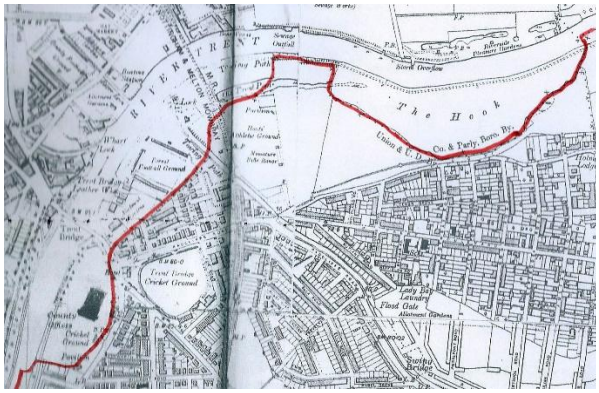
Further Information on Sites along the Walk

1. Sneinton Parish

Sanderson's map of 1835 (below right) shows that, at that time, most of the developing Sneinton was just southeast of Carlton Road but with much of the old village being between Dale Street-Sneinton Dale and Sneinton Hermitage-Carlton Road. However, the old parish of Sneinton starts on the north side of Trent Bridge, east of London Road. Also, from a time before the course of the Trent shifted north (as mentioned in Walk 16), the original parish included part of what is 'The Hook' at Lady Bay. Robert Mellors, 'Old Nottingham suburbs: then and now' (1914), (http://www.nottshistory.org.uk) states that: '*The Hook appears to have been, in 1689, let to the "Inhabitants of West Bridgford," when it was rated at £24'*.



As this 1938 map (left) shows, also within the Nottingham boundary were the land around where County Hall now stands, the land along the river from Loughborough Road to Lady Bay bridge, including the Civic Centre site (now apartments) and the City Ground, and Trent Bridge. The boundary moved to the centre of the river in 1952.

There have been so many changes in this area north of the Trent that it is difficult to say exactly where the western border of Sneinton parish was but I believe it was along the old alignment of the River Leen which, since C12th, went on an eastern loop and then followed approximately where Iremonger Road now is and entered the Trent close to Trent Bridge.

Part of that alignment is shown on Sanderson's 1835 map but, by then, the final section leading into the Trent had been diverted (at the point where it joins the Tinkers Leen) when the canal was built (it is now diverted away from this area).

The diversion went along the north east side of the Notts County ground – where County Road is now – and entered the Trent just beyond the Trent Bridge Quays development (photo shows the sluice gate).

2. Meadow Lane

Notts County is the oldest professional association football club in the world, having been formed in 1862.

It is often noted, with some curiosity, that the Meadow Lane ground, which is referred to as 'the County ground', is within the City, while Nottingham Forest play at the City Ground which is outside the City but in the county.
It was not always so.
The two clubs are actually the closest in England, only 300 yds apart – as seen in this arial photo.
At one time they were even closer.
Prior to 1910, Notts County played their home games across the river at Trent Bridge as a tenant of Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club; so outside the City; in the County. Cricket took priority on the ground and the football club often had to play early and late season fixtures at other venues to avoid a clash. Apparently, the Football League eventually deemed that this practice was inappropriate and demanded that Notts either seek more favourable terms for the use of Trent Bridge or relocate to a new ground on which they could fulfil all of their fixtures.

In 1910, a plot of land near the cattle market on Meadow Lane was leased from the city council and a new stadium erected. Part of the new stadium was a temporary stand from Trent Bridge which was literally floated across the river.

On 3 September 1910, County moved to Meadow Lane, the first game was a 1–1 draw with old rivals Nottingham Forest, played in front of 27,000 fans paying receipts of £775. (The Magpies by Keith Warsop)

2.1 Nottingham Forest, The City Ground

The walk passes the City Ground on the return walk route but I will include it here. Nottingham Forest Football Club was founded in 1865. As Notts County was founded 3 years earlier (so is the oldest professional football club), they were the oldest club in the Football League until they were relegated out of the league in 2019. This made Nottingham Forest the 'Oldest Club in the Football League' until County's return.

Forest have played home matches at the City Ground since 1898 (so the ground is shown on the 1899 map). At the time, this area was within the City boundary so the name 'City Ground' was appropriate. Before that, they played at a number of other grounds within the City, starting at Forest Racecourse (1865-1879) and including, as I noted in Walk 9, the Town Ground on Bathley Street, the Meadows, which became the site of a tram depot and is now a NCT bus depot.

3. The Broken Wheelbarrow.

Notts County supporters have a song about a broken wheelbarrow.
According to an article by Simon Lloyd www.joe.co.uk/sport/notts-county-putting-the-wheel-back-on-the-barrow-237824:

> *Its origins are disputed, but many are in agreement that it started in the away end at Gay Meadow* [Shrewsbury Town's ground] *on a Tuesday evening in April 1990. Attempting to cement a spot in the old Division Three play-offs, the Magpies… had found themselves two goals down to Shrewsbury Town when a chant - to the tune of On Top of Old Smokey - went up from the home support.*
>
> *The Shropshire accent making it difficult for them to decipher the exact words, County fans responded with their own nonsensical version: "I had a wheelbarrow, the wheel fell off, I had a wheelbarrow, the wheel fell off, County, County, County"*
> *Were it not for what followed, it's possible the song would have long been forgotten. But within minutes, goals from Tommy Johnson and Kevin Bartlett helped Notts salvage a 2-2 draw. They went unbeaten from that point on, clinching the first of two successive play-off promotions at the end of the season.*
>
> *And so, the song stuck, becoming synonymous with the club's ascent to the top flight of English football. In the time since, it's taken on a different meaning altogether.*
> "*We're the only club in the world that has an anthem about something going worse*," says Colin Sisson, a lifelong fan ….. "*The wheelbarrow and the wheel falling off - that's typical of Notts. There's a dark humour about supporting this club. I suppose it typifies what it's like to be a Notts fan. The wheels - or in this case the wheel - can fall off. You kind of know and expect things can go wrong".*

