middle of 1852 all the green spaces were completed and the Arboretum was officially opened on 11 May 1852. Four days later an article entitled ‘New Nottingham’ appeared in *Eliza Cook’s Journal* and a few days after it was reproduced in the *Nottingham Review*. Eliza Cook was a poet and journalist; her popular *Journal* was a weekly miscellany directed at women and the working classes that publishing poetry, household tips and juvenile fiction, and promoted educational and career opportunities for women.⁶⁷

Her article, which describes a tour around Nottingham, concludes by saying ‘It will thus be seen that the Recreation Walks – which are, in truth, almost a continuous avenue of trees – completely encircle the town and afford a promenade of ten miles in extent’. The similarity between this statement and Wylie’s comment, and between the title of her article and Wylie’s book, suggests that they may have been acquainted – they were both journalists after all. Eliza’s version, apparently erroneously, attributes the ten mile promenade to post- rather than pre-enclosure Nottingham. However, if she did know Wyle it is likely that her tour at least echoed that original walk. It is therefore worth following – as closely as possible – in her footsteps to appreciate both the old route and the improvements being brought about in the new town.

As a pioneering journalist one of the reasons for her article was to correct the Londoner who thought of midlands towns as ‘pictures of dreariness’ with ‘narrow streets and tall chimneys’, arguing that Nottingham ‘that clean, though densely-populated town, will be the best antidote to the poison he has imbibed’. For this reason her visit took her first from the railway station to the Market place via ‘an

approach as clean as Regent-street’. Here she claims there was no sign of ‘squalor and wretchedness’, an odd statement given the social circumstances that led to Enclosure. Instead

Nottingham might vie with any town in England for its well-grown and well-dressed women of the operative classes who on Sunday throng the Park and public walks.

It is the habit of the people to seek their recreation out of doors, and there are few operatives who had not a bit of garden-ground situated at some little distance from the town.

The last remark may be a reference to the detached gardens on Hungar Hills.

Having viewed the Market, Eliza then went to the new baths and washhouses which she claims were in Sneinton. As Sneinton was not part of Nottingham in the middle of the century, it is more likely that these were baths newly built by the Sanitary Commissioners close to the Cholera Burial Ground (now referred to as St Ann’s Cemetery) a site suggested by the *Nottingham Review* in 1846; as additional to the Enclosure they are not marked on Map 6.⁶⁸ Here she admired the public swimming pool and patent wringing machine, though she claimed the washhouses were used by professional washerwomen rather than the poor. From the baths she went in a north-easterly direction to St Ann’s Well, probably crossing the town boundary into Sneinton (possibly the cause of confusion about the exact location of the baths) before moving back into the town and on to the public walks, presumably along the new carriageway that, pre-enclosure, had been a bridle path. Robin Hood Chase (labelled on Map 6 as ‘Public Recreation Walk’) is described as an ‘undulating gravel walk lined with greensward and winding through an avenue of trees’, from where there was a ‘a beautiful view of the densely packed town of Nottingham, the site of which is only 250 acres while the roads of its embryo brother lie stretched out everywhere’. Moving from Robin Hood Chase into the next public walk, Corporation Oaks, Eliza promenaded around what she names as St Ann’s Hill reservoir; another slight error in place name. According to William Parsons, Toad Hole Hill was re-christened St Ann’s Hill, though the reservoir is usually referred to as Bellevue.⁶⁹

She then proceeded down Elm Avenue towards ‘Sherwood Forest’; as this is not described Eliza probably only looked down from the ridge which had become Forest Road. From here, she noted that a large piece of land had been marked out for a cemetery. By 1852, the location of the Church Cemetery had finally been settled as being wholly on the Sandfield, between the Forest and the Arboretum. This had necessitated the purchase of additional land to ensure that it was surrounded by public roads and open ground, thus avoiding the problems created by the 300 yard restriction.⁷⁰ Raising the funds had been a protracted process, which meant that Eliza would only have seen the undeveloped site. She did, however, view the Arboretum, which being ‘laid out with great taste and liberality’ was a ‘cherished resort’ for townspeople as entry was free on three days a week. She also approved of the tea room, commenting that its rental brought in £150 a year.

