

# OLD SNEINTON

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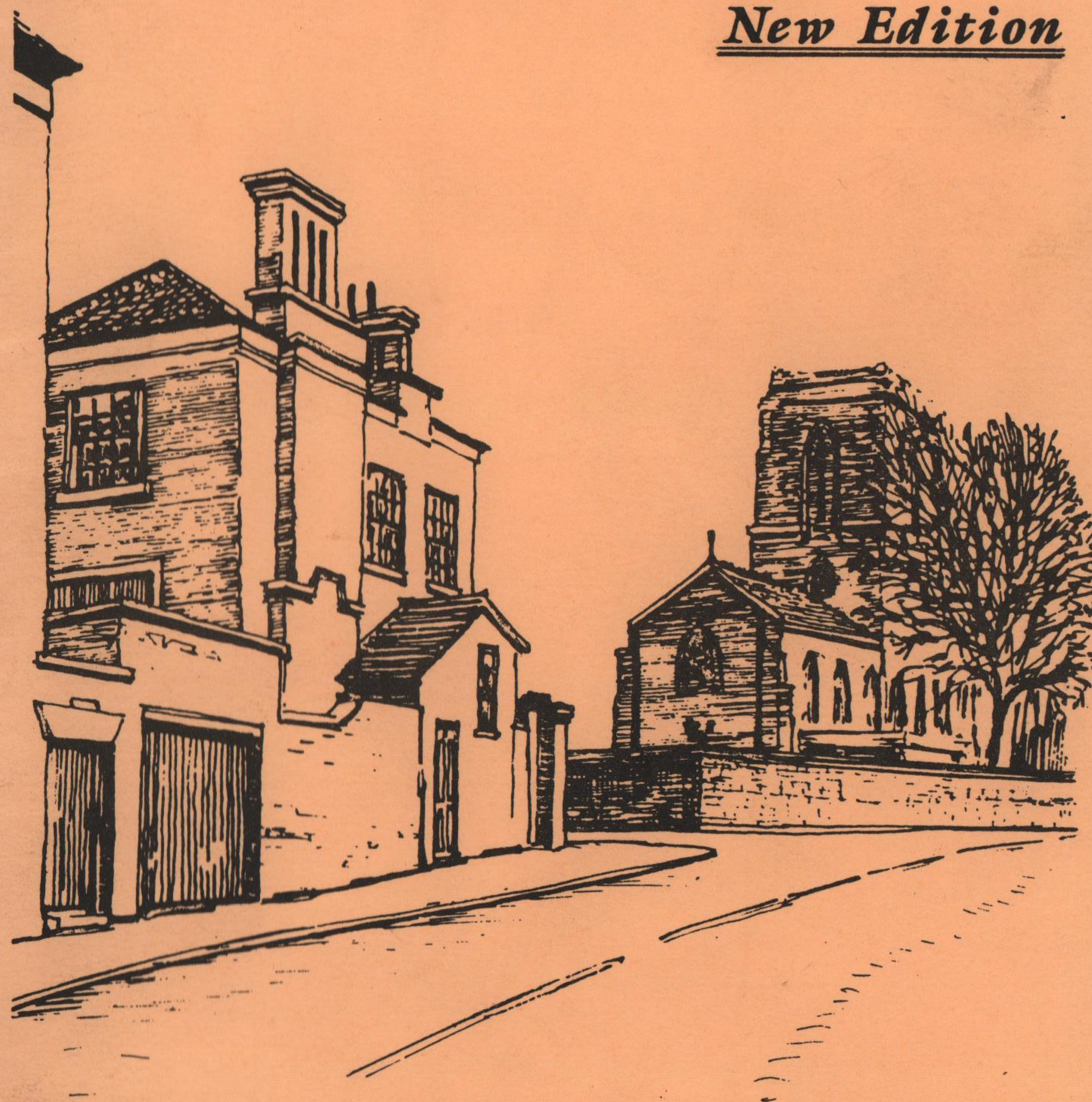
New Edition

This Guide to Sneinton is long overdue. The area, one of the oldest parts of Nottingham, has always been characteristic of the spirit of ordinary Nottingham people, a spirit that was probably more allied to the city than those of Radford, Basford or The Meadows because, apart from being more ancient, it was contiguous to the seat of power which clustered around the Castle.

Sneinton can therefore claim to be one of the most interesting districts of the region, and this welcome guidebook gives much information on its background, historical characters, and topography that older residents will remember, and that younger inhabitants should also find full of interest.

The book should also fascinate the local antiquarian, and ought to find a place on everyone's bookshelf, whether local or not.

Alan Sillitoe



A fascinating part of Nottingham's Inner City



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**A GUIDE  
TO  
OLD SNEINTON**  
**By**  
**DAVE ABLITT**

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## INTRODUCTION

SNEINTON IS NOT A BEAUTIFUL PLACE, but it is of great interest. Its varied townscape includes; rows of 19th century red brick terraces, some rather grand (if often neglected) Victorian residences, Nottingham's only surviving windmill, the birth-place of the founder of the Salvation Army, the home of an internationally famous scientist, remains of cave dwellings and a parish church described as especially attractive in a book edited by John Betjeman.

This guide aims to explain the main points of interest to be seen on a short walk around the area taking one and a half hours.

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## BACKGROUND

SNEINTON'S ORIGINS are so closely linked with those of Nottingham, even though it developed as a separate community, that it cannot be considered in isolation.

Nottingham's pre-Norman name (Snotingham) and the old form of Sneinton (Snotington) exhibit a close similarity. It is considered that Snotingham lost its first letter and eventually became Nottingham because the Norman invaders were not able to pronounce "Sn", or, perhaps, they had no intention of pronouncing Saxon words and enforced changes as part of a campaign to suppress and destroy the native language and culture. An attempt was made to Normanise the name of Sneinton and for a time after the conquest it was referred to as "Notintone". But the present name is known to have been used as early as 1194 and has remained basically unchanged through the succeeding centuries.

There are other close similarities. Both Settlements would seem to have been established about the same time on similar sandstone outcrops overlooking the Trent Valley. Both positions were ideal for constructing rock dwellings and both were defensible. And if Nottingham acquired the name of Snotingham because it was founded by Snot's people, the same would almost certainly be true of Sneinton.

From its formation, about 900 A.D. until 1877, Sneinton remained a separate community from the City. It covered a large rural area roughly defined as being bounded by the River Trent from Trent Bridge downstream to Colwick Park; the border then followed a line north to the top of Colwick Woods, across Sneinton Dale and Carlton Road and then turning to run along the line of Gordon Road down to the Sneinton Market area returning to the river along a course parallel with, and to the east of, London Road.

With the arrival of the Industrial Revolution, Nottingham, still confined to its mediaeval boundaries by the surrounding common lands, experienced a phenomenal increase in population and was transformed from a notably pleasant town into a squalid area of appalling living conditions, forcing many of the wealthier citizens to move to nearby villages, such as Sneinton. This situation only lasted until the Enclosure Acts enabled building to take place outside the old boundary, and soon densely packed slum housing filled the once open spaces between Sneinton and the City.



Eventually the old village was engulfed, and officially became part of Nottingham in 1877. Again, the rich whose wealth was manufactured in the town, moved on to greener pastures, leaving their fine houses to decline.

In the part of old Sneinton remaining today, that is between St. Stephen's Church and Colwick Woods, most of the building took place around the turn of the century. Until the 1930s this area formed the outer edge of the City. It was about that time that new housing, mainly council but some privately owned, destroyed the farm land between here and Carlton, and it is not difficult to find local people who remember the days when Sneinton Dale petered out into a country lane flanked by corn fields.

Sneinton is now commonly thought of as covering a much smaller area than previously; generally being considered as a narrow strip of land running from Sneinton Market to Colwick Woods, following the course of Colwick Road and Sneinton Dale.

The area covered by this guide is even smaller, and is concentrated in the oldest remaining part of the district, being mainly concerned with the area designated as the "Old Sneinton Conservation Area" by Nottingham City Council in 1975.

