



NEWSLETTER

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HAPPY NEW (ARCHIVES) YEAR!



Visitors to the archives meeting room will recognise this photograph as one of the Canal side scenes which adorned its walls.

New Year is traditionally a time for looking back as well as planning ahead. This newsletter adopts something of that same spirit. As well as reporting on recent events and visits for members, we consider projects which rely on extensive use of Nottinghamshire Archives. By the time of the next newsletter (May 2015), the Archives extension programme will have been completed and the service reopened to the public. As we anticipate these new facilities, the committee would like to wish you all a very happy and healthy New Year!

Richard Gaunt (Chairman)

THE VICTORIA COUNTY HISTORY IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Two volumes of the Victoria County History (VCH) for Nottinghamshire were published, as part of a national project, in 1906 and 1910. In 2010, the project was restarted with a group of volunteers working under the direction of the county editor, Philip Riden. The group has met fortnightly during term time on Tuesdays, at Nottinghamshire Archives. Meetings are continuing at the University of Nottingham's Department of Manuscripts and Special Collections at the King's Meadow campus whilst the Archives' renovation programme is completed.

The group is working on parish histories which are compiled in six sections - an Introduction, Manorial History, Economic History, Social History, Religious History and discussion of Local Government. Archival and printed sources are used and Mr Riden has produced a very helpful guide to sources and the range of material to be covered for each section.

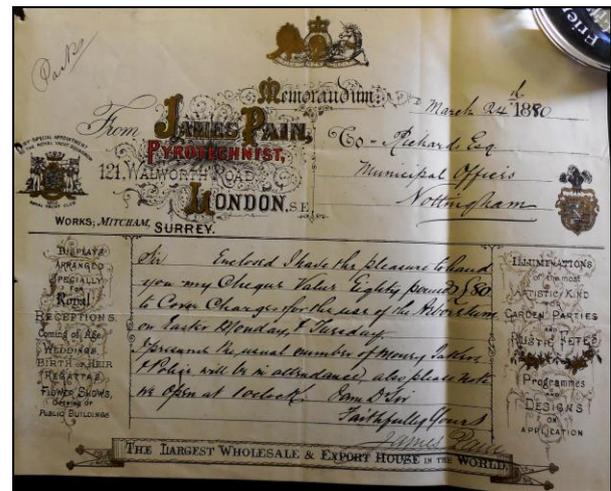
Four members of the group are working on parishes in Broxtowe Wapentake and work is also in progress on Mansfield. The first volume to be published, hopefully in 2016, will be for the 13 parishes in Rushcliffe South Wapentake. Completed sections are available to view on the VCH website, www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk. Anyone interested in the work of the VCH in the county is invited to contact the county editor at philip.riden@nottingham.ac.uk

Sheila Leeds

THE SOCIAL WORLD OF NOTTINGHAM'S HISTORIC GREEN SPACES

The Social World of Nottingham's Historic Green Spaces, a project funded by the Arts

and Humanities Research Council, ran from February 2013 to January 2014. Led by Professor John Beckett, it was a collaborative project with the University of Derby and representatives from the Friends of Nottingham Arboretum, the Friends of the Forest, the Very Local History Group, Nottingham Civic Society, Nottingham Women's History Group, WoLAN, the Parks Department of the City Council and Nottingham Local Studies Library. The green spaces in the title of the project were created by the 1845 Enclosure Act which allowed the open fields around the densely populated and rather insanitary town to be developed for new housing. They are the Arboretum, the Forest (which is now about two-thirds the size it was in the early 19th-century), the Church (Rock) Cemetery, an extension to the General Cemetery specifically for dissenters, Queen's Walk, Elm Avenue, Corporation Oaks and Robin Hood Chase.

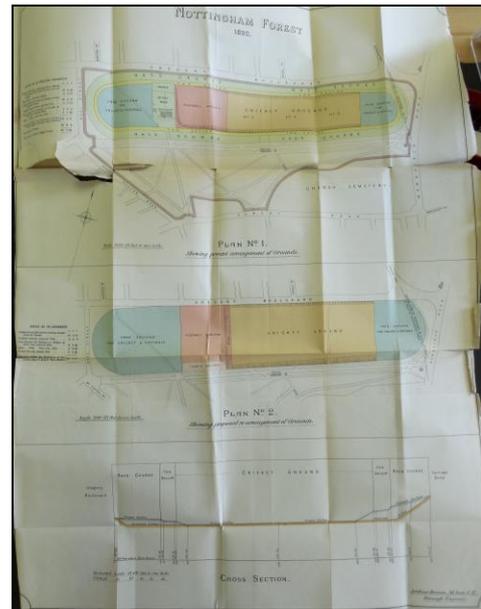


A receipt for hire of the Arboretum for a light show, Nottinghamshire Archives, TC10/70/1: 1880 Public Parks Committee, letters received.