4. Cattle Market

The 'Official Handbook' of Nottingham Corporation, 1946, describes the Cattle Market:

THE CATTLE MARKET

The Cattle Market is on the southern side of the city, its situation being convenient for road and rail transport. Accommodation is provided on a site of about 9½ acres for 1,000 head of cattle, 3,000 sheep, 600 pigs and 400 calves, in addition to space for the sale of horses, hay and straw, agricultural implements, vehicles and live poultry. Special accommodation is provided for imported cattle, and for sales of attested stock. There is a railway siding in the market, good covered lairage accommodation for cattle, and a large car park with space for vehicles used for the conveyance of stock, and cleansing facilities for them. A comfortable building is provided for the "Corn Exchange and Farmers' Room," and there is good office accommodation for auctioneers, banks, etc., and a licensed refreshment room. Market days are: Fat Stock on Mondays, Dairy and Store Stock on Saturdays.

Most of the trade of the market is carried on through four firms of auctioneers, three of whom work in combination for the greater convenience of their clients. The fourth firm handles most of the trade in pigs. Three auction rings are provided in which different classes of animals are sold separately. In normal times about 120,000 animals are sold every year. Since January, 1940, the market has been used on Mondays as a collecting centre for Fat Stock under the Government's control of livestock and meat.

A scheme for an entirely new cattle market on the existing site and land adjoining is in preparation.

THE PUBLIC ABATTOIR

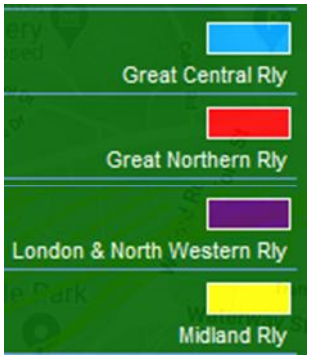
The provision of modern facilities for the humane slaughter of animals to be used for food and the preparation of meat under clean and healthy conditions is a matter of the first importance to a large city. Such accommodation is provided in the public abattoir, opened in June, 1938, at a cost of about £31,000, which adjoins the Cattle Market. This is acknowledged by competent authorities to be the best of its kind yet erected. The premises include comfortable lairages where animals may rest before slaughter. The newest types of electrical and mechanical apparatus are used in such a way that animals are caused the absolute minimum of distress and pain. Operations after slaughter are facilitated by appliances which reduce heavy manual labour and ensure strictly healthy and hygienic conditions. Finished carcases hang in large and airy cooling halls.

The premises have been used to capacity during the Ministry of Food's control of meat, and approximately 100,000 animals have been slaughtered each year since 1940.

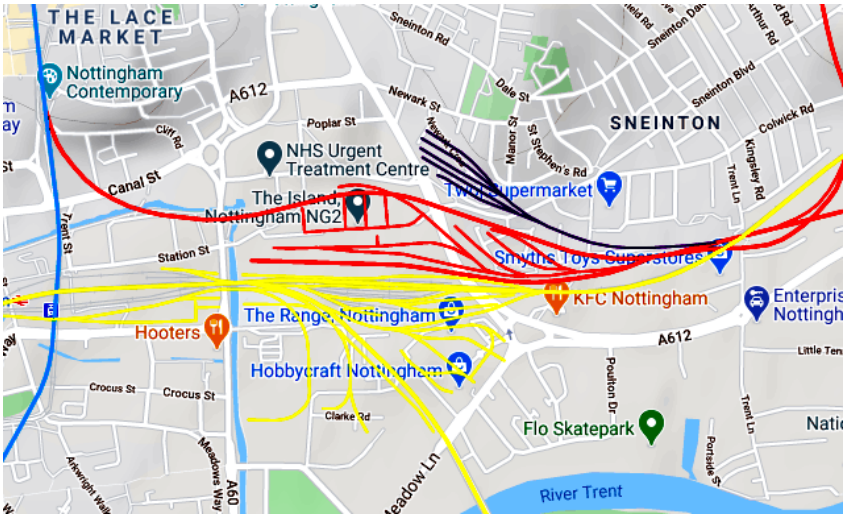
Plans for the considerable extension of the premises are now in course of preparation.

5. Old Railways

During much of the C20th, the area to the south of Nottingham city centre was dominated by railways. As illustrated on this map, from Rail Map Online www.railmaponline.com, three railway companies had sidings serving the cattle market and industrial premises throughout a large area between London Road, Meadow Lane and Sneinton, with through lines in all directions.

