

# The Parish of Glen Parva

**Glen Parva** is a civil parish in Leicestershire, United Kingdom with a population of over 5,000. It is bordered to the north by Aylestone and to the east by Eyres Monsell and South Wigston. Aylestone and Eyres Monsell are both districts of the City of Leicester. To the south and west it is bordered by open countryside.

The Parish Council has its offices at the Memorial Hall on Dorothy Avenue. The Hall was built to commemorate residents of the Parish who fell in World War II.



The Grand Union Canal near Glen Parva

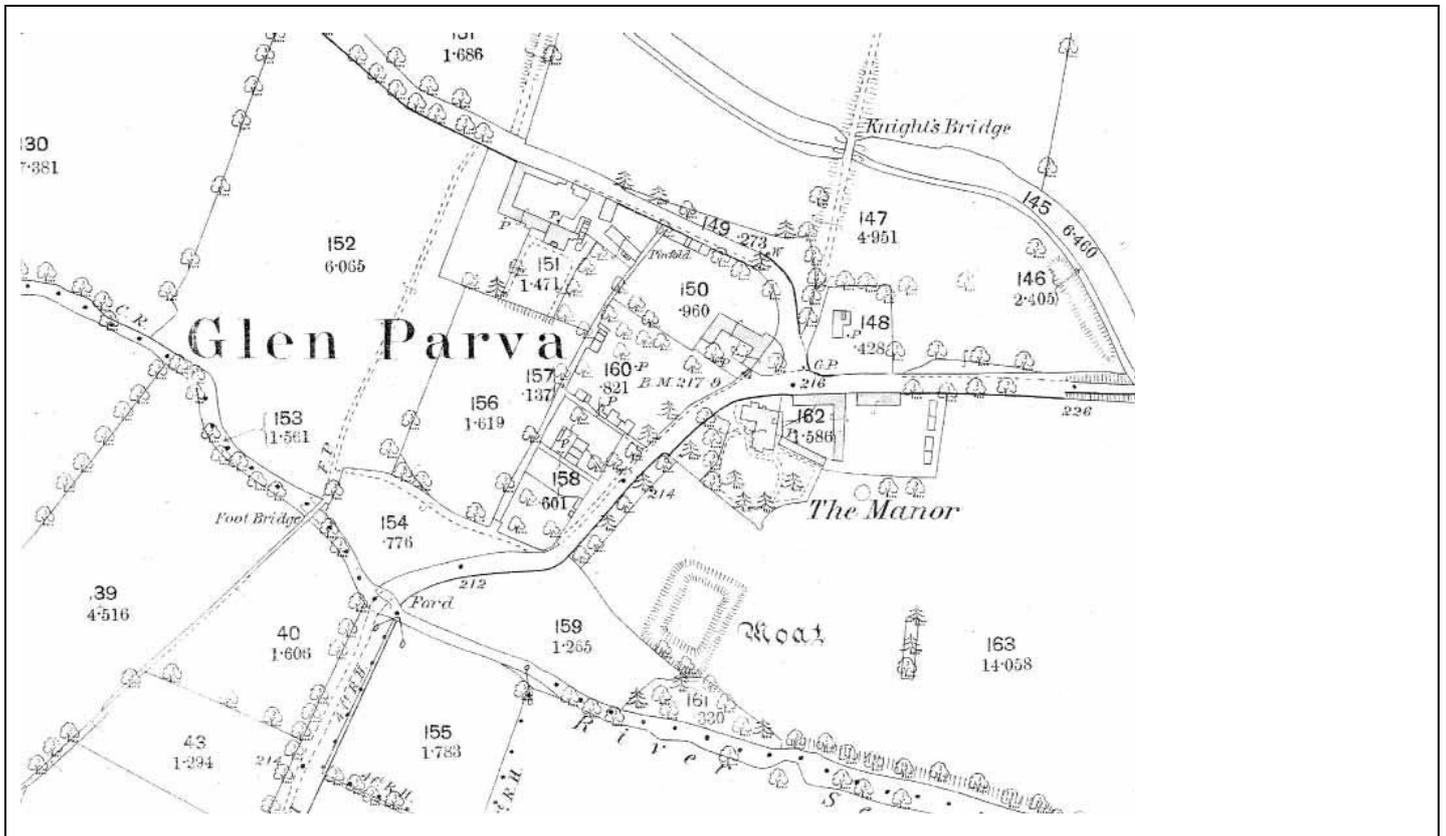
The Grand Union Canal passes to the south of the village where it runs parallel with the River Sence before the canal turns north, to the west of the village and then runs parallel to the River Soar. The Sence is a tributary of the Soar which in turn is a tributary of the River Trent.

