

LOCAL HISTORY 2023

January 2023: GEDLING HOUSE

We kicked off 2023 with a very interesting talk on Gedling House given by Mo Cooper. We were told that the house was built around 1780 by an unknown architect, and modified twice around 1844 and 1904. The building is symmetrical and a glasshouse attached to the house was added in 1803. The hall has a flagstone floor with a geometric cantilevered wooden staircase leading off it. The drawing room was used mainly for entertaining and the glasshouse was turned into a ballroom in the twentieth century, and is currently being transformed into a meditation room.



The house was built for Thomas Smith of the Smith banking family. Smith sold the house to William Elliott Elliott in 1803, who lived there until his death in 1844 aged 88. The house then passed down his sisters side of the family to William Stamford who lived there from 1844 until his death in 1870. It stayed within this family until 1908 when it was sold to Walter H. Rawnsley.

The Rawnsley family owned the house and land until 1955. During this time the house was leased from 1908 -1927 to Sir John Turney and later until at least 1939, to John William Carnegie C Kirk. Turney is particularly well known as a Nottingham industrialist who owned Turney Brothers leather works. His grandchild Nicholas Monserrat describes life at Gedling House in his autobiography.

During WWII the house was used by the war department, and was sold to the council in 1955. Since then the house has been used as council offices, a wedding venue and museum among other things. The house was purchased in 2021 by the Kadampa Meditation Centre and is currently undergoing restoration.

Mo also gave us an insight into the servants who had lived in the house throughout its history, including the housekeeper, lady's maid and butler.

This was a very interesting talk, and we look forward to arranging a visit to the house once the renovations are complete.

Anne Palmer

February 2023: BULWELL – A CENTURY OF CHANGE

Dr Stephen Walker gave us an interesting and informative talk about the industrialisation and urbanisation between 1780 and 1880 in the middle Leen Valley including the settlements of Linby, Papplewick, Hucknall, Basford and Bulwell.

Stephen's information was derived from local Court Rolls, Parish Records, the UK Census which has taken place every 10 years since 1801, and old Ordnance Survey (OS) maps which can be used as a form of archaeology. By superimposing a recent map over an older map you can see what has changed in the intervening years.

The 1879 / 1880 First Edition County Series OS map divided areas into numbered pockets of land. These "Parcel Numbers" are still used by the Land Registry today.

Between 1609 and 1837 nothing much had changed in the area. Bulwell was off the main road out of Nottingham and the wrong side of the River Leen.

Especially after 1842 the number of agricultural employees dropped. Workers in traditional crafts were impoverished and could make more money in new industries. Water powered factories and mills were being built along the River Leen and attracted workers to places such as New Basford which was a planned settlement.

In 1831 Pigot listed 30 tradesmen in Bulwell, of which 7 were butchers and 12 publicans. By contrast, 30 of the 47 tradesmen in New Basford were bobbin-net makers, with only 2 publicans and no butchers.

In the 1870's Bulwell became a borough in Nottingham which allowed control of the river. The Council could prosecute if the water was polluted

The Introduction of waged labour and development of factories, lead to increased consumerism. Population increased which meant more housing was required. Improvement was made in transportation and infrastructure to get people and goods into Nottingham and beyond.

Nottingham had a large market attraction. It was an administrative, social and cultural centre with wholesale and distributive functions reliant on the river-port and radiating road network.

The relationship between Nottingham and the surrounding villages was described by Deering who noted that 60% of stocking-frames owned by Nottingham hosiers in the 1740's were in the outlying villages, who buy their provisions and other necessities in the town.

Eden reported that wages for skilled workers in Nottingham were between two and five times the wages in the surrounding villages. So, slumps in trade affected workers in the villages much more than town workers.

Felkin noted that in the 1820's the weekly wages of bobbin-net workers ranged from 5s to 28s (£0.25 to £1.40). Framework knitters earned between 2s 3d and 26s (£0.11 to £1.30) and the mean for an agricultural labourer was 12s 5d (£0.62).