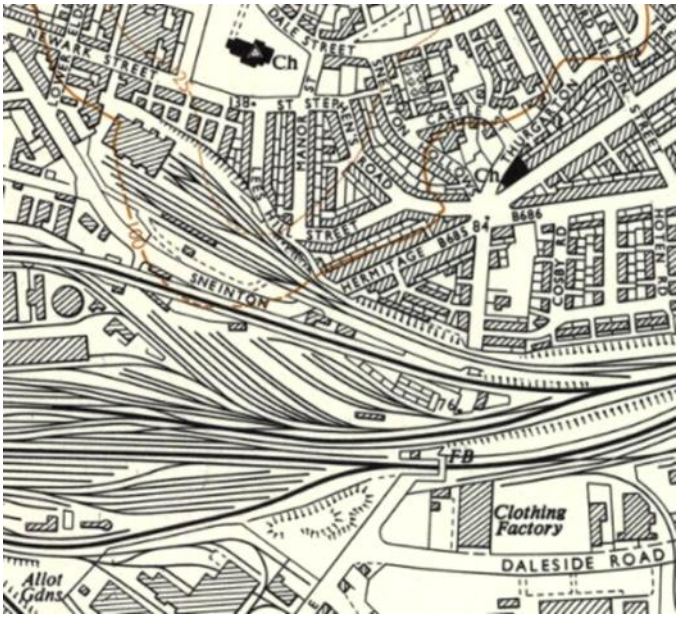


The LNWR had running powers into the London Road station on the joint line (red) with GNR from Market Harborough and Melton Mowbray but also maintained its own goods station at Sneinton (purple lines).



More information on these old lines can be found on www.disused-stations.org.uk

This map, surveyed in the early 1950s, shows the large number of tracks and a major railway engineering site (bottom left of the map), with the main road layout substantially different from today – most significantly, there being no link between Daleside Road and Manvers Street (link constructed early 1990s).



Also, as shown in the photos below (www.nottinghampost.com), there was a level crossing on Meadow Lane which allowed cars to continue into Sneinton (going under a bridge for the GNR line).

1972

1984

6. The Sneinton Dragon

At seven feet high and with a 15 ft. wingspan, the Sneinton Dragon is an impressive stainless steel sculpture by Nottingham-born artist Robert Stubley. But why a dragon?

During the industrial boom of C19th, the small village of Sneinton rapidly expanded to a population of more than 20,000 people. By the early C20th, this overcrowding had caused the area to become a poor and unhealthy district. In his '*Old Nottingham suburbs: then and now*', 1914, Robert Mellors attributed the population's high infant mortality and disease rates to the predatory activity of a metaphorical monster:

> *For more than half a century there has existed in certain parts of Nottingham a monster who has devoured in the first year of their lives a large number of infants, and, what is worse, probably an equal number who have survived have dragged out a pitiable existence in weakness, small in stature, deformed, or anaemic, with diseases, lack of energy, unable to maintain themselves, and therefore dependent on others or the public charge; ……*
> *Many men and women, under the influence of the monster's pestilential breath…. …. sink into helplessness and hopelessness, and twenty to forty per thousand die where ten per thousand ought to have sufficed, for fevers, tuberculosis, and other diseases find them ready for grim death to feed upon….*

….some houses become infected with living, biting, creeping, smelling filth, and wall paper, painting, floors, windows, pipes, taps, shelves, fireplaces, and other parts have been damaged or destroyed, and all this has been the Dragon's work.

Who is this monster, and what is his name? His name is SLUM.

Fortunately, things have changed since Mellors' time.

In 2006, the city council proposed a piece of street art to represent this now vibrant multicultural community and a survey of local residents resulted in the suggestion for a big scary dragon….perhaps to symbolize the hardships of the past and represent the monster, 'Slum'.

7. Sneinton Hermitage

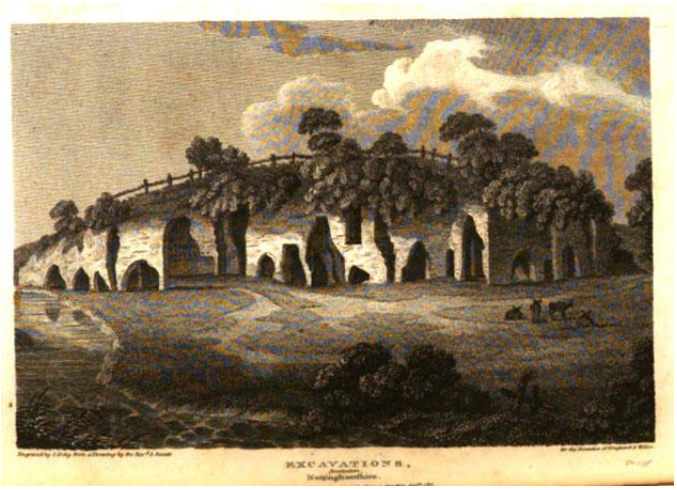
'*The Beauties of England and Wales*' (1801–1815) is a series describing the topography and local history of England and Wales. The work appeared in 18 multi-part volumes arranged by county and written by many different authors. Nottinghamshire is covered in an 1812 volume by Francis Charles Laird. It includes a section on what was then the village of Sneinton:

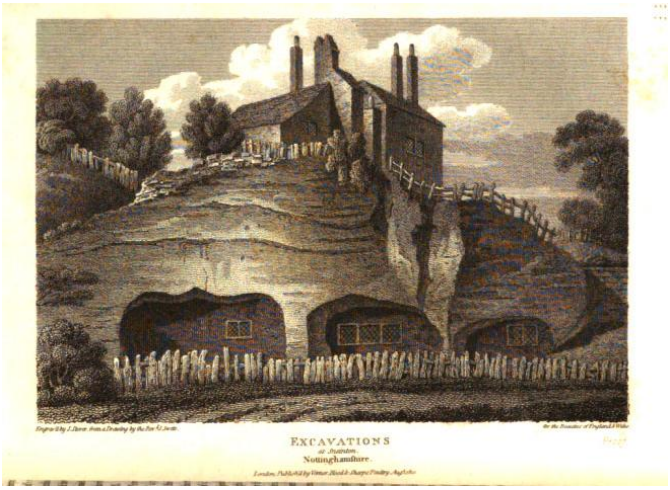
'*The village itself is rural, at present in some measure romantic; has a number of pleasant villas and cottages, and has long been famous for a race of dairy people, who make a very pleasant kind of soft summer cheese*.'