## **FAMOUS MEN**

WHILE NUMEROUS SNEINTONIANS have been influential during their lifetime, before being consigned to obscure history books, it can be truly said that two of them have affected the course of history. One, William Booth, is world famous as the founder of the Salvation Army. The other, George Green, a local miller and amateur scientist is largely unknown outside scientific circles, despite the profound effect his ideas have had on all our lives.

### **GEORGE GREEN**

The life of this man is shrouded in mystery. Few of his personal papers and no pictures survive to give an impression of his character or appearance. Nevertheless we do know that in his short life he conceived ideas which have since earned him the title of the founder of modern English mathematical physics. It is now accepted that science is indebted to Green for its understanding of the rules which have made possible the development of modern aircraft, bridges, generators, transistors and many other inventions of the 20th Century. While his technique of mathematical analysis, now known as Green's Functions, are routinely applied to the solution of problems in solid state and nuclear physics, developments which could never have been foreseen during his lifetime.

Born in Nottingham in 1793, he was the son of a baker of the same name. His only formal schooling was at Robert Goodacre's Academy on Parliament Street which he attended from March 1801 until the summer of 1802, when he left to help in his father's bakery. The next indication of scholarly activity occurred twenty one years later, in 1823 when he joined the Bromley House Subscription Library on Angel Row. Meanwhile, in 1807 George Green senior who had extended his business from baking to the related trade of flour milling purchased land in Sneinton to build a windmill. The site on what is now known as



Belvoir Hill was already occupied by a postmill, but this was removed by its owner, and the Greens set about constructing the impressive, powerful, tower mill which has recently been restored to working order.

It was in a room at the top of this mill, which George Green Junior used as a study, where his theories which were to prove of such importance to science were evolved. In 1817 the family had the house built which stands adjacent to the mill yard, and George moved there with his parents from their previous address on Goose Gate, Nottingham.

In 1833, at the age of 40, and five years after the publication of his first essay "The Theory of Electricity and Magnetism", in which he originated the concept of electrical potential, or voltage, Green won a place at Cambridge. He remained there, apparently without distinguishing himself in the eyes of his fellows, until returning to Sneinton in 1840.

Shortly after his return he moved to a house in Notintone Place, which would have been almost opposite and similar in style, to the birthplace of William Booth. For a short period until his death from influenza in 1841 he lived there with Jane Smith, daughter of the mill foreman. Although they never married she had seven children by him between 1824 and 1840 which must dispel any idea that this mysterious miller and scientist was a dry and dispassionate man whose interests were confined solely to abstract theories. Their graves may be seen in the corner of St. Stephen's Church Yard nearest The Fox public house.

Over the following century the importance of George Green's ideas slowly emerged, until in 1949 Professor R.P. Feynman of Cornell University, and later a Nobel Prize Winner, applied them to his work in nuclear physics. The tremendous value of Green's functions was realised and a true appreciation of the forgotten genius of Sneinton Mill became possible.

## WILLIAM BOOTH

William Booth is the most famous man to be associated with Sneinton. From small beginnings, working in Nottingham's poorest slums, he built up a following which he eventually moulded into the Salvation Army. It challenged the snobbery of the established churches, brought about social reforms, cared for the human casualties of a free-for-all society, can claim much of the credit for defeating child prostitution by having the age of consent raised and supported a historic strike of

match-workers. The achievements of the 'Army' earned its founder inclusion in Churchill's list of the three most famous generals he had met.

Born in Notintone Place, in 1892, William Booth was the son of a builder whose business foundered. As a result the family moved to Bleasby where they worked a smallholding from 1831 to 1835 before returning to Sneinton and occupying a house near the junction of Sneinton Road and Carlton Road. On leaving school he was apprenticed to a pawnbroker, in Goosegate, who was an active member of the Chartist movement and probably had some influence on the development of Booth's ideas.

Booth's formative years were spent in a period when radical politics flourished in Nottingham and, in 1831 at the age of two years, he had witnessed the incident when rioters, who had already burned down the castle in protest at the Lords rejection of the Reform Bill, ripped out the railings at the end of Notintone Place to use as weapons in their attack on Colwick Hall.

The Reform Bill riots preceeded a period when Chartism became a great force in the city and was represented in parliament from 1847 to 1852 by the colourful and dynamic Feargus O'Connor. As a great orator and editor of the mass circulation Chartist newspaper, "The Northern Star", his ideas must have had a considerable impact on the young William Booth.

At this time, Booth was preaching in the slums and soon built up a band of young followers. In 1846, when he was 17 years old, he led this group into the Wesley Chapel (now the Co-operative Education Centre on Broad Street) where they occupied the best seats, causing considerable consternation amongst those in the congregation unable to follow their religion beyond the point where it affected their upper-class privileges.

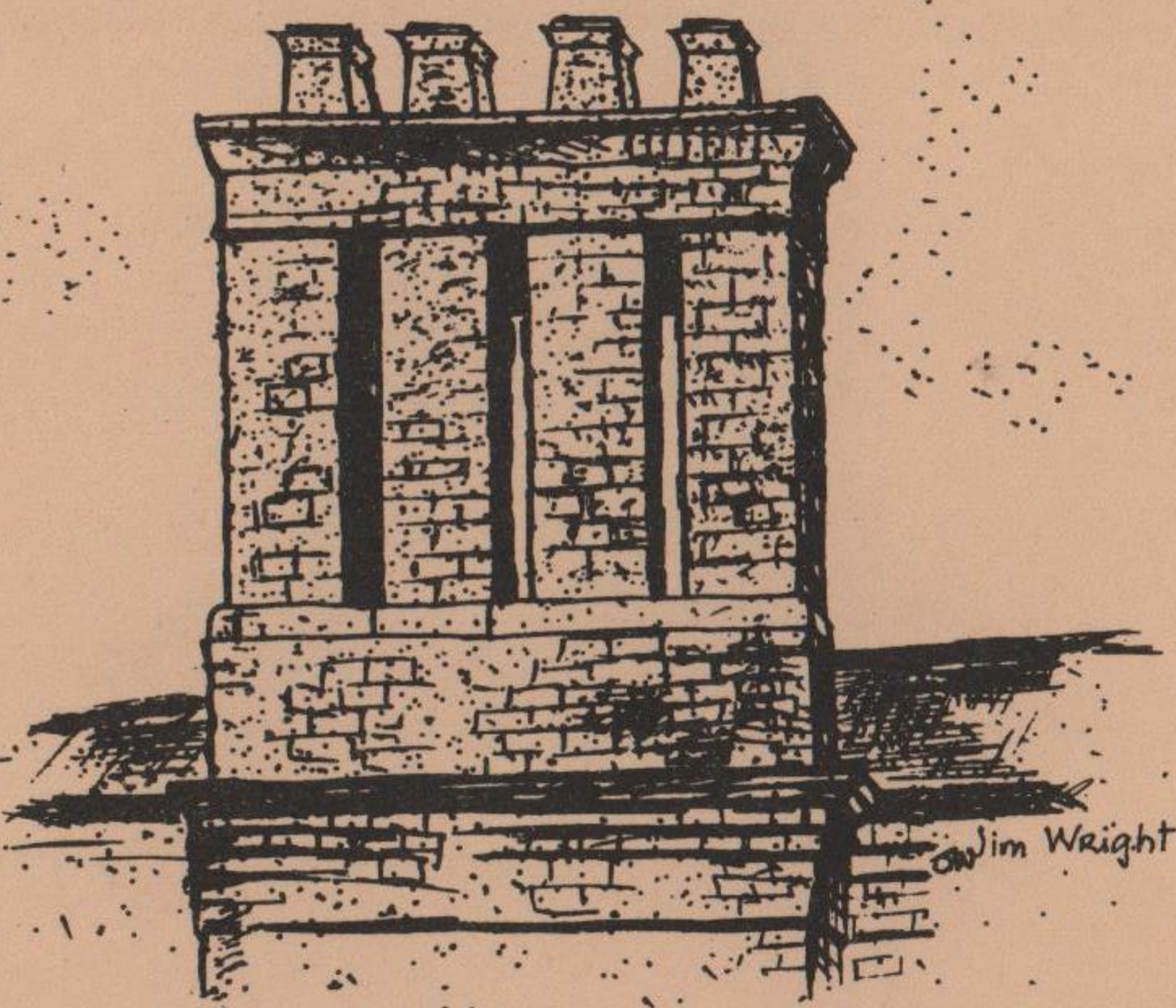
In 1849 he moved to London, again working as a pawnbroker's assistant, but in 1852 he became a full-time Methodist Reform Preacher in Spalding. This proved to be a short lived stage in his career, and he returned to London a few years later to join a group of missionaries in the East End, a group which eventually became the Salvation Army, under General Booth's leadership, in 1878.

