

LOCAL HISTORY 2017

January 2017: CRIME AND PUNISHMENT IN NOTTS

There was a good turnout at the Fire Station for January's meeting, where members presented some stories on the darker side of local life in the past:-

Firing Squad

One of our members recounted a story from his memoirs of when he was part of a firing squad. Ray was serving with the Sherwood Foresters after the war and was stationed just outside Hamburg. At the time, war crimes were being tried and one particular German officer was tried and found guilty of crimes carried out during the great escape. As was his right, the German Officer demanded to be executed by firing squad rather than be hanged. It was S Company's turn for firing squad duties and they attended a meeting giving them the details of the procedure to be followed.

On the day of the execution, the Company were woken at 4am and given breakfast. They were then driven to the site and received further instructions. The company was warned that anyone failing to fire would receive harsh discipline. Now quaking with fear of punishment, they arrived at the site. There were two shelves to lean on when taking the shot. The men left their rifles and moved away while the military police loaded the rifles with 10 live bullets and two blanks, and shuffled them. The men then returned, but one member recognised his rifle, so they had to leave again while the rifles were shuffled for a second time.

The second time the men returned, everything was fine. The German officer was brought in with a hood over his head and was tied to the post. The exercise was carried out in complete silence and a white hanky was raised to signal the removal of the safety catch. The order was then given to fire. After this the men were marched out while an officer shot the German Officer in the head to ensure he was dead. The rifles were shuffled again and the men returned to their barracks where they had a second breakfast.

The Mansfield Horror

One of our members, on tracing her family tree, learnt from a cousin that there was a rumour of a murder having taken place in the family. On further research the story of the Mansfield murders was discovered, but a link to her family tree has yet to be found. The Mansfield murders were particularly gruesome. Mary Elizabeth Reynolds a 48 year old widow was murdered along with her sons William Henry Reynolds aged 16, Charles Reynolds 15, and her grandson Charles Peck aged three years. The murderer was Mrs Reynolds' lodger Henry Wright, 35, a labourer. Henry Wright had expressed a wish to marry her, but Mrs Reynolds discouraged his advances and frequently requested him to leave her house.

At 2am on Sunday 11th August 1895 Wright went to the Police Station. He appeared to be sober and was naked apart from his socks. He was covered in blood, had a wound to his throat and was covered in feathers. He was carrying a little child in his arms; Robert Stanley Hall, a grandson of Mrs Reynolds, whose nightshirt was on fire.

The police inspector proceeded to the house at which Wright lived. There he found the premises on fire and the bodies within. Wright admitted that he had murdered all four people and had set fire to the house as an act of jealousy. Wright was found guilty of his crimes and was hanged on a Tuesday afternoon. Death was instantaneous.

The Body Snatchers of Barker Gate

Between the mid-18th century and early 1900's three new cemeteries were created on land around Barker Gate. In November 1826 a man called Smith took up lodgings on Maiden Lane. On the 18th January the following year, Smith took a large hamper to Pickfords for delivery to an address in London. The book-keeper Mr White became suspicious and asked to examine the contents. Smith

made a run for it and managed to escape. The suspicious hamper was opened and inside was a body of an old woman Dorothy Townsend and a three year old boy; the son of local woman Mrs Rose.

Word quickly spread about the incident and St. Mary's graveyards soon became full of people digging to find out if their loved ones were still interred. It was discovered that 30 bodies had been stolen. There was one incident at a hanging in 1878, where the dead body was hauled out quickly and given to the surgeons before being certified dead by a jury.

The Highwaymen

We heard how the word Highwayman was used to describe those guilty of 'highway robbery' which was any form of robbery committed on a public road or highway. The majority of these crimes were carried out by opportunist criminals, although some crimes were committed against mail coaches by Highwaymen such as Dick Turpin. All crimes of highway robbery were punishable by death. Two men guilty of highway robbery and murder were John Nevison (Swift Nick) and Thomas Wilcox (Sawley Thom). The two men represented two extremes of highway robbery, but both met their deaths at the end of a hangman's rope.

Punishment

We heard that the last public hanging was Richard Thomas Parker who was found guilty of carrying out the Fiskerton murder. Richard took a gun to his father intent on killing him, but his mother intervened and was killed.

We also discussed the Saville murders and were told by one of our members where the infamous murders took place on Colwick woods. We heard how William Saville had put his wife and children into the workhouse while he furthered his career and also had a relationship with another woman Elizabeth Tate. William sent weekly packages to his family in the workhouse, but when Elizabeth asked him questions about this he the parcels ceased. It is thought that Saville's wife was aware of his intentions and may have threatened to expose him. Saville took his wife and children out of the workhouse for an afternoon on the pretext of having a picnic. During this afternoon, he cut their throats. A 10 year old boy playing truant from school is reported as having witnessed the murders and William Saville was hanged for his crimes.

One of our members told us how her 3x great grandmother's husband was transported to Tasmania where he died.

Quite shocking to us now, we heard how children between 8 and 14 were birched. The birching of minors involved a bunch of twigs bound together and used on bare buttocks to set them on the straight and narrow. Custodial sentences were also handed out to young children.

Branding was also used. Those out of work for more than three days had a V burned into their foreheads and were sold as slaves. The branding of prostitutes was stopped, as it was found that the brands were being used by the girls to advertise their trade.

We heard that the last hanging for murder in Nottingham was 27th January 1961 and was carried out in Lincoln. Wasył Gnypuk murdered Louise Surgery. He broke into her house for a place to sleep and during the night he dreamt he was being attacked. When he woke in the morning he had strangled Louise.

The Gallows Hill

Apart from the ramparts of Nottingham Castle (where John de Cuckney is recorded as being executed in 1201), the earliest recorded place of execution in Nottingham was at 'the Wilford-lane end of the Loughborough- road' where Joan Phillips was hanged in 1685.

