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# Thomas Forman of Nottingham - a printing legend



*The façade of the Hucknall Road printing works with Thomas Forman inset.*

## *Cherry Knight reports on the latest Friends event*

On 26 September 2015, Chairman Richard Gaunt welcomed 23 Friends to a fascinating presentation by Howard Parker of the Thomas Forman Preservation Society. Other members of the Society were in attendance and Val Astill gave a short presentation on her reminiscences of working for Thomas Forman.

Thomas Forman was, as Howard explained in his presentation, 'a printing legend' and many Friends will be aware of their final premises on Hucknall Road, to which they moved in 1926. The building was closed in 2000 after the company was sold. In January 2015, Nottingham Civic Society unveiled one of its green plaques on the site.

Howard's talk was centred on the products that Thomas Forman printed for many national companies including Cunard, Rowntrees and Players. At

their height, they employed over 1,000 members of staff, who had access to a wide range of sports and social facilities.

The many products that were printed by Thomas Forman included labels, cartons, calendars, stationery and seals, plus security products (cheques). Printing took place throughout the war and Thomas Forman printed ration books.

Today, the Thomas Forman Preservation Society has 120 members and holds an annual reunion, together with many social events. The object of the Society is to retain contact with former employees and to work with Nottinghamshire Archives in retaining the publishing history of the company.

### *Howard Parker takes up the story*



*Howard Parker and Val Astill.*

Thomas Forman came to Nottingham in 1848 and acquired a printing works on Long Row from a printer named Oliver. Newspaper and book production were the major part of the business. The first issue of the 'Daily Guardian' appeared in 1861 followed by the 'Evening Post' in 1878. His four sons all eventually became partners in the business and the name 'Thomas Forman & Sons' was assumed.

In 1870, the business moved to Sherwood Street with a frontage on what is now Forman Street. Due to the expanding business, the partnership was dissolved in 1919 and the general printing side of the business, headed by James Forman and his son Dudley P. Forman, moved to new premises on Hucknall Road in 1926. The building was the first purpose built printing factory in the country and the original façade still remains today.

Following the deaths of James and Dudley Forman, the business remained in the ownership of the family until it was sold to Mardon Sons & Hall in 1960.

In 1984, they sold out to Robert Maxwell's British Printing & Communications Corporation. In 1989, it was sold again to a London Group of Managers and finally closed in 2000.



During its existence, the Company produced a wide range of products such as brochures, showcards, labels, cartons and security print. Forman calendars were renowned all over the world. Work was produced for many well-known companies including Cunard Steamship Company, British Airways, John Player, Rowntrees and many more household names.



Forman's had their own artists and reproduction departments and printed work by letterpress, litho and gravure processes together with all the finishing operations.

At its peak, the company employed over 1,000 people which included a large sales force with offices in London and Liverpool.





Forman's Social and Athletic Club provided recreational facilities for its employees and the original site, which covered over 20 acres, included football and cricket pitches, tennis courts, etc.

The demolition of the factory commenced in 2001 and, in the autumn of that year, a Time Capsule was excavated containing many examples of work the company produced during the 1960's.



*From the left: Howard Parker, Ron Bramley, Steve Feneley (Persimmon Homes) and Adrian Henstock (Notts. archives), examine the contents of the time capsule.*

The contents of the capsule are held by Nottinghamshire Archives.

Following this event 'Thos Forman Preservation Society' was formed and the Society currently has 120 members and holds an annual reunion attended by former employees and their partners. The Society publishes a newssheet

*The Founding Trustees. From the left: Noel Marshall, Howard Parker and Robert Macdonald. Seated: Ron Bramley.*



'Inform Two' and 'Historical Bulletin' in January each year. One of the objectives of the Society is to obtain memorabilia and archive material of the former company, much of which has been deposited with the Nottinghamshire Archives.

