

LOCAL HISTORY 2016

JANUARY 2016: TRANSPORT IN NOTTINGHAM

13 of us met at Carlton Library (a late change of venue due to Fire Service requiring the room at the Fire Station). As this was the first meeting of the year we used the first 30 minutes to plan our activities for the year. The group agreed that we would meet indoors for the winter months of the year (November to January inclusive) and have visits/walks for the other months if possible. The group then discussed possible activities we would like to have: [list of proposed activities].

Our topic for discussion this month was transport in Nottingham and Nick Clark kicked us off with the Grand Central Railway and Victoria Station. The GCR was the brainchild of the last great Victorian railway entrepreneur Sir Edward Watkins, whose grand scheme was to link his Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire railway with Paris, via London and a channel tunnel. His first plan for a London link met with strong resistance and he was forced to settle for a different route, with a London terminus at Marylebone.

An imposing station shared with the Great Northern Railway was planned for Nottingham, occupying nearly 13 acres in a previously crowded area of the city. The work involved the excavation of about 600,000 cubic yards of sandstone rock and the demolition of 1,300 houses, a church, 20 public houses and the Union Workhouse, displacing about 6,000 people in all, the poorest of whom received little or no compensation. The line was never a great financial success and became a victim of the Beeching cuts of the sixties. Portions of the line between Ruddington and Leicester remain in preservation, as does the clock tower of the station at the entrance to the Victoria Centre in Milton Street.

Graham and Barbara then provided us with history of the trams and buses in Nottingham. Horse-drawn buses operated in Nottingham from 1848. Plans for the first tramway were started as early as 1870, and in 1872 The Nottingham Tramways Company was formed. In November 1872 the company submitted a notice of intent to submit a Bill to Parliament to for the operation on tramways in Nottingham. The application to the Corporation was successful, but the initial submission to the Board of Trade initially failed, but was successful in 1874. In 1877 the Board of Trade made a Provisional Order and Royal Assent was received. On 11th September 1878 the tram company performed a test run and opened its first routes in 17th September 1878 with horse-drawn trams.. The company experimented with steam traction a few years later.

Although this method of transport is now thought of as slow, it did result in several accidents. Some of which were fatal. We heard of several cases where accidents had taken place and the cases were heard before the Nottingham magistrates court. Some (non-fatal accidents) proving to be very amusing to the modern day researcher. Electrification followed at the beginning of the new century and the first electric trams began operating in 1901 and within two years over 100 trams were in service on eight routes. In 1902 the last horse drawn route was suspended due to the route now making substantial losses. The first motorbuses were introduced in 1906. The Nottingham trolleybus system was inaugurated in 1927 and by 1930 a number of routes had been converted from trams to trolley buses. By the end of the 1950s trolleybuses were in decline and they were finally withdrawn between April 1965 and July 1966.

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FEBRUARY 2016: GOING UNDERGROUND

Fifteen brave souls from the Local History group ventured underneath Nottingham on a guided tour of the Broadmarsh caves, on a visit to The City of Caves. The group were offered the loan of hard hats for the tour, but only a few took up the offer; the rest of us fearing for our hair-dos rather than of possible cranial injury due to height restrictions.

The area was originally known as Tiggua Cobaucc, meaning “place of caves”, and was first referenced around 900 AD. The caves were likely used as housing in the early 11th century, and troglodytes were recorded in the 17th century.

The Tannery

Our guide led us into the Pillar cave and the Tannery, both dating from mediaeval times, where the tanning process was explained in lurid detail (you don't want to know what was used in the process). After failing to persuade any of the group to take up employment, we were directed to our next guide, dressed in the overalls of an air raid warden.



Air Raid Shelter

We rushed along to the sanctuary of a cave converted to an air raid shelter as an air raid siren sounded – by February 1941 eighty six caves were available as public shelters. After getting a thorough telling off for not having our gas masks with us, we were told how the caves had been used as shelters for hundreds during WW2, as the sandstone could withstand any bombs that may fall.



Drury Hill

We then moved along to a cave which contained the original basement walls of the last remaining buildings of Drury Hill, one of the main streets in the notorious Narrow Marsh area of the city. In Medieval Nottingham this area was a wealthy neighbourhood but by 19th century some of the worst slums in Britain could be found here. Housing was in short supply in Nottingham and the poorest families often rented basements to live in. Entire families slept, ate and lived in a single room. The overcrowding and poor sanitation made it a breeding ground for diseases such as cholera, tuberculosis and smallpox.

