

River Leen from Source to the Trent: Section 3 – Bulwell to Wilkinson Street



Linear walk following the River Leen from Bulwell through Basford to Wilkinson Street Tram Stop/ Park and Ride. The route follows the Leen more closely than previous sections with urban and industrial interest. There are some surprising green spaces and many opportunities to see wildlife on (and in) the river. We also visit Vernon Park.

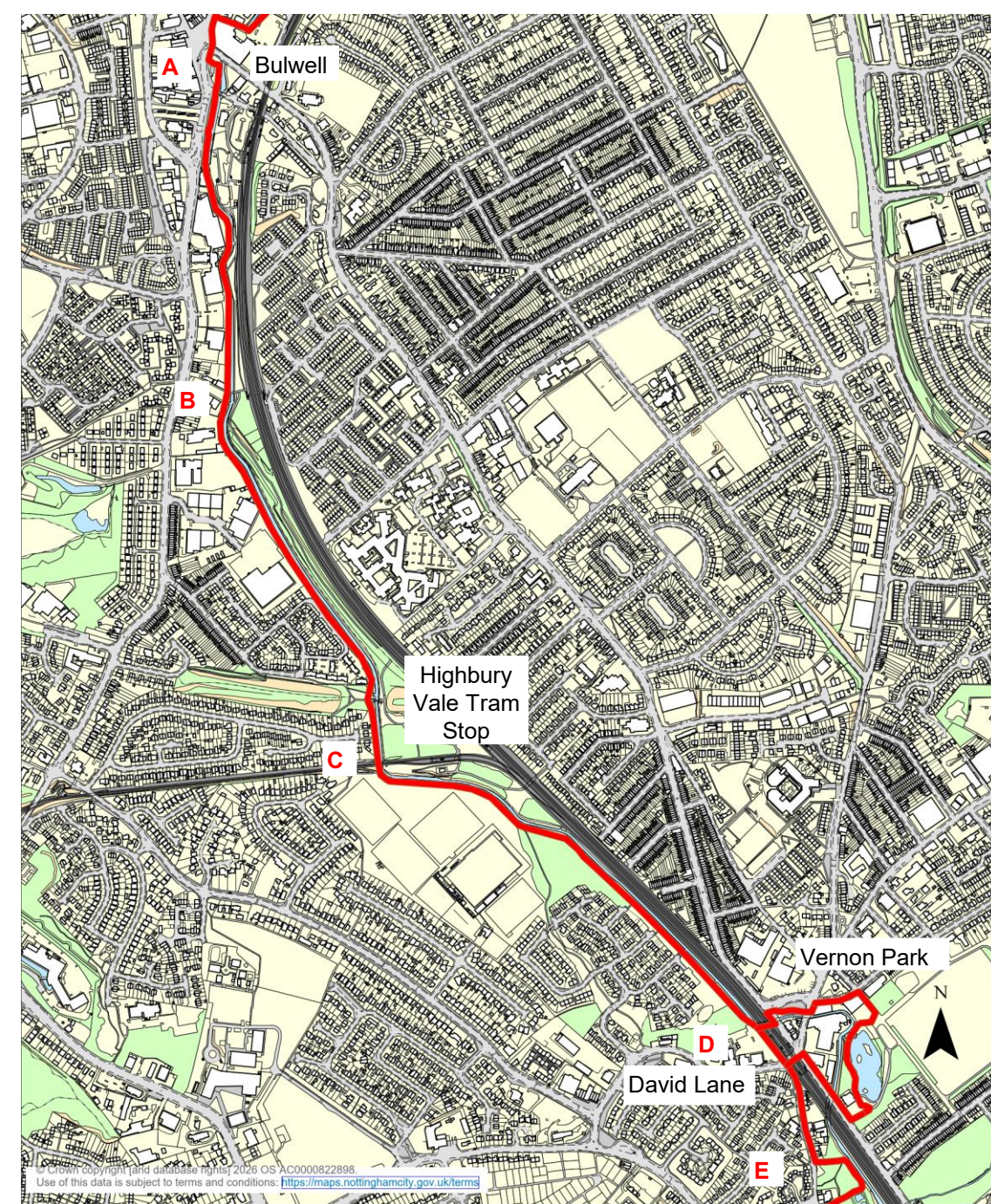
Start	Bulwell Bogs by the river between Highbury Road bridge and the old stone bridge, near the well and sculpture of bull
Finish	Wilkinson Street Tram Stop
Distance	c 3 miles/ 5km
Time	2 hours
Terrain	Mostly cycle paths and pavements
Travel Information	Tram stops at Bulwell, Highbury Vale, David Lane, Basford and Wilkinson Street; buses in Bulwell, Basford.
Maps	OS Explorer 260 Nottingham
Facilities/ Refreshment s	Shops, pubs and cafes in Bulwell, Basford and near Wilkinson Street