The movement was unacceptable to many in its early days; in fact the womens' uniform bonnet was evolved as a protection against hostile crowds who were not averse to throwing missiles. It was also more radical than generally realised. In 1888 the women and girls employed at Bryant and May's match factory began a long and bitter strike, not only for higher pay but also, and more significantly, against the use of white phosphorus in match manufacture. This substance was the cause of an appalling disease afflicting many of the women. "Phossy-jaw", as they knew it, killed its victims by eroding away the flesh and bone of



their jaws. Statutory protection against harmful substances was non-existent at that time and strike action was the only course open to the Bryant & May employees. The Salvation Army helped the women by opening a new factory offering higher wages, model conditions, and eliminating white phosphorus from the manufacturing process.

In 1890 Booth set his army on the path for which it has become so well known. Distressed by the sight of the homeless trying to sleep in the open air he launched a rescue scheme. Hostel accommodation was provided along with encouragement for the destitute to better themselves. Today this work has grown to the extent that 40,000 people are cared for each night. William Booth died in 1912. His army had already become international, and today is active in 82 countries of the world.



## THE WALK

THROUGHOUT THE WALK always remember to look up and around, look for carved stone heads above doorways, coloured tilework in porches, decorative brickwork below the eaves, and many other points of interest common to Sneinton but now unusual elsewhere.

## WILLIAM BOOTH MEMORIAL COMPLEX

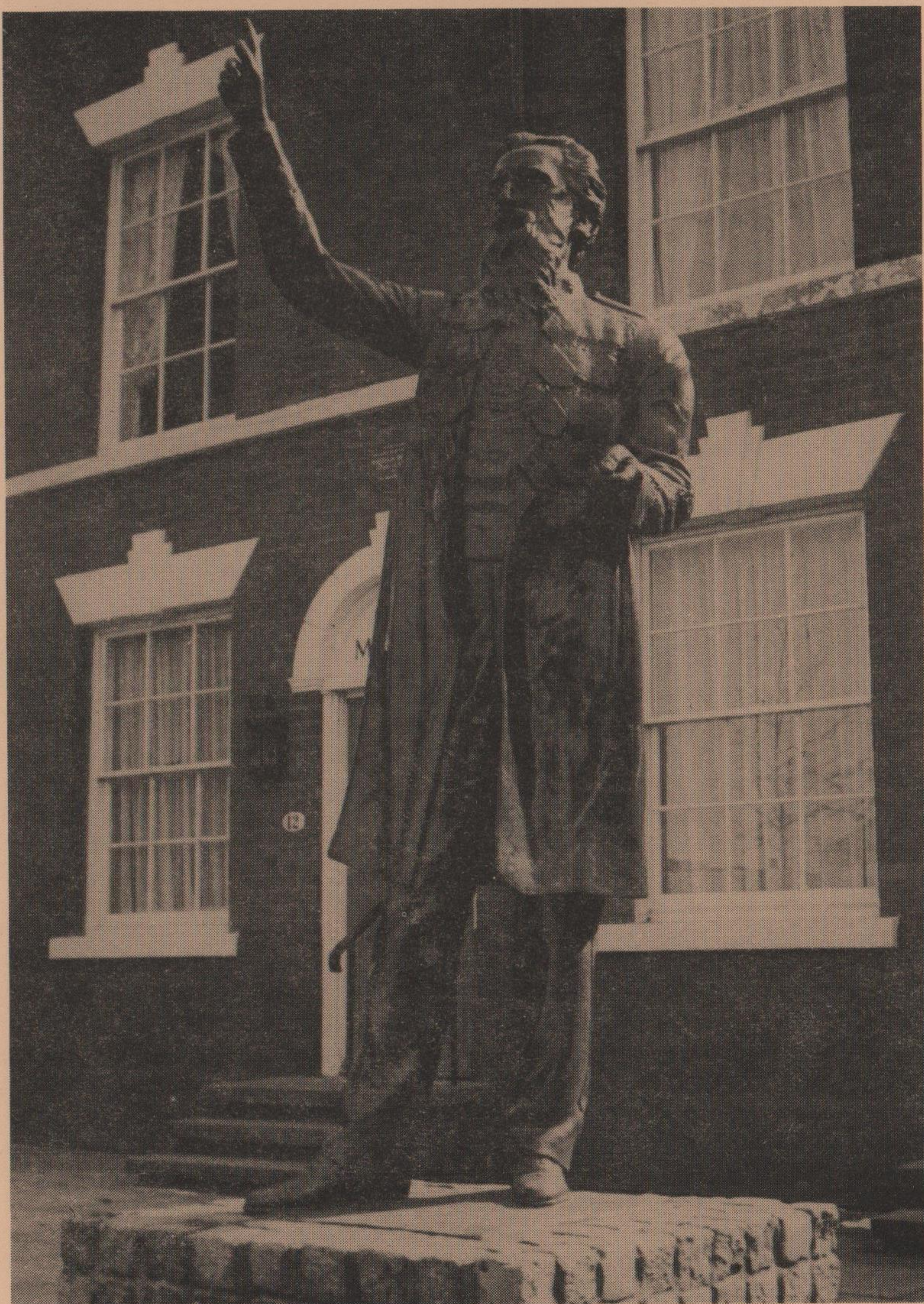
The suggested route of our tour of old Sneinton begins outside the William Booth Memorial Complex on Sneinton Road. This group of modern buildings, which received a Civic Trust Award in 1972, conceals three handsomely restored houses, including the one where Booth was born in 1829.

Enter the courtyard containing Booth's statue and the restored houses. You are now standing on the site of Notintone Place which was, until its redevelopment in the late 1960s, a cul-de-sac off Sneinton Road. All the houses were similar to Booth's and all had gardens fronting the street. The house where the mathematician George Green died was number three, which would have been situated where the gable end of the row of modern shops now stands. Number twelve, Booth's house, contains a fascinating museum dealing not only with his life but also the social conditions of the period and the people who influenced his development as an evangelist and social reformer.

The front bedroom on the first floor is the room where he was born and is furnished in the style of the 1820s. Several items of his clothing are displayed here, including his dressing-gown, christening robe and wedding waistcoat, along with some items of his furniture. It is a strange experience to stand in this historic room and view the rude skyline of modern Nottingham through the lace curtained window.



The museum is normally open between the hours of 10.00a.m. and 12.00 noon and from 2.00p.m. until 4.00p.m. If the door is not open, contact a member of the Salvation Army staff who will be pleased to help. For telephone enquiries dial 503927, although party organisers are requested to apply in writing.



GENERAL BOOTH

Photograph by Bill Vincent

## ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH

From the Salvation Army museum, cross Sneinton Road to St. Stephen's Church. To the casual observer a typically large Victorian city church with a sombre, forbidding exterior though in this case pleasantly softened by its surroundings. The spacious walled churchyard, containing many fine mature trees, forms a welcome oasis of greenery amongst the densely packed houses, and conveys the strange impression of a city church in a country setting. But the severe exterior of the building itself is the most deceptive aspect of the whole scene, for it conceals so many surprises. On entering the church it is worth recalling the description in John Betjeman's "Guide to English Parish Churches":-

"Proportions are good, and the main axial vista leads from the tall canopied font through the coloured rood to the gorgeous Oberammergau High Altar. But not all beauties are apparent at first glance: each transept is differently and effectively treated; the gold and green organ casing stands on a screen between south transept and crossing. There are modern continental statues and a vigorous set of Stations of the Cross. The 15th century oak stalls are beautifully arranged in the choir: There are eight misericords."