Research for a project with such a wide scope and many possible research strands has to call on a range of archival sources. For this project, these included newspapers, both online and on microfiche at Nottingham Local Studies Library (where there is also a large collection of 19th-century maps which vividly illustrate the rapid extension of the town). There were also useful documents in the University of Nottingham's Manuscripts and Special Collections and the Royal

Horticultural Society's Lindley Library, and the community groups were able to call on their own resources. The most important resource though was the huge collection of documents held by Nottinghamshire Archives. The Enclosure Commissioners' Minute Books, together with the Minutes of the Town Council, form the official record of the process of enclosure, and the problems encountered. The Town Council records are also an important source of information about the management of the green spaces through the 19th and 20th centuries.

As the civic bureaucracy became more complex, the research approach had to adapt. For example, increasingly, much of the work of the Council was done by sub-committees which only reported to the full Council periodically. In the mid-19th century, the written reports as well as the Council decisions were written into the manuscript Minute Books but, from the mid-1870s, both the Reports and the Minutes were printed and compiled into separate annual volumes. Owing to the rarity of the volumes of Reports, these are kept in storage, but fortunately the Council Minutes were kept on a shelf in the reading room which made it straightforward to match up the two sets of documents. The advantage of having all the Reports to Council in one volume is that it was easy to find references to parks and open spaces not just in reports of the Parks and Burial Grounds committee but also from other committees: the Chamber Estates' reports and Auditors' annual report detailed the financial commitment of the Council for green space; the Health Committee emphasised the importance of space for exercise and recreation, and the provision of adequate cemeteries; the Borough Surveyor's reports are often feasibility studies for building new pavilions, levelling ground and developing the green spaces to meet new demands. Plans, blueprints and other technical drawings are often included though - as the photograph of plans for the Forest demonstrates - unfortunately, the consequence of multiple folds and tight binding means that these inserts are vulnerable to damage.



Nottinghamshire Archives, TC1/20/2: 1890 Borough Engineer's Report to the Council showing possible reorganisation of the Forest following the closure of the Race Course showing present (i.e. 1890 layout), proposed layout and a cross-section showing the amount of levelling needed.

Another important source were the letters to and from the Town Clerk's Office and correspondence to and from the Parks sub-committee. As incoming and outgoing letters are in separate files (and sometimes incomplete), matching enquiry and response was more complicated, but could be very informative on a large number of subjects. There is, for example, an exchange of letters between the Council and the Head Gardener at Belvoir Castle; notes between the Council and the Chief Constable about complaints, vandalism and the management of the green spaces; leases for stalls and booths for the sale of non-intoxicating beverages; arrangements for musical concerts and other entertainments on the Forest and in the Arboretum; details of the management of the Arboretum aviaries; the use of green space during war time, and the transfer of Goose Fair from the Market Square to the Forest.

This is just a small selection of the range of information gleaned by members of the research team during the course of the project. The results of the research will be published in one form or another over the next few months (including an article in the forthcoming volume of *Transactions of the*

Thoroton Society). The project drew heavily upon the expertise of the staff at Nottinghamshire Archives and the project team would like to thank them for their help, support and encouragement during the research.

Judith Mills

INTRODUCING JUDITH MILLS

At FONA's last committee, Judith Mills was co-opted as treasurer-designate, in succession to Graham Crisp. We're delighted to welcome Judith to the committee. We asked Judith to introduce herself to members through the newsletter. As Judith's article on the Historic Green Spaces of Nottingham has already suggested, she is an avid and experienced user of Nottinghamshire Archives...

Although I am now, I suppose, part of the academic world, this has not always been the case. I have been associated with the University of Nottingham since 1979 when I was appointed as a secretary/administrator for a small Mathematical Education research department. While Maths was not my subject, working in that environment encouraged me to enrol with the Open University. Between 1992 and 2000, I was a part-time student and, as the OU allows and (at that time) encouraged, I covered a wide range of topics from Reformation Europe to the effects of war and peace on social change in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, with some Art History and Social Science for good measure. My first serious encounter with archives was spending many happy hours in the Archives Office in Croyden working on 19th century parish magazines for an extended essay on Evangelicalism. I graduated in 2000 with a BA (Hons) in Humanities with History.

