



## **NEWSLETTER no 13 November 2020**

Dear Friends

During this extraordinary year we have tried to remain in regular contact with you as much as we can, and if for any reason we haven't got your current email address, or if you have a contact who can get emails which they can share with you, do please let us know.

One of the great sadnesses of this year has been the impossibility of properly saying goodbye to those who have left us. The three obituaries which follow recall people of both local and national importance.

### **SIR TERENCE CONRAN 1931-2020**

As this tribute is being written, a mug of coffee is nearby. An elegant creation, it bears on the base the name Sophie Conran. Yes indeed, Sir Terence's daughter, continuing the family talent. A talent which hit the high streets in 1964 with the opening of the first Habitat store, of which his *Times* obituarist wrote: "Stacked high with novelty items from flatpack furniture to floral teapots, colourful pepper grinders, sets of knives, gleaming white plates and the 'chicken brick', it gave affordable design and modern living to the aspiring masses for the first time.

"With its piles of overstuffed cushions and piped jazz music, Habitat was the place to be seen in the Sixties and Seventies. [Conran] described his market as 'young moderns with lively taste' and declared himself 'the Mary Quant of the furnishing world.'" Picasso, no less, once bought a Habitat chair."

More analytically, he declared that his business concept was "98 per cent common sense" and "two per cent of that little extra – style or whatever you want to call it – that makes something worth having."

Impoverished young homemakers of the mid-Seventies could go into Habitat, get the catalogue and buy comparable items from British Home Stores for a fraction of the price. Some of them still survive, and remain in use.

Conran had started with involvement in the Festival of Britain in 1951, the launchpad of much good postwar design

His cooking revolution resulted in many forays into the restaurant business, notably his relaunch of the Michelin building in South Kensington as Bibendum. Clearly a renaissance man: much needed these days.

**STEPHEN BEST** remembered by Dave Ablitt  
*with a photo of Stephen and his wife Sue by Malcolm Stacey*



Stephen Best, who died on 14 October at the age of 81, after a long struggle with Parkinson's disease, made an invaluable contribution to our knowledge of local history. Growing up in Hyson Green, the son of a hosiery folder, he spent his entire life in Nottingham, displaying a deep affection for the city and its people. At the age of eleven he won a scholarship to Nottingham High School and, on leaving, joined the City Library Service where he remained for the whole of his working life.

I first became aware of Stephen some forty-odd years ago through the series of local history phone-in broadcasts he did for Radio Nottingham with the late Keith Train. Those broadcasts were notable not only for the immense amount of local knowledge they conveyed to a wide audience but also how, despite their learned tone, they never patronised the caller, however ill-informed some may have been.

Shortly after hearing Stephen on the radio I became acquainted with him when visiting the Local Studies Library. He was the ideal librarian who, as soon as he knew a client's sphere of interest, would provide a continual stream of relevant information and anecdotes. He cut an impressive figure; tall with dark hair and a vigorous beard, yet modest and quietly-spoken, with a well-developed sense of humour.

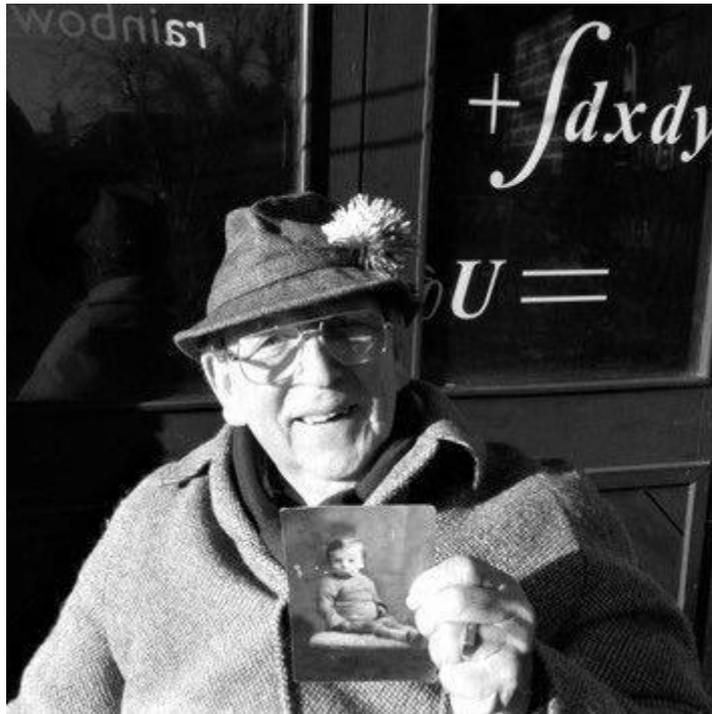
Soon we discovered common interests; Nottingham's history, especially Sneinton, and the history of our railways. It was his affection for Sneinton that led to his steadfast support for

the *Sneinton Magazine*, published quarterly by the Sneinton Environmental Society between 1981 and 2007. More than one hundred issues were produced over those twenty six years and each carried one of Stephen's meticulously researched and highly readable articles - a remarkable record!

