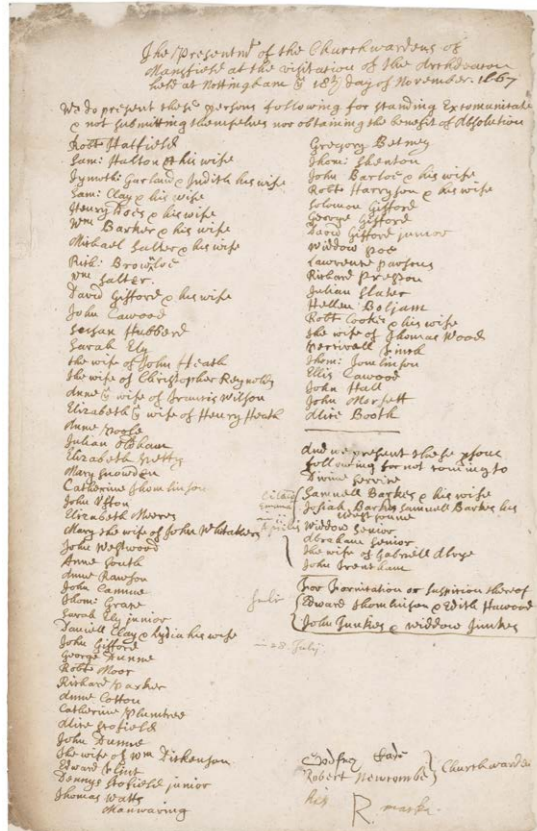


What does the Mayflower mean to you?

Today, we can reflect on the history of the Mayflower not as just the sailing of a community to the 'new world', but as part of a wider history of religion, power and dissent where Nottinghamshire has a central role.



Presentment bill, Mansfield parish, 18 November 1667. Archive of the Archdeaconry of Nottingham, AN/PB 304/9/23

Since the sixteenth century, this county has been the home of religious groups that have sought to depart from established practices. Mansfield gained a reputation in the late seventeenth century as the place for those excluded from the Church of England. On 18 November 1667, the churchwardens there presented 75 individuals who had been excommunicated or banned from the Church for their religious beliefs, or who were not attending divine service.

The 1689 Act of Toleration allowed a degree of religious freedom for dissenting Protestant groups, whilst the 1829 Roman Catholic Relief Act marked the end of official restriction on Catholic practice in Britain and Ireland. Today, the Racial and Religious Hatred Act of 2006 makes it illegal to incite hatred on the grounds of religious beliefs. We have seen the creation of religious freedoms over the last four hundred years.

The Mayflower story is one which is very important to Nottinghamshire. The members of the congregation that sailed in 1620 have become part of our history. The sites and trails across the county today connect us to the people who once sought religious freedom.

This history of the Mayflower and beyond poses important questions about liberty and control, migration and identity. It asks us to think about what we do in the present to protect the rights of others and how we respect difference.



Collage of photographs of the building and people at Castle Gate Congregational Church, Nottingham, c.1948. Castle Gate Collection, CU/P/3/34