Stephen took us through a timeline of industrialisation from an 1609 iron forge recorded at Bestwood, through mills built along the river for dyeing, bleaching works, and calico printing. From the 1840's more industrialisation came providing employment to more workers:

- 1841 Babbington Colliery opened
- 1849 Midland Railway opened
- 1852 Act of Parliament - piped gas to Bulwell from Basford
- 1864 Sale of land from the Bulwell Hall estate
- 1871 Bestwood Colliery and ironworks created
- 1880 Great Northern Railway opened
- 1902 Great Central Railway opened

Urbanisation responded not only to changes in employment but also the relative wealth of the population. Using a series of maps, early industrial housing identified sites with rows of houses on a tithe map; small clusters of dwellings in short rows; longer rows of between 6 and 12 homes; long rows with bigger gardens; street of tenement blocks. The population started to live longer under better working and housing conditions.

If you would like to look at some of the old maps mentioned, follow the links on the Local History page.

Susan Bunting

March 2023: A guided walk around SNEINTON

A group of 29 members gathered at Green's Windmill for a guided tour of Sneinton. Our guide started by listing the subjects he would be covering:

- Topography and geology
- Faiths
- Cottage industry and agriculture
- The development of housing
- Milling
- Medication and pharmacy
- Rail and Water transport
- People
- Historic buildings

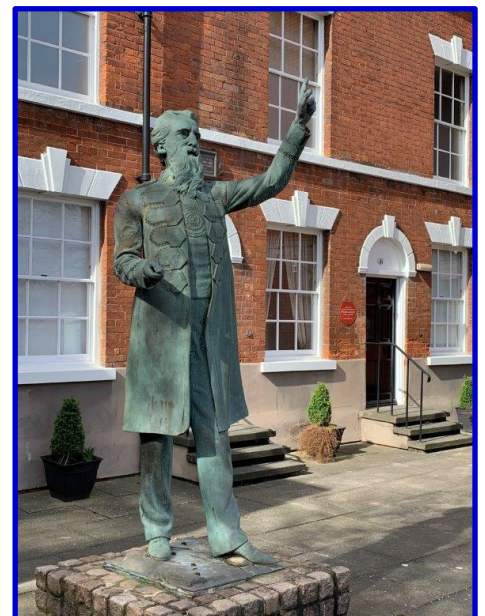
George Green built and moved into Mill House in 1825, a few years after building the smock mill nearby. At the time Sneinton was a small village surrounded by open fields. The family moved from their bakery in Goose Gate due to the poor conditions and riots in Nottingham. The mill was located on the top of a cliff with extensive views across the Trent and the Vale of Belvoir.

Being built on sandstone, Sneinton was suitable for cutting caves and also for a healthy supply of water from wells. In Victorian times it became a desirable area for middle classes which lead to the building of large houses during the 19th century. In addition there were a few framework knitters cottages in the village.



In Notintone Place is the house where William Booth was born in 1826. This is now part of a Salvation Army complex but he is remembered by plaques on his home and a statue in the square outside.

He was baptised in St Stephen's church across the road then after moving to London became a Methodist before starting the Salvation Army. Another resident of the street (for a short while) was George Green.



The Victorian church of St Stephen was about the fifth church built on the site of an Anglo-Saxon chantry built by monks from Lenton. The current building was built by public subscription in the Oxford Movement tradition. In the churchyard are the graves of several members of the Green family including Jane who had seven children with George although they never married. From the churchyard there are magnificent views over Nottingham including St Mary's Church and the Lace Market.

Until 1890 this was primarily an agricultural area after which streets of terraced houses were built. In Lees Hill Street is a post-war house among the Victorian properties. This site was hit by a bomb in May 1941. During the attack damage was caused to several houses and churches. Due to the sandstone, air raid shelters had been created under the houses before the war and we were later shown where some entrances were located between the houses in Sneinton Hermitage. These are now shut up but occasionally are opened for heritage days.