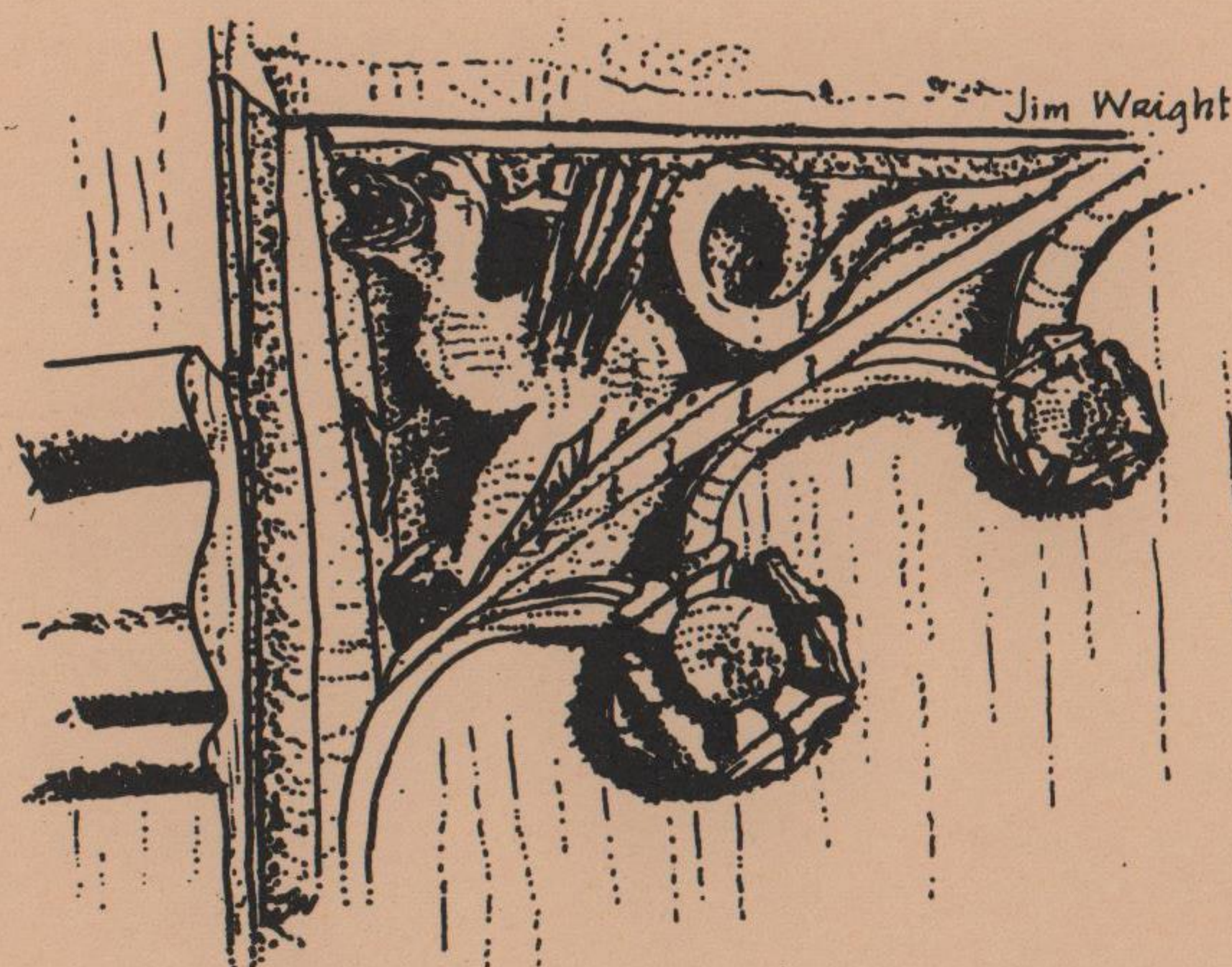
Look more closely at the details...that elegant, spire-like, font-cover. The tall colourful reredos, behind the high altar is in 15th century German style and was carved in Oberammergau, scene of the Passion Plays. It was made in 1909 and exhibited at the Royal Academy before being installed at Sneinton.

The fine mediaeval choir stalls, thrown out of St. Mary's in 1848 and rescued by the organist at St. Stephen's who purchased them for 50p, boast a number of unusual carved figures - including some beneath the hinged seats.

The church registers reveal links with the famous. Here William Booth was baptised on 12th April 1829, George Green was buried on 4th June 1841 and Jane Smith (by then known as Green) on 25th September 1877. On the 27th December 1875, Arthur John Lawrence, described as a mining contractor of Brinsley, and Lydia Beardsall of John Street, Sneinton, were married here. They settled in Eastwood, and were destined to be the parents of David Herbert Lawrence.

Denounced as a pornographer, he was a victim of prudishness and hypocrisy whose work was only to be fully appreciated long





MEDIAEVAL CARVING  
St. Stephen's Church

after his death. Today Lawrence is recognised as one of the great figures of 20th Century English Literature, of whom Eastwood is justifiably, if belatedly proud.

The present church is the fourth to stand on this site. The first was destroyed in a gale in 1558 and its successor was demolished and replaced in 1810. The new church was found to be too small for Sneinton's rapidly growing population and had to be replaced in 1839. This formed the basis of the present church when it was enlarged under the direction of the ecclesiastical architects Bodley & Hare in 1912. The tower dates from 1839 and contains one of the oldest public clocks in Nottingham. The records of the well known Nottingham clock makers G & F Cope show that they took over responsibility for it when they bought out the manufacturers, R. Bosworth, in 1845.

Originally the tower had pinnacles at each corner, giving a more elegant appearance than at present, but they were blown off by a gale in 1860. Although a fund was established for their replacement the tower retains a truncated appearance and it is unfortunate that Bodley & Hare failed to restore them during the alterations and partial rebuilding of 1912.

The grave of George Green is situated in the corner of the churchyard nearest to 'The Fox' public house. Those with a sense of history might muse over the knowledge that they are standing where another great scientist once stood and reflected on the mystery of the Sneinton miller, for in 1930 Professor Einstein visited George Green's grave and mill.

For many years the city council, which maintains this grave, neglected the adjacent one where the remains of Jane Green, the mother of his seven children and his companion for twenty years, lie. Happily this policy has been reversed and Jane's headstone now receives the attention rightly due to it.

St. Stephens church is not open to the public while unattended. The vicar, the Rev. John Tyson, will be pleased to help any visitor wishing to view the interior and may be contacted at the Vicarage (Tel 580508).