He was a prolific writer contributing articles to a wide range of publications where he demonstrated his remarkable ability to generate interest in what many would see as mundane, such as the decorative tiles in the porches of Sneinton's terraced houses. His contributions appeared in publications ranging from the Civic Society Newsletter and other local history society journals to the Cigarette Card News but, whatever the subject, Stephen's work was invariably characterised by its readability coupled with painstaking research and accuracy.

However, it could be argued that the great contribution he made to our knowledge of local history through his published work was at least equalled by the help and encouragement he so generously gave to others. Stephen will be greatly missed by his widow, Sue, his extended family and his many friends.

**DENNY STANIFORTH was a much-loved supporter of Green's Mill.**



*The Green's Windmill Trust has supplied this appreciation of him:*

As a local resident Denny could often be found sitting on his favourite chair in the mill yard supping a coffee loaded with coffee-mate telling an amusing tale or three to staff, volunteers and visitors alike. Known for his love of nature and encyclopaedic knowledge of Nottingham, Denny could brighten up the dullest of days, especially with his endless supply of shortbread biscuits and witty one liners such as "ay up, me owd flower" in deference to the baking ingredient of the same name made by our millers.

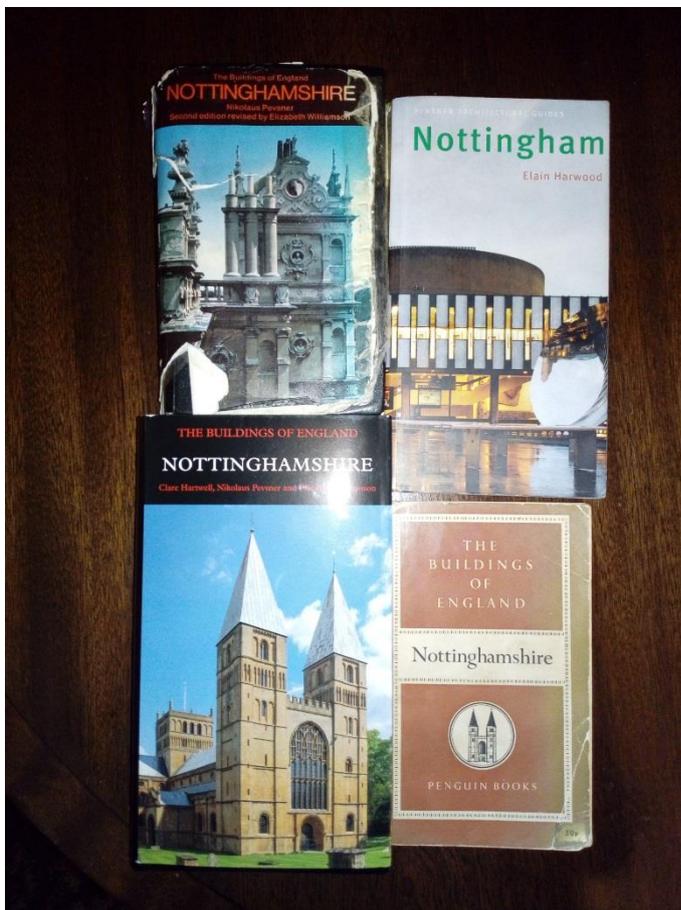
Denny's health had sadly deteriorated over the last eighteen months and he found walking up to the mill increasingly difficult. That though did not stop him making an appearance at last year's carol service, his favourite event of the year.

The passing of Denny is very sad news indeed, though a smidgen of comfort is brought from the knowledge that he passed away peacefully at home in bed.

Gone he may be, but forgotten he is not. He has been immortalised via this YouTube video filmed in 2010:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O74gWupHC5Q&t=33s>

Denny's brother is remembered on the war memorial in the churchyard of St Stephen's church in Sneinton, just across the road from the Mill.



Mention of Stephen Best above brings us to the acknowledgements in Elain Harwood's *Nottingham City Guide* of 2008, where she refers to "Ken Brand of the Nottingham Civic Society, whose generosity of time and knowledge has been exceptional. Stephen Best has been similarly generous in answering questions on Sneinton and reading its text."

Anyone who, as we do, has regular recourse to "Elain" as we call it (as in "Pevsner") is immensely grateful to these two learned gentlemen making their knowledge available in such invaluable and easily accessed form.

And now we have "Clare", Clare Hartwell's long-awaited revision of the Nottinghamshire volume, no longer pocket-sized but a wonderful tome revealing so much about a county of which it has been said either that "they don't know what they've got" or,

perhaps more kindly, "they know what they've got but they don't know what to do with it." Perhaps Clare's volume will tell them.