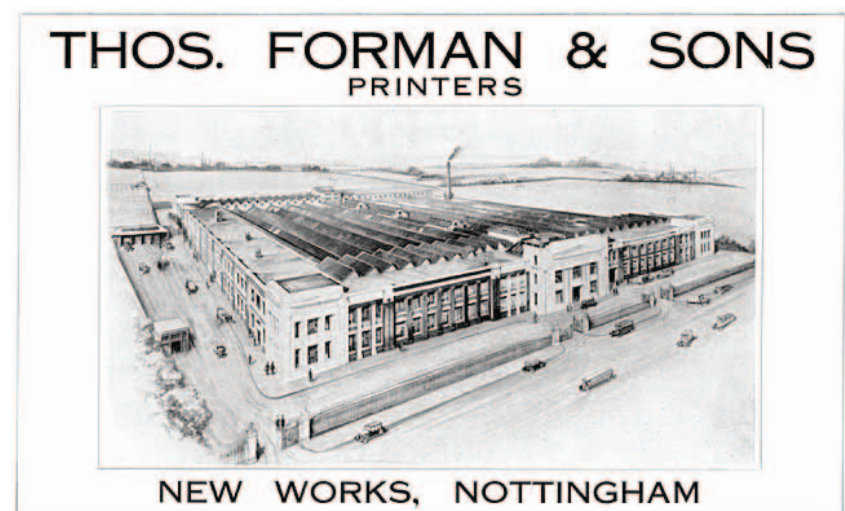
The area where the factory and sports fields were situated was redeveloped in 2002 by Persimmon Homes and now contains a complex of town houses. The right hand side of the remaining frontage was redeveloped into apartments by Persimmon which

was opened in 2006. The centre section was converted into Tesco Express which again opened in 2006.

The left hand side of the frontage was acquired by the Indian Community Centre Association (ICCA) in 2003. Since this part of the building closed in 1998, it had fallen into disrepair and become a target for vandals. The ICCA have done a wonderful job in refurbishing the building and restoring it to its former glory.



The Nottingham Civic Society has promoted the erection of a number of plaques on historic buildings in the city and the plaque unveiled in January this year will serve as a lasting reminder to the public and historians, what the façade of this building originally represented.



*Image courtesy of Nottshistory website. For more information visit [www.nottshistory.org.uk](http://www.nottshistory.org.uk)*

*FONA committee member Christine Drew tells us about a research project which has been using resources at Nottinghamshire Archives*

# The Problem of the Poor?

## A project to discover and share Nottingham's late-Victorian heritage

***This year Nottingham Community and Voluntary Service (NCVS) celebrates its 140th anniversary. 'The Problem of the Poor?' is a heritage project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and managed by NCVS, researching the origins of the organisation and the first 25 years from 1876 to 1901.***

The organisation began life in St James' Street in March 1876 as Nottingham Society for Organising Charity (NSOC). Modelled on the well-known London Charity Organisation Society (COS), it was run by a local voluntary committee and supported entirely by public subscription and donations. In the twentieth century, as the state welfare benefits system gradually evolved, the organisation changed its name, location and function several times as it metamorphosed into its present form.

The annual reports of the organisation for the periods 1876 to 1964 have survived and are deposited in Nottinghamshire Archives. Each annual report includes a wealth of local details: the committee members; the voluntary and paid officers; a list of all donors and subscribers with the amounts they gave; an analysis of new referrals/applicants and

how the organisation responded to them; financial accounts, etc. These records also include the origins of the organisation, statements of official objectives, principles, rules and regulations, descriptions of working practices, mention of other institutions with whom NSOC cooperated, and lists of other charities in late nineteenth-century Nottingham. It is also possible to trace how fluctuations in trade, and fluctuations in the severity of winter, impacted on the poor and demands on charities.

The Charity Organisation movement was founded in 1869 primarily to coordinate Poor Law provision with charitable provision, to eliminate begging and fraud by ensuring referrals and applicants were adequately assessed, and to ensure the help given enabled recipients to be restored to self-sufficiency rather than encouraging dependency. Letters to the local press criticised the Nottingham SOC as judgemental and uncaring and the organisation constantly had to explain and justify its principles.

The project has two main streams running in tandem. A group of twelve Heritage Volunteers, led by a Nottingham CVS Heritage Project Worker, has been meeting weekly for six months. The Volunteers are very diverse and for some this was their first taste of heritage and local



*One of the regular meetings of the twelve Heritage Volunteers.*

history skills. A wide variety of sources, including old photographs, maps and newspapers, were used to explore nineteenth-century Nottingham, focusing in particular on the fate of the poorest in society. As well as an introductory visit to Nottinghamshire Archives, group activities included



a session with the Southwell Workhouse Storytellers and a visit to the Galleries of Justice to learn about the harshness of the Victorian Poor Law and criminal justice system. Illustrative case studies in NSOC reports were used to identify the most disadvantaged groups in society, attitudes towards different types of misfortune, and the charitable organisations and self-help survival strategies available. Although the organisation was often criticised as uncaring, and often constrained by resources, the Volunteers were pleasantly surprised to find evidence of considerable effort, imagination and ingenuity put into individual cases.