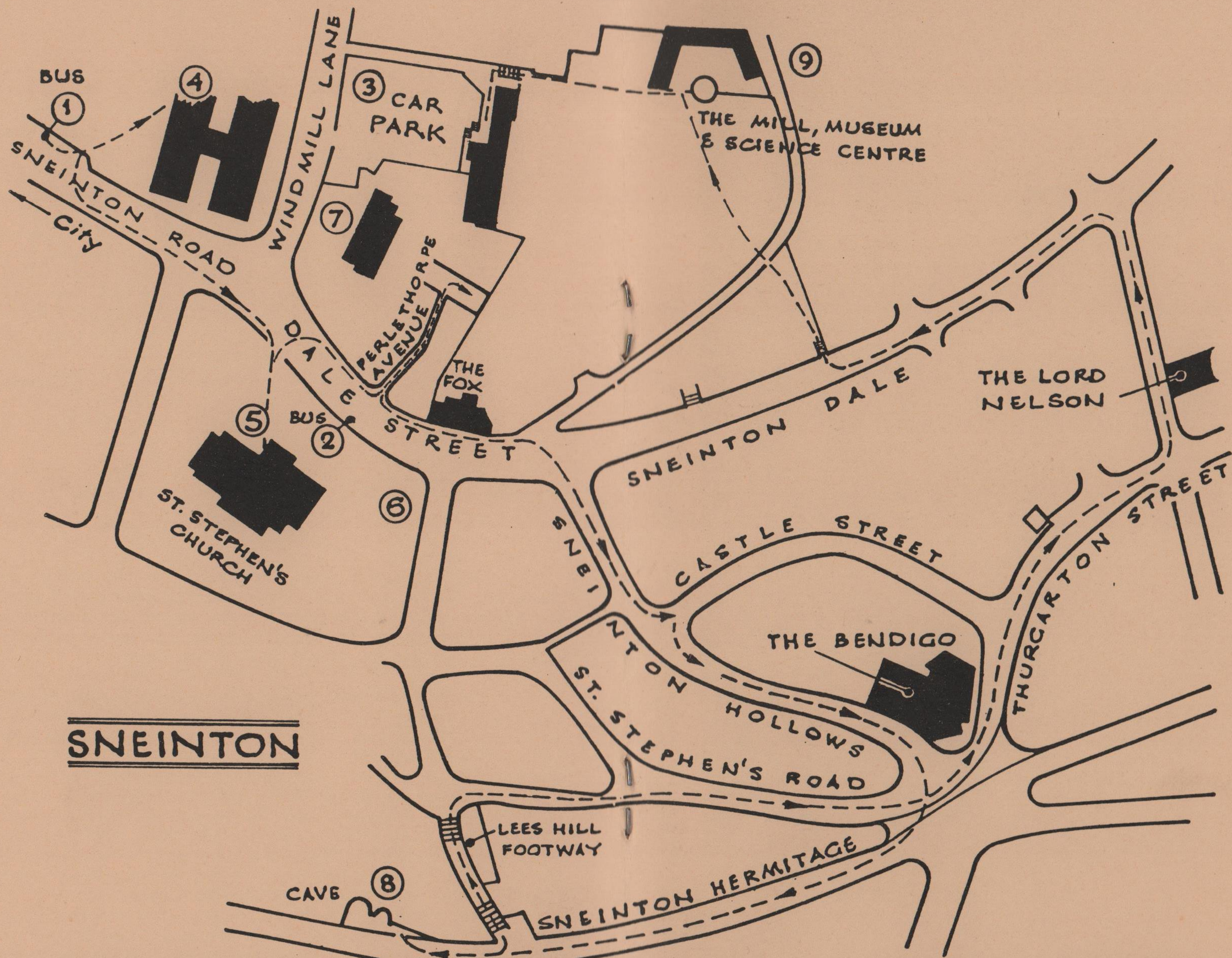
## DALE STREET

When leaving the churchyard by the front gates, the Vicarage, built in 1836, is directly opposite. Listed by the Department of the Environment as being of architectural and historic interest, it forms a pleasing scene with its walled garden, stone window frames and ornate chimneys.

Return to the main road, called Dale Street at this point, and walk towards The Fox public house. Perlethorpe Avenue is of interest, but unfortunately the picturesque limestone cobbles have been vandalised by those authorities requiring access to underground services. Walk up this cul-de-sac to experience the curious sense of seclusion. The pleasant early 20th century terrace houses have been restored by the Bridge Housing Association and offer a view, now rare in Sneinton, of an unspoilt terrace of Edwardian artisans' dwellings. Elsewhere much of the harmony of such terraces has been destroyed by unplanned and shabbily executed modernisation.

Return to Dale Street, and turn left; The Fox is a pleasant building, though considerably altered from its 19th century form. Note the stocking frame knitters' windows on the top floor of the two three-storey cottages adjoining the public house. Though these windows have been reduced in width they retain their original glazing bars and sills, typical of a type of window common when this industry thrived in the Nottingham area.





## SNEINTON

1 BUS STOP

2 " " to City

3 CAR PARK

4. WM. BOOTH'S BIRTHPLACE

5. ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH

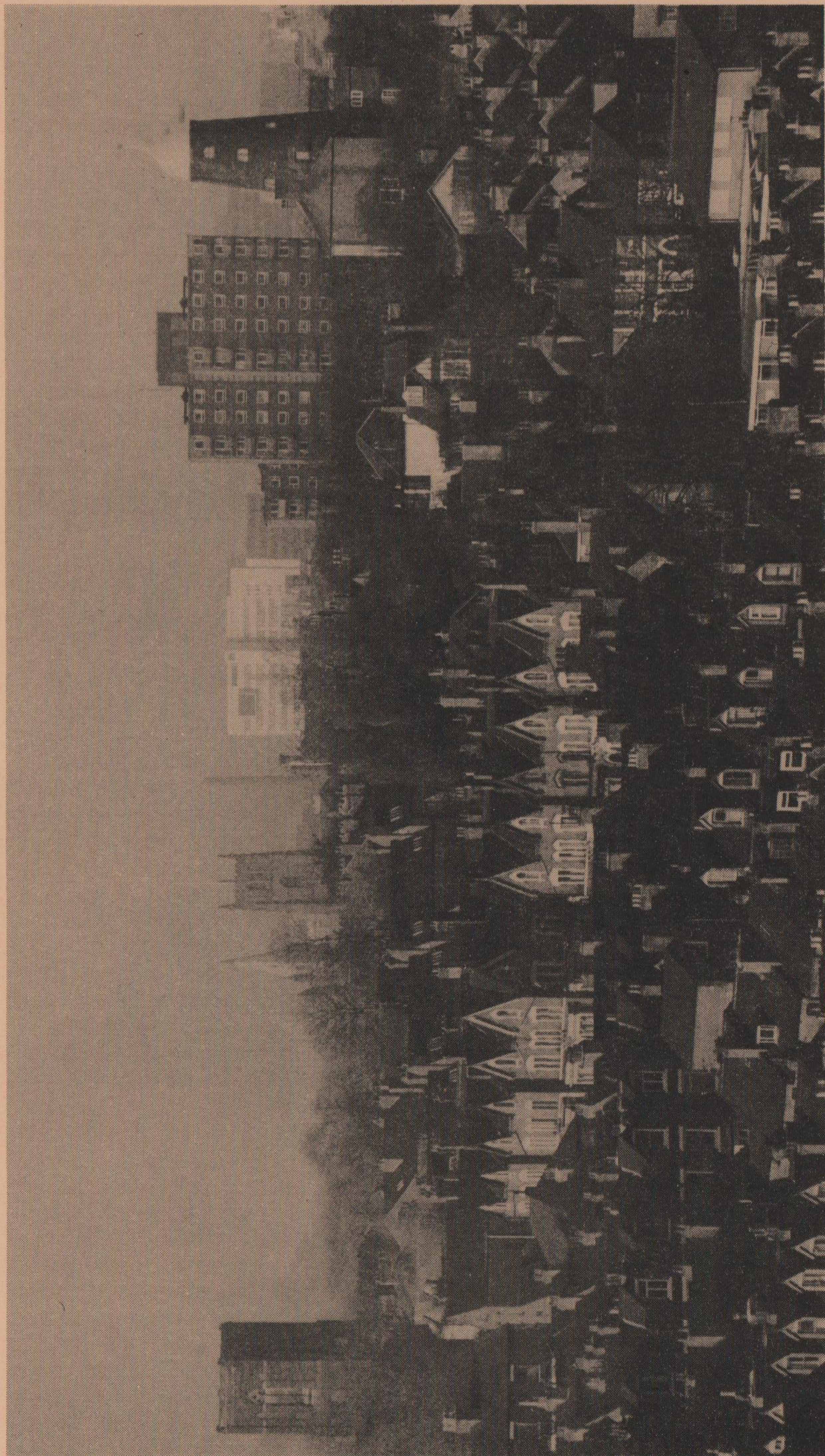
6. GEO. GREEN'S GRAVE

7. SNEINTON VICARAGE

8. HERMITAGE CAVE

9. GREEN'S MILL/MUSEUM





Photograph by G. Clarke

SNEINTON FROM COLWICK WOODS

## SNEINTON HOLLOWES

Turn off Dale Street into Sneinton Hollows. Note the perspective of the road curving down the hill combined with the gorge-like effect caused by the tall houses set high above street level closely following the same curve. The high ground just past the alleyway on the right-hand side of the road is the site of the Manor House. It was a large Gothic style building described by Mellors in his essay "Sneinton Then and Now" (1913) as having been:

"A large old fashioned, three storey, ivy mantled, many gabled red brick house, standing in its own grounds, with large courtyard, on the hill over-looking the Hermitage Rock, having a magnificent view over the Trent Valley to the Leicestershire and Derbyshire Hills."

