

LOCAL HISTORY 2015

JANUARY 2015: THE NOTTINGHAM RIOTS

We explored the topic: Nottingham Riots! Or as one writer put it - "We really don't like being told what to do". Nottingham has a long history of rebellion. It is more than likely that Notts people took part in the Peasant's Revolt of 1381. The forests (the greenwood) were the hideout of outlaws - criminals, professional poachers, landless labourers and unemployed soldiers discharged from the French wars. Although later balladeers placed Robin Hood over 150 years earlier in the reign of Richard 1 and Prince John, the first stories actually evolved within living memory of the Peasant's Revolt.

From Lollards to Diggers (the True Levellers), and through supporting the Parliamentarians during the Civil War, Nottingham gradually gained a reputation for radical thought and riotous behaviour. But it was during the 18th and 19th centuries with the town authorities in favour of reform, that riots became almost an annual event. As the Industrial Revolution gained pace, Nottingham became overcrowded and living conditions were squalid. Wages were low and there was intense poverty. Have you heard about the Great Cheese Riot in 1766? Large cheeses were snatched at the Goose Fair and rolled away, bowling over the Mayor in the process!

From 1779 the Notts framework knitters began to rebel, culminating in the Luddites from 1811 to 1816 smashing hundreds of frames in the area. There were often daily marches through the city pleading for bread. Military intervention throughout led to many deaths and severe woundings.

Then of course came the Big One - after the failure of the Reform Bill in 1831, 9000 city residents trashed Colwick Hall and burned down Nottingham Castle (or more accurately the manor house of the hated 4th Duke of Newcastle) and a silk mill in Beeston. Later, in the 1840's, Nottingham became a centre for the Chartists. 5000 Chartists took part in the Battle of Mapperley Hills when 400 men were arrested. Fergus O'Connor became, for Nottingham, the 1st and only Chartist MP. But after a series of political reforms things began to settle down and our radical image began to fade. However, don't forget the Suffragettes, the 1950's riots and the 1984/5 Miner's Strike. And we do now have our own 'Speaker's Corner' where anyone can say their piece. So maybe we really are 'a revolting lot'...

Acknowledgements to and further information from:
peopleshistreh.wordpress.com
ournottinghamshire.org.uk
nottinghamhiddenhistory.wordpress.com
notts.history.org.uk
bbc.co.uk/history

FEBRUARY 2015: LOCAL CELEBRITIES, PART 1

Bet you didn't know how many famous people, from all walks of life, hail from Nottinghamshire. Starting with our local U3A area, we heard about Richard Beckinsale, actor, born in Carlton and remembered particularly for his roles in Porridge and Rising Damp. Other Notts born actors include John Bird, also a comedian and satirist, known initially for That Was The Week That Was before branching out into other shows and into serious roles and also writing a column for Punch.

There is also Samantha Morton, who started her career with the Central Junior TV Workshop and who has starred in many TV shows and films, winning a BAFTA along the way. Other local notables include the writer Arthur Mee, who developed the Children's Encyclopaedia that so many will remember. He is equally well known for his series The King's England, a guide to the counties of England.

We were reminded of Albert Ball, VC, the highly honoured WW1 flying ace and William Booth, founder of The Salvation Army, who was born in Sneinton. An earlier religious luminary, Thomas Cranmer, was born in Aslockton. Cranmer was appointed as Archbishop of Canterbury by Henry VIII before being executed by Henry's daughter Mary I for treason. Cranmer, not to be confused with Thomas Cromwell, with whom he worked closely, was the leader of the English Reformation.

We were also told about the artist Richard Parkes Bonington, born in Arnold and renowned for his landscapes and historical paintings. He developed a technique mixing watercolour with gouache and gum, closely resembling oil paint. The Bonington Theatre and Bonington School in Arnold are named after him.