The first mention of Gallows Hill is in 1701. The gallows were originally a T-shaped construction, which required a ladder to be ascended by the prisoner and executioner (who perched on the top);

this was last used in 1732. Up to 1800, the gallows were two uprights and a transverse beam, about 4 yards or so high and were situated on Mansfield Road, close to the Church (Rock) Cemetery and was therefore one of the first sights that met the eye of the traveller approaching from the north. A cart containing the prisoner was driven between the uprights, then driven away, leaving the criminal to their fate.

The last execution here was of William Wells, a highwayman, who was hanged on 2 April 1827. After this date, public executions were carried out in front of the jails in which the criminal was confined - criminals from the Town received justice at the House of Correction on Glasshouse Street and those from the County at the Shire Hall. The last public execution at the Shire Hall took place in 1864 and the last hanging in Nottingham took place in 1928 at Nottingham Prison.

February 2017: NOTTINGHAM PAST & PRESENT

The Local History and Photography groups had a joint meeting at the Richard Herrod Centre. As we thought the subject would be of interest to other members of C&G U3A we invited all members and 46 attended. The first half of the programme in the early 1900's, showed photos of the Market Square, Parliament Street, Mansfield Road, the Castle Gatehouse (in a very bad state of repair), the Riding School on Castle Road and a troop of cavalry riding through the town, among the many others showing the costume and transport of the time, and long forgotten alleyways. Friar Lane was just a narrow lane.

The second half was of photographs taken in the 1950's and 60's, although these were in living memory of the audience, not all of whom were Nottinghamians. It was surprising how much Nottingham has changed over the years. There was no Maid Marion Way at the time! There were those horrible under passes on Friar Lane, Derby Rd and Theatre Square.

Keith Hucknall who presented the programme and took many of the photos is Convener of the Burton Joyce U3A Photography Group and must have gone to a great deal of trouble taking the pictures trying to find the exact spot where the original had been taken, which sometimes meant standing in the middle of the road where there was once pavement and if there was someone or something in the original pictures, he tried to replicate it, even to the extent of where the original Boots shop on High Street (the shortest High Street in the country) had the staff standing outside! He went down to the Square and rounded up the group of youths that always seem to hang around there and got them to pose outside Boots. He was meticulous in matching the shots, working out the exact focal length used by the original photographers and looking for clues to where they were taken from, such as a bit of stone wall to match up!

How's that for dedication!

March 2017: BROMLEY HOUSE LIBRARY

We enjoyed a visit to the Bromley House Library, an independent library funded by member subscriptions. The library was founded in 1816 and celebrated 200 years last year. The library spent its first five years in Carlton Street before moving to its current site in 1822 and currently has 1500 members.

We were treated to a reading of a paper written by previous librarian Joan Taylor, the original being held by the University of Nottingham. Joan was the librarian between 1969 and 1987 and during her tenure the library almost closed down twice, but was saved by the income received from tenants on the ground floor.

We heard that the current house was built in 1752 by George Smith the grandson of Thomas Smith, the founder of Smith's bank. The house has had a bit of a checkered past. Their son George who occupied the house was jailed in 1791 for two years. During his time the house had a reputation as a location for rowdy parties. After this time the family mainly occupied their country houses. In 1819 the

house was occupied by two companies of yeomanry who were evicted for causing damage and presented with a bill. The house then became derelict which enabled the library to purchase it for the sum of £2,500 in 1820. After a period of renovation the library moved in in 1852. In the 1950s the house became grade II listed and in the 1990s the committee decided that the library should become a charity.

After the talk we had an extensive tour of the library where we saw among other things, the meridian line and photographic studio. For more information on these and other aspects of the library, please go to the [Trips and Visits page](#) and then click on the ***Trips 2017*** link to see the report from January 2017.





April 2017: ROCK CEMETERY

For our April meeting we were given a guided tour of the Church (Rock) Cemetery by Kevin Powell from the Nottingham Civic Society.



With the 1845 Enclosure Act, land was provided for the purpose of recreation and also a new cemetery. This cemetery was the Church Cemetery. The land designated for the cemetery was part of the sand fields of Nottingham and had previously been used for the extraction of sand and it was this that gave the site its distinctive shape. The sand on the site is 240 million years old and is strong and easy to work. There was also a public sand pit where residents came to collect sand to spread on floors.

The concept for the Church Cemetery began on June 6th 1850, with a meeting in the Exchange Hall on Thurland Street. The meeting was presided over by the Bishop of Lincoln, as Nottingham fell within the Lincoln diocese at that time.

Initially, the area for the Cemetery was to be four acres; however, once the Church Cemetery Company was formed on the 16th April 1851, the company added a further nine acres to the site making a total of thirteen acres.

The cemetery was designed by Edwin Patchitt a local solicitor and clerk of the Church Cemetery Company. The cemetery contains 14,000 graves and 43,000 bodies, with some graves being between 10 to 25 feet deep.

In the early 1800s there were 13 windmills on Forest Road. Three were on the cemetery site. The windmills were Post mills (wooden mills that could be rotated). There was also a rope mill on the site as well as the gallows that once stood on the site of the current lodge house built in 1865. The last hanging on the site was William Wells in 1826. There are also three wells on the site.

The first burial on the site was that of a 10 month old boy, Taylor Cuckson, whose grave was given free to the family.

The mortuary chapel was built between 1878 - 79, and was designed by architect Edward William Godwin. The chapel fell into disrepair and was pulled down in 1965. The cemetery has a Cross of Sacrifice to commemorate the fallen of both world wars. The cross was designed by Sir Reginald

Blomfield and installed by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in cemeteries containing 40 or more war dead. The Church Cemetery contains 99 war graves; 79 from WWI and 20 from WWII.