It was owned by the Pierrepont family, who lived in Holme Pierrepont Hall while letting the Manor to tenants. Throughout most of the 19th century it was occupied by the Morleys who founded the hosiery firm of I & R Morley. In 1888 permission was given to the Pierrepont family (Earl Manvers) to demolish the Manor and develop the site for new housing and roads - Newark Street, Manor Street and Lees Hill Street. The building was left unoccupied and allowed to decay until its destruction in 1894.

On the corner of Castle Street, the large, well proportioned, three storey Georgian style building was a public house, The Old Wrestlers, until the late 1950s when it was replaced by The Bendigo, which stands a little further down the hill.



## CASTLE STREET

At this point a brief diversion into Castle Street is worthwhile. 1970s demolition deprived this street of some of its character, although an amount of varied architectural styles remain. They are mainly mid or early Victorian well-to-do residences, in some cases now multi-occupied but still retaining much of their character. No. 1, the large mock-Tudor house with its unusual bay windows and wooden support columns presents a dramatic feature in the street. The two neighbouring cottages are an interesting development, having been converted in 1985 from a rundown building used for many years as garages and store rooms. Number 9, a large, substantial, red brick dwelling with stone window and door frames exudes Victorian solidity. Opposite is a large, recently restored house with a once castellated tower. Unfortunately this building faces away from the street, and although it can be viewed from Meadow Lane, little can be



seen of its elegant frontage. The Hollies, number 11 is a simple, handsome, building made of old style bricks and modelled on the pattern of a Georgian farm-house. Trentham Lodge, number 15 is a large mid-Victorian dwelling, set in a well kept garden.

## THE HERMITAGE

On returning to Sneinton Hollows, descend the hill to Hermitage Square. Take the second turning on the right into Sneinton Hermitage. While walking along this depressing stretch of road, which has a run-down shabby appearance due to shifting population, changing shopping habits and heavy through traffic, reflect on the description of the place by John Throsby in the 1790s:-

"Some of the inhabitants here, dwell as it were, in dens and caves of the earth called the Hermitage. This romantic scene, if it lay in regions seldom explored would afford a wonderful scope for fanciful relation. The traveller might surprise his reader (as doubtless some do by exaggeration and embellishment, and in that case, he would not fail to relate his own astonishment at what he saw) he would shew a people inhabiting the very bowels of the earth; and he might magnify or reduce their size, with ease, to that of a giant or dwarf. Here is a coffee house and other public buildings resorted to by the holliday making people of Nottingham".

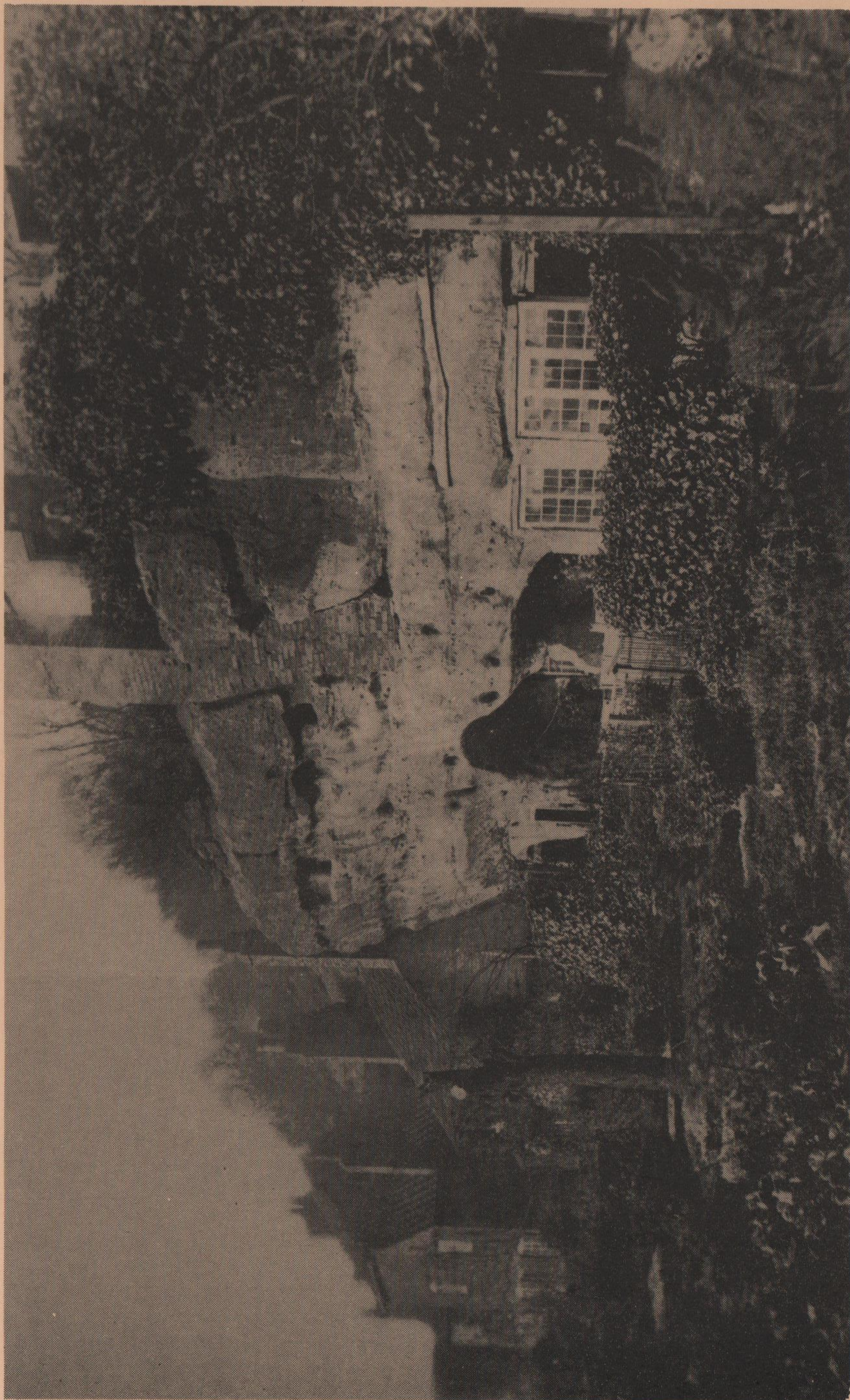
There is a rock face behind the houses on the right; the original cliff was cut back to that position when the old lane became a road and new houses were built. The bricked up doorways in the rock were entrances to World War 2 air-raid shelters.

After passing the blue brick abutments of a demolished railway bridge, the only visible remains of the old Hermitage are situated on the right. The Sneinton Environmental Society now rent these caves from the City council and members have excavated the interior and landscaped the frontage.

First records of the Hermitage are dated 1518 when it was referred to as Armet Hedge Hill. The caves were inhabited until 1867, and until the 1890s there were two public houses built onto the front of the cliff, one of which had a "noble dancing room" cut in the rock.

Destruction came to the Hermitage in 1888 when the London and North Western Railway decided to build a goods station at Sneinton. The company enjoyed a tenuous link with the city, from a junction with its line near Market Harborough via a joint line with the Great Northern Railway which passed through Melton Mowbray and the Vale of Belvoir to Saxondale, from where it gained access to the Great Northern's London Road (Low Level) station by running over that company's track.





THE HERMITAGE, 1860 (Notts County Library)

Goods facilities at London Road were inadequate and so a new depot was built on a manmade plateau on the Hermitage Hill. Access from the Great Northern line was by a half mile long branch from Trent Lane junction, the only stretch of railway wholly owned by the L.N.W.R. in Nottinghamshire.

Further destruction of the cave dwellings occurred in the late 1890s when the Great Northern joined with the Great Central Railway to build the magnificent Nottingham Victoria Station, since destroyed to make way for the city's most prominent monument to greed and vulgarity - the Victoria "Centre". To gain access to the new station the G.N.R. built a high level line from Sneinton, north of their old one. Manvers street was moved about 60 feet northwards and the frontage of the Hermitage destroyed. In 1904 the remaining rock dwellings, east of the railway bridge, were demolished and the present houses built.