Sneinton was surrounded by railway lines and this included a large goods yard used for livestock. From the goods yard, the animals were driven down a ramp and along the road to the livestock market. This area is now a modern housing estate. In the rock below the goods yard lies a tunnel giving access to a railway warehouse area. This is now used for commercial purposes.

From the old goods yard there are views over the Island site which was occupied for a long time by Boot's factory. The site was surrounded by canals giving access to the River Trent as well as railway access. Jesse Boot was born in Goose Gate where his parents had a herbalist shop. His father died while he was young so he helped his mother by going into the fields barefoot to pick plants for the shop. As a staunch Methodist his only pair of boots were kept smart for church on Sunday.

Sneinton Hermitage was once the main road east from Nottingham leading to Colwick and beyond. Underneath the railway yards are caves. Prior to the arrival of the railway, these were fronted by houses and workshops, including a tannery and a well. The railway cleared these buildings. Further along Sneinton Hermitage are a couple of narrow alleyways leading to the cliff behind for access to the air raid shelters.

The junction of Meadow Lane with Sneinton Hermitage is a complex junction of roads which was once very busy. It is now mainly paved over creating a small square. When developed in the late 19th Century there was a police station, a large church, a library and the Bendigo pub. Most of these are gradually being converted to housing. Bendigo was a famous local boxer who later became a preacher.

Along Thurgarton Street is a pub called the Lord Nelson. Originally built as a pair of shepherd cottages in the 16th century, it was later converted to a pub called the Hornbuckles. Castle Street was an early 19th century development of high class houses. One has a tower and was owned by a boat owner who used the tower to monitor the movement of his boats on the river Trent.

Opposite Green's Mill are some large houses with fairly bland exteriors. This is the rear and when viewed from the other side they become very smart with ornate fronts and gardens. They are adjacent to Manor Street where there was a large manor house. This was sold off in Victorian times as a development site for houses.

Andy Dixon

April 2023: ST. BARNABAS' CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL

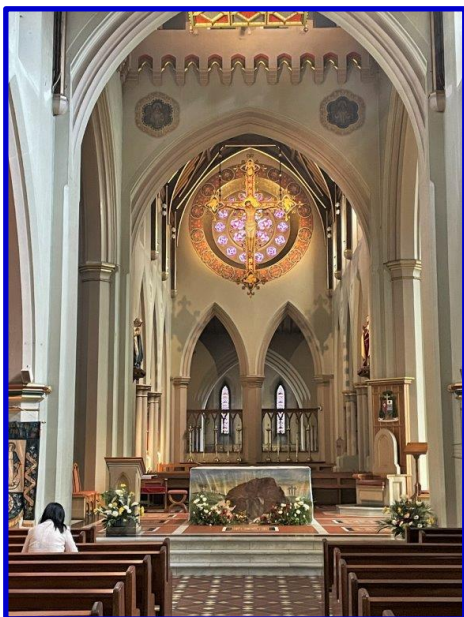
For our April meeting we visited St Barnabas' Cathedral where we were met by our informative guides and split into three groups. Our tour commenced in the garden where we were told that the first Catholic chapel in Nottingham was opened in King's Place in the Lace Market in 1789. In 1828 King's Place was replaced by a larger building in George Street under the leadership of Fr Robert Wilson.



In 1842 Fr Wilson acquired the current site and retained the services of Augustus Pugin, Pugin approached his most important patron John Talbot, 16th Earl of Shrewsbury for funds. In 1842 the foundation stone was laid and 1844 the church was consecrated. As well as the Cathedral, Pugin also designed the Priest House and the old Convent occupied by the Sisters of Mercy from 1844. 70 of the Sisters are buried in the walled garden beside the Cathedral.

On entering the Cathedral we were shown several exploratory patches on the walls where the grey paint added in the 1960s has been removed to reveal some of Pugin's original colour scheme. We were shown the Stations of the Cross which are slowly revealing their original colours and part of the rood screen which can now be found in the baptistery and contains carvings of fish.

