



University of
Nottingham
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ISSUE 26: OCTOBER 2025

DISCOVER

The University of Nottingham's Manuscripts and Special Collections

New Weston Gallery exhibition

The Leen: Nottingham's River

Living and working
along the Leen

Spotlight on Gerard
Brothers soap factory



Discover our museum
treasures: the ancient
samian pottery



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Cover image: River Leen flowing into new channel downstream of Triumph Road, 1967. University of Nottingham RE/DOP/H20/39

Letter from the Editor



In putting together this issue, I realised it has an unintentionally watery theme. We have two articles about sailing, and even our next exhibition is all about the river that has shaped Nottingham the most (and no, it's not the River Trent).

One of the articles focuses on the adventurous Lady Rozelle Raynes and her love of sailing. She inherited Thoresby Hall in 1955 and the estate collection featured heavily in our recent *Country lives* exhibition. As the exhibition's topic was the countryside, there was nowhere we could include her, and so the curator has shared it here as a wonderful insight into a remarkable lady. The second article is far more tragic, concerning as it does the *Doddington* which sank in 1755 with the loss of over 200 lives. Second mate William Webb wrote an account of the shipwreck and the seven months the castaways spent on a remote island. There are published versions available, but they're not complete: only the handwritten manuscript we hold here contains his full account. If the name seems familiar, it's because the *Doddington* made the headlines again in the 21st century. A legal argument broke out when the gold it was carrying was plundered by modern-day treasure hunters, a case which shaped the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage.

This issue also features updates from Dr Fabio Saccoccio about his work cataloguing the University of Nottingham Museum's samian ware pottery, excavated from a Roman settlement in Nottinghamshire but made in France. Funded by the Research England grant we received, Fabio's initial contract has been extended and we are very pleased to say he will be with us until the end of 2025.

There is also some news from the Reading Room, for those of you who visit us in-person. From September, we're trialling timed production with six daily production runs. If you order documents or books to see the same day, they will be retrieved at the next production run. This won't affect material requested in advance when visitors book an appointment. We've always recommended giving us two working days' notice because ordering documents in advance isn't just about production: it allows us to check whether the material has any conservation needs, and that it isn't already required for a class or by another reader on the day you plan to visit. The trial will run until Christmas and we will be monitoring how it goes.

Kathryn

Kathryn Steenson, Senior Archivist (Academic and Public Engagement)

Current opening times



Reading Room at King's Meadow Campus

Monday–Tuesday 9.30am–5pm

Wednesday–Thursday 9.30am–6pm

Weston Gallery at Lakeside Arts, University Park

Tuesday–Sunday
12 noon–4pm

Please check our opening times before visiting: nottingham.ac.uk/mss

Keeper's update

As we were going to print with our previous issue the University of Nottingham made public the news that we were looking to sell King's Meadow Campus which has been the home of Manuscripts and Special Collections since 2006. We had been aware of this for some time before the news was announced and we are having ongoing discussions with senior leaders at the university about relocating our service. Thank you to everyone who has contacted us since hearing about the sale. I won't underestimate the scale of the challenge in relocating a service of our size, but it will also be one that opens up new opportunities for us to make the collections more accessible and to raise our profile amongst new and existing audiences.

Any relocation is unlikely to take place for a number of years, but we are actively preparing for a future move. This includes surveying the collections and ensuring that they are all packaged in such a way as will allow them to be moved safely. You can read about the start of our efforts to upgrade our packaging where required on pages 6-7.

Whilst we are making preparations for a move our other work continues at pace and we have lots of exciting projects underway. I've written in previous issues about the Museums, Galleries and Collections funding that we receive from Research England. In this issue we report on two areas of work that we have supported using the Research England funding. The first is the development of our samian pottery collection (pages 8-9). Based in the Lakeside Arts Centre, the University Museum has been part of Manuscripts and Special Collections since January 2020, and the samian pottery is one of the unsung highlights of the museum's

collections. One of our aims is to make descriptions of our samian ware available online for the first time, and this chimes with the second piece of work that we are reporting on which involves looking at ways to enhance digital access to our collections (pages 16-17).

In other funding news I am delighted to announce that we have successfully bid for £50,000 from the Archives Revealed programme. Archives Revealed is a grant programme dedicated to the cataloguing and unlocking of UK archival collections. It is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Pilgrim Trust, the Wolfson Foundation and The National Archives. Our funding will support the cataloguing of two of our theatre collections and the creation of a theatre-themed exhibition and events programme. Our project archivist will be taking up their new post as this issue goes to print and will be reporting on their progress in future issues.

If you would like to find out more about these projects, want to discuss opportunities to work with the collections, or would like to discuss donating your archives to us then please get in touch at mss-library@nottingham.ac.uk. In the meantime, I hope that you enjoy reading this issue of *Discover*.



Hayley Cotterill
Keeper of Manuscripts and Special Collections



Visit our online catalogue at:
mss-cat.nottingham.ac.uk/Calmview

Outreach diary

Our calendar is always bursting with a wide range of events, visits and classes: here's just a snapshot from the year so far...

- First up, we were proud to co-host the module '**Exploring the German Archive**' alongside the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures! **Across 10 sessions**, students explored 20th century German history through a wide range of newspaper cuttings and personal papers held here at Manuscripts and Special Collections.
- We headed out to **Woodborough** to give their **local history society** a talk about the many 'Nottinghamshire Treasures' we hold, from illuminated medieval manuscripts to mysterious Victorian scrapbooks.
- Next, we introduced our innovative **Early Modern Print Workshop**, which gives students the opportunity to encounter a range of early printed books and to investigate the hidden meanings of the intricate images held within. **Nearly 100 students have taken part so far!**
- We were excited to hold a **book launch** for 'Change and Continuity in Seventeenth-century Nottinghamshire' by Dr Peter Seddon. Attendees had the chance to hear Dr Seddon discuss his work and view some of the rare documents which formed the backbone of his research.
- We held a **hybrid research seminar**, with scholars joining us online and in the Reading Room, about *Le Roman de Silence*, a thirteenth century Old French romance which has only one surviving manuscript copy – held at Manuscripts and Special Collections.



Dr Peter Seddon speaking at the book launch for 'Change and Continuity in Seventeenth-century Nottinghamshire'; 11 February 2025.

50
classes
to
University of
Nottingham
students

33 public
events
We welcomed
1,066 visitors
to the Reading Room
697 email enquiries
answered

- We hosted a series of classes for undergraduate **Archaeology** students, uncovering archival evidence for changes to the Wollaton Hall estate across the centuries, featuring everything from Tudor architecture to early coal mining.
- Very early one July morning, we welcomed Michael Portillo and a TV crew from **Great British Railway Journeys**, who filmed some caves-related archives for a future episode featuring Nottingham. We've also provided images of DH Lawrence for an episode of **Bargain Hunt**.
- It's been a bumper season for loan items as well: **Derby Museums** borrowed two items for two very different exhibitions about artist Joseph Wright and the world's most famous vampire, Dracula. And in August we'll be loaning the **National Portrait Gallery** four items for their *Writers Revealed* exhibition touring to Busan Museum, South Korea and Shanghai Museum, China.