We heard how the caves had been used as accommodation for families until the St Mary's enclosure act of 1845 banned the rental of caves and cellars for use as homes. Some unscrupulous landlords got round the new law by lining the cave walls with bricks.

After passing through a cave used as a pub cellar, we completed this informative and entertaining tour and several of the group adjourned for a well-earned drink in the Cross Keys.

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MARCH 2016: FRAMEWORK KNITTERS MUSEUM

March saw the Local History group enjoy a private guided tour of the Framework Knitters Museum in Ruddington. We had arranged for the museum to open especially for us, and a party of 15 enjoyed an extremely informative tour of the museum. We were initially shown a short film about the life of the knitters, and were then split into small groups to visit the rest of the museum. Our group were first taken up a flight of stairs into a room full of stocking frames where the history of the machines was explained to us.

We were then given a demonstration, involving much pulling and pushing of levers, and could only imagine the noise levels when 20 or more frames were being used at the same time in the room. We were informed that the operator would be able to weave around 40 rows a minute, though our expert could only manage around 8 currently, in spite of many years of practice. We were next allowed a go on some smaller frames, known as Griswold machines, that could produce tubes that were turned into socks, with differing patterns obtained through moving different needles in and out.



We were then shown around a cottage occupied by the site manager of the time, and also a back-to-back with a single room on each floor, typically used by workers. There were often over a dozen people living in these cottages and all the family would be involved in the knitting process, the children winding and spinning cotton, wives seaming and the men on the frames.



We finally went to view the small garden (split into 4 strips for each cottage), pig sty, ash pit and outside toilets, one of which seemed to be occupied by a rather irate framework knitter, judging by his language when we entered. We were so engrossed in the rest of the museum that we even missed a view of Queen Victoria's stockings. Oh well, maybe next time...

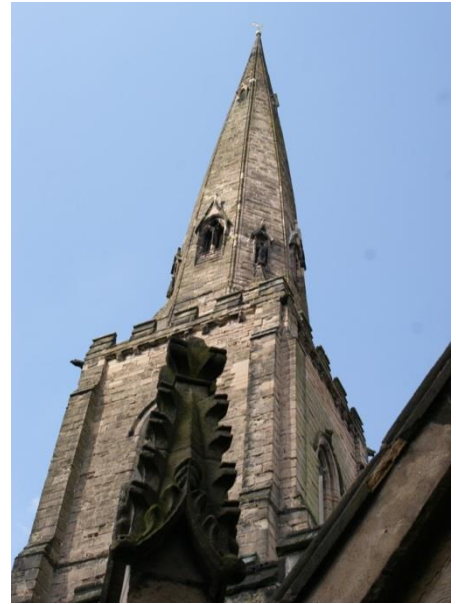
We can thoroughly recommend a visit to this museum. Details can be found at [framework knitters museum](http://frameworkknittersmuseum.com).

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APRIL 2016: ALL HALLOWS CHURCH, GEDLING

The sun was shining as 16 members of the Local History Group met at All Hallows Church, Gedling for a tour guided by Neil Kendrick. Neil firstly led us inside and seated us in the controversial new chairs, which replaced the pews last year. From his lectern at the front, Neil gave us a short history of the church, parts of which date back to the 11th century.

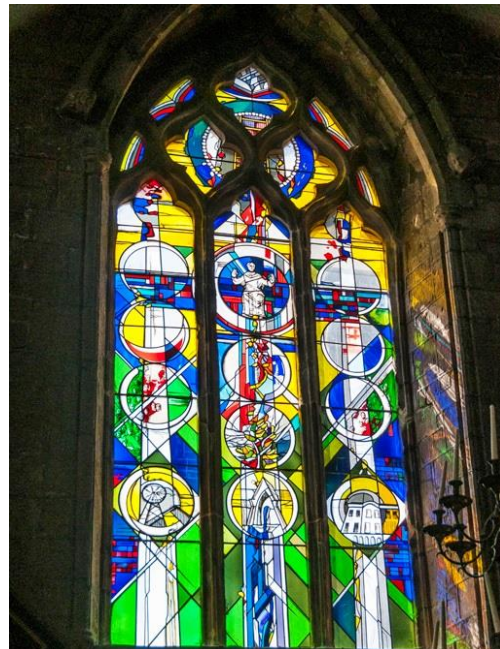
The most striking part of the church is the spire, which dates to the early 14th century and is the 2nd tallest in the county (the spire itself is 91 feet tall, and the tower is 89 feet). The spire is noted for its 'entasis', or bulge, which means that the tip of the spire cannot be seen when one looks upwards from the base of the tower. The entasis is intended to give the illusion of straightness, but this bulge is actually larger than intended, which gives the spire a unique profile.