Laird goes on describe the cave dwellings at Sneinton Hermitage:

Great part of the village, indeed, consists of the habitations within the rock, many of which have staircases that lead up to gardens on the top, and some of them hanging on shelves on its sides. To a stranger it is extremely curious to see the perpendicular face of the rock with doors and windows in tires, and the inhabitants peeping out from their dens, like the inmates of another world; in fact, if it was not *at home*, and therefore *of no value*, it would, without doubt, have been novelized and melodramatized, until all the fashionable world had been mad for getting under ground. The coffeehouse, and ale houses, cut out of the rock, are the common resort of the holiday folks; indeed the coffeehouse is not only extremely pleasant from its garden plats, and arbours in front, but also extremely curious from its great extent into the body of the rock, where visitors may almost choose their degree of temperature on the hottest day in summer.

The book includes two illustrations of the caves or, as they are labelled, 'Excavations'. Note the windows in the cave openings in the second illustration





Today there are only a few small caves remaining. At one time many people lived in houses with brick built fronts that were built into the rock, incorporating the caves into the living space. During railway and road development in the late C19th many of the caves were destroyed.

Once again I look to Robert Mellors, '*Old Nottingham suburbs: then and now*', 1914, to get more detail:

> *It is possible that once upon a time the Hermitage was a cell of some recluse, or religious order, similar to the caves in Nottingham Park, which were at one time connected with Lenton Priory, but more probably it was the secluded dwelling in the rock of someone who loved to be alone. In the Pierrepont* [The Pierrepont/Earl Manvers family, of Thoresby and Holme Pierrepont, owned much of Sneinton until the C19th; much of the rest was owned by the Musters family] *rental of 1544 is an entry, "There is a hous under the grounde in a rocke of stone that sometyme was called thermitage''; and again in 1501, "The Ermytage in Sneynton, being a howse cutte out of rocke and paieth yearly ijs. (2s.) It is very improbable that we are here to be carried back to the time of the British inhabitants, before the Saxons dislodged them, when Nottingham was called Tigguocobauc, "the dwelling of caves."*
>
> *When the road was made from Southwell Road, by the Hermitage, until it joined the road to Colwick at Old Sneinton, two public houses, the "White Swan'' and the "Earl Manvers' Arms," with other adjoining houses were built, having brick fronts, the caves forming the back premises, and on the rock above the Nottingham Catchfly* [a pinkish-white wildflower with hairy leaves that fills the evening air with a heavy scent in order to attract night-flying insects and moths. It is so-named because it was first found on the walls of Nottingham Castle although it no longer grows there] *grew plentifully. In 1829 a lofty rock overhanging fell and crushed two houses, and destroyed "the noble dancing room cut in the rock." The North Western Railway Company having established their goods station on the top of the rock… in 1897, for their high level line pushed the road sixty feet or so further north, the road was widened, and most of the houses and caves to the west were removed. In 1904 the houses and caves east of the*

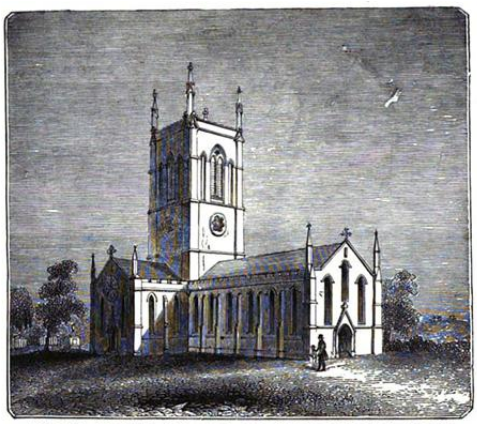
railway bridge were blasted, or pulled down, one cave being 36 feet by 86 feet by 18 feet high.

The Hermitage, Sneinton, c.1900.

Very little is left of the Hermitage caves today

8. St Stephen's Church

The current building dates from 1837 but the church dates back to medieval times. Until the Dissolution of the Monasteries it was served from Lenton Priory, then by clergy from St. Mary's Church, Nottingham, until it became a parish is its own right in 1866.
It is Grade II listed.