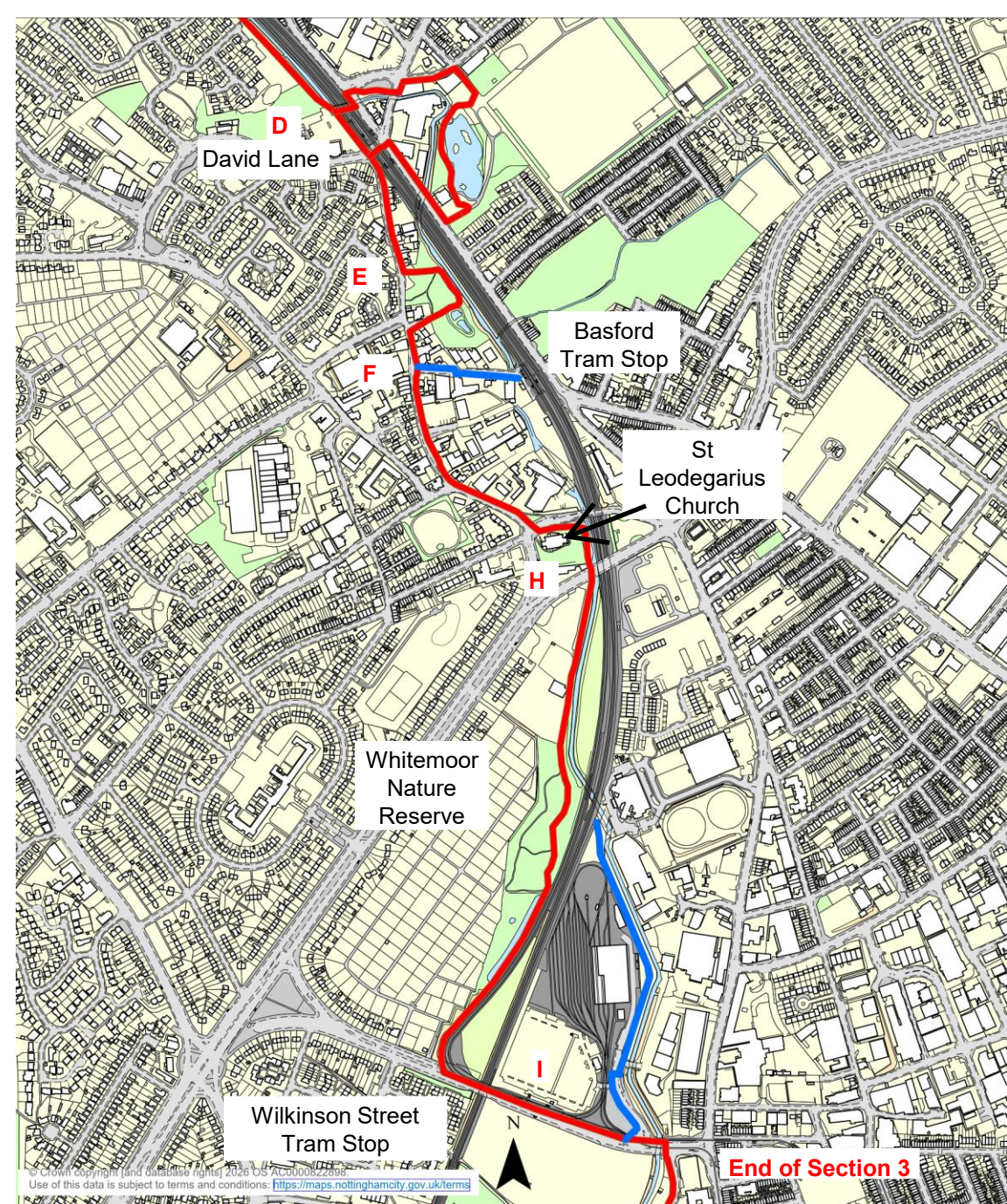
Photos clockwise from top left: Bridge near Highbury Vale; tram over Leen at Highbury Vale; Lincoln Street Open Space; Whitmoor Nature Reserve; Leen and tram line flowing under Nottingham Ring Road near St Leodegarius Church; Leen flowing between Pearsons Mill and Bridge Mill buildings from Southwark Street Bridge.

The walk is on publicly accessible paths and open spaces, most of which are rights of way; some paths are on private land where public access is by permission of the owner.