As we were guided around the cathedral we saw the crossed keys and the triple tiara of the Holy See on the wall along with the altar and sanctuary. We then descended into the crypt where we saw the graves of several of the former bishops. After leaving the crypt we visited the North-Eastern chapel, the Lady Chapel and the South-Eastern Chapel before arriving at the Blessed Sacrament Chapel. This chapel is decorated in the original style of Pugin with rich colours and decoration. We completed our tour at the font which is positioned on an eight sided raised platform and covered by a light oak canopy made from parts of the former pulpit in 1993.



May 2023: LAXTON

This month we visited the village of Laxton where we met our very knowledgeable guide Stuart Rose. Stuart has lived in the village all his life and farms Bottom Farm, like his father before him.

Our visit began with Stuart giving a brief overview of the situation of the village using a copy of the original Mark Pierce map of the Laxton Estate 1635. We then watched a video which explained how the system has been operated over the years by the Gaits and Common and all the tenant farmers; of which there are currently 14. The video also explained how the legally constituted manorial court ensures that the three year crop rotation continues and that the farmers maintain the boundaries of their strips. There is an annual inspection of the fields by the jury and a meeting of the Court Leet, which has the power to fine farmers for transgressions.

After the video Stuart took us for a walk around the village to the castle. On the way he showed us a traditional farmhouse/barn and explained how the buildings were designed for specific purposes. From the castle mound two of the three fields could be observed, although due to the crop growth the individual strips could not be seen.

This was a very interesting afternoon with our excellent host. I'm sure some of us will be back to explore further.

More details can be found at <http://www.laxtonvisitorcentre.org.uk/>

Anne Palmer





July 2023: SOUTHWELL MINSTER

July saw us head to Southwell Minster for a guided tour. We were told that the site was originally occupied by a Saxon church; a small part of which can be seen over a door of the current building. The building of the minster commenced in 1108 and took 50 years to complete, and was constructed of stone from Mansfield. The church was seriously damaged during the Civil War when the nave was reportedly used as stabling.