'Sneinton New Church' from The History and Antiquities of Nottingham by James Orange, 1840

In the 1840s considerable alterations were being carried out in St. Mary's Church and, to make way for new pews, the ancient seats were ejected from the chancel, where they had been since the fourteenth or fifteenth century. It is said that the organist at St Stephen's, Mr Wilcockson, purchased them for 10 shillings. These are now the choir stalls in St. Stephen's. They contain fine medieval misericords – small wooden shelves underneath the chair of a choir which were established to provide some comfort for a person who would be standing for long periods of prayer. As this would often help the infirm, the term misericord deriving from 'act of mercy'. The misericord became a subject of highly carved images which had an inner symbolism.
A description of the Misericords of St Stephen's Church, with photos, by R B Parish is at http://www.ournottinghamshire.org.uk

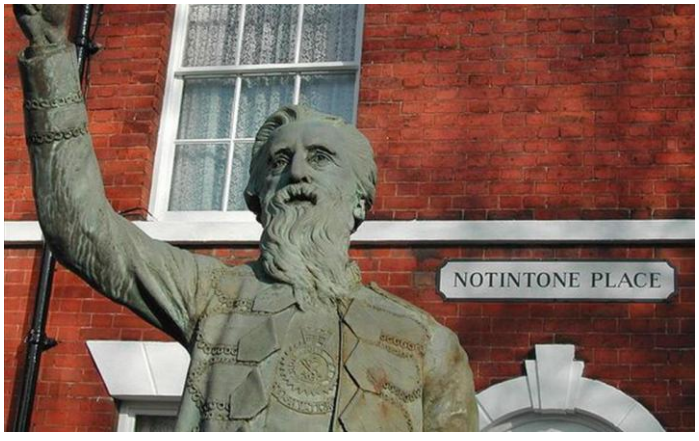
He describes this one as: '*A fox riding a hound and blowing a hunting horn, in some accounts said to be a rat. This may relate to the deceitful nature of the fox which would mean he would be a symbol of the Devil, the image of him riding a dog in a hunt emphasised the carnal nature of hunting perhaps in a satirical fashion*'.
The parents of D.H. Lawrence married in the church on 27 December 1875.

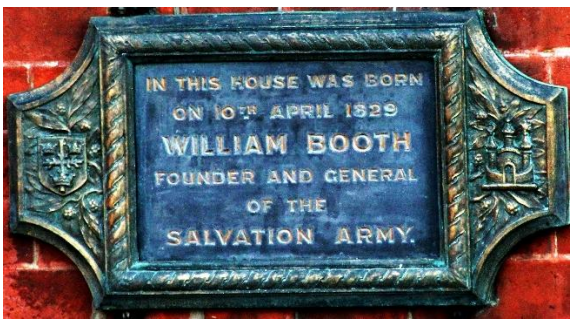
9. Notintone

The origins of the name ‘Sneinton’ is linked with, but has differences from, the origins of ‘Nottingham’.
Nottingham was settled by the Anglo-Saxon chieftain "Snot" and he named the settlement ‘Snottingaham’ (later, just ‘Snottingham’) – the homestead of Snot's people, where inga = the people of; ham = homestead. The area on the hill to the east of the settlement was probably inhabited by their bondfolk and was of less importance. This was called ‘Snottingaton’ (the suffix ton = farmstead settlement).
At the time of the Norman Conquest the ‘S’ of Snottingham was dropped. According to ‘*A Contribution to the Study of Anglo-Norman Influence on English Place Names’*, by R. E. Zachrisson, ‘*S before l, m, n had already been dropped* [by the Normans]*, or changed into another sound ….consequently the combinations Sl, Sm, Sn in English place names were unknown to the Normans*’ – apparently the Normans had difficulty pronouncing such words.
The settlement of Snottingaton is named as ‘Notintone’ in the Domesday Book, but, not being of much importance, it did not attract much notice from the Normans, and so their pronunciation of ‘Notintone’ did not stick; the ‘S’ remained and over time ‘Sneinton’ became the agreed spelling.
However, ‘Notintone’ is used today in Notintone Street and Notintone Place.

10. William Booth

William Booth, Nottingham’s most famous preacher, social reformer and founder of the Salvation Army, was born in 1829 in Notintone Place. He was the son of a builder and, on leaving school, worked at a pawnbrokers. He became involved with the Wesleyan Methodists and during the 1840's preached in the slums of Nottingham, building up a band of followers.
In 1849 he moved to London and then travelled around the country on behalf of the Methodist church whose ministry he eventually left. In 1865 he returned to London with his wife and family and founded the East London Christian Mission which was to become the Salvation Army.
William Booth received the Freedom of the City of Nottingham in 1905. He died in 1912.
For more information visit the William Booth Birthplace Museum website
www.salvationarmy.org.uk/about-us/international-heritage-centre/william-booth-birthplace-museum





11. Green's Windmill

'The History of the Green's Windmill' on www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/greenswindmill gives the full story but, as this is the 'destination' of this Walk, I include much of it here:

In the 1800s England suffered from poor corn harvesting and had difficulties with importing grain due to the Napoleonic Wars. The price of grain increased resulting in the people of Nottingham not being able to afford bread and there were riots – breaking into bakeries and granaries at the canal wharves and the theft of corn.
Mr Green, who had a bakery near the Market Square and also had grain stored beside the Nottingham Canal, had his bakery attacked and he sought assistance from the Mayor.

In 1807 Mr Green bought a plot of land in the village of Sneinton on which he built his windmill; the most powerful and up-to-date of the twenty or so windmills in and around Nottingham.

