

Nottingham – then & now

By Graham Woodward



There is an old saying, the only constant is change. The poet Hilaire Belloc once wrote, *"When science has discovered something more, we shall be happier than we were before"*. A lot of people dislike change and strive to retain an environment that no longer fits with our modern way of life. The key is to maintain a balance between our needs and our heritage and to that end it is sometimes a good idea to look back to remind ourselves how good, or bad, the past really was. This article looks at some of the buildings of Nottingham that have been demolished or changed dramatically over the last 40 years and see what they have been replaced by. I will let you decide if Belloc's theory applies to architecture.

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(Picture above) 1926 NCT English Electric tram outside the Gt Northern Railway's London Road High Level Station, Nottingham c.1934, superimposed on to the modern street view.



Alfreton Road. The Orion Cinema on Alfreton Road opened on 15 May 1913 as the Electra House and had seating for 800. It stood opposite Raleigh Street, near Canning Circus. It was renamed the Orion in 1942 but closed in 1959 and was demolished soon afterwards. (Below) Today you would have no idea that a decorative cinema building ever stood here. The only good thing to say about the replacement building is that it was built of brick (even though it probably has a steel frame) and has a useful purpose.





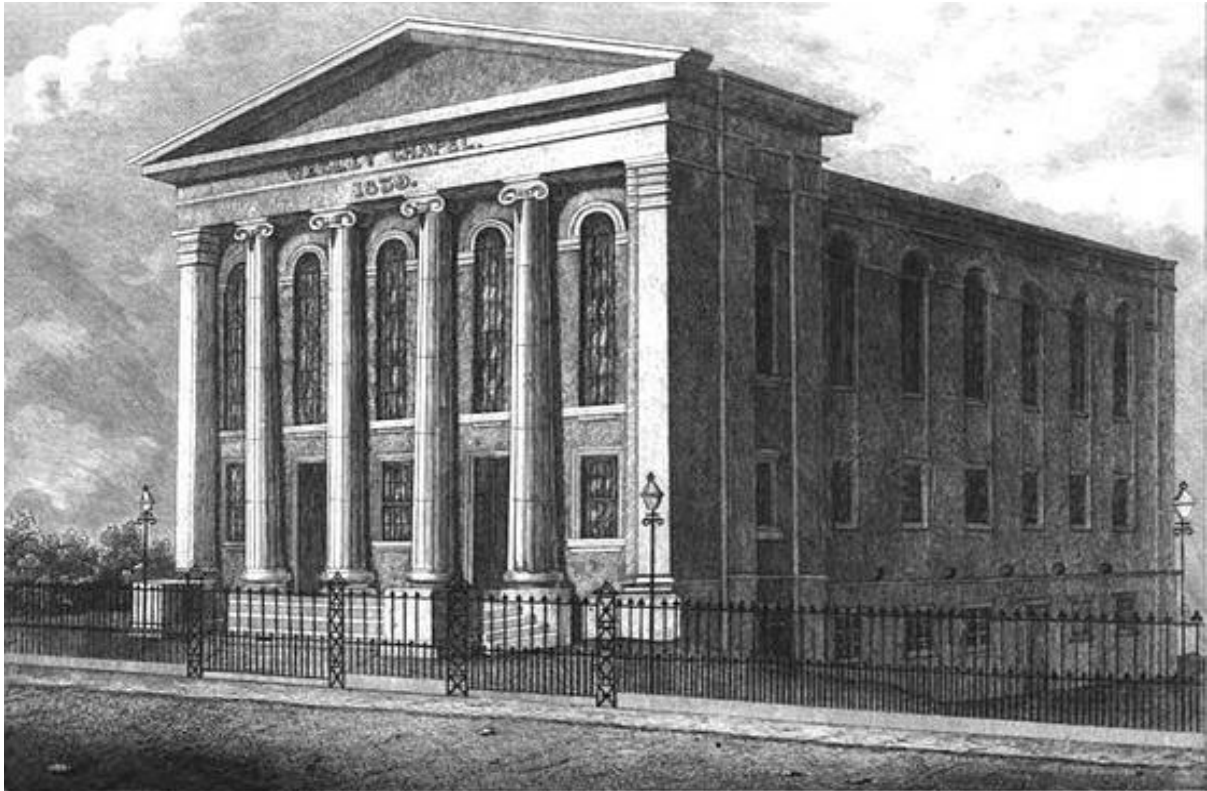
Arkwright Street 2008. This line of buildings (1-27 odd numbers) was demolished in 2013 to make way for the southern extension of the NET tram service. The Midland Counties Bank, the former Midlands Electric Picture Palace and the cob-shop Tasty Bites, at 1, 1A and 1B respectively, were retained, but demolition of the remainder of the row saw the loss of the last Victorian section of the old Arkwright Street. (Below) The vacant site is now destined to be redeveloped with the building of a seven-storey commercial office block. Crocus Place (right) is also set to be re-developed with an apartment block, and the site on the opposite side of the road has been earmarked for the development of a 115 bed hotel and 65 apartments.