The Volunteers recorded their work over six months on a project blog and designed five portable display banners for use in future presentations. They also used a real case reported in the local press in 1879 (a



woman with her young children found begging in the street after dark in pouring rain) and other research findings to create the script for a court-room-drama. This was then acted and videoed in the Victorian court room at the Galleries of Justice.

Simultaneously a small group of more experienced Independent Researchers have contributed to the project, some meeting at intervals to share their work or acting as mentors to the Volunteers. As well as the origins of NSOC, research has covered disadvantaged communities in Victorian Nottingham, housing and public health issues, the networks of upper and middle-class people involved in charity committees, and individual charities founded in Nottingham in the late nineteenth century, such as the Gordon Boys' Home and the Nottingham Day Nursery and Orphanage. Victorian charities and institutions are often portrayed as rather austere and uncaring so it has been rewarding to discover that many of the local children from poor and adverse backgrounds cared for by these organisations went on to make-good in adult life. This research will be added to the Nottingham

CVS archive or used to expand other research tools such as the Thoroton Society's online 'Nottinghamshire Heritage Gateway'.

Over the coming months some of the findings of the project will be displayed and shared at the local history fair in the Central Library and at the Nottingham CVS annual event for local charity and community groups. The Heritage Project Worker and some of the volunteers will also be visiting a variety of community groups across the city, sharing the findings with people who do not usually come in contact with heritage projects.

Some of the Volunteers have made videos about their positive experience of involvement in this project. The HLF is most impressed by their commitment and enthusiasm and has suggested applying for another grant to research the First World War period. The project may also increase awareness of the abundant local details to be found in the records of charities, perhaps encouraging other organisations to think about preserving their records or researching their history.

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## Southwell House of Correction & the 1820 Settlers

*Rob Smith has recently published a study of the Southwell House of Correction (Southwell and District Local History Society, 2015) and is hard at work on a major study of the Nottinghamshire Settlers who went off to southern Africa in 1820. Here, he explains how he first found the research bug – and how he has never looked back since.*

In 1997 I began work for the Rainbow Freight Group that occupied the former prison site adjacent to the Burgage Green in Southwell. I did not give much

thought to the history of the site until a decade or so later after moving to an office adjoining the reception foyer. From there I became aware of the occasional visitor enquiring about the site's former uses as the Nottinghamshire House of Correction and, more recently, as a curtain lace factory. One or two visitors were looking for their forebears that had either been incarcerated in the prison or employed making lace. Others showed up as interested tourists, archaeologists, or conservationists. Hardly any of their questions were answered to their satisfaction. It was time to begin my research. In 2011, precisely 400 years after the creation of an earlier House of Correction nearby, I began with the local library.

At the library I found interesting reports in both volumes of Southwell: 'The Town and its People' by local contributors and also in Julie O'Neill's 'The Life and Times of J. T. Becher of Southwell'. Becher was the very active clergyman and magistrate responsible for numerous socio-economic projects in the county including the two workhouses in Southwell and the replacement House of Correction of 1808. I acquired more information from the internet but, perhaps more importantly, I discovered highly acclaimed books with significant content relating to the former prison. They were 'must haves', the most interesting being 'English Prisons Under Local Government' by Sidney and Beatrice Webb, co-founders of the London School of Economics, with a Preface of over sixty pages by fellow Fabian Society member George Bernard Shaw. For some reason, of over two hundred establishments in the prison estate of the era, the Southwell institution warranted a disproportionately high number of pages, including three devoted to Becher's lurid account of the old prison he replaced, several favourable references to the new prison, and a footnote that referred to 'the model house of correction established at Southwell'.

In 1811, within just three years of the opening of the new prison, Becher had appeared before an inaugural Parliamentary Committee set up to consider the establishment of the first National Penitentiary and, shortly afterwards, he was appointed one of its three supervisors and a trustee for the land acquired for the purpose on the south bank of the Thames. For the first portion of a prisoner's sentence, the Committee recommended the regime in place at Gloucester, with harsh practices based on the solitude of inmates and calculated to instil compliance. For the remaining portion, they preferred the quietly constructive practices at Southwell, designed for the

reformation of character. It was later that I discovered extreme versions of these practices had been adopted as competing, not complementary, systems in the USA - the infamous 'Separate' and 'Silent Congregate' systems.

