

Changing rural landscapes

Urbanisation and industrialisation led to rapid change affecting rural landscapes during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

THE WILD SPRING-CROCUS

IN NOTTINGHAM MEADOWS.



II, though it is an English flower, It only groweth here and there: Through merry England you might vide:

Through all its length from side to side;

Through fifty counties, nor have spied This flower so passing fair.

But in these meadows it is growing, And now it is the early spring;

'Acre upon acre of meadow is so thickly covered that the green appearance of the fields is changed to a most lovely blue purple. Since building has encroached upon the meadow-land, however, the crocus is dying out. The only other locality in England where the crocus is found wild is at Mendham, Suffolk'.

(The Midland Naturalist, 1882)

The expansion of towns and cities reduced the amount of green or open spaces surrounding them. Although this led to the creation of public parks, some restricted entry by only opening at certain times or charging. The growth of extractive industries, such as coal mining, encroached on agricultural land. New mining settlements, ranging in size, were then built. Despite all the change, remnants of the countryside can still be found in towns and suburbs.

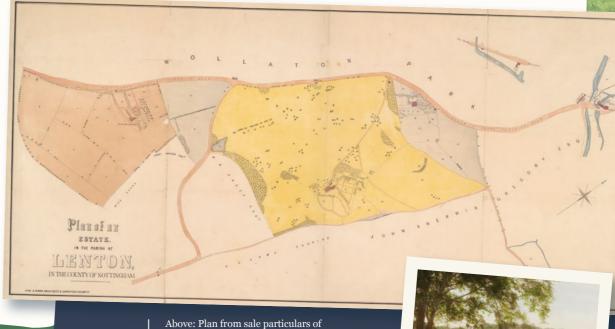
The Meadows, located on the south side of Nottingham, was once fertile grassland. Many nineteenth century publications made reference to the annual carpet of Spring crocus. Mary Howitt was inspired by this scene and wrote the poem The Wild Spring-Crocus in Nottingham Meadows in 1833.

The land on which University Park Campus now stands belonged to Lenton Priory in the twelfth century. After the dissolution of the priory in 1538, the land changed hands several times. After 1798 a number of large residential properties were built including Lenton Firs.



Left: From Mary Howitt, Mary Howitt's sketches of natural history (1864). University of Nottingham, Special Collection Not 1.W8 HOW/MY

Background left: E.J. Lowe, A Natural History of British Grasses (1871). University of Nottingham Special Collection QK 495.G74 LOW Above: Print of an engraving of Nottingham from the Meadows, 19th century. University of Nottingham, Manuscript Collections MS 484/7/10







Above: Plan from sale particulars of an estate in Lenton, c.1867. University of Nottingham. Copyright Middleton Collection, Mi 4 E 137

Right: Image from volume of handcoloured photographs relating to Lenton Firs, c.1930. University of Nottingham, Manuscript Collections MS 940/2