

Walk starts at:

Outside the café in Spinney Hill Park, off East Park Road, Leicester.

Route directions:

1. From the noticeboard by the cafe, head towards the path junction at the centre of the park. Turn right on the main path. At the path junction before the sports courts bear left, then turn right before the park lodge to exit on St Saviour's Road. Turn right along St Saviour's Road. Soon, cross over to the opposite side by the small traffic island.
2. Turn left into Asfordby Street and continue ahead, passing the attractive mosque to your right. Pause at Atkinson Street. On the corner of Asfordby Street / Atkinson Street in the former Anchor Boot Works (A). Continue on Asfordby Street and turn left on Wood Hill. The building on your left before the steps is the former Vauxhall Works (B). Down the steps and to the right is the former Tomlinson's Factory (C). Caution: The steps are uneven here and this cut-through is a little run-down - you may prefer to miss this.
3. Return down Wood Hill to the junction. Cross Asfordby Street then turn right into it, retracing your steps as far as the mosque. Turn left on Jame Walk in front of the mosque. Cross Baggrave Street and continue ahead on Atkinson Street.
4. Turn right on Rolleston Street and continue to where the road bends left and becomes Nottingham Road. Cross side roads with care and continue to the main junction with East Park Road. To your left in the former Imperial Typewriter Company factory (D). You may wish to walk along East Park Road a short distance for a better look, then return to this junction.
5. Turn right on East Park Road and continue to the busy crossroads with St Saviour's Road. Turn left at the traffic lights to cross East Park Road and continue ahead on St Saviour's Road. Look out for the former Corona Machine Tool Works (E) on your left, as you pass. Continue along St Saviour's Road.
6. Cross the road at the pedestrian crossing. Pause on the far side to look back at the former Smith Faire Works (F). Then turn right into Constance Road. At the junction with Linden Street, note the former. F.J. Palfreyman & Co Ltd (G), whose large building extends to Dorothy Road. Cross Constance Road and turn left into Linden Street. Pass the Art Deco building, Linden House (H), on your right. It is now a mosque. Pass the former Commonwealth Works building (I) on your left, before the church.
7. Turn right on Gedding Road to reach Gwendolen Road. Nearby on Evington Valley Road is the large former Evington Valley Mills building (J, not on map) on the left. You might like to detour briefly to look at this (cross Gwendolen Road with care). If you visit this building, now return to Gwendolen Road, walking on the right-hand side. Pass the former Wycliffe Hall and cottages on your right. Turn right into Margaret Street and continue to the end. Note the former Work Institute Building (K) ahead.
8. Retrace your steps and turn right on Gwendolen Road. Continue ahead, crossing side roads with care, to reach busy East Park Road. Turn left on East Park Road. Cross at the pedestrian crossing. Turn left and shortly enter Spinney Hill Park. Take the main path ahead. Soon, turn right along the centre of the park to return to the start.

Places of interest passed on route

This walk takes in just some of the many former factory buildings in this area. We don't visit every building (it would take too long) but we pick out some of interest. You might like to explore the area further at your leisure. It's worth giving a little background history of this area, to set the scene.

Before 1880 this area, known as North Evington, was mostly countryside and there were few roads. At this time, the town of Leicester was expanding rapidly outwards due to the success of its hosiery, boot and shoe and light engineering industries. Development began to edge eastwards towards Spinney Hill, with the building of dense terraced streets, workshops and factories. Spinney Hill Park exists today because the local authority (the Corporation of Leicester) anticipated further development and bought an area of countryside from the local landowner, Colonel Burnaby, to be laid out as a public open space for the public to enjoy. It opened in 1886.

A young man called Arthur Wakerley also bought land here. His name is well known as he is a celebrated local architect, businessman, and politician. It's worth noting that some of the roads we pass were named after members of Wakerley's family (Gwendolen, Dorothy, Constance, Margaret). Wakerley was committed to the development of communities for people and in the late 1800s set about creating a 'model village' here in North Evington. It was to be a self-contained suburb with everything the local community would need, from houses to factories and amenities. This was done in the period just after 1890. We pass a number of buildings associated with Wakerley on our walk today, as well as others.

(A) Anchor Boot Works, Asfordby Street

The Anchor Boot Society made footwear for children and was formed in 1892 by J T Taylor, as part of a 'cooperative movement'. It was an offshoot of the earlier Leicester Boot and Shoe Manufacturing Society on Western Road, later renamed 'Equity'. The factory here was built by Arthur Wakerley and leased to Anchor in the 1890s (date uncertain).

The cooperative movement was popular in the late 1800s, where workers banded together to set up their own cooperative companies in which they were shareholders and had a say in the running of the company.