## History

*“GLENN-PARVA, a township in Aylestone parish, Leicestershire; on the river Soar and the Union canal, 4 miles SSW of Leicester. Real property, £1,894. Pop., 119. Houses, 30.” (Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales 1870-72)*

Glen Parva was originally included in the Aylestone Ecclesiastical Parish but after the Local Government Act of 1894 it became a civil parish within the Rural District of Blaby.

It is generally accepted that the original settlement of Glen Parva was situated near ‘The Ford’ on the River Sence, an area which is now known locally as ‘Glen Ford’. There is limited evidence of prehistoric activity in this area but excavations in 1962 on the site of a moated enclosure some 150m to the south-east of the area exposed a possible roundhouse, with a hearth, an oven and a cobbled surface associated with Late Bronze Age pottery.



1886 OS map – Original site of the village

Romano-British activity is also represented in the area by a small number of stray finds including pottery shards, late Roman coins and a fragment of box flue tile but there is no definite evidence of any Roman settlement in the Parish.

Anglo-Saxon activity is recorded at a single location approximately 750m north-west of the area, where a small number of burials were found from 1886 onwards in a gravel pit off Rye Hill Close, an area now known as Woodbank. The known burials include one richly furnished male burial, one richly furnished female burial (see the Glen Parva Lady below) and one unfurnished burial.

There is no reference to Glen Parva in the Domesday Book of 1086 however the neighbouring town of Blaby appears to have been a reasonable sized settlement with 36 villagers of varying status plus their dependents. A mill is also mentioned, which is likely to have been on the site of the post-medieval Blaby Mill, some 700m to the east-south-east.

During the 1962 excavations of the moated site, a section was also excavated across a bank and ditch further to the east, and a medieval date was confirmed for the earthworks in this area.

Documentary evidence refers to a chapel of ease in Glen Parva in 1220 and while the location of this chapel is uncertain, excavations for a new sewer between Blaby and Whetstone in 1972 recorded medieval green glazed pottery, a glazed ridge tile and an encaustic floor tile at NGR SP 5751 9828, which may indicate the site of this chapel or another as yet unidentified high status building.

Approximately 120m east of Glen Ford is the early post-medieval Glen Parva Manor. The building is a timber framed structure of a late 16th/early 17th century date with brick panel infill and a large rear wing erected in 1861. The building is still in use as a restaurant and pub.

It is possible that the Great Plague of 1626 so reduced the population of the village that it almost ceased to exist as such for as late as 1877 there were only 152 persons living in 28 houses in the whole of the ecclesiastical parish.

The parish of Glen Parva was one of a small number of parishes that were enclosed before the widespread programme of Parliamentary enclosure divided up the typical medieval landscape of open fields surrounding

a village. There are few details of the enclosure of the parish, other than that it occurred in 1653 and was conducted by a private individual, Mr J. Lee.

The Industrial Revolution of the 18th century witnessed a massive and nationwide expansion of industrial activity and the necessary development of improved transportation networks, by road, water and eventually rail. One component of this network, the Grand Union Canal, passes through Glen Parva. An Act of Parliament was passed in 1793 for the Leicestershire and Northampton Union Canal, which was to run from the River Soar Navigation to the River Nene near Northampton. By 1797 however, the funding had run out, by which time the canal had reached Debdale Wharf Bridge some 4½ miles beyond Foxton.

A subsequent phase of work re-routed the canal to Market Harborough, where construction again ceased in 1809. Further funding by subscription was sought, and another Act of Parliament was passed in 1810, with a further 23 ¼ miles of canal being completed by 1814. The canal was not financially successful however, as it relied heavily on through trading heading to London, rather than local traffic.

In 1894, it was purchased by the Grand Junction Canal, which was in turn purchased by the Regent's Canal in 1927, to form a branch to the 'new' Grand Union Canal network connecting London to Birmingham. This consolidation of the canal network stimulated trade once again on the canals until increased competition from road freight forced their closure in 1969.