We then embarked on the tour of the church, firstly to view the font, which is a Victorian replacement for the original font which now stands just outside the entrance porch. A panel on the wall shows a list of all the past Rectors and Vicars of Gedling. Neil explained that Gedling had 2 parsons; a Vicar appointed by the Prior and Convent of Shelford and a Rector appointed by the patron of the living.

High on the walls are five canvasses, which are the funeral hatchments of members of the family of the Earls of Chesterfield, from the beginning of the 19th century. On the wall, above a stone coffin dating from the 14th century, presumed to hold the body of a priest, are 2 panels showing the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer.

The West Window is a new addition (2002) to the church, showing scenes in Gedling at the end of the millennium, including the colliery, the Fountain and Gedling House. Above our heads is a chandelier with 24 candles; one of a pair which provided all the light in the church during the 19th century. As we approached the choir vestry we saw a panel on the wall which gave details of the eight bells which hang in the tower. We had a quick diversion into the vestry at the foot of the tower, and noted the names of past bishops (of Southwell and York) and rectors all over the walls.



On the North wall is the memorial tablet to those men of Gedling who gave their lives in the First World War. Further along on the wall is a fragment of what is believed to be the cross which was situated at the road junction with Main Road. Behind the small altar is a painting by Jovenet, which is believed to be the oldest item in the church. The pulpit is made up of four Elizabethan panels which were ends of the pews replaced in 1871. Passing the choir stalls, Neil told us of the three wall seats (sedilla) and two stone bowls (piscina) being atypical as one is more usual.

The East window is a memorial to those who died in the Great War and was donated by Sir John Turney, who lived in Gedling House, in 1919. A small, low window was then pointed out to us; this is known as a Lepers Window but was more probably just an opening through which a hand bell was rung at the point of consecration during Mass. This was later glazed, to provide some more light.

Neil went on to tell us about the theory that Francis Lovell, known to be Richard III's 'oldest and dearest friend' lies buried within the church. One theory is that Lovell died whilst crossing the River Trent following the Battle of Stoke in 1487, although his true fate remains uncertain. Perhaps we'll see a visitor centre before too long?

We ventured outside into the graveyard, where Neil told us the stories of the great Victorian cricketers Arthur Shrewsbury and Alfred Shaw, who lie a cricket pitch (plus a bowler's run up) apart. There is also the grave of John Flinders (died 1798) who served as a soldier for 62 years. When he came home to Gedling he found living with his relatives intolerable and went to live in the Workhouse because it had the same regimentation he had been used to his entire military career. The earliest grave marker is dated 13 May 1712.

At this point the tour concluded and we drifted off into the sunshine after proffering profound thanks to Neil for sharing his knowledge with us. An extremely interesting afternoon was enjoyed by all.



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MAY 2016: BREWHOUSE YARD MUSEUM & TRIP TO JERUSALEM CELLARS

On a beautiful sunny afternoon 24 of us enjoyed a very interesting guided tour of the Brewhouse Yard Museum of Nottingham Life. We learnt that in the 17th century the Brewhouse Yard was a thriving community consisting of 20 houses and having 127 inhabitants at its peak. The museum is now housed in the remaining five cottages and partly in the Castle Rock.



The first two rooms are staged as part of a Victorian house and the first room we entered was the living 'front' room, and the next the kitchen. All the group were impressed with the level of detail in the rooms and the fact we were able to touch the contents. Many of us recognised some of the items in the kitchen from our parent's and grandparent's homes which brought back some lovely memories. We next visited a replica grocers shop followed by a pharmacy. Again the level of detail was impressive. The guide told us that there are plans to test the liquids and powders in the pharmacy to determine whether they still contain the original substances.

We moved into the Castle Rock caves where there is a mock-up of an air raid shelter. I think we were all surprised when we saw the floor plan of the Anderson shelter by how small it actually was. It must have been extremely claustrophobic being cooped up in there for several hours. While we were in the caves we also saw how the occupants made use of the areas behind their cottages for storage etc.

We then moved upstairs where we all had fun looking at the toys in the cabinets and spotting those we played with as children. This resulted in lots of laughter. The star of the toy exhibition was a wonderful doll's house donated to the museum by Elizabeth Farr. The doll's house was given to Elizabeth when she was seven by her godmother.