Graves visited:-

Clara Green 1840 - 1919: Clara was the last surviving daughter of George Green (of Green's Mill) and inherited most of his money and property. Clara lived as a recluse in a house at the top of Finsbury Avenue until she was admitted to Bagthorpe Hospital and Workhouse.

Stanley Frederick Johnson 1890 - 1918: Stanley was a Canadian soldier. He was born in Nottingham on 23 November 1890 and lived on Forest Road and later Albert Road. He emigrated to Canada and worked as a butcher until he signed up in 1915. He went to France with the Canadian Expeditionary Force and fought at Vimy Ridge. In October 1918 he came to Nottingham to visit his parents and contracted flu. He died on 12th November 1918, one day after the Armistice.

Philip Boobyer 1857 - 1930: Dr Boobyer was the medical officer of health in Nottingham from 1889 until 1929. During his time in office, he fought to abolish the pail closet system as he felt this was responsible for spreading disease. In 1893 there were 613 cases of enteric fever in the city, but when Dr Boobyer retired Nottingham was practically free of the disease. He married Annie Forbes Watson, the sister of architect Watson Fothergill.

William Oakland d1896: William was a miller and his mill was moved to Windmill Lane. In the 1861 census he is recorded as being the miller at Green's mill.

Paupers Graves upper cemetery: There are 15 pauper graves in this part of the cemetery, most of which are for children. During the winter of 1904-5 there was a diphtheria and whooping cough epidemic in Nottingham.

Marriott Ogle Tarbotton 1834 - 1887: Marriott was Borough Engineer of Nottingham from 1859 until 1880. He designed Papplewick Pumping Station in 1884, widened Trent Bridge and was responsible

for started the modern sewerage system in Nottingham. The town council coat of arms is included on his grave.

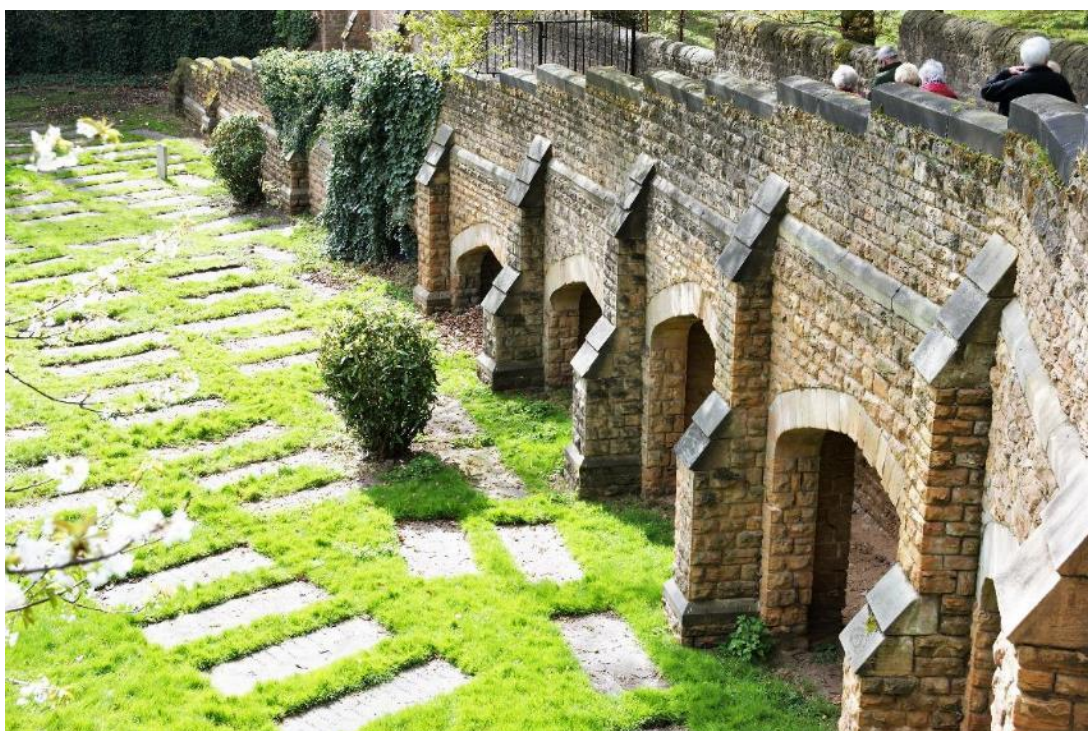
William Henry d 2nd March 1888: Listed all of his bequests on his grave stone.

Watson Fothergill 1841 - 1928: Watson Fothergill was born Fothergill Watson, but changed his name in 1892 to continue his mother's name. He was responsible for designing several buildings in Nottingham; Smith's bank, Victoria building and Express building to name but a few. (For more information on Watson Fothergill, see the Watson Fothergill Trail)



James Shipstone 1818 - 1897: In 1852 James started a small brewery brewing 30 casks per week. In 1900 he built the Star Brewery in Basford. The brewery remained independent until 1978 when it was taken over by Greenall's and closed in 1990.

Lower Pauper Graves: St Ann's Valley is a natural hollow made larger and strengthened for the building of catacombs with a long ramped entrance. Edwin Patchitt intended that the catacombs would be used for the burials of the well to do. However the well to do didn't want to use the catacombs, so they were utilised as paupers graves. There are 40 graves here of mainly adults who died between 1916 and 1919 of flu.



Albert Augustus Atkins 1872 - 1915: Albert was born in 1872 in Bruce Grove. He had four brothers and a sister. He was a labourer and married in 1889. In 1914 he was 42 years old when he went to enlist but was told he was too old. He joined the Special Reserve and became a gunner in the Royal Garrison Artillery. He was posted to Yarmouth and was discharged after a year. He died in 1915 of acute bronchitis and was buried in a pauper's grave. In 1921 he was recognised as one of the war dead and was given a headstone. His age on this headstone is different to his original grave implying he lied about his age to get into the Specials.