By now I was thoroughly hooked by the story but, as yet, had little that I could reasonably call primary data. For this there were two principal sources, Nottinghamshire Archives and the Proquest Parliamentary Papers website. Being in full time employment and working in Southwell, I could not pay regular visits to Nottingham to make copious notes but, in time, gathered a large quantity of material, including data on a Christian missionary exercise in New Zealand financed from the income of a girls' school at Elmfield House on Burgage Green opposite the House of Correction. It was a thrilling experience to handle and view original manuscript documents written at a time well before they would go on to be recognised as part of a sequence of history of national and international importance.



*Rob, amidst a display of research material.*

During some background research on Reverend Becher, I discovered a lesser-known project relating to the Nottinghamshire involvement in a national emigration plan to a new settlement called Albany in the Eastern Cape, South Africa.

In 1819-20, working with Edward Smith Godfrey, Clerk of the Peace, Becher made arrangements for 158 persons from the county to travel under the supervision of Dr Calton of Collingham overland to Liverpool. In all, about 3800 persons embarked at several ports in a fleet of some twenty-three navy transports. As one of the larger parties, the Nottinghamshire contingent was allocated the 'Albury' all to themselves. They were meant to sail



in November but their party was one of the last to be formed and it was one of those appalling winters when the Thames was frozen over. They eventually left in February 1820, arrived in the following May, and formed part of what became known collectively as the 1820 Settlers. They occupied a 5,500 acre location they named Clumber after the estate of their principal sponsor, the Fourth Duke of Newcastle. Another small party of twenty-seven from Arnold under Major White formed the very extensive Table Hill Farm and the nucleus of a wealthy and influential dynasty. In the 1840s, an eighty square mile 'Field Cornetcy' called Southwell was founded by the grandson of Richard Turner Becher, Benjamin Keeton, who had emigrated in Dr Calton's party.

In another intensive session at Nottinghamshire Archives I explored the Smith Godfrey collection covering the unique form of funding for the emigration exercise, their experiences during the delays at Liverpool, their eventful 7,000 mile passage, and their landing at Algoa Bay where Port Elizabeth now stands. I have subsequently followed the exploits of the settlers through South African sources and publications from many parts of the British Empire. The two projects have involved Southwell local history and archaeology groups and, in conjunction with them, two small books were launched on 26 September in the Audio-Visual Room at Southwell Minster. Apart from the books, also on show was a 3D printed model of the House of Correction and information leaflets advertising Bicentenary Commemorative tours in 2020 to the Albany



*Rob, displays the results of his extensive research.*

settlement, to be operated in conjunction with the tour company which was founded by a descendant of the famous Hartley family of settlers from Mansfield. The accompanying displays included numerous transcripts of documents at Nottinghamshire Archives.

Work has commenced on two more substantive books. The first is intended to review the history of European Houses of Correction using the Southwell model as a benchmark. The content will be built around authentic data including some rare original library books written by officials of the prison and several critical documents from the Archives. The second will cover the Nottinghamshire locations at the heart of the 1820 settlement to examine the history of the colony through their eyes and those of their many close friends and neighbours. I hope that both books will have a wide-ranging appeal.

## Members' News & Events

### Have your say

Friends will know that one of the purposes of the organisation is to raise money which can be applied to improving research facilities at the Archives. What would you like to see in Nottinghamshire Archives (which is not already there!) and what would make your lives easier as researchers and users? If you have any suggestions, do contact Chairman Richard Gaunt on [chairman@fona.org.uk](mailto:chairman@fona.org.uk)





# Forthcoming events

*FONA has a programme of activities at Nottinghamshire Archives in the months ahead. Booking information will be circulated ahead of each one. Hold the dates in your diaries!*

## **Saturday 31 October**

11am, Janet Brown speaking on 'You Make Us So Proud'.

## **Saturday 20 January 2016**

11am, Members' meeting: 'Bring a Photograph' illustrating a story or research interest.

## **Saturday 5 March 2016**

2pm, AGM followed by Adrian Henstock speaking about George Sanderson's map of 'The country 20 miles around Mansfield'.

If you have suggestions for future events, or could host a visit or activity, do contact Programme Secretary Sheila Leeds c/o [smleeds@virginmedia.com](mailto:smleeds@virginmedia.com)



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If you would like to contribute articles to the FONA Newsletter please contact Richard Gaunt, Chairman.

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