

Local History 2021

July 2021: WOODTHORPE GRANGE PARK

This month the local history group had its first outing in over a year, so we decided to break ourselves in gently with a guided tour of Woodthorpe Grange Park. Our guide was a local historian and Friends of Woodthorpe Grange Park member Paul Swift.

Paul informed us that the park has its heritage in the brick making industry and the construction of the Nottingham Suburban Railway. However, the story begins in 1609 where the Woodthorpe Estate is marked out on a Crown Survey map of Sherwood Forest as an enclosed field occupied by George Hutchinson, a freeholder of the land. As a result of the enclosure act the land was allotted to Henry Cavendish, 6th Duke of Devonshire in 1845. In 1877 it was recorded that the Woodthorpe estate was owned by Henry Ashwell.

What we know as today's Woodthorpe Grange Park began as a 40 acre farm of grass and arable land and was owned by Alfred Pogson, who in May 1871 put the land up for sale. John L. Thackeray of Arno Vale House purchased the land and a short time later sold it onto Henry Ashwell a master bleacher, who owned factories in New Basford.

Woodthorpe Grange house was built in 1874, and the estate was extended in 1881 when Ashwell bought the small brickworks on Scout Lane (Woodthorpe Drive) from John Harrison for £655. Unfortunately for the Ashwell Family in 1889 the Nottingham Suburban Railway was opened, and the line ran right across and under their estate.



Shortly after the arrival of the railway, Henry Ashwell sold Woodthorpe Grange and Park to Edward Parry. Parry was a highly renowned civil engineer and amongst his many positions designer and surveyor of the Nottingham Suburban Railway line, and a director of the Nottingham Brick Company, the main beneficiary of the line. It is not clear whether Edward Parry ever actually lived in Woodthorpe Grange and in 1905 he sold Woodthorpe Grange and Park to John Godfrey Small, lace manufacturer and Mayor of Nottingham in 1917.

With a £10,000 donation from Sir Jesse Boot the Nottingham Corporation purchased the whole of the 52 acre Woodthorpe Estate in 1921 for £15,000, which included Woodthorpe Grange with carriage drives, which are still there to this day, conservatory, glasshouses, garage, stabling and a gardener and chauffeurs' cottages. In all Sir Jesse Boot gave £350,000 (£14.1m), which enabled the Nottingham Corporation to purchase not only the Woodthorpe Estate but also the Highfields Estate, the home of the University of Nottingham, and the park land adjacent to what became the Victoria Embankment and Memorial Gardens.

The official opening of the park was on the 1st June 1922. Next year will be the centenary of the opening and the Friends of Woodthorpe Grange are currently planning an event to celebrate this landmark. For information on any events, please see the [Friends of Woodthorpe Grange website](#).

August/September 2021: Watson Fothergill

For our August and September meetings Neil Kendrick kindly took us on a tour of Watson Fothergill buildings in central Nottingham (due to his popularity, we needed to split over 2 months!). We started our tour at the old Baptist Chapel built 1893-4, now the **Pakistani Community Centre** on Woodborough Road; one of the few surviving Victorian buildings in St Ann's.

Here Neil gave us a brief overview of Watson Fothergill. We heard that Watson Fothergill was born Fothergill Watson in Mansfield in 1841, the son of wealthy Nottingham Lace merchant Robert Watson and Mary Ann Fothergill. He changed his name to Watson Fothergill in 1892 to continue his maternal family name. Fothergill married Anne Hage in 1867 and had seven children.



We moved on to the **Rose of England** (aka the Yorker) pub (1899), where we observed the rose above the porch and Watson Fothergill's name. We learnt that many of Fothergill's buildings are built on corners and that he had a tendency to put his name somewhere on the building.

Next we went to the Express building (1876) on Parliament Street. We saw the heads of Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, Lord Russell and Lord Palmerston inside and images of Liberal politicians over the door.

We next walked to the **Castle pub and Fothergills** (1883). Originally called Mortimer House, the building housed six shops and offices and was famous for its roof.



Next we came to Queen's Chambers (1897) at the bottom of Queen/King Street. The building is half timbered with a crenelated roof, and the head of Queen Victoria looking on. Further up King Street we looked at the Jessops building (1870), the largest Watson Fothergill building with seven floors and incorporating Mapperley bricks.

We passed by the site of the Black Boy Hotel, demolished in 1970. The hotel was built in 1886-88 by Watson Fothergill and in 1897-1900 he made further additions and incorporated two shops. We walked on to Lloyds Bank housed in the previously-named Station Building (1896). On the north face of the building are reliefs showing scenes of work, toil & industry created by Benjamin Creswick and sponsored by John Ruskin.

Our second bank of the day was the Nat West bank on Thurland Street (1877-82). The building is based on the design of Manchester Town Hall and is dominated by a central tower.

There are three panels in Portland stone, depicting the principal industries of the region - mining, textiles & agriculture and the names of the towns where the bank had other branches are carved in stone along its frontage.