From the Arboretum, she crossed another newly formed road to enter the extended General Cemetery. On Sundays, according to Eliza, the Cemetery was so crowded with wanderers the gates had to be closed during divine service to prevent disturbance. She also observed that while the grounds were generally in good order, incongruously, parts of the Cemetery were used to dry washing. She paid particular attention to the children’s graves and the ‘singular custom ... of placing a praying figure on these little mounds’. Commenting on the high level of infant mortality in Nottingham she said this was ‘produced by circumstances which a sanitary commission can neither control nor diminish’ and contended that a children’s hospital would be more effective than a Sanitary Commission, a sentiment not exactly in-line with the evidence of the effect of overcrowding and poor sanitation on the mortality rate that had finally stimulated the Enclosure Act.

Leaving the General Cemetery she again crossed out of town and entered the Park, noting that the Duke of Newcastle was planning a road to ‘a design which will be far more profitable than picturesque’, highlighting that this was another open space which would soon be filled with houses. From the Park she walked beneath the Castle along the route mentioned by Wylie as the route to Beeston

(in reverse), across the Meadows and over the ferry to Wilford Grove and back again, returning to the station along Queen’s Walk.

The similarities between the older footpaths and the perambulation undertaken by Eliza using the newly created public walks and other open spaces could not be accidental. Rather it proves that the Council and Commissioners, despite their regular prevarications, to a great extent used the existing, traditional pathways and routes around the town to create open space in ‘New Nottingham’.

SOME FINAL COMMENTS

The written and map evidence shows that before 1845, while not describing a full circle, it was possible to take a tour of the northern town by following paths between fields and crossing the town boundaries into Sneinton and the Park. The post-enclosure promenades, parks and cemeteries comprise a similar sequence of walks. The location, and to some extent, the usage of these spaces was dictated by the pre-enclosure town; popular walks across the Meadows and to Toad Hole Hill were preserved, as were much of the sporting facilities on the Forest and in the Meadows. The Forest, however, was two-thirds its former size and was fenced and managed for genteel recreation not rough games. Public opinion and civic pride came into play as plans for the Sandfield transformed from an extensive walk into an Arboretum to rival neighbouring Derby. Some of the traditional paths had become roadways and agricultural fields were replaced by houses. Barker’s rural wandering through lammas fields and embowered paths were refined promenades ‘furnished with rustic seats at intervals’ designed so that ‘the most extensive prospects are continually obtained’.⁷¹ To Eliza Cook this was progress:

when the roads which intersect each other in all directions on this great prairie are lined with handsome villas and terraces such as are now to be found near Elm Avenue, the enclosure will exhibit almost an unique specimen of spirited and liberal provision for public recreation and welfare.⁷²

What the Enclosure Act created was not the country rambles described by Barker but more controlled and artificial promenades with gated entrances that ran along managed pathways between private residences and policed by the local constabulary. They would indeed provide gentle, respectable exercise where a shop assistant could show off her new ribbons or a man his clean, neatly dressed children. More robust – and to some spiritual – activity was catered for through the provision of three cricket grounds. These were not, however, the forward thinking facilities promoted by *The Westminster Review* but simply the continuation of existing amenities, in or close to their pre-enclosure locations and, like the walks, now fenced, gated and supervised by police officers; there would be no more clashes with cow keepers. Intellectual stimulation was provided by the

Arboretum, the only really innovative green space in new Nottingham. The afterlife was catered for by new cemeteries and cleanliness by washhouses. All these spaces would soon be hemmed in by the new housing developments on what had been farmers' fields.

Ironically, since 1852, the social status of 'New Nottingham' has been reversed; the handsome villas have been converted to flats in an area of 'Multiple Deprivation', high unemployment and multi-ethnic communities.⁷³ The 1845 Enclosure Act, however, has ensured that this now densely populated area of the city is still provided with open space for recreation, exercise and fresh air, as its creators always intended.

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Especial thanks are due to Jonathan Coope and also to June Perry from Friends of the Forest who alerted me to the first of the plans for green spaces found in the Enclosure Commissioner's Notes.

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