Thomas Adams 1807 - 1873: Thomas Adams is a well known lace manufacturer from Nottingham, building his factory in Stoney Street in 1855. He went to Calais to study the lace making process before returning to Nottingham. He was a generous man and supported many charities. His grave is opposite the Robin Hood Caves in the 'upper class' area of the cemetery.

Frank Bowden 1848 - 1921: Founder of Raleigh. Frank was seriously ill and his doctor gave him six months to live. He took up cycling on his doctor's advice and bought a bicycle from a small shop on Raleigh Street, Nottingham. He was so impressed with his recovering health and the bicycle that he bought the company; it was making three bicycles a week. In 1926 the company was producing 100,000 bicycles per year. By 1938 this had risen to 500,000 and after the war 1 million. At its height the factory covered 75 acres and employed 7,000. Raleigh closed in 2003.

Thomas Chambers Hine 1813 - 1899: The most influential Victorian architects. He designed numerous houses in the Park Estate as well as Thomas Adams' factory on Stoney street. In 1868 after a major fire he redesigned the Shire Hall. Hine was known as the father of the midland architects.



William Hannay d 1862: William was the local director of the Midland Railway and a JP. He died in an unfortunate boating accident in Sark aged 64.

Anthony John Mundella 1825 - 1897: Anthony Mundella was born in Leicester. He became Sheriff of Nottingham in 1852 and was elected to parliament in 1868 for Sheffield Brightside. Mundella was a great supporter of worker's rights and brought in legislation to change conditions of employment. He also brought in education for children under 10. In recognition of his efforts, a marble bust of

Mundella subscribed for by 80,000 factory workers, chiefly women and children, was presented to Mrs Mundella. The bust is now situated in the Bromley House Library.

Zebedee Jessop 1828 - 1906: Zebedee was born in Lincolnshire and went into the drapery with John Townsend in Long Row, Nottingham. William Daft joined the company later. Zebedee was left in control of the company after Townsend retired and Daft died. In 1897 the lease on the building in Long Row expired and the company moved to King Street where it remained for 75 years. In 1933 Jessops was bought by John Lewis, but a clause in the contract stipulated that the shop would keep the Jessops name for 50 years.

Edwin Cheshire Patchitt 1807 - 1888: Edwin Patchitt lived in Forest House. He played cricket for Nottinghamshire, was a solicitor, local councillor and mayor for two terms. He designed the Church Cemetery.

Anne Palmer

May 2017: HISTORIC GEDLING WALK

Our May meeting saw 25 of us meet at the Gedling Miners Lamp Memorial for a very informative and interesting walk led by Neil Kendrick.



We heard about the tragic deaths of the Withnall brothers at Gedling Colliery, now remembered on the memorial. We learnt that All Hallows church is the second tallest in the county, and that there is a step leading up to the tower with a bow and arrow carved into it marking the edge of Sherwood Forest.

Neil informed us that there were three dairies in Gedling; one of which is now the Postal Sorting Office on Westdale Lane. We heard about the bustling shops in the area from Whiten's newsagent on Westdale Lane; the oldest shop in the area, to Marsden's grocery store at the junction of Ranmore Road and Main Road and of course not forgetting Roy Skellington the Gentleman's Hairdressers shop on Main Road.

I think we were all surprised to hear the history of some of the houses and the rumours of their famous visitors. We heard that Buffalo Bill reputedly stayed at Highclere House (currently owned by Carl Froch and being demolished to make way for flats). 'The Nook' on Blackhill Drive once owned by a director of Raleigh Cycles is said to have been used by Edward VIII for secret meetings. We also heard that the famous music hall entertainer Vesta Tilley stayed at Denmark House on Tennyson Avenue when appearing at Nottingham, and there are numerous urban myths relating to her and the house.

Gedling has been home to many interesting and important people too numerous to mention in the space available in this article. For those interested in learning about them and more information on the history of Gedling, please contact Neil as this walk was based on his book ***The Gentleman's Hairdresser of Gedling - Roy's Story***.

Unfortunately the weather beat us and the rain became too heavy to carry on. This isn't the end of the story though; we will pick up where we left off next year when we visit All Hallows Church for one of our meetings.

I'd like to say a special thank you to Neil for making this walk so enjoyable and interesting for us all.