A few of us also managed to spot the carved monkey hiding on the roof.



Our penultimate building was the Cuckson, Hazeldine and Manderfield Warehouse on Stoney Street (1897–8). The building has five floors, an oriel window and glazed turret.

Our tour ended on George Street opposite the office of Watson Fothergill (1895). Watson Fothergill's original office was on Clinton Street, but he was forced to relocate to George Street with the extension of the railway.

Just below the first floor windows are four terra-cotta panels showing the building of classical, medieval and Elizabethan buildings. The facade features busts of Augustus Pugin and George Edmund Street.

Also inscribed on the building are the surnames of the architects George Gilbert Scott, William Burges and Richard Norman Shaw.

Once again a very interesting and informative tour by Neil, which we all enjoyed.

Anne Palmer



Note: For further information please refer to the [Watson Fothergill Trail page](#) which describes a previous trip by the Local History Group.

October 2021: ST MARY'S CHURCH

We finally made our delayed visit to St Mary's church. We had a very entertaining and informative guide, who began our tour by giving us a brief history of the church.

We were told that there had been a place of worship on the site for around 1,000 years with the first wooden church in Saxon times. This was superseded by a stone built Norman church after 1066 which had the French name of Notre Dame de Nottingham. This church stood for 200 years before the present building was built around it by the early English church. Work began in 1380 and the building took nearly 100 years to complete with the nave being finished in 1475. The church is grade I listed and the largest medieval building in Nottingham.

Our attention was drawn to the lion and the unicorn on either side of the great west door. Queen Anne declared that these symbols of the union of England and Scotland should be present in every church. The lion bears the shield with the coat of arms of Queen Anne and the unicorn the shield of Nottingham.

During the English Civil War, some of Cromwell's army were billeted at the church and destroyed most of the stained glass windows and several tombs. As a result, most of the glass in the church is Victorian and the glass over the great west door was financed by the descendants of Thomas Adam. The west front was rebuilt in 1762 in the Classical style which was not in keeping with the rest of the church, so in 1872 the wall was redesigned in the Gothic style by William Moffat and the deteriorating roof was replaced by George Gilbert Scott.

We moved over to the 15th century font which has a palindromic Greek inscription which says 'for washing the soul, not only the face', where our guide Michael regaled us with the story of how he tracked down what he thought was a stolen porcelain replica of the font which made it into the Evening Post.

November 2021: EZEKIAL BONE

Our November meeting found us in the excellent company of Ezekial Bone for a tour around the centre of Nottingham. We met by the left lion in front of the Council House, the largest stone building in the UK built after WWI. We started our tour in the Exchange Arcade which was designed by architect Thomas Cecil Howitt and inspired by a famous shopping mall in Milan.

We were told the stories of the four historic murals now renovated in the arcade. The first depicts Snot of Denmark capturing Nottingham in 868, the second mural depicts William the Conqueror ordering the construction of Nottingham Castle in 1068, the third mural shows King Charles I at the start of the Civil War in 1642, which led to England becoming a republic during which time Nottingham Castle was destroyed and the fourth mural depicts Nottingham's famous outlaw Robin Hood and his merry men.



We moved on to the High Street end of the arcade where Ezekial regaled us with a story about the everlasting pill favoured by the Victorians (for those wishing to know more about this I would suggest Google). We heard about the building, now occupied by Zara, which was built in 1903 in the art nouveau style. This building was originally occupied by Jesse Boot as many of us will remember.



As we made our way to the Market Square we had a brief stop at the bottom of King/Queen Street to look at the Watson Fothergill buildings and also the building currently occupied by The Alchemist and designed by Alfred Waterhouse, who also designed the Natural History Museum. Arriving at the Market Square we were told that there was also a second market place at Weekday Cross which was superseded by the current Market Square in the 1700s. Looking towards the Theatre Royal, designed by Charles Phipps in 1865, we heard that the auditorium was remodelled in 1897 by Frank Matcham and refurbished in 1978 when it was reopened by Ken Dodd.

We were treated to a visit to the caves under the Salutation Inn where we were told that Nottingham has more man made caves than anywhere in Europe.



Ezekial gave us a very interesting insight into how the legend of Robin Hood came into being and has travelled through the centuries becoming a composite character from many different stories. Moving on to the Statue of Robin Hood we heard further tales of the outlaws and were told that Marian and Tuck only appeared in the 16th century. There is a story that Sir Walter Scott was on holiday at Fountain Dale House in Blidworth in 1819 when he heard of Robin Hood. Scott was writing Ivanhoe at the time and this may explain the appearance of Robin Hood halfway through the novel. We finally adjourned to the Trip for convivial refreshments.

We had a very interesting and entertaining afternoon in the company of Ezekial Bone.

There is no meeting in December and our January meeting sees us return indoors to Richard Herrod, where Stephen Walker will give us a talk on the history of Gedling Borough. See the Calendar for details.

Anne Palmer