In 1828 a visitor to the mill describes the mill at work:

> "*I ascertained some facts relative to the economy of a wind-mill. His sails have a radius of twelve yards, and they revolve twenty-five times a minute, or more than a mile at the extremities. This great velocity carries round the stones, which are sixteen feet in circumference, 162 times in a minute, and they grind a load of ten sacks of wheat in two or three hours. The sails are placed at an angle in the shaft, and then in union are placed exactly in the wind's point, but the quantity of cloth is varied inversely as the force of the wind. I went through this fine mill and felt terrified at the centrifugal force of such heavy masses as the stones, the peripheries of which were carried around with a determined velocity of forty miles an hour. Of course, none but particular kinds of stone will bear such a momentum, and the smallest fracture or inequality occasions them to separate with destructive consequences.*"

In 1829 old Mr Green died, leaving the mill and other property to his son George. Two years later, during the Reform Bill riots, an angry mob attacked the mill. George defended his property by firing his musket from the mill whilst his eldest daughter Jane passed the ammunition.
In 1833 George let out his mill and became a student at Caius College, Cambridge. He went on to become one of the greatest scientists of his time; a mathematician whose work, including scientific papers on such subjects as wave motion, the behaviour of light, crystal structure and the elasticity of materials, is known and used around the world.
George Green died in 1841 and is buried in the churchyard of St Stephen's.

In 1844 flour from the mill was advertised in the Nottingham Mercury; it was then run by a Mr Fletcher. It continued working into the 1860s, with a William Oakland as miller, but

had become uneconomic due to competition from the new steam-powered roller mills. It was abandoned and the sails removed.

In 1919 the mill was bought by Oliver Hind (the solicitor who erected the alms houses in Edwalton, as mentioned in Walk No 8). Over the next few years he had repairs done, including having the cap covered in copper to keep out the weather. The mill machinery and stones were still in the mill but not used.

Later the mill was let to H Gell and Co who used the ground floor and first floor to manufacture furniture polish and boot polish. On the 10th July 1947, the building caught fire and, with the lower floors full of wax and polish and the mill tower acting like a chimney, the blaze rapidly took hold and only the brick tower survived. The mill was abandoned once again.

In 1974, responding to a rumour that the mill might be demolished, staff at the University of Nottingham started a fund to preserve the tower as a monument to George Green whose reputation as a mathematical genius had been growing. Five years later the Fund bought the mill and presented it to the City of Nottingham and restoration started.

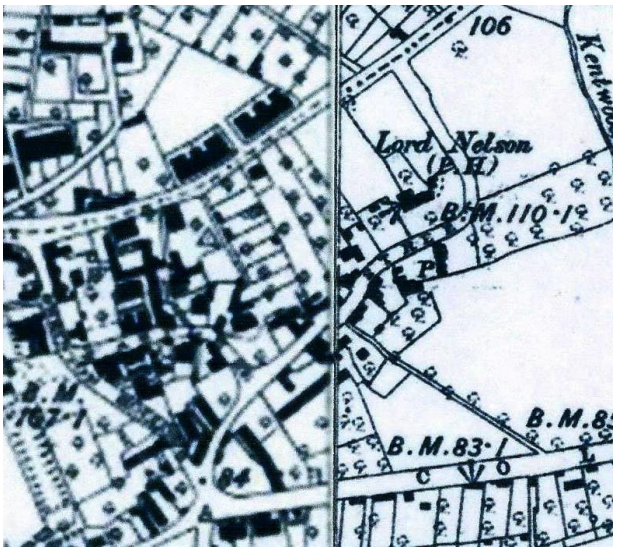
In 1981, with new floors, doors and windows in place, a new cap was hoisted onto the top of the tower by a crane and restoration continued to bring the mill into working order. A science centre was built around the mill yard to tell the story of George Green and his mill. It opened to the public in 1985 but it was not until June 1986 that the mill sails were finally hoisted into place and not until 2nd December that the sails turned and flour was produced in Green's Mill for the first time since the 1860s.

Today, when it is allowed to escape lockdown, the amazing inner workings of the mill can be seen, especially on a windy day, over four floors, including the grain cleaner and grindstones. This enables you to see first-hand how the whole process of how flour is made – and buy the flour. Indeed, the sale of flour has been significant during recent months – the mill has '*played a vital role in keeping supplies* [of flour] *going* [during the Covid pandemic]' (NottinghamshireLive, 27/12/20)

12. Hornbuckle's

I assume that 'Hornbuckle Villas' on Sneinton Hollows are named after Mr Isaac Hornbuckle (d. 1853). Hornbuckle was the 'victualler' of the Lord Nelson pub which was known for a time as 'Hornbuckle's'. The pub is a Grade II listed former coaching inn constructed from two C17th cottages.
When searching on line for information about the pub I noticed that, confusingly, on some sites the address is given as 'Lord Nelson Street' but on others it is 'Thurgarton Street'. It is actually near the junction but the entrance is certainly a few yards up Lord

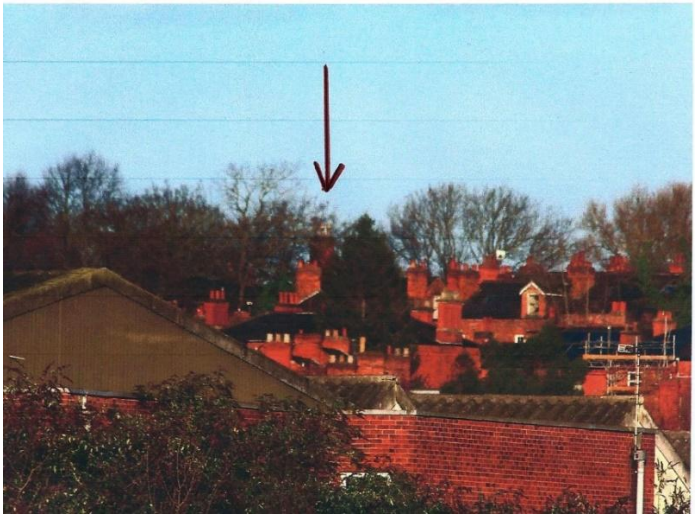
Nelson Street (it is the building to the right of 'LORD' on the 1919 map below left). However, In Hornbuckle's time The Lord Nelson **was** on Thurgarton Street because Lord Nelson Street did not exist (as shown on the 1880s map below right – only 'STREET' is shown for Thurgarton Street). So perhaps one of the addresses is historically pedantic!