Finally we had the stories of the two cricketers buried in Gedling Churchyard. Arthur Shrewsbury, "the best batsman of the 1880's" and Alfred Shaw, "England's best bowler" (1870-1880). Dying within four years of each other, legend has it they were buried 22 yards apart, the length of a cricket pitch, but it seems it is more like 35 yards, perhaps allowing for Shaw's run-up.

There are many others that we didn't have time for, so we will continue next time. It was also noted that so far only one woman has been mentioned, and we didn't even touch on the literary greats of Lord Byron, D H Lawrence or Alan Sillitoe. Many thanks to all for their contributions.

MARCH 2015: LOCAL CELEBRITIES, PART 2

These are the famous local people that we heard about at the March Local History meeting:

CONSTANCE SHACKLER, OBE was born in Sherwood, Nottingham on 16th April 1913. She was an English contralto recruited to the Covent Garden Opera Company in 1946. She died in London in 1999.

REBECCA ADLINGTON, OBE was born on 17th February 1989 in Mansfield, Nottingham and is a retired English freestyle swimmer. She won two gold medals in the 2008 Olympic Games and two bronze medals at the 2012 London Olympics.

DENIS MCCARTHY (7th May 1933 – 10th January 1996) was evacuated to Nottingham during World War II. He was a radio presenter and an employee of BBC Radio Nottingham. He was made an MBE for services to broadcasting in 1991. Taken ill on the air McCarthy insisted on finishing the programme. He died the same day at his home in Bingham, Nottingham. As his funeral procession travelled towards Nottingham Cathedral in the city centre, the traffic was stopped with crowds six deep in places.

LESLIE CROWTHER (1933 – 1996) hailed from West Bridgford, Nottingham and was awarded the CBE in 1995. He was a presenter of many TV shows including Crackerjack and The Price is Right..

SU POLLARD was born in Nottingham in 1949 and began her acting career at the then Co-operative Arts Theatre on George Street, Nottingham. She is perhaps best known for playing the part of Peggy Ollerenshaw, the chalet maid in Hi-De-Hi.

CARL FROCH was born on 2nd July 1977 in Nottingham and is an English professional boxer. He is four-time world champion in the super-middleweight division and was made a Freeman of the City of Nottingham in 2014..

DAME LAURA KNIGHT was born on 4th August 1877 in Long Eaton, and died on 7th July 1970 in London. She was an impressionist painter known for her paintings of the London ballet and theatre scene. She was the official artist at the Nuremberg Trials of Nazi war criminals. She was the first female artist to be made a Dame.

HELEN CRESSWELL was an English television scriptwriter and author of more than one hundred children's books, best known for comedy and supernatural fiction. She was born in Nottingham on 11th July 1934 and died on 26th September 2005.

SIR JAMES MATTHEW (J.M.) BARRIE was a Scottish author and dramatist best remembered today as the creator of Peter Pan. Although Barrie was born in Scotland and raised there, he moved to Nottingham and worked here for a significant part of his early career. In fact, he took inspiration for the story of Peter Pan from his time in Nottingham.

ARTHUR MEE was a British writer, journalist and educator and was born in Stapleford, Nottingham on 28th July 1875. In 1908 he began to work on the Children's Encyclopaedia which came out as a fortnightly magazine. He started the first children's newspaper which was published until 1965. He died on 27th May 1943.

GEORGE GREEN was born in Sneinton, Nottingham on 14th July 1793 and was a famous mathematician. His father was a baker who built and owned the brick windmill used to grind grain. (It still stands in Sneinton today). George studied at Cambridge, but sadly in his final years of study he became rather ill and in 1840 he returned to Sneinton, only to die a year later.

WATSON FOTHERGILL was an English architect. Born Fothergill Watson in Mansfield in 1841 he was the son of a Nottingham lace merchant, Robert Watson and Mary Ann Fothergill. He changed his name to Watson Fothergill in 1892 to continue his maternal family name. He designed over a hundred buildings in Nottingham, from offices, bank and warehouses to churches and private dwellings. His early recognisable style includes the use of contrasting horizontal bands of red and blue brick, dark timber eaves and balconies, and elaborate turrets and stone carvings. He died on 6th March 1928 and is buried in the Church (Rock) Cemetery in Nottingham.