There's plenty more coming up

Heritage Open Days are coming up in September and we will be running **three free events**:

- A **walking tour** about the **architecture of University Park**, Fridays 12 and 19 September
- A **curator tour** of our **Country lives** exhibition, Thursday 18 September
- A display at **Clumber Park**, Friday 19 September

For more information, please see our website:
nottingham.ac.uk/mss

In the meantime, if you'd like to book a visit, talk or class with us, please contact us at:
mss-library@nottingham.ac.uk – we'd love to add you to our diary!

Preparing our collections for relocation



In the last issue, we mentioned the then-recent public announcement that the University of Nottingham had decided to sell King's Meadow Campus, where Manuscripts and Special Collections is based, which means that we would eventually be moving out.

There are no further updates about when that may happen, but that doesn't mean we haven't been busy behind the scenes. We were fortunate that University of Nottingham Library generously allowed staff from the wider library service to volunteer half a day per week for 10 weeks, to help us prepare.

One of our main priorities is to ensure that all the material is in proper archival packaging that can withstand a move. To begin with, we selected three collections where the packaging needed improvement: parts of the theatre, water, and University archives, which are still housed in the original boxes and wrappings that they arrived in. Whilst these are stable on a shelf and are suitable for the brief trip to the Reading Room and back, repackaging them would offer much more protection during a move and reduce the risk of the contents being damaged.

The team of library helpers was trained up on both handling archival material and on their tasks and teamed up with MSC staff to work alongside them regularly on a Thursday or Friday morning.

The show files relating to performances at the Theatre Royal and Royal Concert Hall Nottingham, and the mid-20th century plans from the Trent River Authority water collections, were originally kept in large packets and envelopes. The documents were removed, wrapped in acid-free paper with any annotations on the original packaging copied onto the new, and then placed in archive boxes.

“One of our main priorities is to ensure that all the material is in proper archival packaging that can withstand a move.”

Elisabeth Jackson, one of the library team working on the theatre archives: “Initially I was a little surprised that these had been preserved, as the documents aren't that old. But from a social history perspective it's been absolutely fascinating, and it's really difficult not to get drawn into the items, as we're packing them up...my favourite



Maps before...



Maps during...

Part one repackaged assets in numbers

- 1,158 theatre show files into 91 boxes
- 918 university plans into 55 boxes
- 393 water record plans into 65 boxes

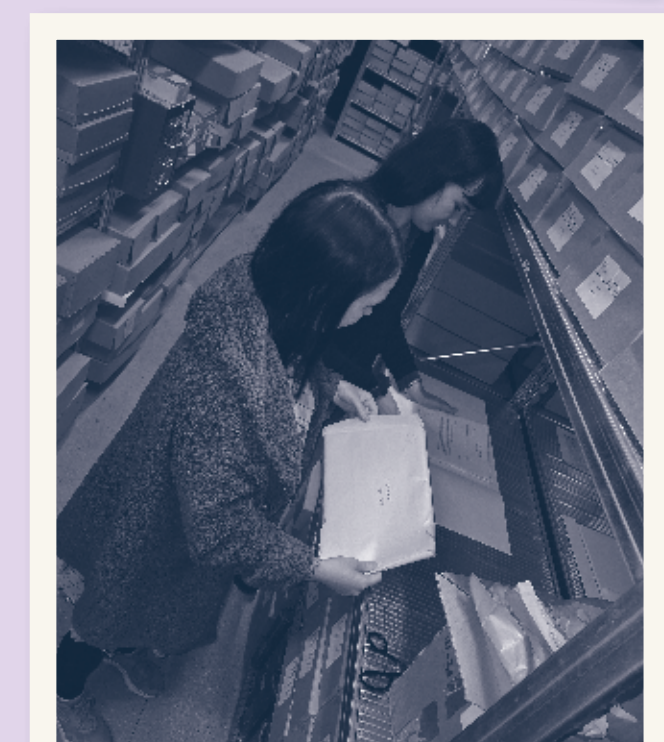
moment has been reading the 'rider' of a performer in the 1980s who wanted 'a pot of tea and a round of sandwiches, but no cheese ones please'. I hope that the work we're doing on the project means that others will get to enjoy these resources for a long time to come”.

The third collection, architectural drawings for various buildings of the University of Nottingham, was stored in cardboard tubes. The tubes had always been slightly troublesome, as they had a tendency to shift and move on the shelves. The plans dated from the 1920s and relate to buildings on University Park, Jubilee, and Sutton Bonington campuses. They were taken out of the tubes, and larger rolls split into two, to avoid them being rolled up too tightly. They were then wrapped in acid-free paper and placed in (square!) archival map boxes.

The progress is incredible, and wouldn't have been possible without the library team who volunteered to spend part of their week here. We'll leave the last word to one of them, Sophie Marshall, and the benefit she found to being involved: “I only joined Libraries earlier this year...it's been a nice opportunity to get to know some new colleagues, and to learn more about MSC in general”.



Repackaged maps



Ancient stories in orange clay

The samian pottery collection at the University of Nottingham Museum

There's always something waiting to be discovered. That's not just a mantra for archaeologists with trowels in hand; it is a truth that echoes through every museum corridor. Some of the most remarkable finds were not uncovered recently in the field, but rather lay quietly, almost forgotten, behind closed storeroom doors.

Now, at the University of Nottingham Museum, one such treasure is stepping into the light.

Thanks to a generous grant from Research England, in January 2025, a dedicated Museum Documentation Officer was appointed to catalogue one of the museum's most intriguing, but largely hidden, collections: the Oswald-Plicque-Chenet samian pottery collection. It includes around 4,500 fragments of stunning Roman pottery, known as *samian ware*, and it is brimming with stories waiting to be told.

So, what is samian ware?

Produced in Gaul (modern France and surrounding areas) between the 1st and 3rd centuries AD, samian ware is instantly recognisable by its smooth, glossy orange surface. Often richly decorated, these vessels were more than just tableware, they were canvases that told stories. Made using intricate moulds, these vessels brought to life scenes of mythical heroes, wild beasts, and powerful gods. Think of lions in mid-pounce, Herakles battling monsters, or the goddess Minerva wearing a helmet, shield in hand.

Mem- Tribunus' cup.
Produced at Lavoye, North-East France, 140-170 AD.



A mould-decorated samian sherd showing the goddess Minerva with helmet and shield. Found at Margidunum; made in 1st-century AD Lezoux, France.

What makes this particular collection exceptional is not only its beauty, but its history. Much of it was originally produced in what is now France, and found its way to Roman sites like Margidunum, near Bingham (Nottinghamshire), where Felix Oswald conducted excavations in the early 20th century.



L. Cosius Virilis' cup, featuring visible fingerprints highlighted within the light blue circle. Fingerprint image by Matt Davies, University of Nottingham Digital Transformation Hub.

Made using intricate moulds, these vessels brought to life scenes of mythical heroes, wild beasts, and powerful gods.”