Belvoir Hill, Sneinton 1979. These houses were built about 1820 and were a classic example of late Georgian terraced properties. Green's Mill, built 1807, is also shown before it was restored in 1986 and is now a Grade II listed building. The houses were demolished when the mill was being restored – they probably interfered with the air-flow to the mill. (Below) The same view thirty years later shows Green's Mill restored with only the front garden wall of the old houses remaining.





Broad Street, Hockley. The Wesleyan Chapel on Broad Street, built in 1839 by the architect S.S. Rawlinson, became redundant for religious purposes in about 1957 and then housed the Co-op Education Centre. The portico frontage was removed and in 1982 the building was converted into the Broadway Cinema. In 2006 it was refurbished at a cost of £6 million and now has four screens and two bars. In 2009, Total Film magazine rated it as one of the best cinemas in the world.





Bulwell Market Place c. 1919. This picture postcard of Bulwell Market Place is undated. Tram route numbers were introduced in 1912 and route 3 was from Bulwell to Trent Bridge, running every six minutes. The numbers changed to letters in 1933 when trolley buses were introduced. The shop names appear in Wright's 1915 Directory exactly as lined up in the photo - the shop on the right was Prosser & Co's clothiers shop. The bank was originally the Nottingham & Nottinghamshire Banking Company, but in 1919 they merged with the Westminster, the name shown in the picture, which suggests a date of 1919 or later. Boots Cash Chemists Limited (right) is also listed in the 1915 Directory – it is now a shoe shop. (Below) The same view today. The building is still standing but a lot has changed. The gables have been altered and a dormer window has been inserted at No.4. Also, the bay windows on the right have been removed. On the left, most of the old buildings have been replaced and the tram lines have been lifted.





Canal Street and Carrington Street, c.1920. In this postcard picture, Canal Street runs left to right with Carrington Street seen heading up towards Lister Gate. The building on the right with the turret was G. Hardy & Co, furnishers, and the Shipstone's pub next door was the Lincoln Arms. The whole line of buildings on the right was demolished in the early 1970s when the Broad Marsh Centre was built. (Below) Not quite the same view as today, but one taken in 2015 showing the old bus station. The turret of Hardy's shop stood where the bus entrance was on the right and Collin Street can be seen in the distance with the Broad Marsh Centre.





Canal Street & Carrington Street 2015. It is rare in a single lifetime to be able to show more than one redevelopment of a major site, but Canal Street in Broad Marsh is one such place. The bus station and car park, built in 1973, were never a visual asset, and the bus station itself was a dreadful place. The building on the left was once an ESSO garage and the offices of the Anglo-American Oil Company. It was designed in 1923 by the architect A.N. Bromley and still stands today. (Below) The new car park and bus station are a great improvement on what was there before, but I wonder if 50 years from now it will still hold fascination for budding architects and local historians.





Canal Street c.1996. The south side of Canal Street near Wilford Road was cleared in 1996 to make way for the new Castle Wharf complex. There were two pubs in the row, the Narrow Boat and the Canal Tavern. There was also a café called Brief Encounter, Kingston's motorbike shop and Bunney's bike shop. (Below) In 1996 this building was built for the Nottingham Evening Post. It replaced their offices on Forman Street where the Cornerhouse Cinema is now. This building is now the Nottingham offices of H.M. Land Registry after they vacated the old Government Buildings site at Chalfont Drive, Aspley. The brick building reflected in the glass is the Castle Warehouses on the north side of Castle Boulevard, built in 1907.