Route Description

- A. Before walking explore **Bulwell Bogs Park** and **Memory Garden** with bull sculpture and metal 2-D sculptures commemorating the Great War, Bulwell Viaduct, Shonky Pit, Bulwell Stone Quarry, Bulwell Hall and the origins of the name “Bulwell”. From below Highbury Road bridge, walk through Bulwell Bogs Park with the river on your left, passing the old stone bridge to reach and cross over a metal footbridge; then turn right to follow the path through the children’s play area keeping to the right of Bulwell Bogs Water Park. The path soon crosses back over the Leen. Continue with the river on your left again. *(Note April 2026: while park closed for development, from stone bridge walk down main road and take path in front of Riverside Health Centre to join path with Leen on your left).*
- B. At the next bridge where the path meets **National Cycle Network Route 6 (NCN 6)** continue ahead still with the river on your left. *(There is an alternative path through trees on the other side of the river which you may take. If so, rejoin the main path at the next bridge).*
- C. The path crosses a small tributary of the Leen to arrive at a junction of paths, a blue metal bridge crossing the Leen and tram and NCN 6 route signs. **Highbury Vale** tram stop is nearby. A small detour on the right can be made to see a steep tree covered embankment where the Great Northern Railway ran. Our path continues with the Leen still on our left to pass under another bridge (with tram line on top). Beyond this the river and path bend left, and **Basford United Football Club** and Sports Ground are on your right. At the next path junction, keep left still following the river (the path to the right follows a previous course of the Leen – see points of interest). There are some **statues celebrating Local Heroes** Sheku Kanneh Mason, Emily Campbell and Karl White. After this the Leen is culverted under the tram and railway line and our path arrives at **David Lane Tram Stop**.
- D. From David Lane we do a short circular walk to see the Leen flow through **Vernon Park** and be culverted again near **Basford Library**: cross carefully over the tram line and railway line; then Vernon Road and Southwark Street using pedestrian lights. Turn left to walk up Southwark Street and cross a bridge over Leen. The buildings here were formerly Pearson’s Mill and Bridge Mill. Turn right to walk up Waterford Street and enter Vernon Park through gates on your right by Sallis Healthcare buildings. In the park turn right to walk by the pond: keeping the pond on your left, the Leen is on your right. Exit the park by Basford Library. Turn right to return to David Lane. Here cross back over the road, railway and tram lines with care, then turn left to walk along **Lincoln Street**. Indications of former shops can be seen in some of the houses on the left.





- E. Beyond the houses take a path left into **Lincoln Street Open Space** where the Leen can be found again. Looking across the river and to the left you can see where it re-emerges from under the railway/ tram lines near Basford Library which is visible behind the wall on the other side. Follow the grass path by the Leen to the wetland area and “Water Meadows” sign. The **Day Brook**, which rises in Arnold, flows into the Leen on the other side of the river a little downstream from here. We exit the green space at another gate onto Mill Close (site of a former mill) and rejoin Lincoln Street.
- F. The next road we cross is **Nottingham Road**. The high house numbers indicate its previous connection to the main Nottingham Road. Here a detour can be made passing the stone remnants of a bridge over a previous course of the Leen and to see the Leen entering another culvert at **Basford Tram Stop**. Return to the main route and continue ahead to Church Street passing the Fox and Crown pub on the left and White Swan (now student accommodation) on your right.
- G. Turn left on Church Street passing Lindley’s Auto Centre, and Basford House (no 61, a former manor house). On the other side of the road, opposite Basford House, a path can be taken into a green space and former graveyard where there is an obelisk in memory of Thomas North owner of Babbington Coal Company. There are also views of the fine **Murphy and Sons building (former Prince of Wales brewery)** which is further up Alpine Street. Our route continues down Church Street to reach **St Leodegarius Church**. The church (when open) and church yard with community garden can be visited.
- H. At the church, turn left following cycle route signs to River Leen and Wilkinson Street, and rejoin the river. The path, river and tram lines pass under **Nottingham’s busy ring road**. Where you meet a path junction keep left following the main path. Here we see the Leen pass under the tram line to be culverted again under the railway. Continue walking on a paved path, then on a board walk over a wetland area, through **Whitemoor Nature Reserve**. The tram line is still on your left. On reaching the road turn left following the tram lines over the railway bridge to reach **Wilkinson Street Tram Stop**.
- I. From the tram stop you can see the magnificent buildings of the former **Shipstone’s Brewery** and the chimney of the former **Gerrards/ Cussons Soap Factory**. The walk finishes at the Tram Stop. However, if you continue ahead from the tram platform to cross Ashford Way (entrance to the park and ride) and turn left where you meet the Leen again you can follow the Leen back upstream passing the **NET Tram Shed** to where it re-emerges from its culvert under the railway. There is no through route here.

