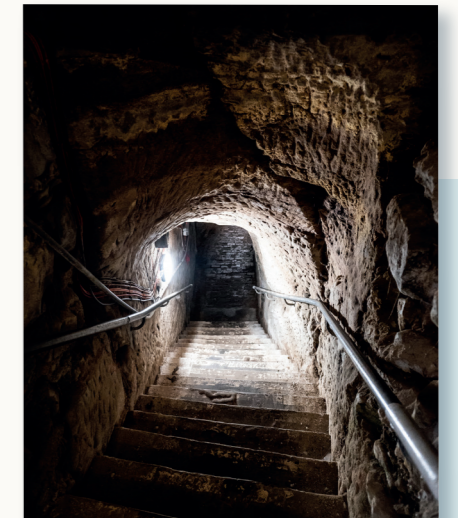


Tales from the Caves: Exploring Nottingham's underground stories

Nottingham is famous for the hundreds of caves which lie beneath its streets and buildings. They are a product of the city's unique geology: the pebbles deposited by a major river over 250 million years ago left a layer of soft, workable sandstone – a rocky outcrop onto which Nottingham was first built. It is little surprise, then, that the ground beneath has long been riddled with caverns and cellars carved by hand – and even less that they have been a constant source of fascination for antiquarians, writers and visitors, as well as being the subject of over 100 years of archaeological investigation and recording.

The caves of Nottingham have attracted many different stories over the centuries, from myths of ancient druid temples to tales of Robin Hood, royal intrigue and Luddite plotters. The surviving historic documents tell a more complex but equally fascinating story. From the earliest times, local people made and used caves for every purpose of daily life: for storage, workshops, malt kilns and stables; as drinking dens and garden follies; as rock-cut houses and as bomb shelters during the Second World War. In this exhibition, we aim to tell the stories of Nottingham's caves in myth and reality, revealing the cast of characters who created and inhabited the caves, as well as the twentieth-century campaigners, volunteers and archaeologists who have uncovered, recorded and preserved this important aspect of the city's history.

The exhibition is jointly curated by Manuscripts and Special Collections and Dr Chris King and Dr Charlotte May of the Department of Classics and Archaeology, University of Nottingham.



Photograph of a rock-cut tunnel leading down to the cave system beneath Wollaton Hall, by Andrew Marlow Hallsworth; 2022



This prospect of Nottingham shows the sandstone cliff on which the town is built overlooking the valley of the river Trent to the south. Illustrated view of Nottingham, c.1695, from *Album of prints depicting Nottingham and Nottinghamshire*, p.48; [n.d.]. University of Nottingham EMSC Over.X Not 1.D14 ALB



Geological map of Nottinghamshire by W. Smith; 1824. University of Nottingham EMSC MapCabinet Not 1.C16 SMI

Sandstone texture: Reproduced with the permission of the British Geological Survey © UKRI [2024]. All Rights Reserved



Engraved illustration of a cottage next to caves built into rock, c.1810, from *Album of prints depicting Nottingham and Nottinghamshire*, p.48; [n.d.]. University of Nottingham EMSC Over.X Not 1.D14 ALB

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