Canning Circus c.1899. Derby Road is in the foreground in this postcard picture. In the days of horse-drawn transport, Canning Circus was a busy place. The steep climb up Derby Road meant that extra ‘trace’ or ‘cock’ horses had to be used to help pull heavy loads up the hill. On the island site in front of Canning Terrace were facilities to service the horse-based system – drinking troughs for the horses, huts for cabbies, a gent’s urinal and a public waiting room for a cab. (Below) The same view in 2019. The layout has changed dramatically and without Canning Terrace in the background it would be hard to tell that it was the same place.





Castle Boulevard 1980. This was once one of Hicking & Pentecost's lace dressing works. The building had 36 bays and was 80m (260ft) long. At the town end (right) there was a private laundry owned by The Park & District Laundry Co. Ltd. The building was being demolished when I took this picture. It was replaced by a commercial retail unit housing a Texas Homecare Centre. (Below) The site is now the car park for the Cornerstone Church. Before the new church was built the congregation worshipped at the Palin Street Baptist Church in Hyson Green. The four trees have grown quite a bit and the post box has been moved further along the road.





Derby Road 1980. This picture is a montage taken by me in 1980. Apart from the Mibro tool shop, all the properties were derelict. They are not listed buildings, unlike most of the other properties on this stretch of the road. They do not appear on George Sanderson's Map of 1835 and were probably built in the 1850s as domestic residencies. The discrepancy in the size of the two houses behind the lamp post is due to the angle from which the original pictures were taken (you could not take panoramic photos on my 35mm film camera).

On the left is the Hand and Heart pub whose website states that, *"The Hand & Heart started its commercial life in 1866 as a brewery. The building was originally comprised of a Georgian House with stables to the back and a cave below. The beers were brewed in the converted stables and dropped through a hole carved out of the ceiling of the cave for storage. Soon after, the Victorian shop front was added, and it started to retail beer as a public house."*

The van on the left is a Mark I Ford Transit, produced in the UK from 1965 to 1977. A short way up Derby Road on the right in the picture is a block of shops and flats built in 1884 by Watson Fothergill for W.J. Bugg.

(Below) The properties were renovated recently and bought back into commercial use, the two original houses at 75-77 Derby Road being converted into a double-frontage musical-instrument shop, Windblowers. The first and second floors now reflect their neo-Georgian roots.





Derby Road c.1989 – Hooleys Garage. This was Hooleys car showrooms on the corner of Derby Road and Upper College Street. It was a Ford main agent and is seen here advertising the Scorpio and Granada range of cars from the late 1980s. The showrooms were built about 1925 and at one time second-hand cars were on sale on a forecourt to the right of the building. The firm also had a garage workshop unit on the Ropewalk. (Below) The showrooms were demolished about 2000 and replaced by this apartment block.





Goldsmith Street & corner of Burton Street, 1980. This picture is looking south down Goldsmith Street from outside the old Nottingham Playhouse (Alberts) at the bottom of Talbot Street. The red shop on the corner sold amusements and next door (left) was a newsagents and a joke shop. The tall building was the Empire Billiard & Snooker Hall and at one time Selectadisc had their record shop next to the Easy Eats café below the hall – they later moved to Market Street. The top of Market Street can be seen far right in the picture, and the old Nottingham Evening Post building on South Sherwood Street is on the left, now the site of the Cornerhouse cinema. (Below) A part of the Royal Concert Hall was built on the site in 1980-82.





Goldsmith Street & Shakespeare Street 1979.

The corner of Shakespeare Street (left) and Goldsmith Street (right) has changed considerably. This view is looking southwest towards the Victoria Centre – the flats in the distance, at 78m (256ft) high, are the tallest building in Nottingham.

Nottingham Trent University had already taken over most of the north side of Shakespeare Street (far left) but the south side where the phone box stood still had older properties. Hinton's shop was a Post Office and in 1979 was one of the last traditional grocery stores in the area.

(Below) The same scene today showing the turret of the Boots Library, built in 1995 as part of the Trent University.





Hucknall Road and Alexandra Street 1980. This was Whitmores Garage; Hucknall Road is on the right. When this photo was taken in 1980 the garage no longer served petrol, as a new service station had been built behind where I stood to take the photo. The old black petrol pumps once had long pipes on arms that swung out over the pavement to reach cars that stopped on the road. These old pumps are now collector's items and fetch well over £500. (Below) The same scene today, now the offices of Hobsons, Accountants.





