



A triumph of purpose and of grit

The Second World War had a huge impact on the adult education provision at the University of Nottingham. Following instructions from the Central Advisory Council for Adult Education in HM Forces in December 1939, military personnel were educated in everything from vocational courses like radio engineering and shorthand to more academic lectures on drama and psychology at Lenton Hurst, a residential hall on University Park.



University buildings on Shakespeare Street, including the Adult Education building, suffered heavy damage during the Nottingham Blitz of 8-9 May 1941, but this did not deter lecturers, or their adult students from attending evening classes. As AC Wood wrote in his *History of the University College Nottingham* (1953):

“Night after night in the long war winters lecturers went out beneath the searchlights – and occasionally the bombs – to keep troth with their classes; and with equal resolution the members of those classes wound their way along the darkened roads, through some of the worst weather of the century [...] to rooms, often chilly and ill-lit, where cultural enthusiasm had to fight a ceaseless battle against fuel shortage and the black-out. It was a triumph of purpose and of grit.”

◀ Photograph showing Blitz bomb damage caused to the Arkwright and Shakespeare Street buildings, University of Nottingham, 9-10 May 1941. University of Nottingham Collection, UMP/2/1/42/3.

After the War, Professor Robert Peers saw adult education as a vital part of post-war construction, and in 1947 invited a delegation from Germany to see the provision at the University to use as inspiration in the establishment of an adult education course in Aachen. Writing later to a delegate, Peers reflected on the visit:

“I can understand the impression which your visit to this country must have made upon you, after the years of repression in Nazi Germany. I hope that [...] we may begin to look forward to a new era of progress and enlightenment. Adult Education has a great part to play in post-war reconstruction, but there are very great difficulties to overcome also in the economic sphere, especially in Germany.”



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▲ Photograph of a posed group of servicemen who were attending a course at Lenton Hurst, University of Nottingham, 1948. University of Nottingham Collection, UMP/1/8/1.



▲ Photograph taken at an Adult Education course for servicemen at Lenton Hurst, University of Nottingham, 1948. University of Nottingham Collection, UMP/1/8/2.