

Kings Norton Park

In 1920, this area of land was bought by the Birmingham Civic Society and given to the City to save it from urban development. At the southern end of the park the 'Civic Garden', is a more formal area which was recently restored with stone benches like those in the original design.

The Old Grammar School and St. Nicolas' Church

The upper timber framed part of the Old Grammar School dates from the early 15th century, and strangely pre-dates the brick-built lower storey by about 200 years. It was probably built as a house for the priest at St. Nicolas' Church. It later became a school until it was declared unfit towards the end of the 19th century. It was given to St. Nicolas' Church in 1914, and was most recently restored in 2008. The 12th century, high-spired church dominates the local landscape. It lies at the heart of the medieval and Tudor buildings of historic Kings Norton (*see front cover photo*).



The Old Grammar School, Kings Norton

Kings Norton Village Green and St. Nicolas' Place

There are few surviving relics of traditional village greens in the urban sprawl of Birmingham, but the delightful village of Kings Norton is a notable example. Kings Norton Green perversely owes its survival to the march of progress, when, in 1825 a new toll road was opened (now the A441) which bypassed the village centre with its winding narrow streets. The Green has remained largely unchanged since then, and has been a conservation area since 1969. An annual 'Mop Fair' has been held here since the 16th century, and it is home to the thriving monthly Kings Norton farmers' market.

The medieval building at the top of The Green dates from the 15th century when it was the home of a wealthy Tudor wool merchant. In the late 18th century it became a pub called the Saracen's Head, but in 1930 it was given to the parish for use as offices. It was re-named St. Nicolas' Place in the early 2000s, following a restoration project. Of special interest on this trail is the thin stone foundation underlying the SE corner of the building. (See photo top right.)



Kings Norton Nature Reserve and the Rea Valley

The nature reserve occupies a ribbon of land alongside the River Rea which was formerly dominated by water courses serving the now demolished Wychall Mill. This functioned as a copper rolling mill, on a site now occupied by the Catesby Park industrial estate. Initially there was a mill race from the River Rea at Pope's Lane, but the arrival of the Worcester and Birmingham canal in 1815 caused depletion of the water supply from the river. The mill was duly compensated by the construction of the Wychall Reservoir. With the demise of the mill, the reservoir gradually silted up and is now a wildlife reserve, managed by Birmingham City Council and the Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve.

The River Rea rises in the Waseley Hills on the SW fringe of Birmingham, and along its 15 mile (23km) course once supported numerous mills. It is also a good hunting ground for glacial erratics, carried along as the ice melted. Some of these can be seen upstream in the Frankley area, and the large boulder in Cannon Hill park was found buried close to the River Rea. There could be many more, yet to be found.

Visit our website: erraticsproject.org

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Birmingham's Erratic Boulders Heritage of the Ice Age

Glacial Boulder Trail 3 Around Kings Norton Kings Norton to Bromford Dell via Masfield Square



Take a trip back into deep time to discover relics from the Great Ice Age half a million years ago. Thread your way past glacial erratic boulders, mostly from the mountains of Wales and brought here by the power of ice. This trail links these little-known bastions of our prehistoric heritage.





Arenig Fawr

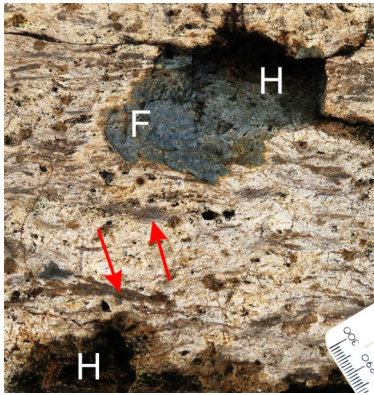
What are glacial erratic boulders?

These are boulders moved by a glacier to a different place and left there when the ice melts. The boulders can often be matched with their source, allowing the flow of the glacier to be reconstructed. The photo shows the eroded east face of Arenig Fawr, the source of most local erratics.

What is distinctive about the Arenig rocks?

The volcanic rocks from Arenig in North Wales display features showing they formed as pyroclastic flows which are very hot, ground-hugging flows of rock debris and gas such as those which buried the Roman city of Pompeii. The photo (right) shows a clear example of a cleaned rock.

The weathered surface of the rock is cream-coloured, but where the surface has chipped away (F) the dark green colour of the fresh rock is seen. Larger rock fragments in the deposit often weather out as holes (H). Elongated black fragments (indicated by the red arrows), were originally



blocks of pumice (volcanic glass full of gas holes) which became flattened by the weight of overlying deposits whilst they were still hot. Geologists call this a welded tuff.

What is special about the Birmingham boulders?