Anne Palmer

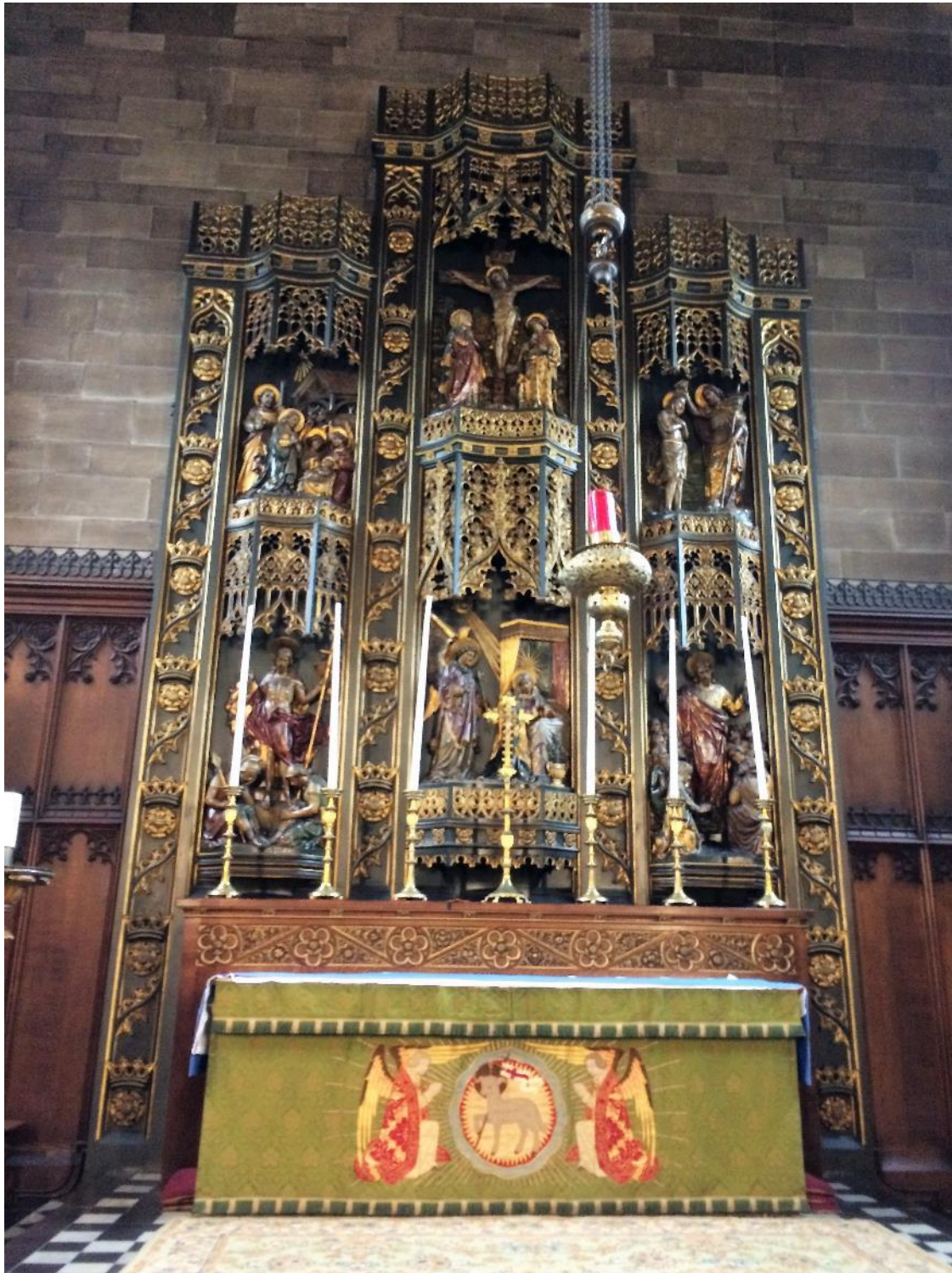


The former Tivey's bakery at the bottom of Redland Grove – bread is still baked behind the shop.

June 2017: WILLIAM BOOTH BIRTHPLACE MUSEUM

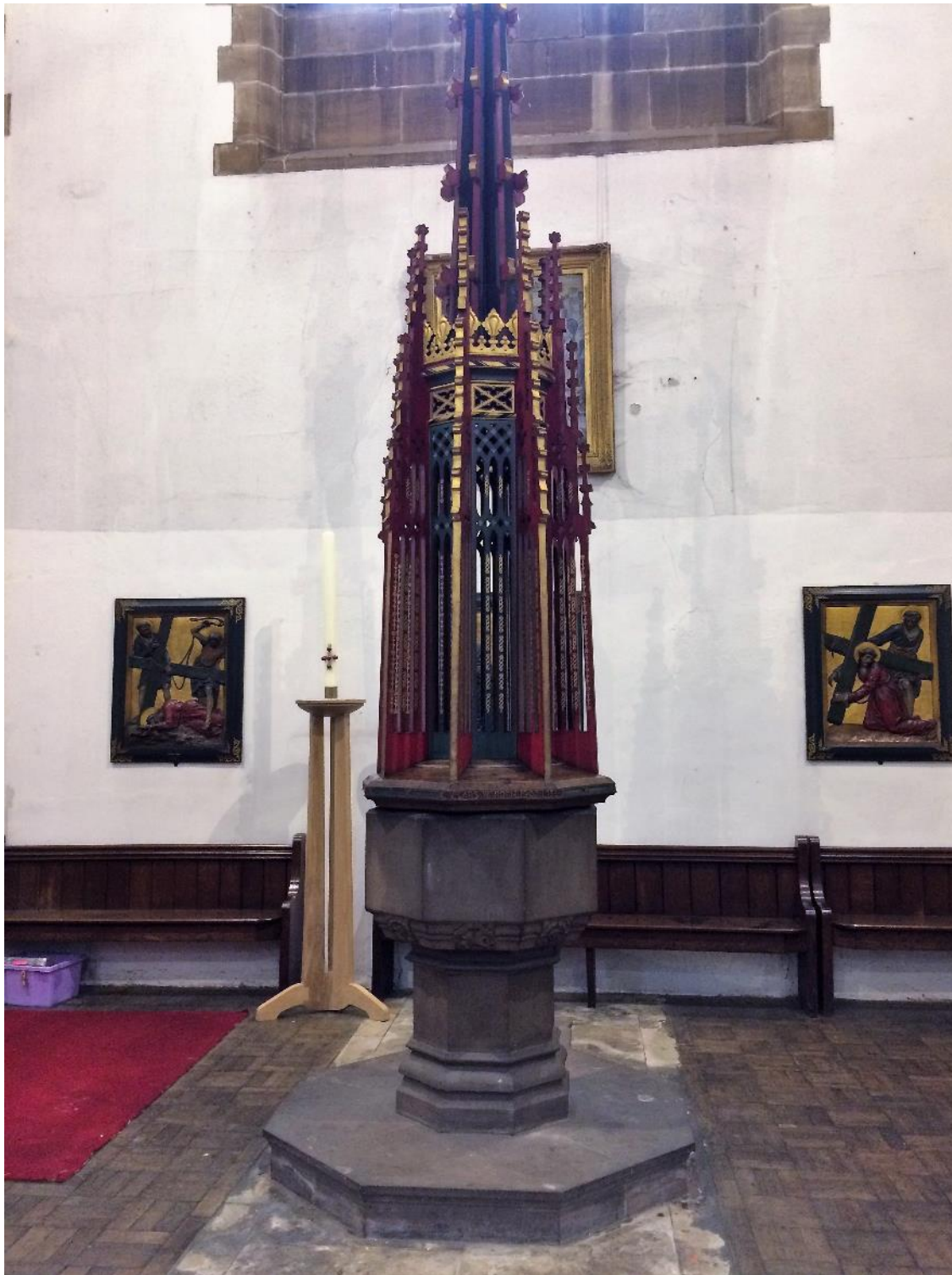
In June we enjoyed a guided tour of the William Booth Birthplace Museum and St Stephen's Church, Sneinton.

