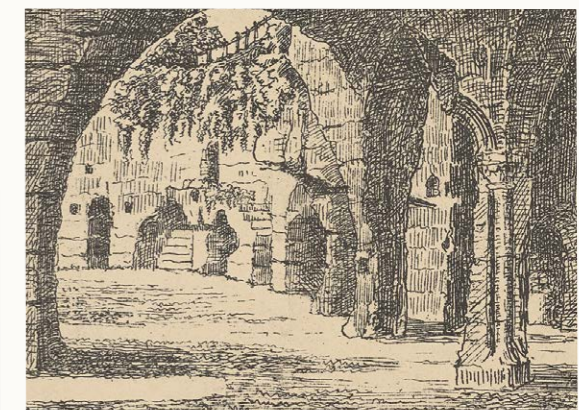


# Myths and legends of the caves

From the beginning, caves have been woven into the stories of the city's past - some more believable than others. Many early antiquarians held that Nottingham's caves had been the site of mysterious rituals performed by druids, but this is entirely false. Another popular suggestion was that caves at Lenton and Sneinton had been inhabited by early Christian monks and hermits - which was certainly the case in the later medieval period.

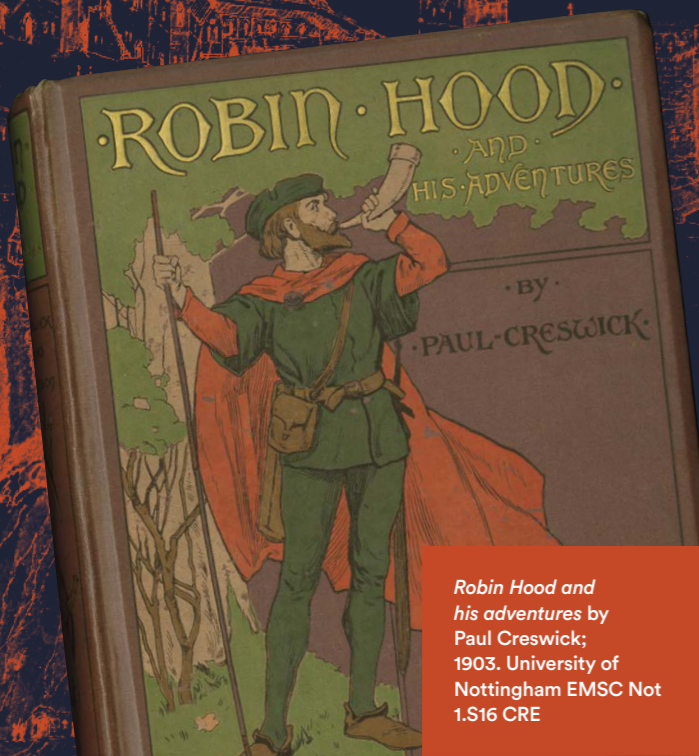
Robin Hood's name was attached to several sites in and around the city, including 'Robin Hood's cave' in the Rock Cemetery. Caves also feature in many well-known local tales - most famously, in a dramatic episode of royal intrigue. In 1327, Queen Isabella conspired with her alleged lover Roger Mortimer to depose her husband, placing her son, Edward III, on the throne as a puppet - only for the teenage King to then overthrow them in turn, three years later. He is said to have captured the treacherous pair by means of a secret rock-cut passage at Nottingham Castle, known forevermore as Mortimer's Hole. According to legend, some caves were used by the Luddites in the early nineteenth century to hatch plots to sabotage the machines which they feared would threaten the value of their work.

Many of the more outlandish tales, such as tunnels connecting the Castle to Wollaton Hall or Lenton Abbey, are myths which are still often repeated. These exaggerated stories probably emerged because of the sheer number of underground spaces beneath the city's streets and buildings. However, some gruesome stories are based in reality: some of the caves underneath the Castle were used to house plague victims in the sixteenth century.



Detail from a print of a drawing by T.C. Hine made from an earlier drawing by William Stukeley, showing the caves in Nottingham Park; 1892. University of Nottingham NPE X 3/1

Illustration of Nottingham Castle in the 16th century from *Nottingham, its castle* by T.C. Hine, p.12; 1876. University of Nottingham EMSC Oversize Not 3.D64 CAS



Robin Hood and his adventures by Paul Creswick; 1903. University of Nottingham EMSC Not 1.S16 CRE



The Park rock holes Album of view-postcards, chiefly of Nottingham; undated. University of Nottingham EMSC Oversize Not 1.D14 ALB

Tales from the Caves

Exploring Nottingham's underground stories