The boulders on the trails originated not in the last ice age, but in a more severe, older one, probably 450,000 years ago. Most of these erratics are volcanic rocks from the Arenig area of North Wales - around 80 miles (130km) to the west of Birmingham, but a few are basalts and sandstones from the Midlands. The rocks are exceptionally tough, resulting in unusually large erratics up to three metres across. The photo (top right) shows one of the largest in the area, which is on private land.



What have these boulders meant to local people?

In ancient times the size of the boulders was an obstacle to movement, so many were used to mark district or property boundaries just where they were left by the ice, or moved short distances. But where had they come from? They were unlike the local red sandstone, which was relatively easy to work for building stones. Theories abounded: were they brought with the Biblical Flood? by giants? or were they meteorites?

Through the 19th century scientists began to unravel the real story of their glacial origins. As more and more were unearthed during building works in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, they became valued as curiosities to be preserved and celebrated.

The photo below shows a large boulder in Cannon Hill Park at the turn of the 20th century, preserved with metal railings and later accompanied by an explanatory notice. The original



Photo by W.J. Harrison. British Geological Survey, P236744

notice and metal railings are gone, but the boulder is still there and is included in Glacial Boulder Trail 7, 'Boulders by Bike'. The smaller boulder in the photo is now missing.

The walking and cycling trails in this series show some of the ways in which these boulders have captured the interest and imagination of scientists, historians and local people.

Trail 3 Route Details

This is a circular walking trail. Starting at Kings Norton Station (Pershore Road South, B30 3EG) the trail heads south through Kings Norton Park to the historic centre of Kings Norton, then through a nature reserve alongside the River Rea to Masefield Square and on to Bromford Dell. The suggested return route is divided between the busy B4121 and the quieter Northfield Road, with no further boulders.



Masefield Square - Wellbeing Hub and Locality 6

Trail length and alternatives: 4 miles (6.4 km). The return journey can be made by bus from Bunbury Road (B4121). Alternatively, a walk of 1 mile (1.6km) via Bunbury Road and Church Road will take you to Northfield Station (Cross-City Line). This has the bonus of passing 'The Great Stone', and other erratics around Great Stone Inn, the starting point for Glacial Boulder Trail 1.

Accessibility: The marked trail route follows hard surfaces, using accessible crossing points. Where there are steps, an alternative route is marked on the map with dashed lines. Locality 4 is only accessible on foot, and can easily be omitted from the trail.

Facilities: Kings Norton Station, Cotteridge, Kings Norton, Masefield Wellbeing Hub (limited opening), Convenience store on Ingoldsby Road near Masefield Square.

Locality 7 - Bromford Dell

From Masfield Square the dashed line shows an alternative route to Bromford Dell avoiding steps. Otherwise, continue to the NW corner of Masfield Square, and follow the path and steps up to Lindsey Avenue. Turn left and proceed into Bromford Dell.

Here, a large typical Arenig ash boulder (7) is the final erratic on this trail.

The map shows a fully accessible return route to Kings Norton Station via Northfield Road, Selly Oak Road, Middleton Hall Road and Pershore Road South.