In 1996 I moved with my family to Surrey. Here, I was fortunate enough to get a new job working in the Southern Regional Office of The National Trust, with the rather grand title of 'Assistant to the Historic Buildings Representative' (following reorganisation,

HBRs have been renamed Curators). This introduced me to another side of archive work; cataloguing. As the department was responsible for managing the Region's various collections, we had a fairly large archive of photographs, magazine articles (especially *Country Life*), oral history recordings, auction catalogues and papers relating to the provenance of chattels and the original owners of the properties. This had grown organically, so the Research Assistant and I spent several months improving the storage and indexing the whole collection. I was also responsible for managing a team of volunteers who maintained and checked the Region's chattels inventories.



Judith in her element, on FONA's recent visit to the University of Nottingham's Manuscripts and Special Collections.

After taking voluntary redundancy in 2005, I returned to Nottingham and treated myself to a year's full-time study by enrolling for an MA in History at the University. My dissertation analysed the account books of the Guilds of St George and St Mary at St Peter's Church, Nottingham. These had been translated and published as part of the Thoroton Society's Record Series in 1939, and the translator's notes were deposited with the University's Manuscripts and Special Collections. My timing, however, was not good: my work coincided with the move to

King's Meadow and the documents were unavailable. It meant, though, that I was introduced to Nottinghamshire Archives which owns not just the original 15th-16th Century manuscript but a 19th century transcription that included additional materials (including church wardens' accounts) which had not been published. Following my MA, I was fortunate enough to receive a research grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council to study for a PhD. Building on my MA work, I undertook an intensive analysis of Nottingham's civic records from 1400-1600. For about a year, I spent three to four days a week in Nottinghamshire Archives, working through Borough Court rolls and books, quarter sessions rolls, Hall and Mayor's Books, Chamberlain's accounts, tax returns and other early documents. One of the outcomes of this work was a database of 6,700 people who lived or worked in late medieval/early modern Nottingham.

Since graduating in 2010, I have had a variety of research-related positions. I spent four months as an Intern at Brewhouse Yard Museum, cataloguing part of the John Player Advertising Archive and, lately, I have been a Research Fellow on the *Social World of Nottingham's Historic Green Spaces* project which saw me once again installed at Nottinghamshire Archives for several weeks during 2013. Currently, I am an Honorary Research Fellow in the Department of History, Membership Secretary for the Thoroton Society and a Committee Member of Nottinghamshire Local History Association. I have also started volunteering with the Robin Hood Theatre Company, Averham, where I am cataloguing the photographic archive as the prelude to making it more widely available.

Over the last few years, Nottinghamshire Archives has played a large part in my life, and I am delighted to be one of its Friends.

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MEMBERS' EVENTS AND VISITS: TALK AND BOOK SIGNING BY ALAN DANCE (20 SEPTEMBER 2014)



Alan Dance (left) pictured with Graham Crisp (who chaired the event) and Ruth Imeson (Nottinghamshire Archives). This was the last FONA event to be held in the building, prior to the extension and renovation programme.

After education at Nottingham High School for Boys, Alan Dance spent his working life in the railway industry, maintaining an amateur interest in local history. However, after taking early retirement in 1996, Alan began to venture into historical fiction: his first book, *The Chilwell Ghost* (1998), based on the story of a local 'ghost' house which had been demolished in 1951, has proved successful enough to justify five reprints in subsequent years. However, it was the publication of *Narrow Marsh* in 2008 (which has been reprinted three times since) which really proved to be Alan's 'instant hit'. He has followed this up with a sequel, *Leen Times* (2011) and has also published *The Westbrook Affair* (2013). His most recent publication, co-authored with David Field, is *Canary Child* (2014), based on the story of the 'Canary Girls' who worked in National Filling Factory No 6 at Chilwell (the site of a major explosion on 1 July 1918).

Alan's introduction to Nottinghamshire Archives began, as with many new visitors, through researching his family history in the census returns, wills and baptism registers. He followed the male line of his family as far

back as William Dance (d.1680), a furrier/skinner who moved from London to Nottingham and whose first son was baptised in the town in 1648. Alan's fascination with the framework knitters whose stories dominate *Narrow Marsh* and *Leen Times* also relates to his family history. Alan established that, by the late-18th century, the family had progressively declined (occupationally speaking) from the lofty heights of William Dance (who was assessed for eight hearths in the 1674 Hearth Tax returns) to the somewhat precarious existence of framework knitting. Inspired by his own family history, Alan thus began to write the story of a framework knitter and his family, completing a first draft of what subsequently became *Narrow Marsh* in 2000.

