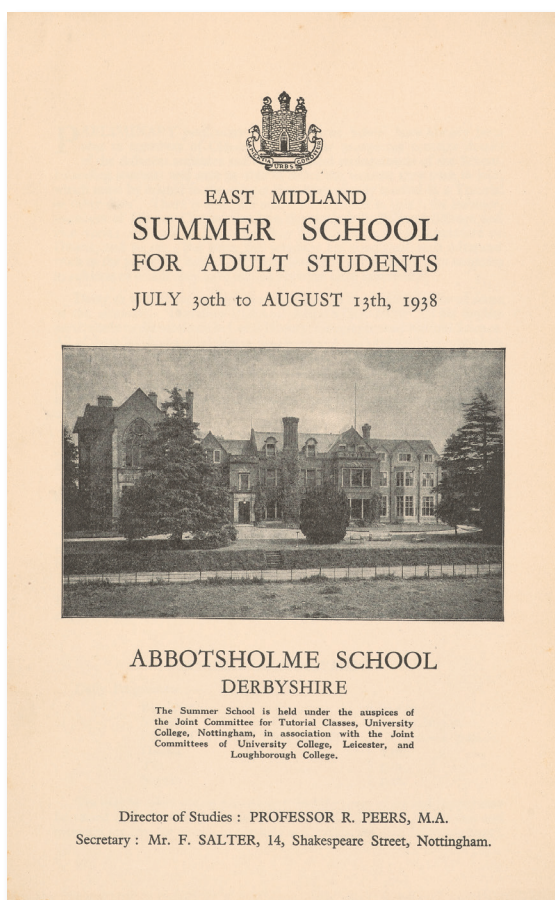


An agent of change and social progress

Adult education classes brought the University of Nottingham closer to the communities of the East Midlands. They changed both the university and the region: the department also had national and international impact.



Nottingham branch of the WEA, Shakespeare Street. University of Nottingham Collection, ACC 3187.



Leaflet advertising a WEA residential course: 'English Literature and Social Movements', 1935. Records of University College Nottingham, UCN A/3/6/24.

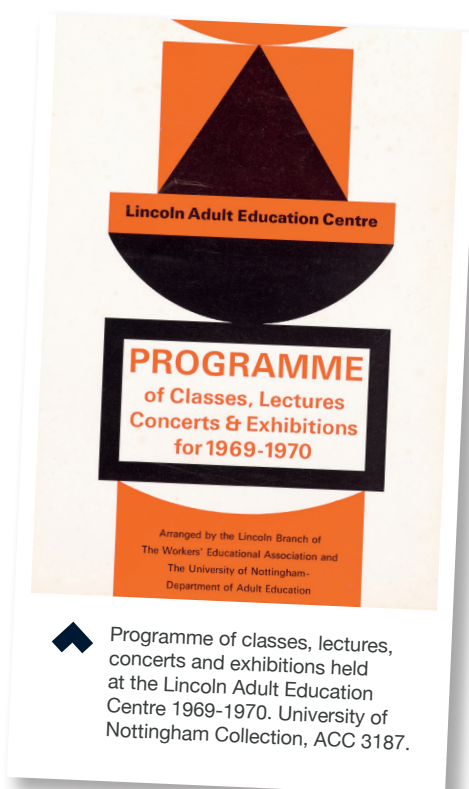
Adult education provided the seeds for subjects which later blossomed into departments and degree courses: archaeology, classics and economic history, for instance. It influenced teaching in areas such as sociology, social policy, history, English and education. The work of several outstanding University of Nottingham scholars – such as archaeologist Maurice Barley (1909 – 1991) and economic historian JD Chambers (1898 – 1970) – was shaped by their early work as adult education staff tutors.

Adult education courses, students and staff, were often central to local and regional associations of amateur researchers. For example, Alan Rogers, Reader in Local History, wrote that the department's "seminars, training conferences, residential schools, public lectures and the like" led to "permanent groups" across the region – typically with adult education class as their focal point – in industrial archaeology, demography, churchyard memorials, landscape and oral history. The department published the *Bulletin of Local History: East Midlands Region* from 1966 to 1990.

Adult education classes were also a location for civic discussion and voluntary action in towns and, perhaps especially, villages. Some were on explicitly political topics: "How significant are the present symptoms of inflation, business failures, unemployment and payments deficits?" From the 1960s, the environment was a focus: "The Cost of Survival" was a two-year economics class in the early 1970s.

Classes and students provided the core for trade union organisation in many industries. Students and former students became leading figures in local and national politics, as councillors and MPs: Bernard Taylor MP, miners' union leader and later Lord Taylor of Mansfield; Don Concannon MP, a minister in Harold Wilson's government and Bert Wynn, general secretary of the Derbyshire Miners 1947-1966.

The Nottingham department's impact was also international. A striking example was its work on the Kikuyu College of Adult Studies, twelve miles from Nairobi in Kenya – department staff worked there through the 1960s – but students and researchers came from across the world, drawn by Nottingham's adult education expertise.



Programme of classes, lectures, concerts and exhibitions held at the Lincoln Adult Education Centre 1969-1970. University of Nottingham Collection, ACC 3187.