PAUL SMITH is one of Nottingham's most famous and successful fashion designers. His venue in Nottingham is Willoughby House, a five-floor, Grade II listed building showcasing both men's and women's collections including accessories.

WILLIAM LEE (1568 – 1614) was an English clergyman and inventor, and devised the first stocking frame knitting machine in 1589, the only one used for centuries. Its principle of operation remains in use today. Lee was born in Calverton, Nottingham.

ALAN SILLITOE was born in Nottingham on 4th March 1928 to working class parents. He was an English writer and one of the "angry young men" of the 1950's. He wrote many books, possibly the most famous being Saturday Night and Sunday Morning which was made into a film which was shot in Nottingham. He died on 25th April 2010 at Charing Cross Hospital, London of cancer. He was 82 years of age.

TOM BLOWER (1914 – 1955) was born in Hyson Green, Nottingham and became the first man to successfully swim the North Channel between Ireland and Scotland, completing the feat in 15 hours, 26 minutes. He also swam the English Channel several times with a personal best of 13 hours, 29 minutes in 1937 to set a new record. The son of a miner, Blower was a decorated World War II hero.

JUNE 2015: RE-LAUNCH OF THE LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Following the decision by Jann to stand down as convenor of the group, the June meeting was held to discuss the future of the group. It was decided that we should try to continue running the monthly meetings, with a fairer sharing of tasks amongst the members, to prevent all the burden falling on the shoulders of one person. As there were only a small number of members present, the only decision made was that Anne & Graham Palmer would take over as convenors, and we

would find others to help with such tasks as writing the reports for the website and the newsletter, and planning forthcoming themes etc. at subsequent meetings.

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on July 21 at Carlton Library on the subject of Gedling Colliery, with all members being asked to bring along some research that they have undertaken and present to the group.

Anne and Graham are trying to establish who are currently members of the group, and have sent an email to those they currently have contact email addresses for. Can any members who have not received an email, please contact us via the button on the web page, so that our records can be updated?

A list of suggestions for future themes was drawn up by Linda Shelton, including: Youth Organisations – Scouts, Guides, Boys Brigade, Girls Life Brigade, youth clubs etc; Southwell Minster - maybe a guided tour; Local inventions and discoveries; Pubs; a talk by Margaret Harrison (subject to cost); Thurgarton Priory; River Trent/canal; Boots/Players/Raleigh - any other industries?; Local buildings and structures; Hospitals and things medical; Crime and punishment; Fires and rescue; Accidents and Incidents; Railway, buses and transport; Local families; "Big" houses - manors, halls, etc; Visit to Framework Knitters museum. Members are requested to review this list and provide additional ideas for future themes. The August topic will be decided at the July meeting.

JULY 2015: RE-LAUNCH & GEDLING COLLIERY

The re-launch meeting was well attended by 13 like-minded individuals. Before moving on to the main topic of discussion, the following housekeeping items were discussed and agreed.

1. The format of the meetings will be more formal, with members of the group researching the agreed monthly topic and feeding back to the group.
2. For the short term the meetings will continue to be held at Carlton Library, with walks/visits being organised intermittently.
3. Future possible visits were proposed.
4. The meeting topics for August and September were agreed (see below).

Gedling Colliery

Gedling colliery's origins can be traced back to 1881 when the rector of Gedling had tried to revive the hosiery trade in the parish, and had also suggested that due to a great demand for iron there would be a need for coal. It took until 1899 for the building of the colliery to commence with the first shaft being sunk in 1900. The first seams to be worked were Top Hard and Main Bright, with High Hazels being developed in 1927. At its deepest, the mine was over 1,200 feet deep and at the widest the coal faces were 250 yards. There were 35 miles of roadway below ground with the tunnels stretching five miles in either direction. At its height of productivity there were 3,500 men working there. After WW2, there were men from 20 nations working at the pit, greater than at any other UK pit, earning it the name "UN pit" or "the pit of all nations".