Hucknall Road 1980. The Commodore opened on 1 December 1932 as the Aspley Picture House. It had seating for 1,294. The screen area was 56ft wide and the stage was 25ft deep, which meant that when it closed as a cinema in 1956 it was ideal for conversion to a concert venue which is when it acquired the Commodore name. It was a popular venue, visited by many famous artists. (Below) Most old cinemas were difficult to re-use as they had large open seating areas, not suitable for office space or residential conversion. The Commodore was demolished and replaced by this new L-shaped complex containing a Sainsbury's store and apartments, but the supermarket has now closed and is vacant.





Huntingdon Street 1978. The car showrooms of T. Shipside Ltd was on the east side of Huntingdon Street, on the corner of Nile Street. Before the garage was built the site was that of a large lodging house. Shipsides was a BMC main agents, selling MG, Morris, Riley and Wolseley vehicles. The founder of the company, Tom Shipside, was responsible for the building of Tollerton Airfield in 1928. The garage had closed when this picture was taken by me in 1978. (Below) The garage was replaced by Royal Mail's main delivery office.





Ilkeston Road 2010. This pub at the top of Ilkeston Road was called 'Seven', despite being No.5 Ilkeston Road. It was not the most inspiring building. Most people would call this Canning Circus, but it is actually Ilkeston Road which once went straight across and through the gap between the Sir John Borlase Warren and the Falcon pubs. (Below) Modern buildings are getting better, especially now that brick is back in fashion. In my view this is one of the best looking buildings erected recently and has made a vast improvement to the area.





Lenton Boulevard 1979. All Souls Church on the corner of Lenton Boulevard and Ilkeston Road was consecrated in 1895. The Southwell & Nottingham Church History Project refers to it as a 'Radford Church'. It was designed by Naylor & Sale of Derby and comprised a nave, aisles, chancel and vestry. The church absorbed most of the congregation from Christ Church further up Ilkeston Road when that church closed in 1943. All Souls itself closed in January 1979 and was demolished soon afterwards. (Below) The new church was designed by Smith & Curtis, and the foundation stone was laid in July 1979. The redeveloped site included sheltered accommodation.





London Road 1980. This view shows the junction of Canal Street (right) and London Road (ahead), as seen from the Lace Market. The large group of buildings in the centre of the picture were Boot's the Chemists Island Street factory complex. The tall chimney on the right is at Enviroenergy that supplies heating to the Victoria Shopping Centre and other sites. The building with the green dome was originally Leenside Police Station on Canal Street, later a PDSA centre, and now a refuge. The modern building in the left foreground with the round tower was Pemberton Street police station that replaced the one on Canal Street. (Below) The same view today. The Island factory site has been replaced by a BBC studios, an NHS walk-in centre and an hotel. Sam Ward's garage on the left has now been demolished and is being replaced by a block of flats.





Lower Parliament Street 1980. Below the art-deco clock, Market Garage Ltd. was advertised as “Automotive Electrical Engineers”. The style of the building suggests that it was built in the 1930s. At the time of the First World War the part of Huntingdon Street on the right was called Millstone Lane, leading to Cross Street then Platt Street. The road in front of the garage was called Cur Lane, and on the corner where this garage was later built was E.S. Poyser & Sons Pawnbrokers shop. (Below) A new petrol station with its entrance on the right in Huntingdon Street has replaced the old building. The new style leaves a lot to be desired but the garage behind the wall is well used and is open 24 hours a day.





Middle Pavement 1978. During World War Two, the Lace Market area suffered several hits from air raids. This property on Middle Pavement, originally occupied by five lace manufacturers, was totally destroyed and remained derelict until the 1990s. Halifax Place was also badly damaged as was the old Theatre Royal on St Mary's Gate. St Mary's church was hit by an incendiary bomb, but the fire was extinguished. (Below) The site on Middle Pavement is now a shop unit with flats above, but like many in the area the shop is currently empty. The stone and brick building to the right (No.15) was built in 1907 and was once the offices of H.W. Cooper & Co, lace manufacturers who also had three other lace making tenants in residence. It is now Grade II listed.