Retrace your steps past the old bridge abutment and turn left up Lees Hill Footway; such interesting and useful cut-throughs were once common in Nottingham. It is reminiscent of Middle Hill, now buried beneath that short stretch of urban motorway, on which pedestrians are banned, which speeds the motorist past the side of the Broad Marsh Centre so quickly that he has little opportunity to appreciate the tastelessness of that building. But it was on Garners Hill, adjacent to Middle Hill, that the planners of the 70s atoned for the gargantuan errors of their immediate predecessors by building an imaginative park on urban wasteland.

Here they demonstrated an understanding and sympathy with nature as well as a degree of common sense unknown to their preceding generation. It is the Garners Hill Park, recipient of several national awards, that provided the pattern for the landscaping and improvement of Lees Hill Footway. The flat area to the left, now occupied by maisonettes, is the site of the old London North Western Railway goods station.

On reaching the top of the steps, turn right into Lees Hill Street and descend again towards Hermitage Square.

St. Stephens Road and Sneinton Hollows, both on the left, present interesting views. Such streets, following the natural contours of the land, curving away to convey the impression that something of interest must be just around the corner, are becoming unusual as our cities are rebuilt.



## BENDIGO

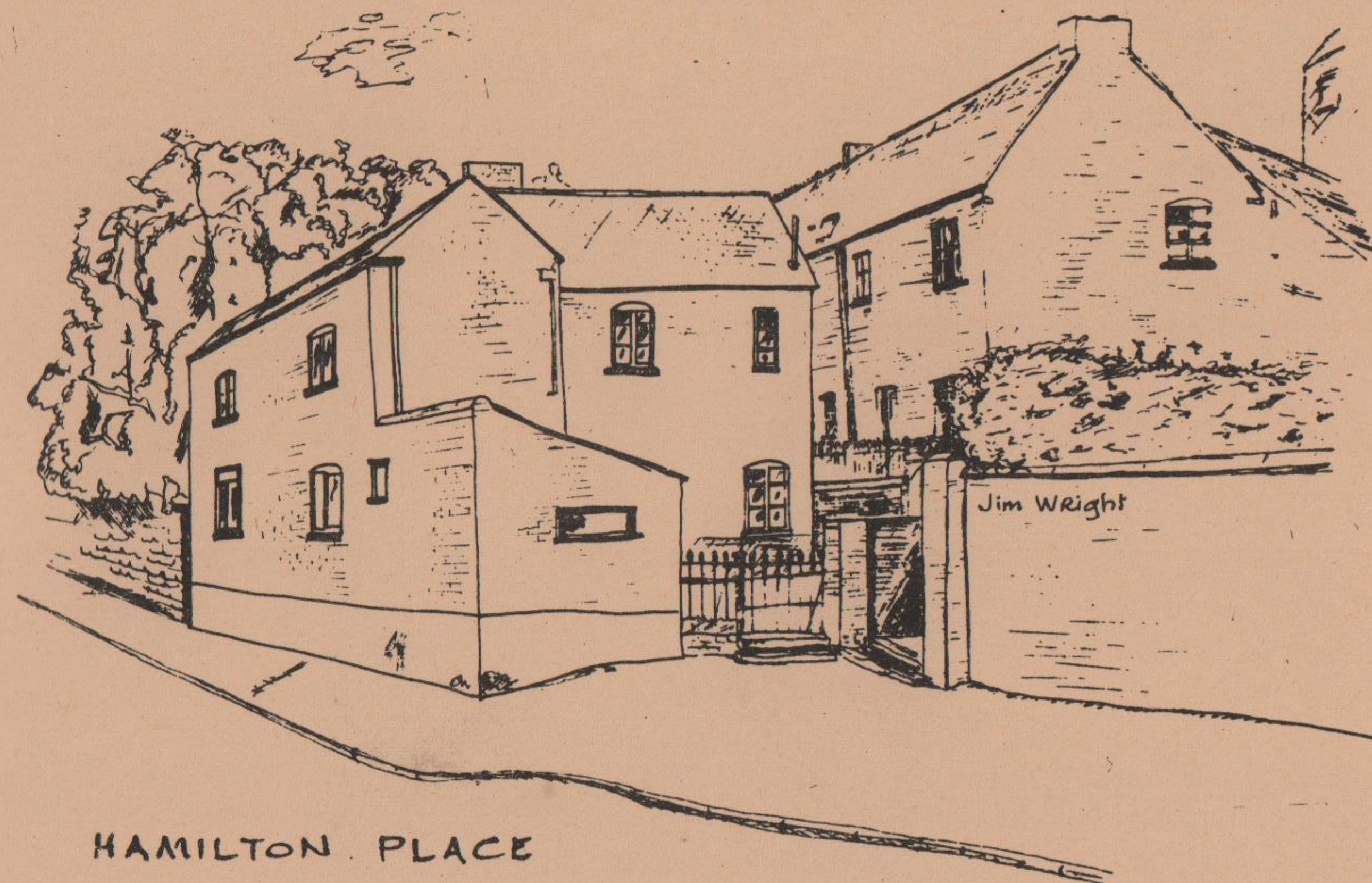
On re-entering Hermitage Square note the statue surmounting the public house depicting "Bendigo" in fighting pose. William Abendigo Thompson was born in Nottingham in 1811. He became a bare-fist fighter and was the English champion, unbeaten throughout a career spanning twenty years. He also excelled at other sports and once demonstrated his strength by throwing half a brick across the river Trent with his left hand! Unfortunately, his fighting spilled over into his social life and he also became a drunkard - being sent to prison on twenty eight occasions. He repented and saw the error of his ways towards the end of his life, turned religious and became famous as a preacher. Though he still suffered occasional lapses when, words having failed, he would use his old pugilistic skills in an attempt to convert his audience. He died in 1880 and is buried in Bath Street Rest Garden about a mile from here, in a grave marked by a carved stone lion.

Although his only statue is to be found over the entrance of a Sneinton public house, he is remembered in two other unusual ways - a town in New South Wales and The Home Brewery Company's strong ale both bear his name.

## HERMITAGE SQUARE TO SNEINTON DALE

The old Methodist church facing Hermitage Square is now a community centre and when access is possible the main hall is worth viewing, having a good hammer-beam roof and stained glass windows.

Continue into Thurgarton Street from where there is an interesting view of Castle Street on the left. After passing the high stone wall, the group of early Victorian cottages called Hamilton Place, clustered round a yard and built on several levels, presents an attractive scene. Recently they were restored and internally modernised by the Nottingham Community Housing Association. Thurgarton Street was once known as Nelson Street, and this may explain how Hamilton Place acquired its name.



Pause at the end of Pullman Road, with its Bulwell stone walls and well styled porches, and then follow Thurgarton Street to its junction with Lord Nelson Street.

The picturesque Lord Nelson public house is listed by the City authorities as being of "local interest". It is an early 18th century building which was surrounded during Sneinton's rapid growth in the late 19th century. With its old world atmosphere and garden, it is a surprising feature among streets of terrace houses, illustrating the contrasts of period and style to be found in Sneinton.