St Stephen's church is a grade II listed building dating from 1837, although there has been a religious building on the site since Saxon times. The reredos to the high altar was designed by George Frederick Bodley and carved in Oberammergau and features scenes from the life of Christ.



The choir stalls date from the fourteenth or fifteenth century and were originally from St Mary's Church. They are rumoured to have been acquired by the organist of St. Stephen's in 1848 after being discarded by St Mary's. They contain fine medieval misericords which have carved figures. The font is from the 14th century.

We learned that William Booth was christened here on 12th April 1829, his father's occupation given as Gentleman. More surprisingly we learnt that the parents of D H Lawrence were married here. The mathematician George Green is buried here.



After visiting St Stephen's, we crossed the road to the museum. We learnt that the museum is housed in the first three buildings on the street of terraces. They were built in 1820 and Samuel Booth moved in with his second wife Mary in 1824. William was born on 10th April 1829, the middle of five children. When William was 13 his father went bankrupt, so William was apprenticed to the pawnbroker Francis Eames in Goose Gate. William's father also died this year.

In 1844 William converted to Methodism, and began preaching in Nottingham in 1846. William styled his preaching on James Caughey, a Methodist minister and evangelist in the US. In 1849 William left Francis Eames and went to London where he became a full time preacher in 1852. In 1855 he

married Catherine Mumford whom he met in 1852 when he was preaching. William formed the Christian Mission in East London in 1865 which was renamed The Salvation Army in 1878. William died in 1912 at the age of 83.

Anne Palmer



August 2017: ST ANNS ALLOTMENTS

A small but select group of us visited the grade 2* listed St Anns Allotments on a sunny afternoon in August. We heard how the allotments are the oldest and largest detached town gardens in Britain, possibly the world, with its history going back over 600 years.

There are 670 individual gardens marked out by hedges on three connected sites: Hungerhill Gardens, Stonepit Coppice Gardens and Gorsey Close Gardens covering 75 acres. 550 plots are allocated to individual tenants with the remainder designated for community or wildlife sites. Today the gardens are still in the layout created in the 1830's, when the site was established as hedged 'pleasure gardens' for wealthy Victorian town-dwellers whose grand houses did not typically have gardens.

In the late 19th century, the site's purpose changed and gardens started being used to grow food. Some tenants moved out of their rented houses and lived in the summerhouses on their plots as a result of financial hardship. In the late 1990's, a small group of tenants decided to fight the sale of part of the site and after 20 years of campaigning the site is now listed with English Heritage.

We visited Oliver's plot; named after its last tenant Mr Tom Oliver. This garden is now divided into 4 areas illustrating the heritage of the site: Victorian, Dig for Victory, 21st Century and Wildlife. There is also a very impressive restored greenhouse, growing everything from tomatoes to cape gooseberries.

We were also fortunate to visit two ladies who were busy on their allotment. One of the ladies told us they had been working the allotment for three years. When they first took on the allotment there was just grass, but today there is fruit, vegetables and flowers, and is a credit to their hard work.

We had a lovely afternoon exploring the allotments and thanks go to our guide John, who had just had surgery on his wrist, but was still happy to take us around.



September 2017: NEWARK CIVIL WAR MUSEUM

It was another lovely Tuesday afternoon as 18 of us travelled to Newark, to visit the Civil War Centre. After ensuring that everyone had paid the correct entrance fees, we were given a brief introduction to the centre, and a short history of the building.



The Centre is housed in the Tudor Hall, which was built between 1529 and 1532 for a free grammar school bestowed by Rev. Thomas Magnus. There is some fascinating graffiti on some of the walls, left by long-gone pupils.



The group were then left to follow the route through the rooms containing many artefacts from the Civil War and some very well-produced interactive displays showing the full story of the causes and results of the war as well as the vital part that Newark played in the hostilities due to its position as the last crossing of the River Trent before becoming tidal; it being known as ‘the key to the north’ during the war. Some members of the group stumbled upon an area for dressing up in clothes of the period, and your correspondent does have photographic evidence but is willing to ‘lose’ these if he hears from the participants in the near future with a suitable offer – otherwise photos may appear on our web page in the near future.



We also enjoyed looking around a temporary display based on the life of Lawrence of Arabia, and also some fairly grisly exhibits showing how battlefield injuries were treated at the time of the Civil War, as well as a strange-looking plague mask.



A battle-hardened crew then departed from some well-earned refreshments at a local hostelry, whilst others enjoyed tea and cakes in the centre's café.

October 2017: TRENT BRIDGE CRICKET GROUND

This month 35 of us enjoyed a very entertaining tour of Trent Bridge Cricket Ground on a lovely sunny day.