Points of Interest

Bulwell – see section 2

River Leen in Basford. Old Basford was an Anglo-Saxon settlement that grew up around three River Leen fords at David Lane crossing, Nottingham Road and St Leodegarius church. From the 1790s people came here to framework-knit hosiery and used the clean water from the Leen for bleaching and dyeing works. Pearson’s Mill, which we pass, is an example. Sallis specialized in medical hosiery. Willow plantations were planted by William Scaling in the damp fields behind Mill Street. He created a thriving wicker industry in Basford from about the 1840s. The Leen once meandered far more in Basford. It still meanders in Vernon Park. The ruins of Mill Street corn mill are on the old river course (off our route). Lincoln Street was flooded in 1947 and in the 1960s most of the river channel in Basford was straightened and deepened to prevent more flooding. The former course of the Leen can be seen on old maps [Side by side georeferenced maps viewer - Map images - National Library of Scotland](#).

Vernon Park, Old Basford. The land formerly belonged to Rock House, home of the bleacher Charles Cox, and was the site of industrial activity linked to bleaching, with a pond serving as a water source. It was opened as a public park in 1901 and Queen Elizabeth II visited in 2012 as part of her Diamond Jubilee celebrations.

The Day Brook. This tributary of the Leen rises in Arnold and joins the Leen in Basford (flowing under Vernon Road and the railway first). Thomas Hawksley, engineer of the Nottingham Waterworks Company, was born at Arnot Hill near the Daybrook. There is a memorial to him in Arnot Hill Park. [Thomas Hawksley \(1807-1893\) - The University of Nottingham](#)

Lincoln Street and Basford Town

Lincoln Street was the shopping street for ‘Basford Town’. By 1962 the shops had all gone and Lincoln Street declined. In 1971 the concrete Basford Flats replaced them and were demolished in 1985. The Lord Nelson pub on Cowley Street is the only reminder.

Lincoln Street Water Meadows was once Billy Bacon’s Field and from 1930 was the site of Basford Wakes fair, where some rides and stalls moved to after Goose Fair. Billy Bacon was the local butcher who owned the field and grazed cattle, with one shop at 9 Lincoln Street.

Prince of Wales Brewery and Maltings: Built in 1891 for Henry Hutchinson and Sons and like Shipstone’s, by William Bradford. It was sold in 1919 to Murphy and Son, suppliers to the brewing trade, who are still there. The maltings are now residential. [Murphy's Factory, Old Basford - formerly the Prince of Wales Brewery - Brewery History Society Wiki](#)

St Leodegarius Church. The church owes its name to a C7th French martyr, also known as St Leger and traces of the church date from the C12th. It had its floor raised because of flooding. The tower collapsed in 1859 and there was more restoration after a fire during decorating work in 1900. The churchyard has fine Swithland slate gravestones. In 1816 Basford Luddite James Towle, who had been hung, was supposed to have been buried in an unmarked grave near the main gate. Today its community garden is well cared for. [Basford St Leodegarius - History](#)

Shipstone’s 1905 Star Brewery. James Shipstone began brewing “Shippos” on Radford Road in 1852 and his family expanded it. The Horse and Groom nearby was the Brewery Tap. Beer was first carried to pubs on carts pulled by 2 white dray horses, kept in the brewery’s stables. They continued brewing until 1978, then were taken over by Greenall Whitley. The brewery closed in 1991 and now houses a business center and the auction rooms of John Pye and Sons.

Wildlife of the Leen. Although now in an urban area there are often opportunities to see wildlife along this section of the Leen in and out of the water – including mallard, moor hen, coot, cormorant, swans, egret, kingfisher, chub, water voles and more.

River Leen industry and pollution. In the 19th century industrial river pollution and population growth created pressures for improved water supply and sanitation which required more co-ordinated water management. Following the Nottingham Water Act of 1845 the Nottingham Water Works company was formed from a merger of separate water companies. The extension of Nottingham’s boundaries in the late 19th century brought places along the Leen under one city authority. The 19th century also saw significant developments in the city’s water infrastructure (e.g. Basford’s Scotholme water works closed in 1884 after the opening of Papplewick Pumping Station; and Stoke Bardolph Sewage works began operation in 1880). [City of Nottingham Water Department, 1852-1978 - The University of Nottingham](#); [Stoke Bardolph Sewage works and Bulcote Model Farm, 1892-1975 - The University of Nottingham](#). The Leen is much cleaner now as can be seen by the wildlife it supports, but pollution and waste can still be an issue. These issues can be reported [Report an environmental problem - GOV.UK](#). Fly tipping can be reported to Nottingham City Council. [Report a problem in your neighbourhood - Nottingham City Council](#)