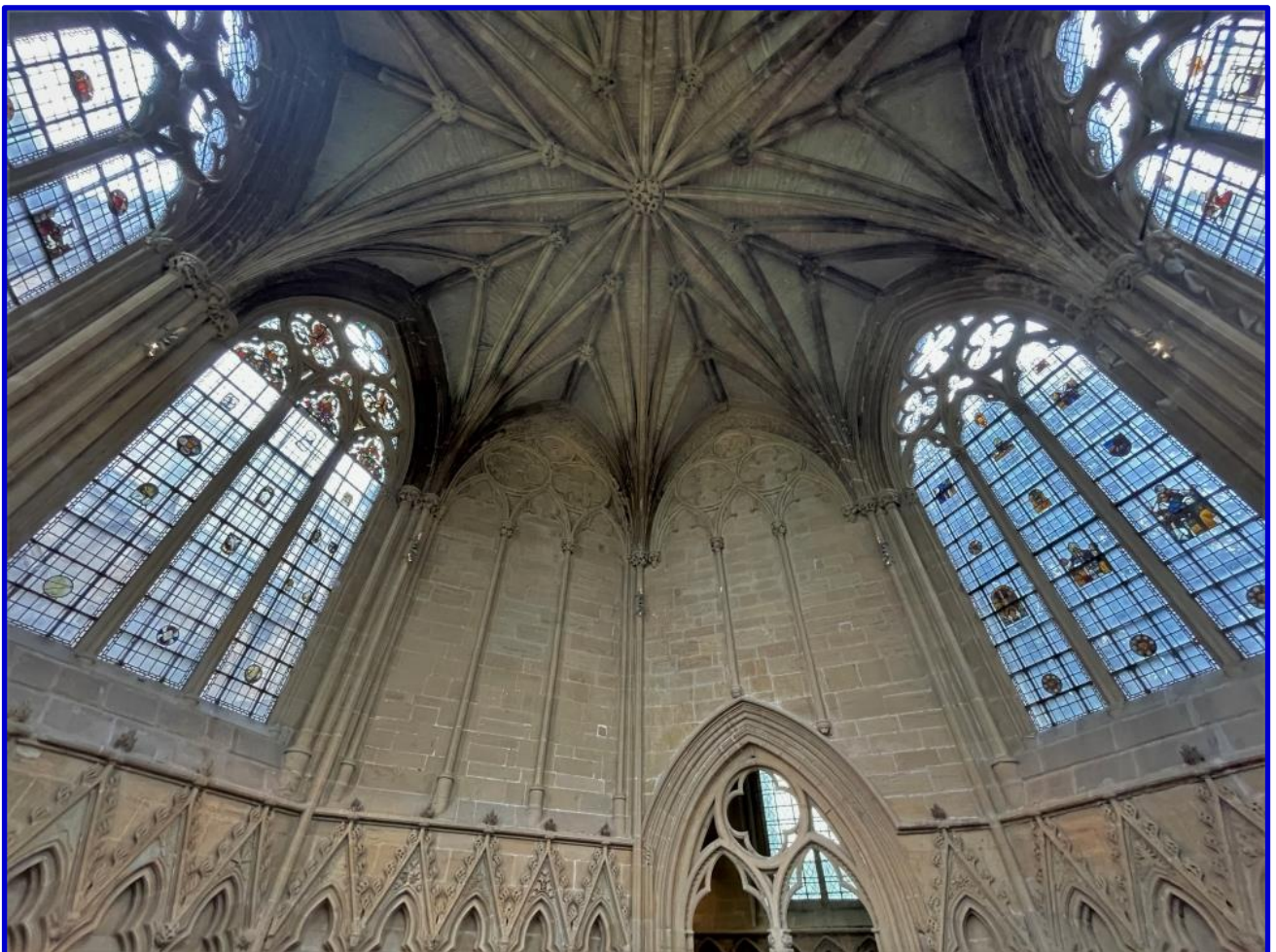
In 1884 Southwell Minster became a cathedral for Nottinghamshire and a part of Derbyshire including the City of Derby. The diocese was divided in 1927 and the Diocese of Derby was formed. Southwell is the southernmost diocese in the archdiocese of York, while Derby belongs to the archdiocese of Canterbury.

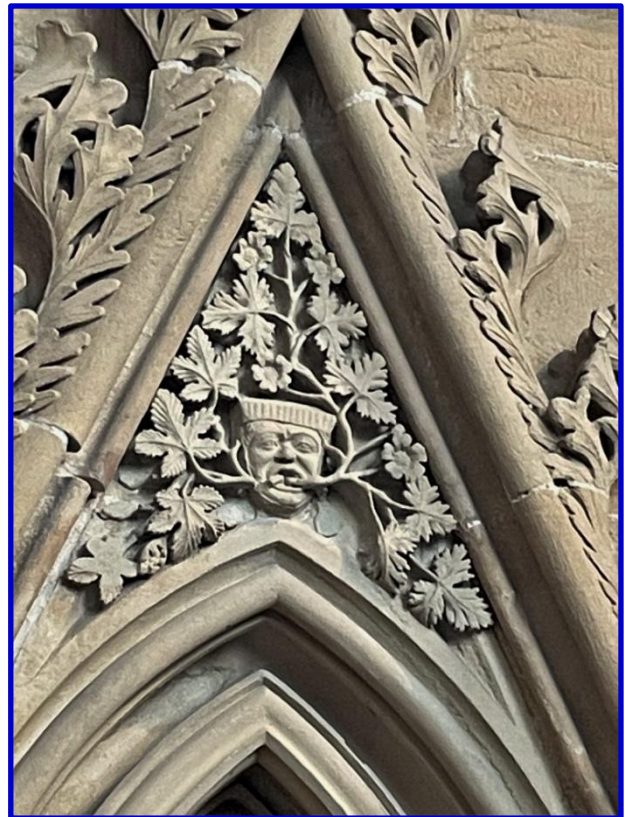
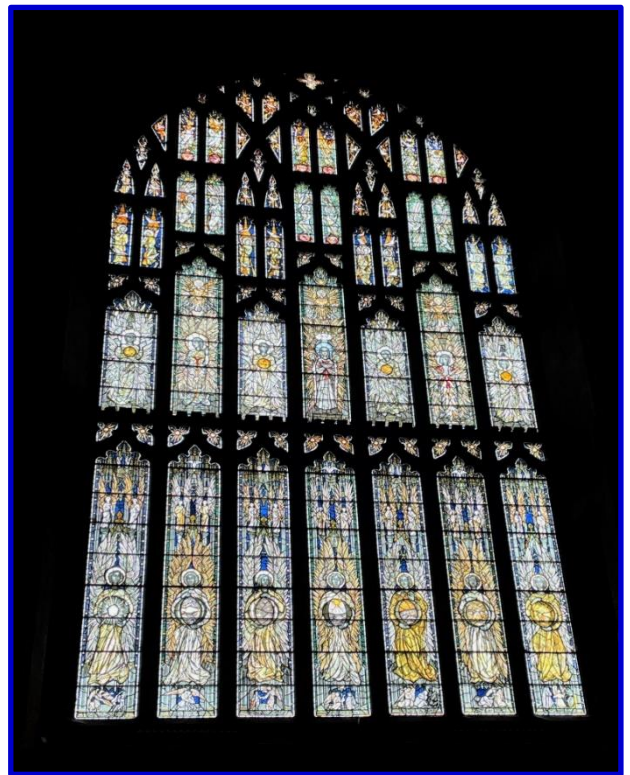
In 1805 the Newstead lectern was given to the Minster by Archdeacon Kaye. It was discovered in the pond of Newstead Abbey where it had been thrown for safety during the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