We started our tour by the picture of William Clarke, the father of Trent Bridge. Clarke effectively ran cricket in Nottingham during the 1830s from his pub the Bell Inn in the Market Square. Games were played on the council-owned Forest, and were free to watch. In 1837 Clarke married the landlady of the Trent Bridge Inn. Behind the pub was a meadow which Clarke turned into Nottingham's first pay-to-enter cricket stadium. However his fellow townsfolk failed to appreciate the idea of paying to watch cricket, when they had previously watched matches free of charge.

The first game was played at Trent Bridge in May 1838 and today 60 days of cricket are played a year. Trent Bridge is the third oldest ground in the world where test matches are played and Notts County played football here until 1910.

As part of the tour we were allowed to sit in the press area where we were entertained with amusing anecdotes of batsmen breaking windows and other stories. We made our way to the pavilion and were told this building dates back to 1886. In the entrance hall are photos of past presidents of the club which included Jesse Boot.

We moved on to the away team's dressing room which was a bit more basic than many of us expected. We didn't see the home team dressing room so aren't sure how the two compare. We moved on to the dining room where the walls had photos of the ground through the years. One showed the old scoreboard which one of our members had painted during his career as a sign writer.

Our final destination was the long room, bedecked with 147 cricket bats including one belonging to W G Grace. Alan gave us a very interesting and entertaining tour and we're all keen to return next year to see the museum and library.



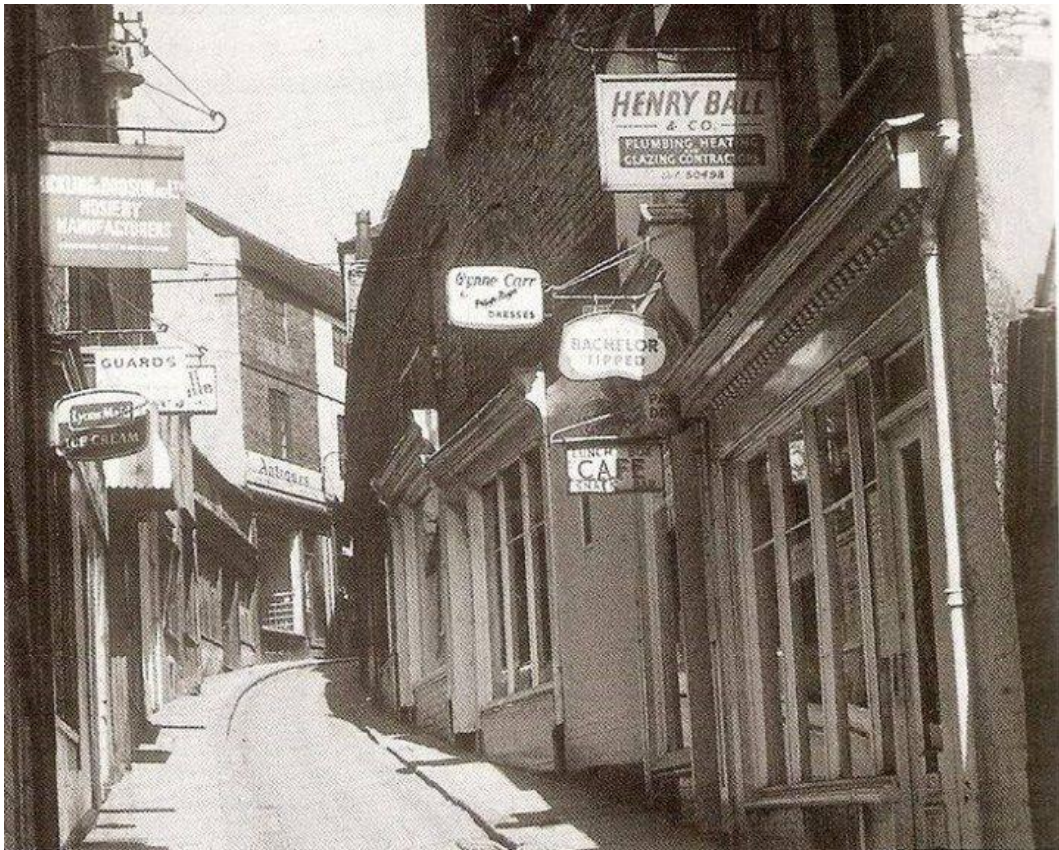
November 2017: GONE, BUT NOT FORGOTTEN – THE CHANGING FACE OF NOTTINGHAM

It is a strange phenomenon, but passing familiar areas on a daily basis, we tend not to notice changes, as they are generally so gradual that we accept them. However, as Bob Massey reminded us, when we have been away, even for just a few days, small changes will often strike us being quite startling.

There have been settlements in this area since the Bronze Age, but there is no immediate evidence that would demonstrate this. For example, Front Street in Arnold has existed from these times, but where is the evidence in the buildings? In all probability they will have been repeatedly built over. This is because the homes of the hoi polloi were built of more insubstantial materials, and soon needed replacement. The homes of the moneyed and landowning classes would be more solidly built, and we still see many stately homes standing after many centuries.

Because of the changes, which seem in recent years to have happened so rapidly, all we have left are photos, street names and memories. Bombing in WWII also contributed to the destruction, but the City fathers are responsible for the most significant losses. Drury Hill for example, Nottingham's own

medieval roadway, in some places only 4 foot 10 inches wide. Had there been some enlightened foresight, then Nottingham would have had a tourist attraction to rival York's Shambles. What did we end up with? The stunningly ugly Broadmarsh Centre. 40 years later, now being demolished, for what?