The final floor of the museum is set up as a street of shops from the 1920s. It was wonderful to peer through the shop windows at all the wares in display. I think we all agreed that this museum

was extremely interesting with lots to see, and we would like to go back again to see the schoolroom.



After the museum, a number of the group went on to the Trip to Jerusalem to partake of a small drink (or several) and a guided tour of the cellars. We were surprised by the number of different branches the caves consisted of, and also how low the roof was. We saw the cock fighting pit and also the old route through to the castle (now blocked). We were also told how the cellars were used as a prison and saw the initials carved into the walls of the condemned cell. Luckily for us we were released from the cellars to enjoy our drinks in cosier surroundings.

Anne Palmer





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JUNE 2016: THE LACE MARKET

Sixteen of us met by the left lion on what was the driest and sunniest day of the week. We started our tour at Weekday Cross where we heard how Nottingham, or *Snottingham*, played a strategic part in English history from the time of the Saxons right through to the wool trade of the 17th century, and the centre for lace making in the late 1800s. And let's not forget that King Charles I raised his Standard here in 1642 at the start of the Civil War.

From Weekday Cross we moved on to High Pavement and were shown the Queen Victoria Jubilee Plaque between 7 and 8 High Pavement. Many of us admitted we'd not spotted this before. From

here we walked to what is now the Pitcher and Piano and were told of an impressive stained glass window designed by Burne-Jones, one of the Pre-Raphaelites.

As we made our way to St Mary's Church we passed County House, or Judges Lodgings, opposite the Shire Hall, now the Galleries of Justice. We learnt how executions took place on the front steps of the Shire Hall until 1868 when a huge crush developed for the execution of William Saville resulting in 8 deaths and 150 injuries. After this date executions were held inside the premises.

At St Mary's Church we heard how the current church is the third to be built on the site and dates back to 1475. The original church was mentioned in the Domesday Book, but it is thought the church probably dates to 100 years before this time.



After a look around inside St Mary's church we walked to Commerce Square where we saw the impressive 18th century warehouses, which were a stark contrast to Narrow Marsh which was reached from Malin Hill just off the square. From here we retraced our steps and walked down Kayes Walk and heard details of Plumptre House which once stood there. From Kayes Walk we turned into Stoney Street, the heart of the Lace Market. We entered St Mary's Burial Grounds and there heard tales of grave robbers before returning to Stoney Street passing Maidens Lane (rumoured to be called this after the prostitutes who worked there).

We then admired two T C Hine buildings; the Adams Building, now part of New College Nottingham. The building was designed in an E shape to maximise light and space and contained a chapel, library, dining room, washing facilities and a heating and ventilation system. The second building, the Richard Birkin Building, has an arched window thought to be part of the original Norman St Mary's Church.

We finished our tour by entering the rear of the Adams Building to look at the loading bay areas. Our viewing was cut short as we were asked to leave by an over-zealous security person, even though there is public access to that area. However, this behaviour did not spoil our enjoyment of what was a very interesting and informative tour and I'd like to thank Jann Kirke for leading this

tour for us. We all had a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon, finished off with a well-deserved drink. For those interested in more details and a route of the tour click [Lace Market Trail](#).



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JULY 2016: NATIONAL HOLOCAUST CENTRE

Our July meeting was a joint visit with the History Study Group to the National Holocaust Centre and Museum at Laxton. The Centre is set within an acre of lovely landscaped gardens planted mainly with roses, each dedicated to a person, family or community who perished in the holocaust. We were fortunate to have chosen a day when the centre had a holocaust survivor speaking. Our speaker, who was an amazing lady of 90 years of age, told of her story as a refugee trying to escape the advancing Nazis and the threat of the ghettos and the death camps. She told of her family's struggle to cross Europe from Bratislava via Paris, Spain, Morocco, Gibraltar and Portugal to eventually reach the safety of England, arriving in Liverpool. She explained that many countries did not wish to take them as they were refugees which struck a chord with everyone in light of the current situation in Syria.

After a restorative cup of tea, we visited the ***Holocaust Exhibition*** in the museum. The aim of the museum is to tell the story of the holocaust from pre-war Jewish life, through the rise in anti-Semitism, the rise of Hitler, the ghettos, the final solution (the death camps) and survival of those fortunate enough to be liberated by allied forces. The museum is very well structured with an enormous amount of information, reinforced with photographs, films and recordings of survivors.