But Oswald's passion for samian pottery went far beyond local digs. He corresponded with fellow scholars across Europe and, through these connections, acquired remarkable material from two pioneers of Roman ceramics: Dr Alfred-Edward Plicque, who developed an interest in samian ware after discovering a kiln while digging in his garden in Lezoux, Central France, and George Chenet, a leading researcher in the Argonne region, North-East France. Oswald purchased part of Plicque's collection from his widow and received finds from Chenet, including moulds, complete vessels, decorated fragments, and even wasters – overfired pottery discarded at production sites. Together, these finds form a one-of-a-kind archaeological time capsule, offering a unique

glimpse into Roman craftsmanship, commerce, and daily life.

And here's where it gets even more exciting: this collection is now being fully catalogued and studied, bringing to light hidden treasures.

Next time you're near University Park's Lakeside Arts, step into the museum and see for yourself. Spot the maker's mark of Atilianus, a potter active in Lezoux between 170–200 AD. Look for a warped cup made by Mem-Tribunus, whose kiln fire flared out of control. Marvel at lion-headed spouts of mortaria, vessels used for grinding food, or the exquisitely detailed scene of a gladiator facing a lion, armed only with a spear.

In at least two samian vessels from the collection, the ancient potter's fingerprints remain visible. One of these belonged to L. Cosius Virilis, who was active in southern France nearly 2,000 years ago. Although not currently on display, these remarkable traces of human touch are being documented in collaboration with NTU's ISAAC Research Centre – Haida Liang, Sammy Cheung, and Patrick Atkinson – and the University of Nottingham's Digital Transformation Hub – Matt Davies – as well as the labs of the Department of Classics and Archaeology – Susie Sherwin – and the Metrology Lab – Chris Tompkins – both part of the N-MESH (Nottingham Materials and Environment Science and Heritage Laboratories) network. These partnerships will offer new insights into Roman pottery production.

There's more: samian pottery wasn't just admired at the dinner table. It was repurposed over the centuries into game tokens, mosaic tiles, and even spindle whorls used in textile making.

And while you're at the museum, be sure to check out another marvel: the enigmatic Norton Disney dodecahedron, on display until 18 January 2026 – a mysterious Gallo-Roman object that continues to puzzle experts and delight visitors.

There's always more to uncover. And right now, at the University of Nottingham Museum, history is being rediscovered, sherd by shining sherd, with plans to host a samian digital gallery soon.

Come and explore. You never know what else you might find!



Living and working along the Leen

Our current Weston Gallery exhibition *The Leen: Nottingham's River*, mentions a number of local businesses that were based along the course of the river. In this article we look in more detail at one of these through a fascinating photograph archive held by Manuscripts and Special Collections.

The year 2026 marks the 150th anniversary of the founding of this company, and the 20th anniversary of the closure of the site where so many Nottingham residents worked.

Gerard Brothers, established in 1876, was founded by two brothers who recognised that the local textile industry, with its associated bleachers, dyers and finishers, meant there was a high demand for soap. Their factory was positioned close to both the railway and the River Leen from

which water was pumped, filtered, used for cooling and then returned to the river at a rate, at one point, of 35,000 gallons per hour.

Soap is produced by the chemical reaction of caustic soda on vegetable oils and animal fats which produces glycerine as a by-product. Over the years



Gerard's produced a number of products, investing in cutting edge machinery in order to meet demand. One of their main brands was a toilet soap called Ino and they also produced Ino washing flakes.

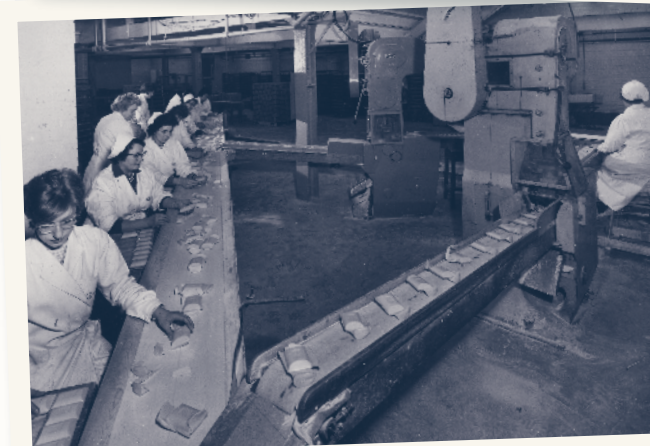
In 1955 the entire share capital was purchased by Cussons Sons and Company Limited of Manchester. This enabled the modernisation of plant, and Gerard's took over the manufacture of Cussons soap which had previously been supplied by Lever Brothers. By 1970 Gerard Brothers were the second largest toilet soap base producing factory in the UK, capable of producing over 1,000 tons of products per week. Imperial Leather soap was stamped at the rate of 68 tablets per minute and labelled at 100 per minute. In 2006 the Basford plant closed, and production was moved to a new plant overseas, ending over 130 years of soap making at the site.



By 1970 Gerard Brothers were the second largest toilet soap base producing factory in the UK, capable of producing over 1,000 tons of products per week.”

The River Leen connects places and communities, and we hope the exhibition will prompt discussions and recollections. We will be holding an event at which memories of living and working alongside the Leen can be shared and captured. Come and share your memories and explore more images from the archives of local businesses such as Gerard's, Cussons and institutions such as the QMC. Reminiscences collected at the event will be mapped to the course of the River Leen to examine how its meaning has shifted over time.

The workshop, *Living and working along the Leen* will be held on Thursday 13 November 2025 10am-4pm at the Weston Gallery and refreshments will be available in the meeting room opposite. Contact Lakeside Box Office to reserve a free space.



Opposite page:
Gerard's fleet of motor vehicles; c.1923. MS 801 (ACC 2106 box 2)

Gerard's Soap Works, Basford; c.1950s-1960s. MS 801 (ACC 2106 box 1)

From top: Saponification process at Gerard Brothers factory; c.1900-1950s. MS 801 (ACC 2106 box 2)

Ino Flakes production line; c.1930s-1950s. MS 801 (ACC 2106 box 2)

Wrapping bars of soap, at Gerard's, c.1950s-1960s. MS 801 (ACC 2106 box 2)



The Leen: Nottingham's River runs until 15 March 2026 at the Weston Gallery, Lakeside Arts.