The colliery closed in 1992. During its 93 years 128 people lost their lives. One of the group's participants had a relative who moved to Nottingham from Shropshire to take up the position of ostler at the pit due to the untimely death of his predecessor Henry Flood from "glanders" contracted from the ponies.

One notable miner was Eric Pearce, who had 2 spells working at Gedling. He was injured in a roof fall, hospitalised for several months and was forced to use a wheelchair. After helping disabled children with sports, he decided to start training himself, culminating in him being selected for the 1982 Paralympics where he won medals for javelin (bronze), shot put (silver) and discus (gold).

The pit also spawned successful football and cricket teams (as Gedling Colliery/Miners Welfare) which are still in existence today.

To see a more detailed write up about the colliery click [LH01: Gedling Colliery](#).

AUGUST 2015 LOCAL BUSINESSES - LARGE AND SMALL

This month members focussed on researching local businesses to feed back to the group. We kicked off with some smaller businesses which may not be as familiar as the larger names such as Boots, Players and Raleigh. We heard about Samuel Bourne a resident of Nottingham Park who built the Cotton Doubling works in Netherfield. Staffords the printers and several businesses in the Colwick Industrial Estate area. We learnt about Thomas Glover and Sons, elastic web and fabric manufacturers, along with two local businessmen who both became Mayors of Nottingham and also received Knighthoods; John Turney who founded Turney Brothers the tanners, and Albert Atkey who brought motoring to Nottingham.

We were also treated to a virtual trip around the streets of Netherfield, where we heard about various businesses including Higginbottoms pork shop who on Fridays would sell hot faggots straight from the oven to the counter and three old pence would buy enough to feed a family of four.

No discussion on local Nottingham Businesses would be complete without mentioning two of the most famous ones. We heard of the founding of John Players, and the rapid expansion and success of this business, until its unfortunate slow down and reduction in size in modern times. We also heard about Boots the Chemist from its founding in 1849 when John Boot opened a herbalist shop in Goose Gate, Nottingham (now The Larder on Goosegate restaurant) up until 2014 when Walgreens Alliance Boots was created through the combination of Walgreens and Alliance Boots.

Finally we have to mention Nottingham's most famous brewery founded by James Shipstone. Shipstones brewed beer from 1852 until it closed in 1991, although from 1978 it was in the hands of Greenalls. Shipstones was a tower brewery and called the Star brewery because of the red star it proudly displayed on top of the tower.

To see a more detailed write up about these local businesses click [LH02: Local Businesses](#)

SEPTEMBER 2015: SOUTHWELL MINSTER

14 members of the Local History Group visited Southwell Minster. We were given a very interesting conducted tour by our knowledgeable guide Hilda Hutchinson.

We learnt that the site of the minster has been visited by pilgrims since the 900s, and became holy ground in 956 when King Eadwig gave land in Southwell to the Archbishop of York, on which a minster church was established. The building of the Minster commenced in 1108 using local stone from Mansfield and took 50 years to complete. Fighting during the Civil War saw the church seriously damaged and the nave is said to have been used as stabling.

In 1884 Southwell Minster became a cathedral proper for Nottinghamshire and a part of Derbyshire including the City of Derby. The diocese was divided in 1927 and Diocese of Derby was formed. Southwell is the southernmost diocese in the archdiocese of York; Derby and Lincoln being in the archdiocese of Canterbury.

In 1805 Archdeacon Kaye gave the Minster the Newstead lectern; once owned by Newstead Abbey, it had been thrown into the Abbey fishpond by the monks to save it during the Dissolution of the Monasteries, then later discovered when the lake was dredged. Sir Henry Gally Knight in 1818 gave the Minster four panels of 16th-century Flemish glass (which now fill the bottom part of the East window) which he had acquired from a Parisian pawnshop.

More recent additions include the west (angel) window which was added in 1996, where great efforts were made to match the glass from the 15th century. Also, the Bramley Apple window was added in 2009 to mark the 200th anniversary of the Bramley apple.