We then visited the ***Journey Exhibition*** which told the story of Leo Stein. Leo was a 10 year old German Jewish boy living in Berlin with his parents and sister Hannah in 1938. We follow Leo's story from his family life in Germany through to his journey to England on the Kindertransport. This exhibition showed us the impact of Nazi propaganda and the rise of anti-Semitic feeling. This was a very informative, if harrowing, visit; the museum is very well designed and really brings home the level of suffering experienced by the Jews at the hands of the Nazis.

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AUGUST 2016: CASTLE QUARTER

Our August meeting was a walk through the Castle Quarter, which focused on the **3 R's** - not the ones we remember from schooldays but: ***Royalty, Religion & Radicalism***. The power struggles between these three fluctuated in importance over the centuries in Nottingham and this area proved to be a battleground in more ways than one. ***Royalty*** is symbolised by the castle itself, of

strategic importance in the Middle Ages and a favourite of medieval kings. From the castle we walked up Standard Hill to where King Charles I set up his Royal Standard to proclaim the start of the Civil War. But Radicalism, which showed itself much earlier in the tales of our folk hero Robin Hood, soon prevailed and Nottingham declared itself for Parliament. The British Civil Wars are often seen as religious: Catholic against Protestant. Religion held a prominent place in people's lives but beliefs had been evolving through time.

An early map showed us the location of the thirteenth century Friaries. The Greyfriars (Franciscans) established themselves in Broadmarsh - look for the remnants of Greyfriars Gate - and the Whitefriars (Carmelites) between Whitefriars Lane and St James's Street. But local tales of immoral friars in the 1500s meant that these were closed down with little fuss after Henry VIII's power struggles with religion led to the dissolution of the monasteries.

If Robin Hood demonstrated the local spirit of rebellion against royal power, the mid 1700's to mid-1800's showed Nottingham at its most radical. Low wages and squalid living conditions led to intense poverty and food riots. Nottingham became a garrison town and soldiers were often despatched to quell the riots of the framework knitters and later the frame-breaking Luddites. Nottingham people developed a reputation as a 'combustible mob'. The rallying cry of '*To the Castle*' led to the burning of the ducal palace of the Duke Of Newcastle after he refused to support the reform Bill.

The walk showed other examples of the **3 R's**. The Salutation Inn was a recruiting station for both sides in the Civil War and St Nicholas church - rebuilt in 1671 - was destroyed by the Parliamentarians because the Royalists used the tower to fire on the castle yard, killing and injuring several soldiers.

We ended our walk at the foot of Castle Gate, halfway down what used to be the main thoroughfare from the Norman castle to the Saxon part of the town, which later became the centre of the Lace Market. We had also seen other sites of interest and some fine examples of architecture from the Medieval to the Victorian eras. Nottingham has a long, complex and fascinating history and the more we look the more we find!

Jann Kirke



To see more photos and more about the history of the area click [Castle Quarter Trail](#).

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SEPTEMBER 2016: CIVIL WAR TRAIL

Twenty six of us set off on a joint trip with the Photography Group in two minibuses on our Civil War trail to Shelford and Southwell. We learnt that Shelford derives its name from 'shallow ford', one of the many places along the Trent where crossing by foot was possible. Shelford has its origins in the Bronze Age and is mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086. The Stanhopes of Shelford were a prominent family within Nottinghamshire and played a major role as strong loyalists to King Charles I during the Civil War.

Our first stop in Shelford was St Peter and St Paul's church. In 1645, during the fighting, some Shelford men took over the church tower, drawing up the ladder and bell ropes after them. From there they fired on Roundhead troops, refusing to come down despite warnings that no quarter would be given if they did not. Straw was sent for, set alight and the defenders smoked out. The fire scars are still visible. In the church yard is a listed monument - a hollow which was the emplacement for a Civil War gun battery. There are earthworks defining a horseshoe-shaped bank up to 0.6 metres in height and 5 metres in width. Tom issued a challenge to the Photography group to take a photo of this earthwork (if they could find it).



From the church we walked to the pinfold where stray animals were kept until claimed by their owners and War Memorial which commemorates the 12 soldiers of Shelford and Newton who lost their lives in WWI.

After a slight diversion across three fields (with stiles and an electric fence!) and a photo opportunity with several horses we arrived at the Mill Bridge. After a pleasant walk through the village to the minibuses we set off for Southwell.