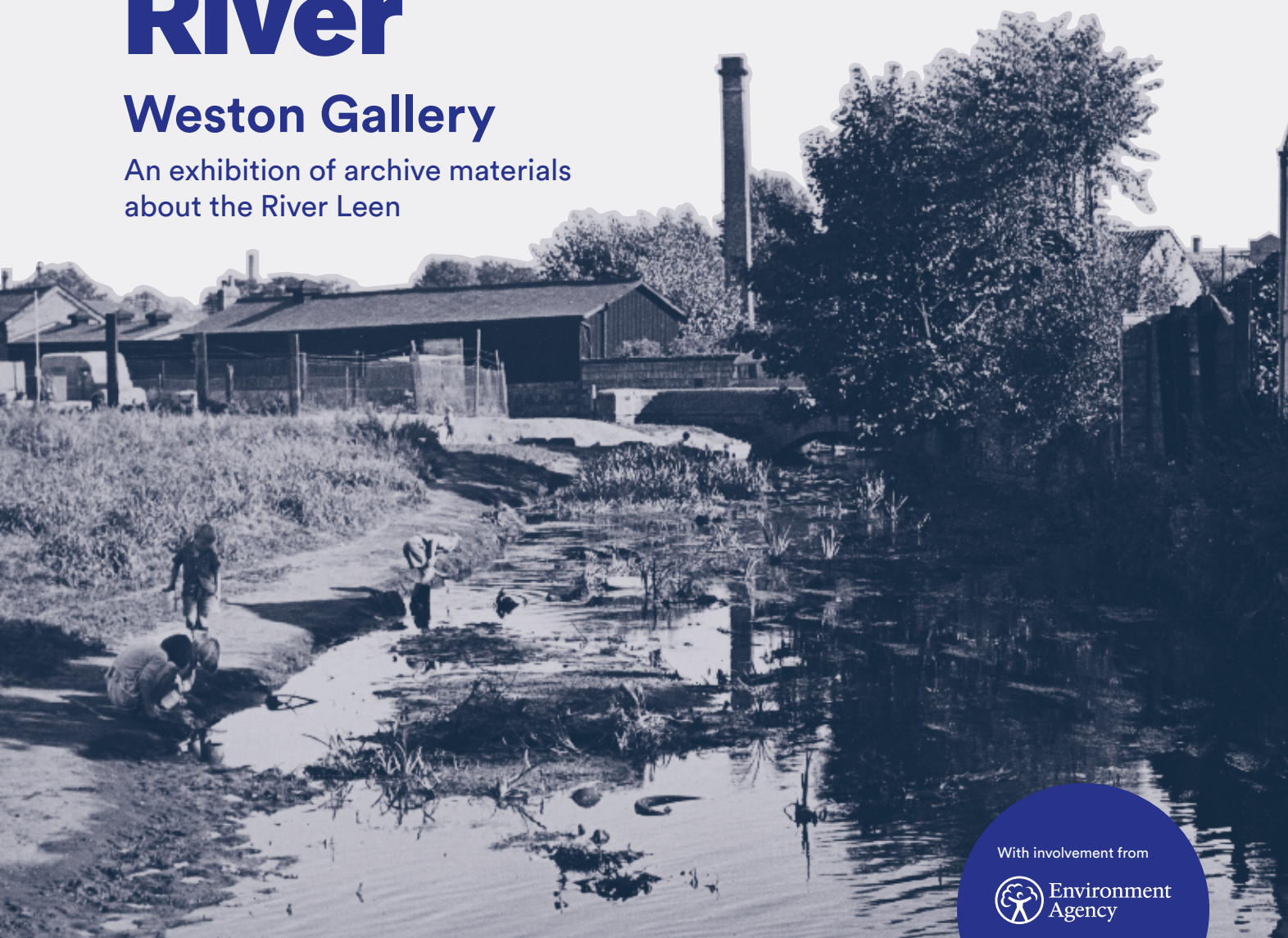
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Presented by
University of Nottingham
Libraries, Manuscripts and
Special Collections

The Leen: Nottingham's River

Weston Gallery

An exhibition of archive materials
about the River Leen



With involvement from



Thursday 9 October 2025 to Sunday 15 March 2026

Free admission. Opening times: Tuesday–Sunday 12 noon–4pm. Closed Mondays.

Weston Gallery
Lakeside Arts
University Park
Nottingham NG7 2RD

☎ **Box Office: +44 (0)115 846 7777**
🌐 **lakesidearts.org.uk**
🌐 **nottingham.ac.uk/mss**



EXHIBITION NEWS

Why the The Leen is Nottingham's river

This exhibition puts the Leen at the centre of the story of modern Nottingham. From its source in the Robin Hood Hills above Newstead Abbey to the River Trent at the Meadows, the River Leen connects places and communities.

Drawing on the archives of the Trent River Authority and its predecessor bodies, the materials on display show the challenges created by the growth of places like Bulwell and Basford and the expansion of industry.

These included pollution from chemicals and sewage, and changing flood risk from urban expansion. New management challenges shaped the redrawing of Nottingham's political and economic boundaries, and in the 1960s a substantial engineering 'Improvement Scheme' diverted the river and fixed the channel behind steel pilings and flood walls.

The Leen: Nottingham's River evaluates the legacies of historic interventions along the Leen for those who manage and live beside it today.



This exhibition has been jointly curated by Dr David Beckingham and Dr Rachel Dishington (School of Geography) and Manuscripts and Special Collections at the University of Nottingham. The Environment Agency's Trentside Office, Nottingham, has provided additional input.

Opposite page, pictured: Channel at the River Leen's junction with Daybrook, Basford, Nottingham, 1961. University of Nottingham RE/DOP/H5/22

Above: River Leen flowing into new channel downstream of Triumph Road, 1967. University of Nottingham RE/DOP/H20/39

Left: Flooded Basford Crossings, Nottingham, 1947. University of Nottingham RE/DOP/H2/43

Join our events

A series of special events will be held to accompany the exhibition. Places are limited so please book in advance on +44 (0)115 846 7777 or online at lakesidearts.org.uk

Lunchtime talks at Djanogly Theatre 1pm–2pm, £3 (free concessions)

How do we make our cities more resilient to flooding?

Wednesday 29 October 2025, 1pm–2pm

Dr Emily O'Donnell (School of Geography) will explain the ideas behind Sustainable Urban Drainage.

What's living in our rivers

Tuesday 11 November 2025, 1pm–2pm

Professor Matthew Johnson (School of Geography) will introduce the links between aquatic life and our river systems, with research examples from across the region.

The future of the Leen

Wednesday 28 January 2026, 1pm–2pm

This special panel discussion introduces the work of the Environment Agency's River Leen team and looks at the challenges and opportunities for river management.

With involvement from



Weston Gallery tours

Join us for a walk through the exhibition and learn about the stories behind the items on display.

Starts 11am–12noon on:

- Wednesday 29 October 2025
- Saturday 22 November 2025
- Wednesday 28 January 2026

Starts 4pm–5pm on:

- Wednesday 4 February 2026

Free – advanced booking is required

Other events

Living and working along the Leen Thursday 13 November 2025 10am–4pm Weston Gallery and meeting room

Come and share your memories and explore more images from the archives of local businesses such as Gerard's/Cussons and institutions such as the QMC. Reminiscences collected at the event will be mapped to the course of the River Leen to examine how its meaning to local residents has shifted over time.

The lost Leen

Dr David Beckingham will lead a walk tracing the old river through Nottingham city centre.

Saturday 7 March 2026
2pm–4pm
(Walk distance is around 1.5 miles)

£5 – advanced booking is required



Map of the county of Nottingham, by John Speed, 1610. University of Nottingham Map Cabinet Not 1.B8.C76

PROFILE

Five minutes with...

Dr Fabio Saccoccio



What is your job title and how long have you worked at the University of Nottingham Museum?

“My job title is Museum Documentation Officer and I started in January 2025.”

How did you get into this type of work?

“After completing my PhD at UoN, I worked for the Department of Classics and Archaeology as a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow until December 2024. My expertise lies mostly in Bronze and Iron Age Northern Italy and Central Europe and even though I'm not an expert on samian ware, which is the focus of my current role, I've dealt with pottery extensively, building an extensive background in museum collections and cataloguing.”