The Civic Society gains honourable mention, particularly Hilary Silvester, Alan Bates, Kurt Hatton, Rachel Farrand, Terry Fry and Richard Tresidder. The glorious photos are by Martine Hamilton Knight, with whom Paul Mottram gets mentioned in dispatches. And Ian Wells who according to Clare "acted as driver and guide" on a couple of occasions in the suburbs.

## THE BROAD MARSH

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There have been several proposals for a revamped Broadmarsh centre which at its greatest would have occupied much of Canal Street. Schemes have come and gone, and indeed owners of the centre have come and gone, and while the building has itself partially gone we haven't yet reached the cleared site of 1970 pictured above, with the People's College building under the Castle rock, while the thoroughfare in front of the carpark kiosk is none other than Collin Street. *(Picture by courtesy of Fred Gardner, and with thanks to Janine Tanner for bringing it to our attention)*

However . . . no-one could have predicted the changes in shopping habits, the 2008 crash or the current emergency when the great design first emerged. But now? Half a century ago there was complete paranoia about nostalgia, or going back: now, we look at it differently.

A restoration of the name Broad Marsh as the original two separate words rather than the single word which it became following the creation of the shopping centre would be a start.

It was astonishing to hear recently that they would never have got rid of Drury Hill had they realised there was such a groundswell in favour of its retention. Well, voices can be expressed now, and while a complete reconstruction of Drury Hill might seem excessive it would be worth re-establishing the connection from Bridlesmithgate to Canal Street.

What is essential is to restore connectivity between the Square and the Station, and towards the Meadows perhaps along the lines of the lost Listergate route. One might forget that until 1950 there was the Walter Fountain in Listergate, and then the road forked: the pedestrian route towards the current entrance near Boots is on the line of Greyfriargate, which is truncated at that point, while Listergate has vanished, to be found again at the end of Carrington Street. The Carrington Street connectivity concern reminds us that since the mid-nineteen seventies The Meadows has largely been cut off. The direct link to Trent Bridge

via Arkwright Street was removed, to (it was hoped) enhance the quality of life in the newly-rebuilt Meadows; time for a change there as the area became isolated.

Clear connectivity between the Saxon borough in the Lace Market and the Norman borough towards the Castle to some extent exists, although there will always be traffic going to Fletchergate car park, not to mention the trams on the same road. Another concern on that route is the creation of a clear way of viewing, understanding, interpreting and using the Cliff that links these two boroughs.

Which brings us to the southern end of the site. We are pressing for good landscaping of the pedestrian route along Collin Street. It is not enough to pedestrianise it using slabs; a properly thought-out scheme is essential. And of course we need clear sightlines along Collin Street between the tram bridge and the Castle, with ideally the removal of the bridge which links the car park and obscures views of the Castle rock. The picture at the head of this section, despite the annoying presence of the telegraph wires, gives us an idea of the rock that needs to be revealed once more.

Then what about the site itself? Not just an enormous open space, although there need to be significant green spaces within the new development: we would like to see a mixed use development on the cleared site which could allow for housing and appropriate small scale shops, cafes, bars etc, with no high-rise buildings. And underneath all this, the effective presentation and interpretation of the Caves, with the entrance to the caves at the bottom of the Cliff rather than as presently at the top.

Do take the opportunity to make your views known by going to:

[www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/BroadmarshBigConversation](http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/BroadmarshBigConversation)

Major concern has been expressed that visitors to the restored and relaunched Castle will for a long time be making their way through a building site to reach it, especially if they are coming from the station. There are other ways proposed, but still problematic. A roadtrain is proposed from near the Trip to Jerusalem to the castle itself. Fine, but where do you drop off visitors arriving by coach? In Peveril Drive behind the red telephone box, "Under the Castle Rock" as the address used to be when Rediffusion had their offices nearby? In Friar Lane, obscuring the gatehouse which just happens to be the entrance to their destination and should seem like it? Or in a layby on Maid Marian Way, not far from Friar Lane, which seems ideal.

We are told that every problem is an opportunity. Difficult to believe much of the time, but there is an opportunity to rise to the challenges in this whole Broad Marsh / Castle / Station area. We were concerned that despite the excellent work being done there, Carrington Street might remain the road you hurried along between the station and your place of work.

Perhaps not now, if a serious attempt is made to turn the Broad Marsh area into a discrete area of the city. Recent discussions concerning the Sneinton Market conservation area lead towards the same conclusion: that perhaps we should, even in the city centre, be creating local community enclaves where businesses can thrive at a time when larger concerns are, to our astonishment, struggling to survive. Perhaps small will be beautiful once more.

Best wishes, and stay safe

Hilary Silvester

Ian Wells