Milton Street and Lower Parliament Street. This old pub, The Miltons Head Hotel, was built in 1782 by William Stretton, although there had been a pub on this site called the Saracen's Head since 1706. This picture from 1969 shows the pub after it was restyled in the 1930s. Milton Street is to the left and Parliament Street is on the right, now the site of a Boots store. In the late 1960s the pub had a bar below street level where every Friday night they played blues and soul music. It was very popular. Although the hotel survived the building of Victoria Station in 1898 it could not hold out against its replacement, the Victoria Shopping Centre. (Below) The Victoria Centre opened in 1972 and this entrance on Lower Parliament Street is on the site of the old hotel. Millions of shoppers have now walked through what was once the saloon bar but sadly the centre's sound system does not play blues or soul music.





Milton Street, 1953 and 1982. A lot has been written elsewhere about Victoria Station, so I will not repeat that. All that is left is the clock tower; even the trolleybuses disappeared in 1966.



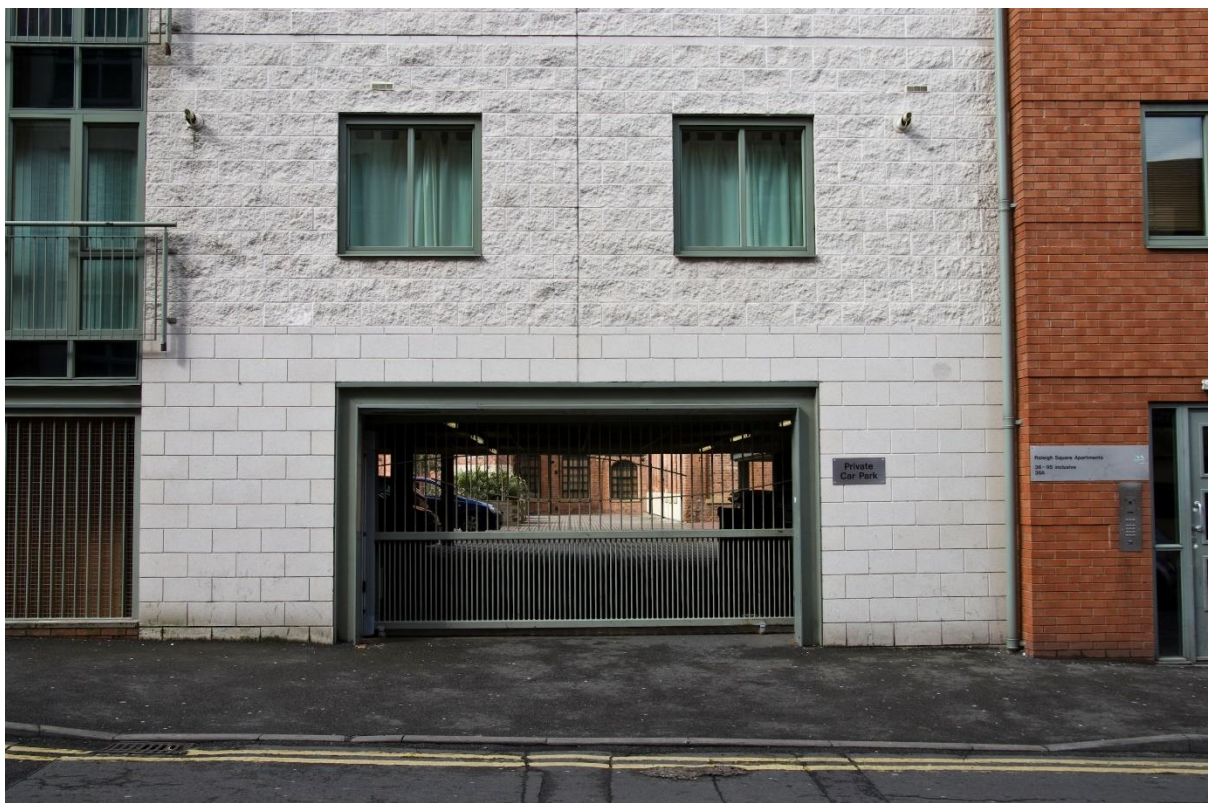


Radford Boulevard 1980. In 1890 John Player built a large 30 acre factory complex in Radford. It was one of the largest factories of its kind at the time, but soon it was not big enough, as by 1930 two-thirds of all cigarettes sold in Britain were made by Players. In 1932, Players built this No.2 factory on the east side of Radford Boulevard on the corner of Hartley Road, originally the site of a St Peter's vicarage, a school and allotment gardens. The factory had a floor area of 220,000 sq ft and was used solely for cigarette production until 1976. It was demolished in 1987. (Below) Today the site is occupied by the Castle Retail Park. Only the clock and some art-deco railings that enclosed the factory have survived.