I should note that I have made an assumption about the link of Hornbuckle the pub landlord and Hornbuckle Villas. Apparently there was a prominent family of Hornbuckles in West Bridgford. They were once the only family, other than the lord of the manor, who owned land in the village. From the early C19th they lived at The Poplars, Rectory Road (demolished in the 1950s to build a large block of flats) The Hornbuckle name occurs in the parish registers from 1561 to 1823 when it is believed the last of the line died…….or perhaps one of the decendents moved to Sneinton and ran a pub!?

13. The Towers

The story that the owner of 'The Towers' on Castle Street used the tower to watch and check up on the movement of his barges on the River Trent may be true but it is difficult to determine that today. As the photo on the left shows, the tower does reach up higher than other buildings around it. So, with a good telescope and an unobstructed view……? Today there are obstructing trees in Sneinton and many buildings alongside the river which makes this unlikely. However, at one point on the southern bank of the river opposite Trent Basin it is just possible to make out the Tower on the horizon!



14. Bendigo

When the ‘Wrestlers Inn’ (at the junction of Sneinton Hollows and Castle St) closed in 1957 its licence was transferred to a new pub at the bottom of Sneinton Hollows. This was named ‘The Bendigo’ in commemoration of Nottingham's famous bare-knuckle fighter.
An article at www.picturenottingham.co.uk explains that:

> *Bare-knuckle fighting was ever popular during the free-wheeling days of the late 18th to mid 19th centuries and the only rules that governed these prize-fights had been drawn up in 1743 by a Thames waterman called Jack Broughton. These remained the only written rules for over a century. They stated that a round lasted for no set length of time, but ended when a fighter was knocked down or thrown to the ground by wrestling. (Hence the name of the pub in the foreground). Once floored, the fallen fighter had thirty seconds to come up to the 'scratch,' a marker set in the centre of the ring. During the bout, no fighter was allowed to take a respite, and would be instantly disqualified if he 'fell without taking a blow.' These contests became a war of attrition, often developing into a form of grappling match as the combatants became bruised and tired.*

The BBC website has an article dated 10 January 2016 about Bendigo:

> *William Abednego Thompson was born in the Trinity slums of Nottingham in 1811, one of triplets and the last of 21 children. At 15, his father died and he was sent to the workhouse in Sneinton. After various jobs, including oyster selling and iron turning, he took up bare-knuckle boxing and by 21 had defeated a number of local men.*
> *"Bendy Abednego" became known as Bendigo, beating challengers all over the country in front of crowds of thousands and in bouts that would last dozens of rounds. His strength was unrivalled - he once reportedly threw a brick from one side of the River Trent to the other.*
> *He earned the nickname "The Nottingham Jester" for taunting his opponents by making faces or reciting insulting rhymes - much to spectators' glee.*
> *In 1839 he defeated James "Deaf'un" Burke for the All England title and a prize purse of £220*
> *He even attracted the admiration of Sherlock Holmes author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who wrote a verse titled "Bendigo's Sermon".*
> *In later life he became a preacher, adopting a boxer's stance in the pulpit and addressing his congregation: "See them belts, see them cups, I used to fight for those. But now I fight for Christ."*
> *His later years were plagued by alcohol abuse and he died aged 60 in Beeston after falling down the stairs of his home in Beeston.*

Arthur Conan Doyle’s poem is too long (over 70 lines) to include in full but a few lines give an idea:

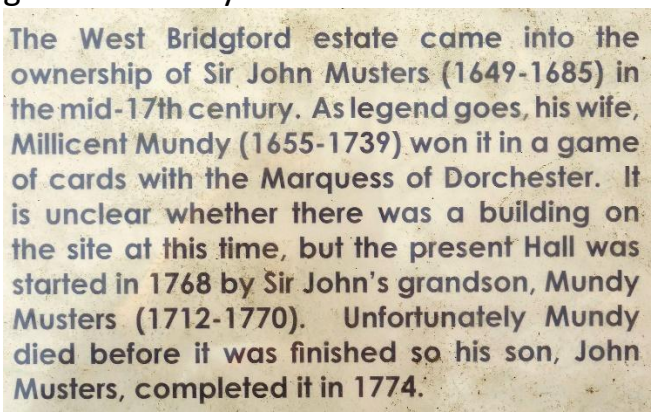
> *You didn’t know of Bendigo! Well, that knocks me out!*
> *Who’s your board school teacher? What’s he been about?*
> *Chock-a-block with fairy-tales full of useless cram,*
> *And never heard o’ Bendigo, the pride of Nottingham!*
> *Bendy’s short for Bendigo. You should see him peel!*
> *Half of him was whalebone, half of him was steel,*
> ……. [Many verses describing his fights and sermons]…….