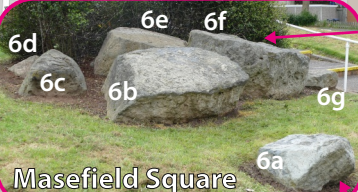
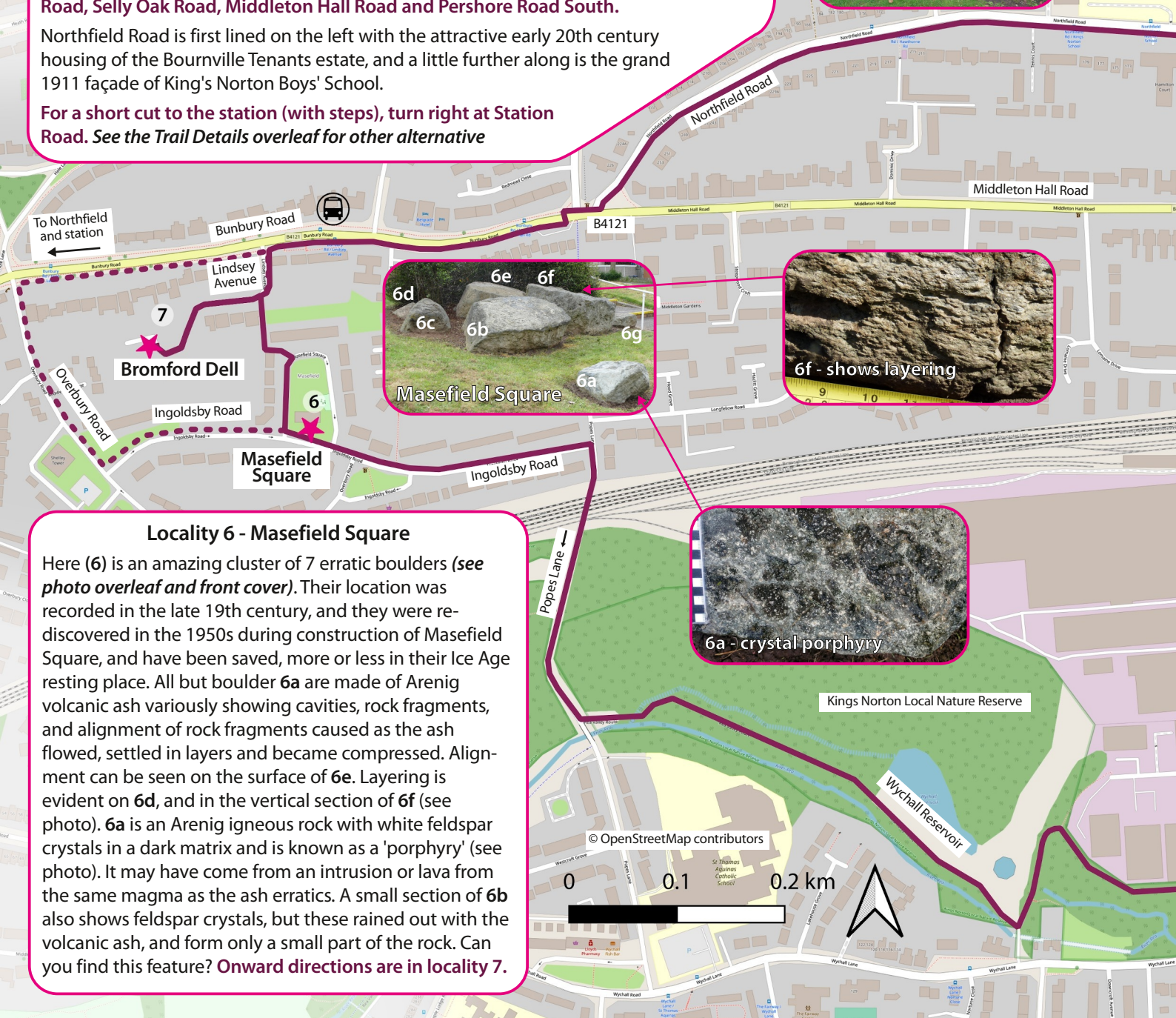
Northfield Road is first lined on the left with the attractive early 20th century housing of the Bournville Tenants estate, and a little further along is the grand 1911 façade of King's Norton Boys' School.

For a short cut to the station (with steps), turn right at Station Road. See the Trail Details overleaf for other alternative



King's Norton Boys' School

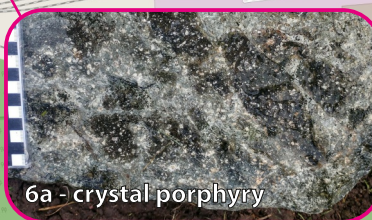
Bromford Dell



Masfield Square



6f - shows layering



6a - crystal porphyry

Locality 6 - Masfield Square

Here (6) is an amazing cluster of 7 erratic boulders (see *photo overleaf and front cover*). Their location was recorded in the late 19th century, and they were re-discovered in the 1950s during construction of Masfield Square, and have been saved, more or less in their Ice Age resting place. All but boulder 6a are made of Arenig volcanic ash variously showing cavities, rock fragments, and alignment of rock fragments caused as the ash flowed, settled in layers and became compressed. Alignment can be seen on the surface of 6e. Layering is evident on 6d, and in the vertical section of 6f (see photo). 6a is an Arenig igneous rock with white feldspar crystals in a dark matrix and is known as a 'porphyry' (see photo). It may have come from an intrusion or lava from the same magma as the ash erratics. A small section of 6b also shows feldspar crystals, but these rained out with the volcanic ash, and form only a small part of the rock. Can you find this feature? **Onward directions are in locality 7.**

Localities 4 and 5 - Kings Norton Green and St. Nicolas' Place

Locality 4 is accessible only on foot. Locality 5 (St. Nicolas' Place) is 20m to the right of the lychgate. To visit Locality 4, the map shows a safe route from the lychgate. Use the zebra crossing, then take care crossing the minor road to see the boulder.

Boulder 4 is an Arenig igneous rock with distinctive white feldspar crystals and is a 'porphyry' similar to 6a (see description there).