One of the highlights of the visit was being shown the intricate carvings in the chapter house 9in stone), and on seats and pews (wood) in "the quire".

Overall we had a very interesting and informative afternoon in the company of Hilda.



OCTOBER 2015: WATERWAYS OF NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

This month we learnt that there are several tributaries of the river Trent, including the rivers Leen, Idle, Maun, Meden and Poulter. The River Trent is the third longest river in England and emerges at around 919ft (280m) on Biddulph Moor and flows for 185 miles (298km) eventually discharging into the Humber Estuary at Trent Falls. The limit of navigation is at Burton on Trent.

The Trent Basin site, which faces the Lady Bay nature reserve, was Nottingham's biggest river port and it was here that barges from Hull unloaded cargo such as Baltic timber, flour and cargo and reloaded with locally made manufactured goods such as hardware and machinery. The Trent Lane Depot was built between 1928 and 1931 as part of a concerted effort by Nottingham to increase the flow of freight along the Trent. We heard how the Trent was dredged to a depth of 12ft as the draught on Harker's barges was 8 ft.

We found that the history of the canal system within Nottingham was complex, but in summary was built in 1790 for the coalfields and was 15 miles long incorporating 20 locks.

We learnt that Nottingham, owes its location to the Rivers Trent and Leen which provided the early settlement with means of transport, defence and water supply. Wells, springs and rainfall were other important sources of water, although many people had to buy their water from carriers known

as Higglers. As the population grew, the rivers and wells became increasingly contaminated and a more organised water supply was needed. Over the years a number of water companies were formed. In 1845 the Nottingham Water Act was passed which merged all of the small companies into a new Nottingham Water Works Company.

Finally we heard about St Ann's Well which is actually a spring that was once thought to have magical healing powers. The earliest reference to the Well refers to it as Brodwell, possibly derived from the Saxon Brod. The alternative name for the Well was Owswell, from the Saxon word for goddess Eostre. A gothic-like spired structure stood on the site from 1856 to 1887, when it was demolished to make way for the Nottingham Suburban Railway which remained in use until 1954.

NOVEMBER 2015: NETHERFIELD WALK

A small group of hardy members braved the rain and wind of storm Barney to participate in a very enjoyable guided tour of Netherfield. We learnt that the first houses were built in 1841 on the Nether (lower) Field in the Township of Carlton in The Willows in the parish of Gedling. In 1851, the population of Netherfield was just 68, but by 1881 had increased to 735 due to the opening of the Great Northern Railway's Engine Shed and the Marshalling Yard. In 1881, the population had risen to 2,648 and by 1911 to 6,386. We passed by the once-thriving Cosy Cinema and the Ceylon Tea House with its small tower which once housed a bell that was rung at the same time as the Bourne's factory hooter.

We were able to spend some time in St George's Church, the foundation stone of which was laid by Lady Forester in 1886 and the ground consecrated in 1887 by the Archbishop of York, Dr W. Thomason. The group were all impressed by the wonderful interior of the church and noted how the church and its attached centre are very much the heart of the community. After our visit to the church we looked at Bourne Mews on the opposite side of the road where the former Britannia Cotton Mill once stood. The girls who worked there were affectionately known as Bourne's angels.

As we carried on down Victoria Road, we came to the Railway Hotel, known locally as Jackie Bell's after one of the landlords; John Henry Bell. At one time boxing matches were held upstairs here. We passed by the Co-op buildings and the Methodist Church built in 1886, the same year as St George's Church. We learnt about the four gates railway crossing and how the gates were locked overnight, preventing the "muck men" from gaining access to the houses south of the railway, resulting in those houses becoming rather unpleasant.

As we neared the end of our tour we heard how the Marshalling Yard in Netherfield was the largest in Europe and must have been a sight to behold. We had a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon and would like to say a huge thank you to Alan Woolley our very knowledgeable guide. And the rain stopped as soon as we set off, not to return until after we finished!