But to think of all your schooling clean wasted, thrown away,
Darned if I can make out what you're learnin' all the day,
Grubbin' up old fairy-tales, fillin' up with cram,
And didn't know of Bendigo, the pride of Nottingham.

15. Bridgford Hall, Library & Rectory

Bridgford Hall

An information board outside the Hall gives its history


The West Bridgford estate came into the ownership of Sir John Musters (1649-1685) in the mid-17th century. As legend goes, his wife, Millicent Mundy (1655-1739) won it in a game of cards with the Marquess of Dorchester. It is unclear whether there was a building on the site at this time, but the present Hall was started in 1768 by Sir John's grandson, Mundy Musters (1712-1770). Unfortunately Mundy died before it was finished so his son, John Musters, completed it in 1774.

The board explains that the Musters also owned Annesley Hall (the ancestral home of the Chaworth-Musters), Colwick Hall (their main Nottinghamshire home), Wiverton Hall and Edwalton Manor. So Bridgford Hall was largely redundant and it was leased out.

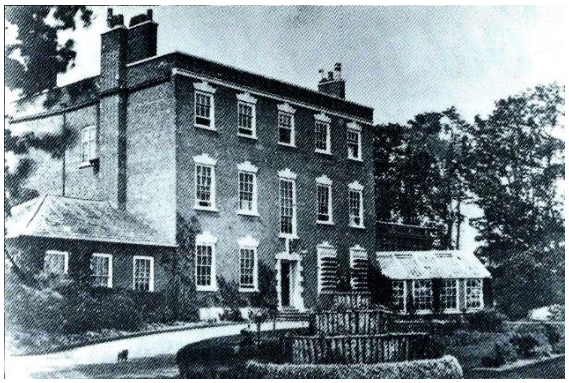


Photo of the Hall before the service wing was built

From 1841 it was occupied by the Heyman family. Lewis Heyman and his wife were both born in Germany and came to Nottingham about 1836. He made a fortune in lace manufacturing, with a particular expertise in the design and production of lace curtains.

After Lewis Heyman died the tenancy passed to his son, Albert who bought the Hall in 1883 and added the service wing.

Albert Heyman sold it to West Bridgford UDC in 1923 (at a price equal to what he had paid for it plus the cost of subsequent improvements) for use as its offices and to create Bridgford Park. Before this, the Council offices had been at 8 Bridgford Road (next to the Memorial Garden) which then became a Midland Bank and is now a Co-op food store.

In 1949 the Hall was Grade II Listed – one of the earliest in the country to be designated. In the 1980s it became a registry office before closing in 2014. In 2017, following repairs and renovations, it reopened as a registry office and 'aparthotel'.

Bridgford Library was officially opened in 1939. Prior to this there had been a reading room in the Hall.
According to an article in the Nottingham Journal on 3rd March 1939, at the opening ceremony the Nottinghamshire County Council Chairman, Major T P Barber, made '*References to the value of libraries in helping to check the spread of "horrible Americanisms….We are beginning to think, eat and drink American. I do think we shall forget how to speak our own language if we don't take a great deal of trouble*"'. The article continues that the Major said he '*was often impelled to put some of the books he read on the fire. Others he locked up so that people should not see them'.*

One wonders what he read! And was he suggesting censorship at the library? Hardly a suitable encouragement at its opening.

According to Geoffrey Oldfield (West Bridgford Past), an earlier opportunity for a library was turned down. In 1905, the Carnegie fund offered £3,000 to the Urban District Council for the establishment of a free library. One Member of the Council opposed this on the grounds of running costs and that '*West Bridgford did not need a library as residents were able to pay for books they wanted'*. After a referendum of residents resulted in 843 against and only 533 for the Council voted 6 to 4 (with 4 abstentions) to refuse the offer. It seems that libraries, or perhaps just Americans (although Carnegie was born a Scot), were not popular in West Bridgford.

The old Rectory on Church Drive will be remembered by those who lived locally before the early 1960s when it was demolished and replaced with a smaller rectory. The new rectory was demolished when the site was sold and the police station built and now that too is to go, probably to be replaced with retirement apartments.

This photo of the old Rectory was taken c1920. (from: 'Turning Back the Pages in Old West Bridgford' compiled by Dick Venner, Notts CC)

As I have said about a number of old vicarages and rectories I have passed on my walks, including the one in Sneinton, this seems a large building for the needs of a clergyman. It was, of course, part of his 'church living' – the guaranteed income and home for the lifetime of the clergyman entering what was considered a gentlemanly profession and indeed many younger sons of gentlemen pursued the church as their career so no doubt had high standards. In later times, such affluent living would often be difficult to maintain.

In Dick Venner's book the Rectory is described as '*a traditionally over large house, very expensive to run and difficult to heat*'. The size of the building (and its heating needs) is illustrated by historical records as reported in Geoffrey Oldfield's 'West Bridgford Past' (2001). In the C17th there was a property based tax known as the Hearth Tax where the tax due from each house was based on the number of hearths or fireplaces. Oldfield notes that the 1674 list of tax payments for West Bridgford '*gives the number of hearths taxable in each house, the largest being eight. As this was for Mrs. Greathead, the rector's widow, it is probably the Rectory. Widow Hornbuckle* [the Hornbuckles were the largest landowner other than the lord of the manor] *and William Dewbery had three hearths, six others had two, but the rest only had one*.' So, the Rectory was either by far the biggest house in the village or the most heated!