Four panels of Flemish glass which now fill the bottom part of the East window were given to the Minister in 1818 by Sir Henry Gally Knight. More recent additions are the West (angel) window in 1996, the Bramley Apple window in 2009 and in 2014 the memorial window to the men of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire who lost their lives in WWI.

One highlight was being shown the carvings in the chapter house which are outstanding and also on the seats and pews in the quire.

Anne Palmer





August 2023: PARK ESTATE, Part 2

Our August meeting saw us returning to Nottingham city centre for the second part of The Park walk with Kurt Hatton our very knowledgeable guide.



Kurt started by pointing out the eight-pointed star windows and four-pointed star air vents incorporated into the houses designed by T C Hine.

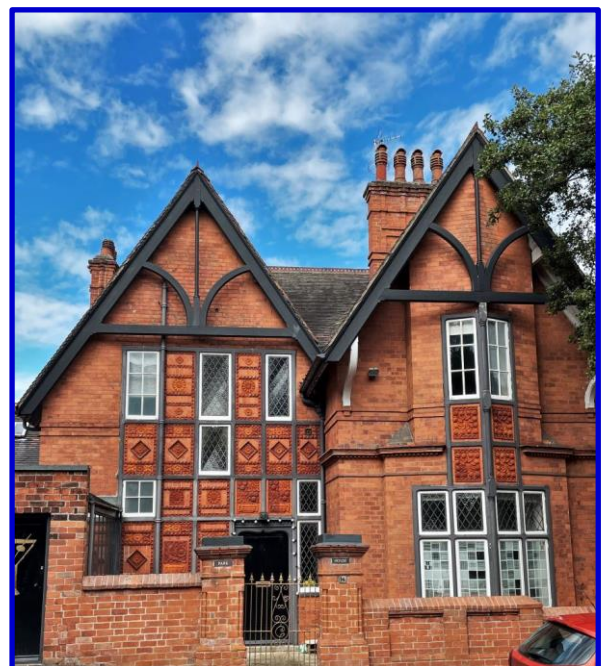
Kurt also pointed out the 1st stock street lights dated 1854/56, and the 2nd stock added in the 1870s designed by Hine which are still gas lit; The Park has the largest concentration of gas lights in Europe.