Retrace your steps over the zebra crossing to Kings Norton Green. Take the diagonal path across to the Bull's Head. Continue to the half-timbered building on the left known as St. Nicolas' Place. (See front cover photo and overleaf for more on St. Nicolas' Place.)

This is the site of our next glacial erratic boulder (5) but can you find it? Look down and to the SE corner of the building and you will see a thin sliver of stone beneath a wooden beam. This is an Arenig ash erratic which has surely been in this place since the construction of the building in the 15th century. Kings Norton is the only place on these trails where boulders have been found in the construction of buildings. Can you find more?

Follow the path around St. Nicolas' Place along Birdcage Walk to St. Nicolas Gardens. Cross the road and continue to Westhill Road. Turn right along Westhill Road, and cross where convenient before or at the park. Continue, taking care as you cross Wychall Lane, to pedestrian traffic lights before the junction with Eckersall Road. Turn left into Kings Norton Nature Reserve and follow the Rea Valley Route to the dam at Wychall Reservoir (more on the Reserve and River Rea overleaf). Turn left at the dam, then right alongside the reservoir, exiting onto Popes Lane. Turn right, go under the railway, then left along Ingoldsby Road to Masfield Square.

Kings Norton Station



Locality 1 - Kings Norton Station Platform 1

The trail starts on platform 1 of Kings Norton Station. Approach from Pershore Road South via a ramp, or from Station Road via steps. The boulder lies behind a fence at the side of the platform.

This boulder (1) is a fine example of an Arenig ash erratic. W.S. Boulton and W.H. Laurie reported in 1925 (Proceedings of the Birmingham History and Philosophical Society) that it was unearthed from glacial deposits during railway widening excavations, at a depth of around 9 feet (2.7m). The boulder was placed on the station platform, where it has remained close to its glacial resting place for nearly 100 years. In 1884, F.W. Martin had already reported in the same journal that numerous erratic blocks had been found in excavations around the station, but where are they today? The station erratic boulder is a lone survivor, though it is possible that others may still exist, perhaps buried in local gardens.

From the platform, head for the steps to Station Road. (The dashed line shows an alternative route avoiding steps.) Cross the bridge and continue down to Camp Lane. Cross with care, turn right and

follow the road round to enter Kings Norton Park on the left (see overleaf for more on Kings Norton Park). Follow the path to a hedge by the car park. Turn left, then right, then take the right fork at a junction. Continue uphill and through the Civic Garden to exit on Pershore Road South. Turn right, and after 100m turn right into a lane. Stop at the old half-timbered building on the left. This is the Old Grammar School (see overleaf for more on the Grammar School and St. Nicolas' Church).

Locality 3 - St. Nicolas' Churchyard

This small Arenig ash boulder (3) has a coarse texture and contains rock fragments up to 5cm across. It is peppered with cavities where rock fragments have eroded out. There is a larger inclusion on the side of the boulder which is of volcanic origin like the other rock fragments but whose smooth texture suggests a highly siliceous composition.

Return to the church, turn right and exit through the church lychgate onto Back Road, with the Village Green in front (see overleaf for more on the Village Green). Onward directions are in localities 4 & 5.

Start here

1

Cotteridge

Middleton Hall Road

Station Road

Kings Norton Station

Pershore Road South

Camp Lane

River Rea

Eckersall Road

Wychall Lane

Car park and playground

Kings Norton Park

Civic Garden

St. Nicolas' Church

Old Grammar School

2

Birdcage Walk

St. Nicolas Gardens

St. Nicolas' Place

Kings Norton

The Green

Pershore Road South

4

Redditch Road

3 - showing inclusion

The Old Grammar School

2a - rock detail

Locality 2 - The Old Grammar School

In the stone foundations of the Old Grammar School you will see two large irregular shaped stones (2a & 2b, see photo, right). Closer inspection reveals the characteristic texture of the Arenig ash boulders, 2a in particular showing holes where fragments of rock from the original volcanic ash have eroded away (see photo, right). This is a rare example in this series of trails, where erratic stones have been used as building stones. These stones would have been found nearby, and are evidence of a natural tendency for people to make use of materials found close to hand.

Continue along the lane past steps on the left, to a path leading to St. Nicolas' Church. Follow this to the corner of the church and look at the red stone blocks which are so characteristic of old buildings and walls in the area.

This is a local red sandstone which formed in desert conditions around 250 million years ago. You can see that it is much eroded, unlike the hard volcanic erratics which have survived for 450 million years, plus their long glacial journey from Wales.

Follow the path to the right away from the church to a small boulder on the left, close to a bench (locality 3).