In the 1950s we had 52 cinemas, or as they were originally known, Picture Palaces, across the area. The only original one still standing is the Savoy on Derby Road. This is only still there because it is privately owned. Had it been owned by one of the large combines, it too would have been long gone. Having reached the end of their lives as cinemas, they were converted to Bingo Halls, carpet warehouses and, when demolished, car parks. The roll call includes The Globe at Trent Bridge, the New Empress, The Adelphi at Bulwell, The Tudor at West Bridgford, the Roxy, the Palladium at Beeston, the Curzon on Mansfield Road, the Cavendish and of course, The Ritz



Bob showed us a short clip from a tram ride taken by Dan Cruickshank, that showed that there are still some sights, still visible today, that have stood the test of time. This was cut in with photos of the original horse drawn trams and film of later, electric driven ones. There are some saving graces! Note that the original Mitchell & Kenyon film can be viewed via a link on our group web page.

In 1854 came the Enclosure Acts which radically changed the face of the City. Arkwright Street/Queens Street was the heart of the Meadows until wholesale demolition swept it all away. Bob reminisced about Griffiths sweet shop and tobacconist, Nottingham's first Chinese restaurant, television hire and many other small shops we no longer see. He also reminded us that until the 1960's women were considered too unreliable to be able to hire a television, so a man had to sign!

The Broxtowe and Aspley estates, each with its own Hall were both controlled by the Willoughby family, who owned Wollaton Hall. Aspley Hall is said to have been built, or rather a 1600 mansion rebuilt, by Thomas Smith the founder of Smiths Bank. These estates are now, of course, covered by housing developments. There was a 7th Century barn at Aspley until 1968, when it was demolished.

Public houses continue to disappear at a steady rate, this having accelerated over the past 10 to 15 years. Many were the heart of their local communities and handy meeting places. I wonder how many of us can remember directions being given using public house along a given route? They are being demolished for new developments, like office blocks or converted, these days, principally for student accommodation. Remembering some of the more notable we saw, or were reminded about; the Narrow Boat, the South Notts Hussars, the Barley Mow, the Guildhall Tavern, the Queen Elizabeth, the Lord Nelson, the Locomotive, Noah's Ark, the Prince Albert, the Saracens Head, the Robin Hood, Old Moore's Tavern and the Sawyers Arms.

Trent Bridge in its current form was rebuilt to replace the old stone bridge, in 1871. There is still a small remnant in an island in the middle of the river even now.

Lido's were another feature we no can no longer enjoy (what? Open air swimming pools in this climate?)! Carrington, Highfields and the Ken Martin have all now gone.

We were also surprised by the appearance of a clip which included the old Central Market. Can anyone recall having a bowl of mushy peas with mint sauce (one leaf of mint goes a long way you know!), or having whelks or winkles?

Nottingham's most famous architect of note was Watson Fothergill, 1841 to 1928. Whilst some of his buildings are still remaining, most have been demolished. His own family home on Mapperley Road was demolished in 1968. He worked extensively on refurbishing the magnificent Black Boy, which was described as being the best in the country. The City vandals decided to allow its demolition in the 1960 to be replaced by another concrete monstrosity that is now Primark.



Fothergill's St Nicholas' Rectory, and other historic landmarks, were demolished in 1958 to make way for Maid Marian Way.

Victoria Great Central Railways Nottingham station was opened in 1900 and named after the Queen had celebrated her Diamond Jubilee. It was the best sited station in the City, but the London Midland Region of British Railways decided it no longer served a purpose and it was eventually demolished to make way for the Victoria Centre and flat complex. The old clock tower was retained and incorporated into the new development. The station hotel has also survived. Bob had included a clip of demolition in progress and we saw how the wrecking ball had to take bigger and bigger swings to take the building down, as it had been so solidly built.

Of course, some of the redevelopments, removing historical buildings, took place well before the vandalism of the 1960's. The Exchange Building that had stood since 1724, surviving a fire when a reward was offered to anyone saving the City's barrel of gunpowder, was eventually demolished and replaced by the Council House, built between 1926 and 1929. And more recently, the old fountains in Slab Square have been replaced by a "water feature".

A very entertaining and evocative presentation, as we know Bob is well capable of delivering, was enjoyed by 35 members.

December 2017: CHRISTMAS SOCIAL & FUTURE PLANNING

There was a great turnout of 28 members of the group for our Christmas social at The Willowbrook, where we successfully took over the lounge. Most of the time was spent socialising, but we did have a brief discussion about the events planned for 2018. It was agreed that the group enjoyed the current format, consisting of visits for most of the year, with some talks and presentations in the winter months. It is disappointing that little progress has been made in our 'at home' research projects, as we would like to see some more input from the members (we are supposed to be a 'university' after all!).

As usual, each monthly meeting will be held at 2pm on the third Tuesday of each month – see the calendar for further details. January sees us return to the Richard Herrod Centre for a talk given by guest speaker Angie Keyworth, based on the research she has carried out for her recent book on the Godfrey family. This will include lots of historical detail of our area, with many photographs and should prove to be an interesting presentation.

February sees us again at Richard Herrod for a talk about Nottingham's famous WW1 flying hero, Albert Ball VC given by Dorothy Ritchie.

In March we will be having a guided tour of the Council House, led by Dorothy, who has recently qualified as an official tour guide, so we should learn quite a lot. The areas that we visit will depend upon what Council business is taking place on the day, but this should be a fascinating tour.

Later in the year we are planning a tour of the General Cemetery, a walk around Gedling (to complete last year's abandoned walk) and a return visit to Trent Bridge Cricket Ground, with a smaller group so that we can all get into some of the smaller rooms!

Keep an eye on the Calendar and look out for our email and web site updates. You will be able to sign up for the visits, and give us your deposit where necessary, each month at our table in the market place at the monthly meetings. Note that some visits will be restricted in numbers. There are no limits for our talks in January and February- just turn up.

Wishing you all a happy, and historic, 2018!