7 The Great Central Railway

The last major long-distance railway to be built in Britain, the Great Central ran from Nottinghamshire to its London terminus at Marylebone which opened in 1899. Developments in railway construction enabled the line to be built with fewer curves and gradients, enabling its trains to run at faster speeds.

➤ The towpath takes you into the parish of Glen Parva.

8 Glen Parva

Glen Parva has the Grand Union Canal, the Leicester to Birmingham railway and now disused Great Central Railway all passing through the parish. The River Sence forms the southern parish boundary and the village most likely grew up as a place to ford the river. At the eastern end of the parish, Wigston Barracks opened in 1881 and it remained an active military base until 1960. In the 1970s, part of the site was used a borstal and then an adult male prison before finally becoming a young offenders' institution until its closure in 2017.

Sue Townsend, the author of the Adrian Mole books, lived in Glen Parva as a child and several of her characters are thought to have been based on the people living here. Apart from the eight Mole books, she wrote many other novels and plays and has a theatre named after her in Leicester.

Another former resident of Glen Parva is now on display at Leicester's Jewry Wall Museum (at the time of writing closed for refurbishment). Known as 'The Glen Parva Lady' this Anglo-Saxon woman was probably a high-status pagan, as her skeleton was discovered in 1866 far from any church and buried in a stone vaulted grave on a north- south alignment. What makes her discovery important is the array of grave goods she was buried with. These include delicate brooches and rings, a necklace made with beads of glass and a piece of crystal, possibly a pendant.

➤ Leave the canal after passing under Bridge 95 and descend to the main road. Cross the road and take the path to the right of Glen Parva Manor. Glen Parva Moat land is on your left.

9 Glen Parva Manor

Glen Parva Manor appears on a map of 1886, along with a small number of houses that made up the village then, sandwiched between the canal and the River Sence. A manor has stood here since at least the early 13th century. The current building was expanded during the 19th and 20th centuries, but it still retains parts of the medieval manor that date back to the 15th century at the front of the building.

➤ Turn right before the river bridge to walk through Alison's Acre. Cross the River Sence and continue to the road where you turn left then right. At the main road in Blaby, turn right then first left down Cross Street and keep going straight ahead.

10 Blaby

The name Blaby has Viking origins. The 'by' portion means farmstead and the first part of the word refers to a Viking called Blár. Blaby is therefore 'Blár's farmstead. Virtually all the towns and villages in England ending in 'by' have Viking origins, for example, Cosby.

Bouskell Park contains the evidence of medieval farmsteads which can be seen even today. You may notice lots of lumps and bumps in the terrain – these are the scars of this medieval settlement. Included within the park is a restored Victorian 'Ice House' which formerly served Blaby Hall.

➤ As you approach the roundabout, turn left down The Avenue. Take the footpath to the right at the end of the road and go through the underpass. On emerging take the footpath to the right, go left at the road and then cross the playground to the far corner, away from Whetstone church.

11 Whetstone

Whetstone has grown a lot as a village over the years, but it has always been quite a big village. In the 1086 Domesday Book there is a recorded 43 households, putting it in the largest 20% of settlements in England. Sir Frank Whittle, who developed the Jet Engine during WWII, set up his company, Power Jets Ltd in Whetstone. According to tradition, as a dedication to him and all those who worked there at 8.00am every morning up until 2002 an air raid siren was sounded.

➤ Follow the footpath to the main road, turn left, then right by The Bull's Head. At the little turret, take the footpath to the right which brings you back to the main road leading to the car park. Turn left.

With Thanks to...

Our thanks to Eddie Smallwood and Michael Dix for creating the walking routes and uncovering the heritage stories. And to Graham Luker for the illustrations.

This series of heritage walks have been designed to inspire walking across the District – we hope that you enjoy them. We welcome feedback and you can get in touch with us by emailing leisure@blaby.gov.uk. The walk uses footpaths, bridleways, permissive paths and some roads. Please respect the landowner's property and stay on the indicated paths. Please follow the countryside code. Take care when walking on roads and follow the Highway Code for pedestrians. You are advised to use the route in conjunction with the OS map for the area. This guide has been created with funds from the European Regional Development Fund and HM Government.

go jauntly

Find this walk, all 12 heritage trails and more on the **GoJauntly app.** Simple photo guides help you navigate while nifty tips point out things of interest and places to eat.