Other elements of the landscape of the Industrial Revolution in the area include the South Leicestershire Branch of the London and North-Western Railway, which was opened in 1864 and crosses the Grand Union Canal some 100m north-west of the Glen Ford area.



In Victorian times was primarily known as the home of the Leicestershire Regiment which had its barracks on Saffron Road on the site of the current prison. The Royal Leicestershire was originally an infantry regiment formed as 'Colonel Solomon Richards' Regiment' in 1688. It was renamed the 'Leicestershire Regiment' in 1782 and from 1825 was known by its famous nickname "The Tigers". The regiment served with distinction around the world and was honoured by the prefix 'Royal' in 1947. It was merged into The Royal Anglian Regiment in 1964.

The barracks had its own railway station, Wigston (Glen Parva), next to it but this was closed as a result of the Beeching cuts in the 1960s only to be reinstated not far away as South Wigston station in 1985.

During World War II Glen Parva was home to RAF Blaby Wharf and 65 Maintenance Unit which was tasked with the repair and salvage of crashed aircraft. Today a sole blister hangar is the only surviving structure which is located in the present industrial area on Wharf Way.

Not far from Wharf Way on New Bridge Road was a brickyard (latterly Butterley Brick) which supplied materials for local housing built in the 20th century.

The place name 'Glen Parva' is of uncertain origin; the 'Glen' element is probably of Old English derivation, referring either to a river name or simply a valley. 'Parva' is of Latin origin meaning 'small' and refers to its inferior status to a neighbouring settlement, perhaps Blaby immediately to the south, or Great Glen further to the east. For further information follow this link:

<http://glenparvanr.co.uk/moatacre.htm>

### **Well known residents**

Sue Townsend who wrote the Adrian Mole books grew up here and it is speculated that many of the locations and characters in her books were based on local places and people.

Snooker player Tom Ford, was born in Glen Parva and at the time of writing is listed as Number 33 in the world.

## **The Glen Parva Lady**

Possibly Glen Parva's most famous resident was the 'Glen Parva Lady', a rich female Anglo-Saxon, whose remains are now displayed at the Jewry Wall Museum in Leicester.

The National Monuments Record (NMR Reference 340517) refers to a single female burial found in a stone vaulted grave in 1866 and aligned north – south. Grave goods with this burial included a glass cup, a necklace of 28 glass beads, a piece of crystal and several bronze rings and brooches, which dated the burial to the late 5th century CE.

The Glen Parva Lady is significant because her burial is a gateway to our understanding of Anglo-Saxon colonisation in Leicestershire, which developed through the sixth century.

Due to her early date, evident high status, the distance of the burial from any known church sites and lack of ecclesiastical objects, it is most likely that she was a pagan. She is of interest not only as being a representative of pre-Christian religion in the UK but also, as her sophisticated belongings demonstrate, that the early Saxon period was far from being a technological or cultural 'Dark Age'.

## **Amenities – Glen Parva Today**

The Great Central Railway used to pass through Glen Parva until the 'Beeching cuts' of the 1960s. The route is now a paved walkway which leads directly into Leicester city centre and is popular for walking and cycling.

Glen Parva (Glen Hills) Local Nature Reserve is west of the village and is jointly owned and managed by Blaby District Council, Leicestershire County Council and Glen Parva Parish Council. Glen Hill Primary School and HMP Glen Parva are also situated within the Parish.

Glen Parva, as we know it today, is mainly a residential area which started being built in the early 1930s when the expansion of Leicester drove the demand for the new suburban housing. In the 1940s & 50s substantial developments alongside and to the west of the A426 Leicester Road were built. Although further house building has continued through the decades to the present day the Parish is fortunate in retaining substantial green spaces many of which are now protected as nature reserves or are in trust for the enjoyment of future generations.

There are a few shops located at 'Carver's Corner' and also on 'The Parade' on Needham Avenue, but no large shopping or leisure centres. However, it is situated near to the Fosse Shopping Park; one of Britain's largest out-of-town shopping parks.

It is a good centre for easy access both to Fosse Park and Leicester city centre, encompassing a semi-rural environment with close links to urban facilities and amenities.

A well known local landmark is the remains of the late 1930s County Arms public house with its art-deco detailing at the junction of the A426 and the B582. Sadly the building has been derelict for many years although plans are in place remodel and add to it to create a private retirement development.