What does your work involve?

“The main aim of my job is to catalogue all the finds that belong to the Oswald-Plicque-Chenet samian pottery collection. The collection is mostly composed of pottery finds from Margidunum, a Roman town near Bingham, but recorded samian vessels were mostly produced in France between the 1st and 3rd century AD. The catalogue will eventually be available not only to researchers but also to the wider public. To reduce the number of records which need to be created, I match sherds by looking at the decoration and relying on experience. I have kind of a photographic memory, so if I remember seeing a similar sherd in another box, I'll go and look for it. To aid future conservation efforts and provide an intuitive method for assessing joins, I have produced 'one to one sherds matching diagrams' on paper, where I've drawn the perimeter of every single sherd showing how they match together.”

What are the most challenging aspects of your job?

“Dealing with all the legacy data, such as paper archives, which I have now re-ordered.”

What is your favourite item from the collections?

“A little cup which has the stamp of the potter, L. Cosius Virilis, who was active in southern France between 75 and 110 AD. The most interesting thing is the presence of fingerprints. There are at least two partial ones and that let me wonder about production processes, specifically whether a single person or multiple people were involved in it. So, we started a project about fingerprints with Nottingham Trent University, using their ISAAC Centre to do some laser scanning. I'm waiting for the results.”

What do you like most about your job?

“Learning something new every day. As I mentioned, I'm not a specialist on samian pottery, but I have learnt a lot and I'm really grateful for this opportunity because it made me think in a different way, and that's something we need to do because it's the only way to understand a bit more about the past. Sticking with the same vision forever will not get you far enough.”

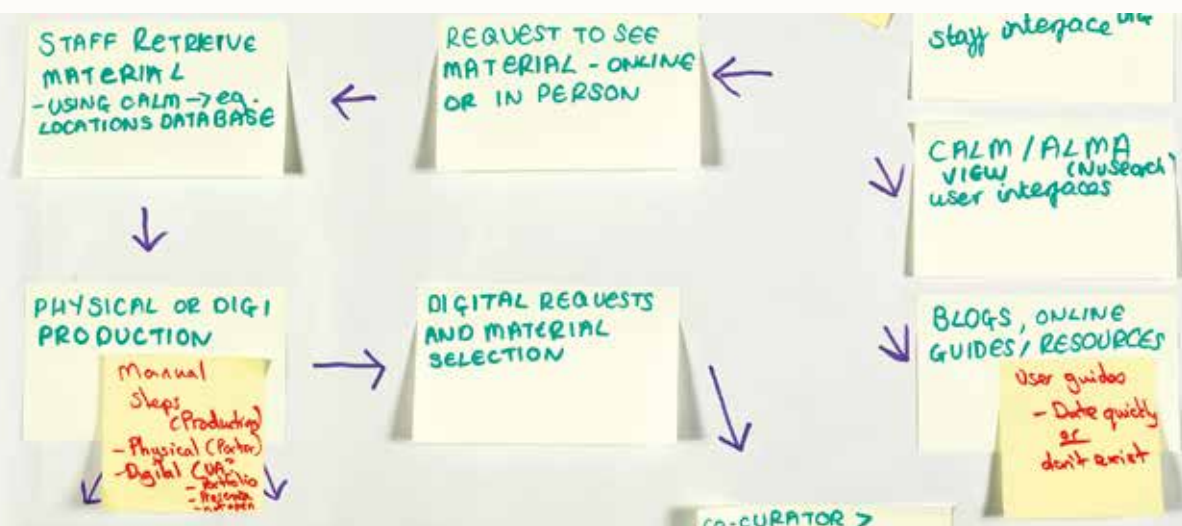


Finding matching sherds: a reconstructed mould-decorated samian pottery bowl belonging to the Oswald-Plicque-Chenet samian pottery collection held at the University of Nottingham Museum.

For more information about the samian ware project, see article on page 8.

Exploring ways to enhance digital access to our collections

Post-it notes from a digital access workshop discussion.



At Manuscripts and Special Collections, we strive to increase opportunities for people to access our collections digitally as well as physically. We also continually seek to make our platforms easier to use to increase discovery of our collections.

Late last year we embarked on a project to review our existing digital access platforms to evaluate how well they were meeting our user community needs and identify ways to enhance our digital offering.

Work completed so far

We have surveyed our existing digital access tools and user groups, including our own staff. This consultation has taken the form of workshops, interviews, and usability testing of some of our digital platforms.

Here are different types of digital content and the ways in which people can currently discover and interact digitally with the collections:

- Digital image galleries
- Manuscripts online catalogue
- Exhibition spaces
- Dedicated computer to view born digital material in our Reading Room
- Virtual Reading Room
- Interactive resources

What we have found

The process has been very revealing. It has confirmed many of the thoughts we had about possible opportunities to enhance the digital experience we offer. We can see that whilst our users value our information and extensive digital resources very highly (75% of respondents to a survey 2024 rated the quality of our online resources as “very good”), usability testing has demonstrated navigation challenges across our multiple platforms.

We also identified a need to provide clearer information about how archives work, how to access digital (and physical!) content, and provide clear instructions on how digital material can be used, including permission to reuse.

Another aspect that we are now exploring is technologies that allow users to interact with our digital content in more innovative ways for research purposes. This includes experimenting with 3D and other imaging techniques, such as reflectance transformation imaging and photogrammetry, and incorporating tools that allow for more sophisticated analysis and comparison of our digital images online.

This means that we need to provide access not just to static images, but complex digital objects.

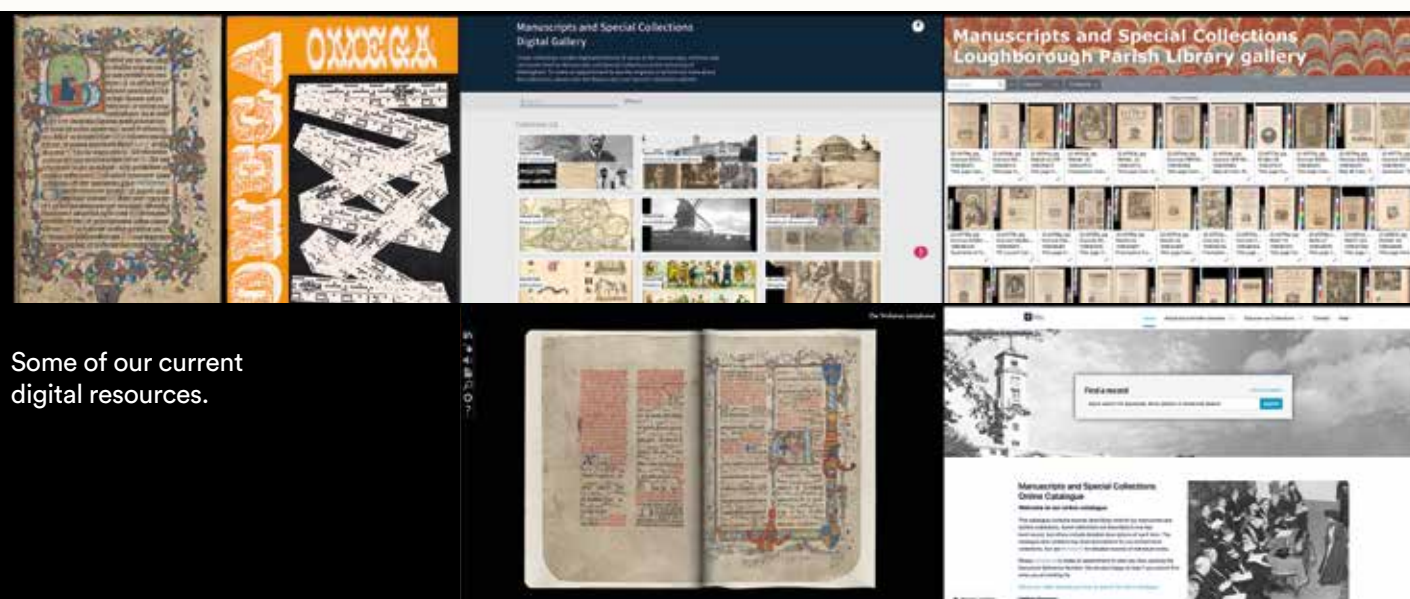
Reflectance Transformation Imaging of a 13th century seal and photographing a 3D mannequin.

