

GENERAL MEETING 2023

January 2023: LET'S TALK ABOUT TOILETS

Why should we want to you may ask?

Well, in 2017, around 2.3 billion people around the world did not have one.

Why should we care?

Why are there so many people without one?

What can be done about it?

What could you do?

Bob Reed, our speaker, came warmly recommended by other Notts u3a's and did not disappoint. Bob trained as a Civil Engineer and has spent more than 40 years working in emergency relief and poverty alleviation. He has mainly specialized in water supply and sanitation for low income communities and post disaster relief.

February 2023: NOTTINGHAM CASTLE TRANSFORMATION by Cal Warren

Our February speaker was Cal Warren who talked about her 9 years working on the £30m Nottingham Castle Transformation project. The castle closed for the upgrade in 2016 and re-opened in June 2021.

Sadly footfall didn't meet the expected levels post-Covid leading to the castle's closure in November 2022. It is hoped that the castle will re-open once again in the next 6 months.

We heard that the name of Nottingham is known throughout the world. Robin Hood is one of the 8 most recognised names in the USA, while Europeans tend to know Nottingham Forest Football Club first and then Robin Hood.

People come to Nottingham to see Robin Hood. A character that has been around for hundreds of years – but no one can live that long!

The first wooden castle building was started by the Normans on the orders of William the Conqueror in 1068, two years after the Battle of Hastings.

On walking through the castle gatehouse, many visitors expect to see a medieval castle, but are greeted with the 17th century ducal palace built by William Cavendish, 1st Earl of Newcastle.

An aerial view of the site pre-transformation showed 180 trees on site and demonstrated how unassailable the castle was. On the advice of experts 90 trees were removed which has made the castle building much more visible from the City.

We saw animated videos that showed how an organised walk takes visitors through 4 different galleries in the castle:

The **Robin Hood Gallery** providing an immersive, multi sensory experience, enabling visitors to travel back in time to medieval Nottingham

The **Rebellion Gallery** exploring the fight for democracy, representation and fairness which runs throughout Nottingham history. Enormous 5m x 3m video screens feature dramatic animations encompassing the noise and chaos created by Nottingham's famously rebellious inhabitants during three key periods of history:

- English Civil War 1642-1644. Charles raised his standard at Nottingham, to declare war on Parliament, but wasn't supported by the local people.
- Luddite uprising 1811-1817. People were hanged outside what is now the Galleries of Justice. In 1817 Jeremiah Brandreth (an ancestor of Writer and broadcaster, Gyles Brandreth) was hanged and drawn with the quartering being commuted.

- Parliamentary Reform 1830-1832. Nottingham's notorious act of protest, led to the castle being burnt down.

The **Early Nottingham Craft Gallery** showcasing 2 of the museum's finest collections:

- Medieval Alabasters
- 17th Century Salt Glaze Pottery

The **Nottingham Lace Gallery** dedicated to the story of Nottingham's most famous creative industry. A catwalk of cases showing clothing made by machine with remarkable weave and weft. The lace panel was attached by hand taking 6 hours – and is 4m high.



Robin Hood Gallery



Rebellion Gallery



Early Nottingham Craft Gallery



Nottingham Lace Gallery

Tours starting at Brewhouse Yard employ actors to act-out what life was like. One playing the part Frances Lee, wife of William Lee and described as like a medieval Barbara Windsor, really got into character by sprinkling lavender on the ground. When a dignitary from the Heritage Lottery Fund commented that it smelt nice, the reply came: "it covers the smell of p***!"

There are around 850 caves under Nottingham, many of which have been 3D scanned. You can view a fly-through on Nottingham Cave Survey on *YouTube*. Pre-Covid, headsets could be used to give visitors a virtual tour without actually having to go into the cave.

The famous Mortimer's Hole passageway through the sandstone rock has been refurbished and now has lighting at floor level as well as a handrail at the side of the steps.

During questions after the talk, Cal confirmed the Military Museum is still housed in the castle.

A very interesting talk which left members wanting to visit when the castle re-opens – hopefully with lower admission prices!

Susan Bunting

June 2023: SOCIAL EVENT





July 2023 GREтна GIRLS & DEVILS PORRIDGE by David Skillen

The talk was about The Gretna Girls and the Devil's Porridge; the story of how the world's biggest factory was built in Scotland to help the War effort in 1915 and how women came from all over the UK and the Empire to work making the highly dangerous "Devil's Porridge".