(B) Vauxhall Works, Wood Hill

The second factory built in this area by Wakerley in 1889 for W Oram, Boot and Shoe Manufacturer.

(C) Tomlinson's Factory, Halstead Street

This was Wakerley's first factory here, built in 1888. Wakerley found it hard to get a tenant because at this time North Evington was so remote. The goods from the factory had to be carted to St Saviour's Rectory for the Midland Railway to collect. Both factories (B) and (C) lacked toilets until they were added in 1894.

(D) Imperial Typewriter Company, East Park Road

The Imperial Typewriter Company was based in Leicester from 1908-1973. It was founded in 1908 by Hidalgo Moya (born in Missouri, US) with other local businessman including his British father-in-law, a wealthy Leicester bootmaker. It was an expansion of the Moya Typewriter company established earlier, in 1902.

(E) Corona Machine Works, St Saviour's Road

This was the factory of Frederick Pollard and Co, makers of high-speed drilling machines. The company started in 1911 by Frederick Pollard, formerly a partner in A A Jones and Shipman.

(F) Park Vale Works, St Saviour's Road

A Wakerley factory used by Smith, Faire & Co. The company was established in 1876 by Arthur Smith. They made 'Windsor' ladies shoes.

(G) F.J. Palfreyman & Co Ltd, Constance Road / Linden Street / Dorothy Road

Boot and shoe factory. Unsure of date of building – estimate 1915 for build/ formation of company. Old adverts can be found online picturing 'Foot Delight' shoes, 1946.

(H) Linden House, Art Deco style building on Linden Street

This was the Tonic Tea Company tea-packeting factory for about 30 years. It is now a mosque.

(I) Commonwealth Works, Linden Street

Built 1925, this housed the Leather Supply Association who made leather stiffeners for ladies' shoes. Look at the façade above the company name where the emblem shows a man holding up a hide (now faded). In 1954 the factory produced 'outerwear'.

(J) Evington Valley Mills building, Evington Valley Road

This was the factory of The Leicester Rubber Company. The company formed in 1906 by two brothers. They initially dealt with imported cycle tyres and tubing and were based in a small warehouse on Granby Place. They moved here to Evington Valley Mills in 1915 where they started to manufacture their own bicycle and pram tyres. By 1928 they were mass producing car and motorcycle tyres. They also made tyre repair kits. The company's success led to them changing name in 1934 to the John Bull Rubber Company Ltd. In 1937 they merged with another company, Metalastic. During the Second World War the company supported the war effort, producing gas masks and solid rubber tyres for tanks. In 1955 the company became part of the Dunlop Rubber Company.

(K) The Work Institute building, end of Margaret Street.

This was part of the *Wycliffe Society for helping the Blind*, an organisation founded in 1893. The society needed land in a healthy location to build houses for blind people and their helpers. In 1897, Arthur Wakerley donated land here to the society for six cottage homes and a hall of residence and later the work institute, which we stand in front of. He designed them free and gave £1,300 towards the cost. We passed the hall (known as Wycliffe Hall) on the corner of Gedding Road and also the cottages (with Dutch gables) on Gwendolen Road. Both built 1906. The hall was extended in 1929. In the 1970s, accommodation started to move away from Gwendolen Road and the building seems neglected at present.

The Work Institute with the imposing stone gateway was built in 1922. The building is shown as 'basket works' on the 1930 map. At its peak it employed 100 people. It functioned until 1994. It was refurbished and reopened as the Wakerley Centre in 2002. Note the clock tower, housing a Gent & Co. clock.

Gent & Co. were based in Leicester and manufactured electrical equipment including clocks and telephones. Their electric clocks were used in public buildings and railway stations all over the world.

They were based at Faraday Works on St Saviour's Road, opposite Drinkstone Road. It is a long red brick building with a clock tower. They also had offices nearby in Temple Road.

Some background resources:

The Wakerley Trail, University of Leicester: <https://www.le.ac.uk/emoha/leicester/wakerley.html>

Spinney Hill Park: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spinney_Hills

Imperial Typewriter Company: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_Typewriter_Company

Grace's Guide to Industrial History. Search by company name for information. Includes some lovely old adverts of products: <https://www.gracesguide.co.uk>

Development of the boot and shoe industry in Leicester during the Nineteenth century, David Holmes (University of Leicester website): [https://www.le.ac.uk/lahs/downloads/2009/2009%20\(83\)%20175-118%20Holmes.pdf](https://www.le.ac.uk/lahs/downloads/2009/2009%20(83)%20175-118%20Holmes.pdf)