For more information on this walk and for other walks in the series visit our website:

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Let's go! Blaby District

11

Heritage Walks

Route Eleven

7.9 miles 11km

This walk is one of a series of 12 heritage trails plus a long distance perimeter route around the whole District, see the website visitblaby.org.uk for more information.

- Enderby
- Grove Park
- Fosse Park
- Everards Meadows
- Glen Parva
- Blaby
- Whetstone

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P 1 Start at Jubilee Park in Enderby

Turn left out of the car park and cross at the bollards. Take the footpath to your right and cross the packhorse bridge.

2 Enderby Mill

The packhorse bridge is a double arched 15th century construction over the River Soar. The Domesday Book records a mill at Enderby worth 5 shillings, one of three in the area along with Whetstone, of which no record remains after 1254, and Blaby, which was to the east of the village on the River Sence. The latter two were only worth 2 shillings meaning that Enderby Mill would have been far more productive. There are a few remains of a later 19th century mill that stood alongside the bridge, but nothing is left of a substantial building that would have overlooked the mill and bridge - the Blaby Union Workhouse. Built in 1837 to a square design promoted by the Poor Law Commission, it could accommodate 350 inmates who had fallen on hard times, taking the poor from across the current Blaby district.

Go to the right of the playground, then left up the road to the main road. Turn right and cross at the traffic lights. Follow the B582 until it bends left, then take the footpath on your right that follows the Roman Fosse Way. In the second field, keep the hedge to your left then follow a gravelled path by the yellow post. Cross the road at the lights. Follow Smith Way into Grove Park, taking a right turn to follow a path round the lake.

3 Grove Park

As you walk through the commercial buildings of Grove Park, it is difficult to imagine the landscape back in the first centuries BC and AD, when there was a Late Iron Age farmstead here consisting of several circular buildings. This would have been present when the Romans built the Fosse Way, the route of which you follow apart from a detour around the lake. Evidence from crop markings, ditches and an archaeological survey in the 1990s prior to development of the area, point to a settlement with a mixed economy: crops, cattle and rights in the nearby Leicester Forest. During the construction of the Park and Ride car park, six Roman skeletons were unearthed, suggesting a Roman cemetery close to the Fosse Way.

Turn left at the T junction, turning left at the main road. Continue in the same direction, crossing roads at the light-controlled crossings. Pass the entrance to Sainsbury's then cross at the next set of crossing lights to a sign saying Fosse Park. Turn left and stay on the pavement until the Fosse Park entrance.

4 Fosse Park

Opened in 1989, Fosse Park has grown to become one of the country's largest retail parks. Two years earlier a previous bid to build 'Centre 21', modelled on London's Brent Cross Shopping Centre and named after the nearby Junction 21 on the M1, had been rejected, prompting the city council to plan improvements to the city centre. However, what was then a smaller project, Fosse Park, was approved although it has now expanded considerably.

Follow the pavement around to your right and head through Food Central. (If Food Central is closed, track round to your left until you reach the far exit.) On leaving Food Central, continue straight on until you meet the main road and then turn left and walk to the traffic lights where you cross the road and enter Everards Meadows.

5 Everards Meadows

In 1849, William Everard, from Narborough Road House in Enderby, and brewer Thomas Hull, bought a brewery on Southgate Street in Leicester. It was the start of a successful business that expanded through the purchasing of public houses in the area so that by 1967, Everards had 125 pubs employing 700 staff.

Everards Meadows is a 70-acre green space with cycle hire, a café and Everards Beer Hall with shop and brewery tours. In 2015, an Iron Age Shield, made of bark, was discovered by archaeologists working on the meadow. To date, it is the only bark shield that has been found in Europe and is estimated to be around 2,300 years old. A representation of the shield can be found next to the brewery. Just south of Everards Meadows and lying on the western bank of the River Soar are the remains of St John's Church, Aldeby. A raised oblong mound is all that is left of a church that was once the mother church to Enderby.

At the Enderby shield, turn left and then right at the T junction. After crossing the River Soar again on a long wooden bridge take the path to your left before the canal bridge and turn right along the towpath.

6 The Grand Union Canal

This stretch of the Grand Union Canal began life as the Leicestershire and Northamptonshire Union Canal, built following a 1793 act of Parliament, it was never particularly prosperous. Traffic consisted mainly of cheap coal and Baltic timber, with local produce heading to new markets on the canal network. It was bought by the Grand Junction Canal in 1894 and merged with several other canals in 1929 as the Grand Union Canal.

You will pass by the route of the Great Central Railway although the bridge across the canal is no longer there.