Raleigh Street 1978. This was one of the saddest losses in the city. This pair of houses at 13-15 Raleigh Street was where the world famous Raleigh Cycle company began in 1885. Richard Woodhead and Paul Angois, supported by their financial backer William Ellis, began production of bikes here and in Gamble's Lace factory behind the building. They made about ten bikes a week until Frank Bowden bought the firm in 1888 and later made it the largest bike production company in the world. Despite having an 'Historic Interest' plaque fitted to the frontage, the building was demolished in 1980 and replaced by a housing complex. The modern entrance gateway to Raleigh Square shown below is where the two houses once stood.





South Sherwood Street & Forman Street c.1960.

This was the Guardian Journal Office on the corner of South Sherwood Street and Forman Street. It was built in 1872. Thomas Forman began production of the Nottingham Evening Post in 1878 and later merged with the Guardian Journal. In 2010 the newspaper was renamed the Nottingham Post to reflect the fact that it was published as a daily paper, not merely an evening one. In 1998 the Post moved to a new building at Castle Wharf (now HM Land Registry) and this building closed.

The building on Forman Street was demolished in 1998 and replaced by the Cornerhouse cinema complex (left and below). The complex contains 14 screens and an Imax cinema. It also has bars and restaurants, a nightclub, a casino and two indoor adventure golf courses!





Talbot Street 2008. This building was originally a commercial livery stables, designed by the architect Hedley J Price and built in 1902 on the corner of what was then called Upper Talbot Street. Price also remodelled the Blue Bell pub on Parliament Street. Although the Talbot Street building was built after the introduction of electric trams in 1901, cabs (taxis) based at Canning Circus were still horse-drawn and heavy goods wagons still needed the assistance of 'Cock' horses to climb Derby Road, although many hauliers used the new flat route along Castle Boulevard. The building was later Gee's Japanese restaurant, but it then stood empty for 14 years and was demolished in 2015.

(Left) Talbot Point was built in 2016 and houses 77 self-contained studio flats, aimed at the student population. It was designed by the architects CBP of the Ropewalk, Nottingham. In addition to the flats the complex has laundry facilities, bike storage, a cinema and a gym. Two-bed apartments start from about £150 per week per person.



Theatre Square 1950s. This postcard shows the now demolished Gaumont Cinema on Wollaton Street, formerly the Hippodrome Theatre, and the County Hotel on the corner of Goldsmith Street. The Hippodrome opened in 1908 and then re-opened in 1927 as a cinema with seating for 1,724 people. It was renamed the Gaumont in 1948. It closed in 1971 and was demolished in 1973. The County Hotel was built in 1867, called the Clarendon Hotel, and was rated as a “*First class family and commercial hotel*”. Many famous people linked to the theatre stayed there, such as Agatha Christie in 1952 when her new play *The Mousetrap* had its world premiere at the Theatre Royal. The hotel was demolished in 1975 as part of the Theatre Royal’s refurbishment. (Below) The same view in 2015. The Gaumont was replaced by Berresford House and is now the site of ‘Hydrogen’, a “*Student Roost*”. The County Hotel site houses dressing rooms for the Theatre Royal.





Wollaton Street 1980. This was the first power station built in Nottingham. It stood on the corner of Wollaton Street and Hanley Street and backed onto Talbot Street. The site was acquired in 1894 at a cost of £10,175 (£1.3 million today) and this station, with four seven-foot diameter boilers, was built. The site had a 50m (165ft) high chimney and the station could supply power for 10,000 lamps. It was later extended and by the time electric trams were introduced in 1901 it was running at full capacity, capable of lighting 127,000 lamps. It was so successful that electricity prices in Nottingham were the lowest in the country. (Below) The Crowne Plaza Hotel now occupies the site of the old power station. It has one of the most uninviting entrances of any major hotel anywhere and it is very difficult to see any architectural merit in its design. ♦



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See also <http://www.gwoodward.co.uk/nottm.html> for more history guides to Nottingham.