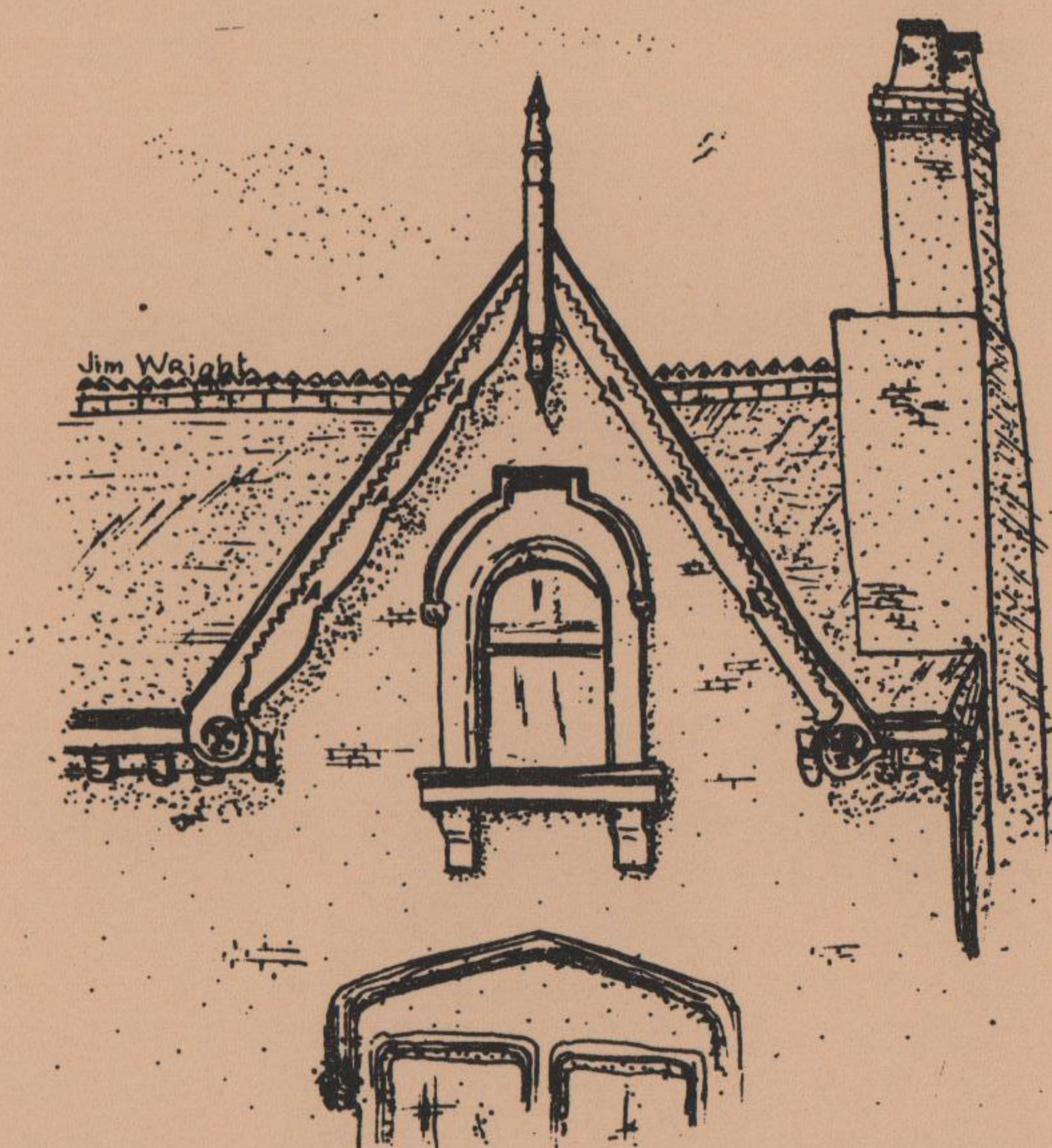
Continuing up Lord Nelson Street note the pleasant mellow hue of the local red brickwork and the stone ornamentation over the doors and windows of these well constructed dwellings. Sadly, much of the integrity of these terraces has been spoilt by ill-conceived "improvements", instigated and financed by Nottingham City Council's housing department. This insensitive bureaucracy appears incapable of learning from the local Housing Associations, which have tastefully upgraded scores of similar houses without the use of mismatched windows, concrete roof tiles, or subsidies to cowboy builders.

On reaching Sneinton Dale turn left. The three storey late Victorian Houses, on the right hand side of the road are included in the Old Sneinton Conservation Area and are notable for their ornate bargeboards, decorative ridgetiles, and fine



bay windows. The entire row is virtually unspoilt, and when a previous owner recently demolished one of these bays a furore ensued. Within a month of demolition it was rebuilt in the original style, though lacking a little of its original ornamentation.

Belvoir Hill Park was created from wasteland and largely derelict allotments by the City Council as part of the Sneinton District Plan. Follow the path up the hill to its windmill and adjoining museum.



DECORATIVE BARGEBOARDS  
and RIDGE TILES



SNEINTON MILL, 1860 (Notts County Library)



## GEORGE GREEN'S WINDMILL

Sneinton Mill was built shortly after the Green family acquired the land in 1807. At that time there were many mills on the high ground surrounding Nottingham, including three at Sneinton. However, Green's mill was not typical. Nottingham's other mills were post mills, wooden structures where the entire building had to be manually turned into the wind by the miller - at whatever hour of the day or night that might prove necessary.

The mill built for George Green was a tower mill - much more efficient than the post mill - being largely automated. And among tower mills it was a giant. The top of the finial is eighty feet high, making the mill one of the tallest in Nottinghamshire, and its sturdy walls are thicker than any other in the county.

Typical of most buildings in Sneinton, it was constructed of local brick and it is a tribute to the builders that the tower remains in such good condition. The onion-shaped dome is known as an "ogee cap" and is typical of the type fitted to tower mills in the East Midlands. The four sails, each over thirty feet long, are a combination of what was, in Green's time, the latest technology in the form of two "spring" sails and two of the older cloth covered "common" sails. The spring sail, invented in 1772, has hinged, spring loaded, shutters (rather like louvres) which allow excess wind to be spilled. However, it is less powerful than the cloth covered sail and Green apparently chose a combination of the two systems in order to benefit from some of the advantages of both. The gallery, encircling the tower at first floor level, was to facilitate adjustment of the sails and, on this mill, was unusually wide.

The fantail, fixed to the cap at a right-angle to its main sails, is an ingenious device, consisting of a set of small sails which act through gearing to turn the cap, so that the main sails always face into the wind.

Grain being brought into the mill is lifted to the top by a winch powered by the sails, and then emptied into a hopper ready to descend to ground level by gravity. On the way down it passes between the mill stones (Green's mill originally had three separate sets) to emerge as flour from a chute and fall into a sack placed in position by the miller. The energy from the entire process, except for carrying sacks in or out, and filling the hopper, is provided by the inexhaustible resources of wind and gravity.

Sneinton Mill did not enjoy a long working life. The advent of steam driven roller mills led to a very rapid decline of windmills during the 1850s. Green's mill is known to have been worked by at least one other miller after the mathematician's death but by 1871 he had moved to a post mill on nearby Windmill Lane, possibly because reduced trade would not support the running costs of a large, sophisticated tower mill. After that date the story, until 1980, was one of decline and decay.

Shortly after the death of Green's last surviving daughter, in 1919, the mill was purchased by a local solicitor named Oliver Hind. By this time the sails, fantail and gallery had disintegrated, though Oliver Hind had the cap repaired and covered in copper sheeting. It is in this form, with its unusual copper cap, weathered to a green colour, that local people remember the mill. Subsequently he let the building to a firm of furniture polish manufacturers.

Catastrophe struck in July 1947. A pot of beeswax, used in polish manufacture, boiled over on to a gas ring and the ensuing fire, fed by the inflammable materials stored in the tower and aggravated by the chimney shape of the building, completely gutted Sneinton's most prominent landmark. The tower was later capped with concrete and left to the mercy of the elements.

In 1974 Professor L.J. Challis of Nottingham University suggested to an international conference of physicists in Budapest that the mill should be restored as a memorial to George Green.

A fund was formed and in 1979, following exhaustive negotiations, the mill was purchased and given to the Nottingham City Council for restoration, as the centrepiece of a museum complex, completed in 1985. It now stands not only as a memorial to a great scientist, but also to the cooperation between The George Green Memorial Fund, Nottingham Civic Society, the Sneinton Environmental Society and Nottingham City Council. The story of the mill is also seen by many as symbolic of Sneinton's ability to withstand years of neglect and then to rise again to a new future.



## CONCLUSION

Leaving the windmill, visitors may return to the vicinity of the church, from where a frequent bus service operates to the City Centre.

The view of the city during the descent of Sneinton Road presents an opportunity to reflect on comparisons between Nottingham's modern buildings - designed without concessions to scale or beauty, of harsh concrete with aggressive lines, and old Sneinton built without destroying natural contours, of local brick, pleasantly mellowed, with gently curving streets. Although the area was built-up rapidly, with bricks produced by the million, even the humblest house displays some ornamentation to prove that aesthetic sensitivity and mass production can co-exist happily.