“...experimenting with 3D and other imaging techniques, such as reflectance transformation imaging and photogrammetry, and incorporating tools that allow for more sophisticated analysis...”

Tools such as artificial intelligence could provide opportunities to expand and develop the ability to draw together data from our different digital collections in ways that traditional archive catalogues and search tools may not.

Still to come

Having gathered a lot of very useful information during the course of this consultation process, we are now moving on to improving the tools we have, investigating various technologies that can support innovative research access. We will also continue to focus on ensuring the information provided alongside our digital content helps people most effectively understand what it is and how it can be used.



Some of our current digital resources.

A lady's love of the open ocean

Discovering Thoresby's remarkable Lady Rozelle

Frederica Rozelle Ridgway Pierrepont's long life (1925-2015) was one of chance, tragedy, adventure and happiness. Her parents were Gervas Evelyn Pierrepont and Marie-Louise Roosevelt Butterfield. They were privileged but not titled. Gervas fought with distinction in the First World War and then became a London County Councillor. Marie-Louise's father had inherited the small Cliffe Castle estate at Keighley in West Yorkshire. Marie-Louise was a talented artist and studied in Paris.

Their life was very different from the Gothic splendour of Thoresby Hall and the management of thousands of acres of Midlands arable land. But in 1926 Gervas's cousin Robert Evelyn Pierrepont succeeded as the 5th Earl Manvers. Sadly, following a severe breakdown aged 17, he was unable to manage the estate and had no children. Gervas would be the next owner. Rozelle was the youngest of three children, but over two horrific years between 1928 and 1930, her four-year-old brother Evelyn and nine-year-old sister Mary, known as Venetia, died of scarlet fever and septicaemia, leaving her the only surviving child.

Gervas succeeded as 6th Earl Manvers in 1940 and Rozelle, now the daughter of an Earl, assumed the title Lady. She preferred action to aristocracy and at the age of 18 she joined the Wrens and became a stoker on launches and small landing craft in Portsmouth and Southampton. She saw British and American troops off to D-Day in 1944 and was horrified by seeing young and wounded German prisoners of war. She hated war but loved the sea.

Rozelle served as a crew member on the racing yacht 'Moonbeam' in 1947. Her life at sea was then confined to holidays, as she took a full-time job with the Inner London Education Authority as a School Care Committee secretary. She bought her own boat 'Imp', and in 1953 a larger vessel, the 'Martha



Lady Rozelle Raynes, perhaps aboard the 'Martha McGilda' on the River Thames; 1970s. Manvers Collection Ma 10 Ph 203/110/2

“She preferred action to aristocracy and at the age of 18 she joined the Wrens and became a stoker on launches and small landing craft in Portsmouth and Southampton.”

McGilda'. She used this boat to cruise around the Baltic Sea and the Norwegian coast, often alone.

After her father's death in 1955, Rozelle inherited Thoresby. Marie-Louise lived in Thoresby Hall until her death in 1984, but Rozelle managed affairs from afar. In 1953 she married Major Alexander Beattie,

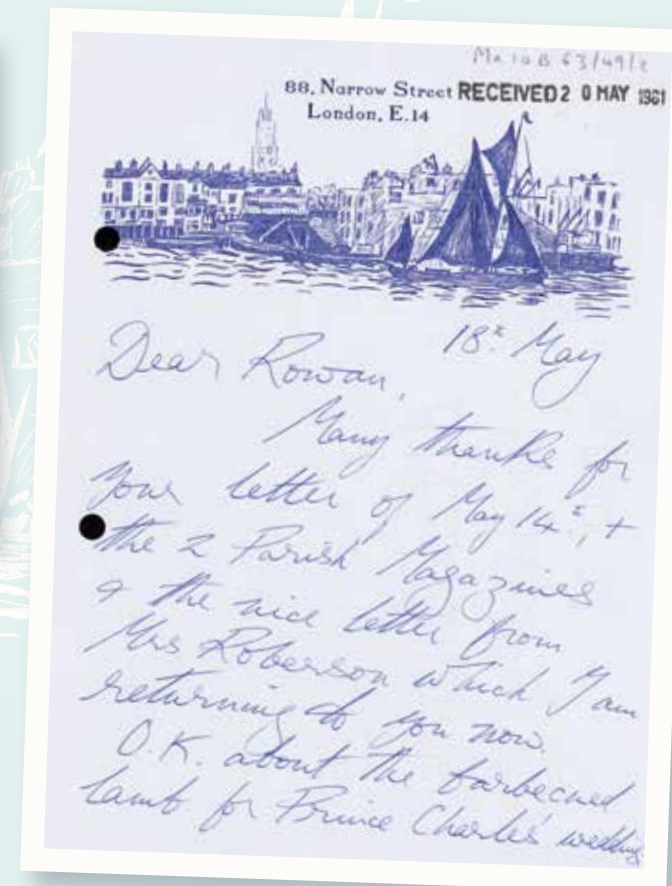


“In the 1970s Rozelle and Dick developed a successful project to take groups of east London boys from difficult backgrounds and teach them to sail on the 'Martha McGilda'.”

a former Coldstream Guard. Beattie masterminded opening Thoresby Hall to the public for the first time in 1957, arranging for the glamour model 'Sabrina' to be in attendance and writing the text of the first printed brochure.

Rozelle continued working in London and divorced Beattie in 1961. In 1965 she married Dr Richard Hollings Raynes, a deputy medical officer in Newham. The couple were devoted to each other and their shared interests of sailing, motor cars, and work in deprived communities. In the 1970s Rozelle and Dick developed a successful project to take groups of east London boys from difficult backgrounds and teach them to sail on the 'Martha McGilda'.

The couple built a new home on the Thoresby estate in the mid-1980s and retired there. Rozelle helped refugees from the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, offering them accommodation at Thoresby and helping them to settle. She wrote seven books (as Rozelle Raynes) about her varied life experiences.