Another notable architect responsible for developing The Park was Watson Fothergill and his earliest surviving house in Nottingham built in 1873 can be found on Lenton Road. The largest single house built by Watson Fothergill can also be found in The Park, built in 1883 on South Road.

As we walked through The Park we arrived at Fishpond Drive, named after the large fishpond that was present on the site and once supplied the castle with fish. A caretaker looked after the pond and collected money from the locals who wished to fish there. The pond was filled in in 1791.

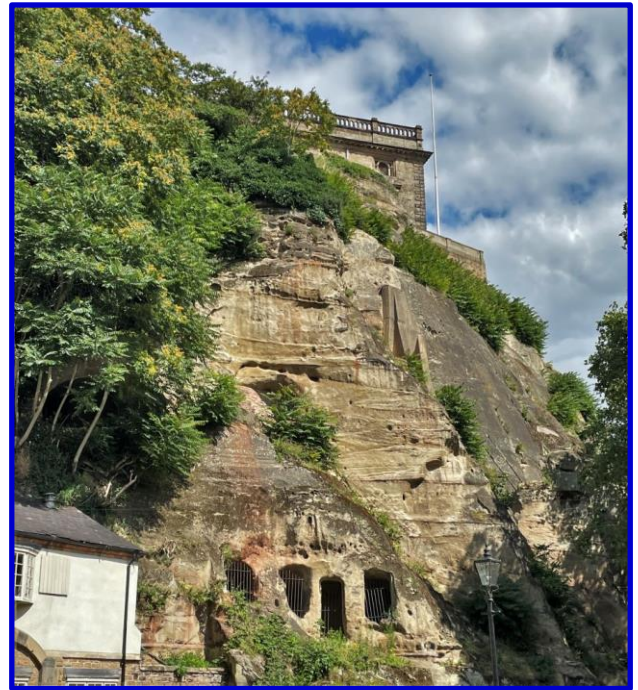
We moved on to The Park Ravine, cut in 1850 by T C Hine and photographer Charles Frederick Shaw lived there. Shaw was an aerial photograph pioneer and helped with the war effort in WWI. Kurt also pointed out Hermitage Walk, a cave system dating from 1108 containing the chapel of St Mary de la Roche.



As well as houses designed by T C Hine, we saw houses designed by other Nottingham architects such as Arthur Marshall who designed Brightlands in 1885 and Julian Marsh who designed Lenton View in 1986. We walked past St Helier Court, built on the former site of St Helier House which was owned by Jesse Boot and demolished in 1936. We passed by Bishops House, built in 1883 and occupied by the Bishop of St Barnabas Cathedral since 1932.

As usual this was a very interesting and informative walk by Kurt for our final outing.

This was the final meeting of the Local History group, at least until someone steps forward to take over as Convenors. If you would like to see the group continue, please contact the Groups Co-ordinator to offer your services.



Anne Palmer

October 2023: GEDLING STATION

28 members visited Gedling Station on Shearing Hill. We started the visit with a talk from Francis Rodrigues, who is a volunteer for one of the community groups who are working hard to renovate the station as a Youth Club and Gedling Hub. GYCGH. Some of our members already support the work. The gym building has been demolished and the old station is being revealed. Luckily it was a sunny day and we were able to visit the garden, an interesting work in progress, led by arborist Peter Wood, perfect name!



We heard how the station was used for passengers and the Gedling pit, and there are many interesting photographs on display. Francis included other snippets of local history, and members shared their own memories.

Have you noticed the blue plaque on the station wall? It commemorates JRR Tolkien, who visited his Aunt Jane who lived in the station cottage. Whilst staying there, he wrote his poem **The Voyage of Earendel the Evening Star**.

We were then free to wander round the building before enjoying tea and cakes, kindly donated by volunteers. Donations to GYCH raised £140 for this worthy project.



I'd planned this as a 'one-off' but so many members were interested, a second group is fully booked for the 8th November. Look out for a third visit if there is enough interest.

Maggie Martinez