In Southwell we visited the Archbishop of York's Palace and garden. In the early stages of the Civil War it is likely that Charles I stayed at the palace en route to the north. At the end of hostilities the remaining Parliamentary troops stripped the roof of its lead and everything they could sell for one

penny, and as a result the only remaining useful part was the Archbishop's State Chamber, now called the Great Hall. We all agreed that the Great Hall was still quite impressive.

From the Bishop's Palace we headed off to the Saracen's Head (originally called the King's Head) for some well-deserved refreshment. It was here that King Charles spent his last night of freedom before being taken away by troops to the Scots camp near Kelham. Luckily no such event befell us and we all managed to escape back to the minibuses to be driven home by our expert drivers Tom and Mike.

Anne Palmer



OCTOBER 2016: GOING TO THE FLICKS - memories of the Cosy, Regal and Ritz

Dorothy Hollingworth gave us a very interesting talk on our local cinemas. We heard how films originally spread through fairs, music halls etc. and the first film in Nottingham was probably shown at Goose Fair. Later, buildings were taken over and the windows blacked out as films became more popular. The first purpose built cinema in Nottingham was the Victoria Electric Picture House in Milton Street, later called the Moulin Rouge.

We were told that George Hinton wanted to open a small hall for theatre and cinema in Netherfield, and on 13th March 1911 his plans received approval. The Alexandra, later to be called the Cosy, opened its doors on 25th July 1911. With capacity to hold 600 people it showed short films and had music hall acts in between.

In August 1912 Enoch Parker bought land on Station Road and submitted his plans for a cinema in October 1912. Site preparation began in 1913 and the Victoria cinema, later the Regal, opened on 30th April 1913. The cinema had a capacity of 450 and was built of brick with terracotta ornaments on the outside.

The cinemas proved very popular and in 1913 it was decided to add a balcony to the Alexandra which provided space for an additional 130 people. The Victoria also added a balcony increasing its capacity to 600.

In the 1930's the Alexandra closed for alterations, and reopened in 1932 under new management with the name Cosy and showing full talking pictures. The Victoria closed on 6th December and reopened on 22nd December as the Regal, showing talking pictures.

In 1936 Invincible Cinemas Ltd. contracted architect Reginald Cooper to design a cinema, and on the 1st June 1936 the Ritz cinema opened having taken just 14 weeks from the decision to build to opening. The Ritz had a balconette and a capacity of 1914.

The Cosy closed on Saturday 30th April 1955 after 44 years, the Regal on the 19th December 1959 and the Ritz on the 8th June 1968. The Ritz has been demolished and is now an old people's home, the Regal was purchased by the Pentecostal Church and still shows films. The Cosy is still standing but is now derelict.

Special thanks to Dorothy for such an interesting talk.

NOVEMBER 2016: BOB MASSEY - Murder, Mystery and Mayhem

This month saw us move indoors for a very entertaining talk given by Bob Massey. Bob started his talk with a series of questions on news items to illustrate how we need to put these events into historical context to fully understand their true meaning. We heard stories of outlaws being broken out of jail in the middle of the night, and also the story of Richard Fletcher a murderer who was pardoned by King Edward III for his invaluable service during the battle of Crecy in 1346.

We learnt how badly the mentally ill were treated in the 18th century. The patients with violent tendencies were made visible to the public much like a sideshow. The less violent were to be found begging on the streets. Also quite shocking to us now, was hearing how women bearing illegitimate children were put into these asylums and would probably never be released having become institutionalised. Bob also told us that between 1735 and 1799 79 women were hanged for killing their illegitimate children, the crime being "murder of a bastard".

On a slightly macabre note we heard how the Victorians took post mortem photos. If no photo existed of a deceased family member a photographer would stage the body and take a photograph as if the person was still alive. Sometimes these photos included the whole family.

It was a surprise to me to hear that around 1735 Dick Turpin moved to the Nottingham area and carried out a series of highway robberies along what is now Mansfield Road.

Bob told us about many local people including Kitty Hudson the human pin cushion and James Chambers who was killed in a balloon flight in what was the first local air crash.

Thanks to Bob Massey for a very interesting and funny talk.

DECEMBER 2016

For our December meeting we enjoyed a very pleasant and sociable afternoon at The Willowbrook. We discussed our plans for visits and activities for the coming year along with hearing some amusing anecdotes from various holidays.

In 2017 we will be obtaining an organisation membership for the Nottingham Local History Society. This will entitle us to receive a magazine every six months which we'll pass on to group members, attend talks / courses and obtain help with publishing articles etc.