It was one of those subjects that didn't sound too exciting - until it started. No, not exciting but engrossing. We began to understand why the "Devils Porridge" when hearing of the young women mixing by hand nitro-glycerine, gun cotton and acetone to make cordite. The women had no training - learn on the job (they had come from the mills of Lancashire, etc.).

The cordite was so sensitive and explosive that they had on-site trains with wooden wheels to avoid sparks and metal tunic buttons were banned. Nice work if you can get it?

David rattled off figures of the size of the factory. Built by 10 thousand Irish Navvies - the factory was 9 miles long. The top secret facility was knocking out 800 tons a week of cordite for the guns on the war front line.

A new town was built - Gretna and an on-site hospital (no surprise). It was all a big secret and when the war ended the secret facility disappeared - just the town left.

Everything about it was almost unbelievable. It turned out to be a fascinating subject. From my usual position at the back of the hall, I could see people were not leaving early.

Eric Rennie

September 2023: Lord Coaker - STOP AND REFLECT

Lord Vernon Coaker was our guest speaker. A well known character around these parts as our former MP, Leader of Gedling Council and Head Teacher of a local Comprehensive School. Vernon started his talk about "life as a lord" with a comment that his father worked for the lord of the manor and now here he is in the House of Lords.

He noted that no one else there talks like him. There are 777 members of the House of Lords, 262 are Conservative, 180 are Labour and others there for a variety of reasons and expertise in other fields, etc.

In the way the House works within Parliament, the House of Commons has primacy. Blocking Commons proposals is not what the House of Lords does. They seek to suggest changes to the Commons proposals on a sort of basis of "Are you sure you have got it right?" A check on the system is it's main function. the Lords do not block legislation – it tends to look at what is right regardless of the political bent of the proposer.

The House of Lords is composed of people with former expertise from various backgrounds (military, business, politics, etc.). Vernon gave an example of an internationally recognised eminent surgeon. People listen to him. The House of Lords can be controversial but it's important for it's role that, that we don't have a written constitution, so care has to be taken to maintain our non-elected system.

The House of Lords provides a calm discussion and consideration, (which can't always happen in the Commons). There is a lot of talk about reform of the Lords and Vernon mentioned some of the possibilities including having an age limit but that would lose a lot of the expertise. The legal system is also very important, so Lords who are Supreme Court judges are very useful. Reform would be complex. In essence the Lords function is to "stop and reflect".

Lord Coaker is now an Honorary member of Gedling u3a. Welcome aboard my lord!

Eric Rennie

September 2023: FIRE SAFETY IN THE HOME

Our October Speaker was to have been Natasha Neale, but in fact was given by colleagues Ben Groves and Lucy Fox from the Notts Fire & Rescue Service based at Beeston. They went through a large number of typical, everyday domestic fire issues. Although the issues were obvious, they still happen frequently in peoples homes.

Starting with **Smoke Alarms**. Should be tested Monthly (how many of us do?) Should be located in hallways – not in kitchens (again how many of us do?) You get the idea!

Electrical

Most fires start in the kitchen - good advice is "one socket per plug – no multiple adaptors.

Mobile phones

Never charge under pillows – which is often done at night.

Daisy chaining socket extensions

Not a good idea. 40% of their call-outs are in the kitchen – Their advice is "get out then call the Fire Service"

Washing and Drying machines

Should be on single plugs, not together on adaptors. All due to the amount of power they use (I plead guilty to that one). Keep wiping the filters.

Portable heaters

Keep away from clothes, etc. remember to switch off at night

Open Fires

Make sure it's out at night.

Emollient products – creams, oils etc.

Can get onto clothes – wash at low temperature. Never smoke around those products.

Smoking

Last cig before bed – have some water at hand / go outside.

Candles need to be in a container (glass, etc.) keep away from draughts. Blown out before bed.

Gas appliances

Service regularly

Keep **doors** closed (especially the kitchen).

Loft insulation

Fire Service can give advice on benefits and discounts.

Lithium Batteries (Very topical)

Never charge a scooter / bike in-doors. Needs a cool aired space. These batteries are small but very powerful and can go off dangerously.

The Fire Service can provide a lot of advice and special equipment (e.g. Deaf Alarms).

Quite a lengthy questions /answers to finish with. One of those speakers that doesn't look interesting on paper, but I think most of us could identify ourselves in some of the points made.

Eric Rennie