

Pride and protest

In the nineteenth century, the caves of Nottingham became recognised and celebrated as a distinctive and characterful element of the city's history.

During this period, legends about the city's distant past - from tales of druids to the exploits of medieval knights - gained new prominence: and for many, the caves represented a tangible link with this imagined history. They were even incorporated into the ubiquitous mythology of Nottingham's most famous storybook character, Robin Hood. Visitors to the town could purchase prints and postcards commemorating the city's ancient caves.

In the second half of the twentieth century, however, Nottingham City Council sought to embrace modernity and renewal in the face of wartime damage and the decline of the city's traditional textile industries. Grand plans were drawn up to redevelop the centre of Nottingham with new roads and retail spaces, which though only partially realised, did impact the historic core. A new ring road was first proposed in 1945, although construction of Maid Marian Way did not begin until the late 1950s. Between 1968 and 1975, the Broadmarsh shopping centre was built, sweeping away medieval streets such as Drury Hill and threatening the historic caves underneath the Broad Marsh cliff.

In response to these developments, many citizens campaigned vigorously for the protection of Nottingham's historic fabric. Resistance to the Broadmarsh development was spearheaded by a citizens' campaigning group led by Miss EM Palmer. A 1971 newspaper report refers to them as 'a genteel group of little old ladies' - this could not be further from the reality: these women were educated professionals who strategically campaigned by speaking and writing to local newspapers, councillors, and the public. City Council minutes show that heritage considerations gradually came to the fore and the Broadmarsh caves were awarded Scheduled Monument status by the Department of Works.



Broad Marsh Centre: the complete shopping experience; 1983. Nottingham: Nottingham Post. University of Nottingham EMC Planfile Not 3.N52 EVE

"We do not want to live in the past. We want a modern attractive city in which important historic parts are preserved. We are not getting this and therefore I ask that at least Broad Marsh Street may be preserved for future generations."

Objector's Statement by E. M. Palmer, teacher, conservationist and University College Nottingham graduate, from 'Second Broad Marsh public enquiry'; 16 December 1970. Nottinghamshire Archives, DD 1051/9 f.4

Tales from the Caves Exploring Nottingham's underground stories



Image of 'The Inner Motorway, Forest Way with Waverley Street below', an insert from F.M. Little, *Traffic in Nottingham, 1965-2000: A Traffic Plan for the City*; 1966, p125. University of Nottingham NPE B 5

Image of proposed 'Inner Motorway - The Parkway looking towards Canning Circus with Castle Boulevard in the foreground', an insert from F.M. Little, *Traffic in Nottingham, 1965-2000: A Traffic Plan for the City*; 1966. University of Nottingham NPE B 5/2