It took a further seven years before Alan published the book (on his own resources). Its overnight success emanated from the fact that he was able to weave dramatic real-life events, including the Nottinghamshire Luddites (1812), the Pentrich Revolutionaries (1817) and the Cato Street Conspirators (1820) into the story. A good example of the way in which archival research informed the plot was Alan's discovery of the explosion which took place in Nottingham on 28 September 1818. A boat transporting gunpowder from Gainsborough (intended for the Derbyshire lead mines), was unloaded in Nottingham for onward carriage by way of Nottingham canal and the Cromford Canal. In the course of being transferred, there was an explosion, caused by the boatmen dropping hot coals on the gunpowder which had leaked from the barrels. Alan's family history also informed *Leen Times*, which included a story based on one of his ancestors, Thomas Dewey (a brother of one of Alan's distant great aunts) who was convicted – and subsequently hanged – for murder in 1825. By using the court reports in the Nottingham press, Alan was able to work the details into his story. This weaving together of real-life events and family history has continued to inform Alan's recent work – notably *The Westbrook Affair*.

Alan is currently researching the life of the famous local boxer, William Thompson

(Bendigo), and working with David Hallam, an Australian-based writer, to publish his account of Nottinghamshire in the Luddite period: look out for *In Ludd's Name* during 2015!

The Friends are indebted to Alan for providing us with such an informative and enjoyable discussion of his work, and for illustrating the connections between his archival research and his fiction. We are also grateful to Alan for making a substantial donation to FONA, based on the book sales generated at the event.

Richard Gaunt

EVENING VISIT TO MANUSCRIPTS & SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM (12 NOVEMBER 2014)

The University has been collecting manuscripts since the 1930s and moved to the King's Meadow Campus in 2006. The department is responsible for three related collections: the East Midlands Collection, Special Collections and Manuscripts and Archives. The East Midlands Collection consists of printed papers, pamphlets, periodicals, newspapers and maps relating to the counties of Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire and Rutland and details of most items are available on the University's online library catalogue: <http://aleph.nottingham.ac.uk/ALEPH>

The Special Collections consist of separate named collections. These are library materials that, because of their age or rarity, vulnerable physical condition or other special significance, are managed separately from the general library stock. About 60,000 printed and other published items are managed within different collections, e.g. The Lawrence Collection. To view these documents, there are separate registration procedures and they can only be viewed for reference, they cannot be taken away. The Archive Collections contain over 3 million manuscripts in over 700 collections. The

collection dates range from the 12th to the 21st centuries and includes local, regional, national and international history. These collections have a registration process for viewing and, again, are for reference only: <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/manuscriptsandspecialcollections/collections/introduction.aspx>

The department retains historical papers and archives which build upon their established strengths; material with a curriculum or research relevance to the University of Nottingham; papers of, and concerning the life, work and legacy of, D H Lawrence; archives and historical records of the University and its predecessor bodies; and material associated with the history of the University of Nottingham, including the private papers of former members of staff and alumni. There are different acquisitions policies for each Collection.

The Archive has various subject strengths: i) Landed families and estates: papers on aristocratic life; farm tenants; urban development; The Dukeries; ii) 18th-19th century political and diplomatic correspondence; iii) Literary papers, including D H Lawrence, Portland Literary Collection, theatre holdings; iv) Business: such as local business, for example, lace, engineering, collieries and coal mining, farming and local pre-nationalisation electricity companies; v) Trade Unions and Trade Associations: records of the Nottingham and District Trades Union Council and those related to hosiery and textiles, i.e. the Amalgamated Society of Operative Lace Makers and Auxiliary Workers; vi) Education: including the Briggs Collection as well as the University's own records; vii) Health: hospital records including, for example, Nottingham General Hospital; viii) Utilities: water and drainage companies and papers of the predecessor bodies of Severn Trent from the 16th to the 20th century; and ix) Ecclesiastical: The Archdeaconry of Nottingham collection and papers relating to the nonconformist

churches (e.g., Presbyterian, Baptist, United Reform).



The department is developing its growing range of online resources and curates three exhibitions per year (together with related events) at the Weston Gallery, Lakeside Arts Centre, University of Nottingham: <http://www.lakesidearts.org.uk/Exhibitions.html>



FONA members were given the opportunity to view selected items from the Archives, with material ranging from 1582 (Middleton building accounts) to 1890 (Severn Trent photograph album of Nottingham Waterworks in Progress) and up to 1906 (Day Training Register including D H Lawrence's name). Friends were particularly excited by the opportunity to view these historic materials at close quarters. Our thanks to Mark Dorrington and his staff for organising this fascinating evening.

Cherry Knight