Above, left: Dr Dick Raynes and Lady Rozelle Raynes at their house in, London; c.1980-1990. Manvers Collection Ma 10 Ph 203/53

Letter from Lady Rozelle Raynes to Thoresby agent Rowan McFerran; 1981. Manvers Collection Ma 10 B 63/49/2 The letter refers to preparations for a party for Thoresby tenants and Perlethorpe residents for the Royal Wedding of Charles, Prince of Wales, and Lady Diana Spencer.

A large collection of material from the Thoresby Estate Office has recently been catalogued as part of the Manvers Collection (Ma 10). Brochures, plans and letters relating to public access to the Thoresby Estate feature in the recent *Country lives* exhibition. Thoresby Hall remained a visitor attraction until the 1980s, followed by the Thoresby Courtyard from the 1990s. Access to the Major Oak was managed from 1969 by the development of Sherwood Forest Country Park in partnership with Nottinghamshire County Council. In the 1970s Rozelle nominated two distant cousins to inherit the Thoresby estates, Hugh Matheson and Ian Thorne. They moved to Nottinghamshire and took on farming responsibilities. The complexity of managing the family estates meant that queries and decisions were recorded in detailed correspondence with the resident Agent at Thoresby. Rozelle's own personal archive does not form part of the collection, but some chance survivals in the Agent's files, such as photographs, postcards, letters and a few sailing logs, give a sense of this remarkable woman.

Shipwrecked and stranded: the journal of the East Indiaman *Doddington*

In a University archive of a landlocked county, a shipwreck journal might be one of the last things you expect to find. However, in the Mellish collection there's a compelling handwritten account of the shipwreck of the East Indiaman *Doddington* which sank off the coast of Madagascar in 1755.

This handwritten account could be a copy of an original document or testimony given by William Webb, second mate on the *Doddington*. The journal is divided into five sections and details the route and objectives of the East Indiaman, the behaviour of the twenty-three survivors and the landscape and people they encounter, the hand-crafted sloop 'Happy Deliverance' used to escape the island, and a report relating to the loss of the British garrison of Fort William in Calcutta in June 1756. Sections one to three were published in 1758 in a compilation of journals.

Poems, novels and first-hand accounts of shipwrecks have been popular subjects for writers and readers including Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner' (1798) and Yann Martel's 'Life of Pi' (2001). A shipwreck enables writers to explore the wider themes of humanity and the natural world, and remains a real anxiety for people all over the world who rely on the sea for travel and livelihoods.

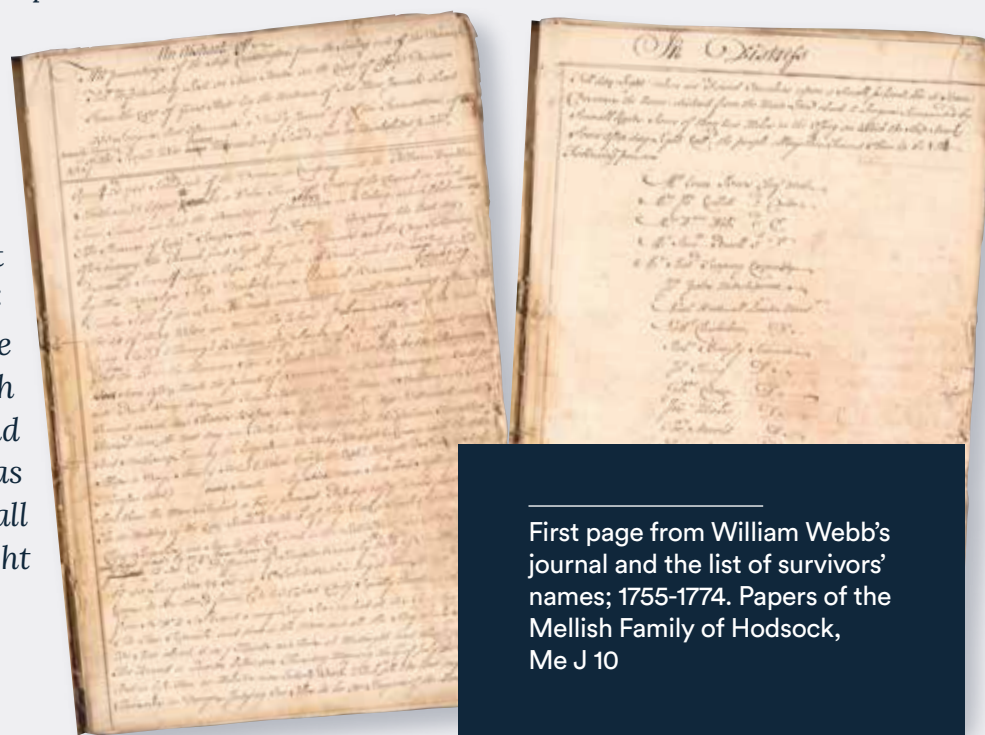
The journal of the *Doddington* describes the events which lead to the loss of 247 lives. The author records that this was not just due to the sinking of the vessel, but also the speed at which it occurs:

'... a Quarter before one Thursday Morning the 17th of July the Ship Struck And in less than 20 Minutes was entirely Wreckd which is all the time any Body thought Themselves in Danger'

'She went to peices in so little Time, that I am Certain Half the People had not Time to gett Upon Deck, for tho I got out of my Cabbin the First Stroke She Gave by the Time I Gott Upon Deck, it was Falling in'

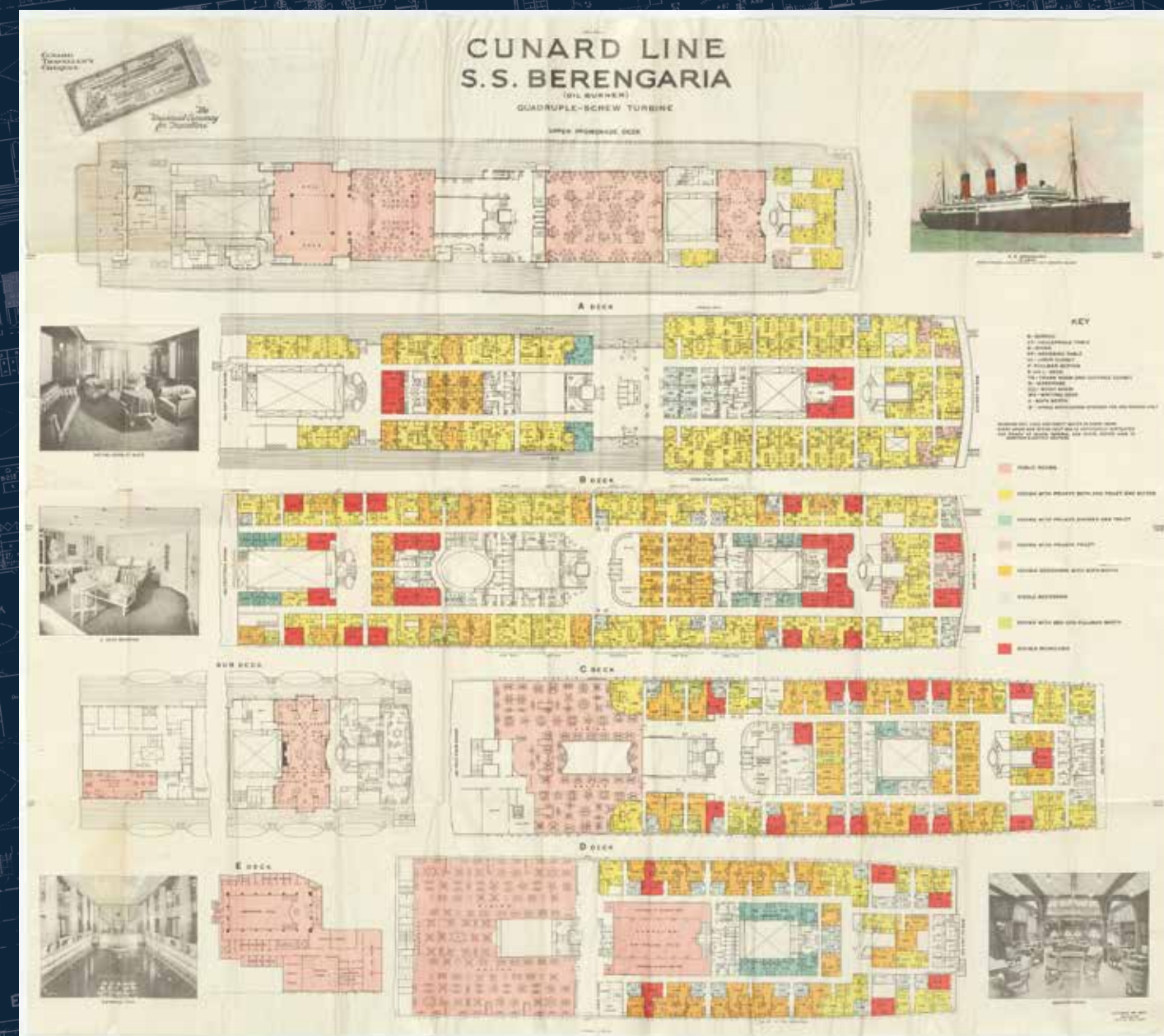
This is a fascinating example of just one of thousands of mentions of ships and seafaring activity at Manuscripts and Special Collections. This is due to the historical need to control and use the sea for establishing colonial rule, trade, and building empires reflected in both printed and handwritten records. Estate papers and personal correspondence are particularly important datasets for this: a younger son of an affluent family might go into the navy or work for the East India Company, and many landed families had business interests and investments overseas. There are also records of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in archival records, outlining the different streams of incomes that enabled Estates to flourish.

Webb's account of the wrecking of the *Doddington* is a fragile document carefully preserved in the archives. However, for those wishing to read the account, digital surrogates are available to read at Manuscripts and Special Collections.



First page from William Webb's journal and the list of survivors' names; 1755-1774. Papers of the Mellish Family of Hodsock, Me J 10

Additions to the collections



Plan of the SS *Berengaria*, issued to passengers; 1921-1938. Papers of George Spencer BSP 13/3

Over the last few months, we've taken in some unusual and visually striking material.

Business collections

A lovely accrual (BSP/13) to the Papers of George Spencer, hosiery manufacturer, arrived at the archive recently, containing a photograph album and souvenirs from travels to and around America. The records document George's Atlantic

crossings on cruises including Cunard ship *Lusitania* in 1914, a ship sunk in May 1915 by a German U-Boat in World War One, and *Berengaria* and *Olympic* in 1924. The collection includes some stunning photographs, a colour plan of the ship's layout, passenger lists and other ephemera.

Local people

We have recently undertaken some work to have the cassette tapes of George Hardy digitised (MS 910). Hardy, a local historian, conducted numerous interviews in the 1970s and 1980s with Eastwood residents covering local life, people and reminiscences, including anecdotes relating to D.H. Lawrence and his family. We have clips from some of these interviews to our [online gallery](#).

Another interesting local item was our recent acquisition of a gorgeous, annotated scrapbook put together by Charlotte Sutton (née Nelthorpe, 1817-1872) of Bilsthorpe (MS 1067) and chronicling a year in her life as a member of the lower Nottingham gentry. Beginning on New Year's Day 1864 the volume illustrates her family, social life and travels as a mother of eight children through the use of annotated botanical specimens, keepsakes, sketches and paintings gifted by her children. Annotations reveal that she gathered the items on walks, trips away, extracted them from bouquets, and in some cases took them from church flower arrangements!

University of Nottingham

We have a had a few new additions to the University Archive and related collections including some lovely, atmospheric 1950s black and white photographs of the then newly build Portland Building in the snow, alongside images of Dramsoc student theatre productions (NUP/66). We recently had an accrual to the Papers of Professor Malcolm Jones (PMJ) relating to the University of Nottingham Slavonic Studies Department, 1974-2025. We have also received ephemera collected by Dr Hongwei Bao relating to exhibitions and lectures organised in Nottingham to highlight themes around China and LGBTQ+ issues (UL/F/2/4).

Theatre

Our theatre collections continue to grow with the addition of scripts written by playwright Julie Wilkison for New Perspectives Theatre, Nottingham Roundabout Theatre and BBC Radio 4 (MS

1059). The plays, written in whole or jointly devised by Julie deal with local issues drawing on experiences as an activist in the region, including 'Coal', a Radio 4 play, and 'Trouble and Strife', jointly devised with New Perspectives.

Political and social archives

We were pleased to add the European Nuclear Disarmament records of Ken Coates and Ken Fleet (END) to our collections. Documenting activities, peace conventions and meetings taking place in the 1980s whilst the Kens were Secretaries of the European Liaison Committee. The work paved the way for the INF Treaty of 1987. The Papers of Ken Coates (KCS) and the Records of the Institute for Workers' Control (ICW), already held at MSC, document other work undertaken by Ken Coates and Ken Fleet.

Special collections

Last, but not least, we were able to purchase this wonderful volume 'A General System of Horsemanship', published in 1743, with generous help from the Friends of the Nations' Libraries. This volume is a translation into English from the French publication of the 1st Duke of Newcastle William Cavendish's original manuscript (Pw V 21) on the manner of feeding, dressing and training of horses written in 1658, also held within our collections. The Duke of Newcastle's equestrian skills were renowned, and his riding school at Antwerp attracted students from across Europe. The volume is lavishly illustrated with numerous engravings.

Allegorical representation of the Duke of Newcastle riding Pegasus. From *A general system of horsemanship in all it's branches* (1743) by William Cavendish, 1st Duke of Newcastle. University of Nottingham, Special Collection O/S X SF309.N4

“The Duke of Newcastle's equestrian skills were renowned, and his riding school at Antwerp attracted students from across Europe. The volume is lavishly illustrated with numerous engravings.”



Page from Charlotte Sutton's scrapbook, including drawings of Scottish landscapes, the first snowdrop in Bilsthorpe, and leaves from Ripley wood; January 1864. MS 1067





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- Sex and scandal in Nottingham Church Court
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- An unheroic history of Robin Hood
- Murder most horrid

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For group size, fees and refreshments, see online.

For a full list of talks available and
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