

An Itinerary of Nottingham.

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Being information as to the history of the Streets, Buildings, etc., of the City, collected from many sources by

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This itinerary was prepared before modern conditions altered the lay-out of the streets of Nottingham. It has been thought better to leave the itinerary as it was when written so as to preserve some record of many streets and houses now destroyed.

ST. PETER'S GATE.

ST. PETER'S GATE is of very respectable antiquity being mentioned as Peter Gate in 1285. Like all other Nottingham streets it was narrow and congested during the Middle Ages and it was not until 1870 that it was widened. In the course of this widening the County Court which was erected in 1868 was constructed and a very great many beautiful half-timbered houses were swept away. One of these houses was so beautiful that Mrs. Gilbert tells us that Ruskin made a special journey to Nottingham and stopped at the "George Inn" for the purpose of making a sketch of it.

But this widening was insufficient and the road was again widened in 1884. To effect this a slice had to be taken off St. Peter's Churchyard and one realises how old the churchyard is and for how long a period it has been used for interments when one hears that in taking off this slice it was necessary to remove no less than 2,000 bodies and re-inter them elsewhere. St. Peter's Church Walk probably refers to a footpath

running across the eastern end of the churchyard and corresponds with St. Nicholas' Church Walk and with Kaye's Walk. It cannot be very ancient for as we have seen the churchyard was not fenced in the year 1641. At any rate the present fence was not set up until 1804.

Peck Lane was in medieval times of great importance and carried a great deal of traffic. It is mentioned without any name as early as 1326 and appears to have been the western boundary of the property where the great family of Plumptre settled in the 13th century. It was first called Plumptre Lane in 1414 and we know that John Plumptre held land here in 1435. In 1504 it is called Peck Lane and a stream is mentioned as running down it which I suppose would go to swell the mud in St. Peter's Square. The name of Peck Lane has always been an antiquarian puzzle, the orthodox theory is that it is a corruption of "pack" and denotes a burden carried by a pack-horse, but if I may venture to advance another theory it is this. I would suggest that there were two inns, one called "The Punch Bowl" and the other "The Peacock" situated within it. They were both of considerable notoriety so much so that they were mentioned in the "Eccentric Excursion" as famous for their ale and I have wondered whether "Peck" is not really a shortening of "Peacock" and that the appropriate name of the thoroughfare should be "Peacock Lane," I confess that nowhere is it referred to as Peacock Lane, but perhaps the suggestion may bear further investigation. The maid at this "Peacock Inn" had a thrilling adventure in 1776. It appears that she was a native of Leeds and upon one occasion had attempted to visit her relatives in her old home. It was winter and it was bitterly cold and the result of her expedition was that she very nearly froze

to death and was rescued from deep snow-drifts near Mansfield with the utmost difficulty.

Great things often have small beginnings, and as a further instance of this it is pleasant to remember that the great family of Stanhope whose fame is so resounding take their origin from a draper's shop which was established in Peck Lane, but more important than this is the story of Thomas Smith. In 1658 Thomas Smith who was a son-in-law of Lawrance Collins, founder of the Collins Charity, established himself as a mercer in a shop at the corner of Peck Lane and what is now South Parade where at present stands a millinery establishment. Underneath his premises he had certain rock cellars and in these cellars he undertook to take charge of people's money and valuables. This fulfilled a long-felt want, for the custody of valuables in the Middle Ages was a constant source of anxiety to our forefathers. In London, it had been the custom for the goldsmiths to deposit their specie in the Tower for safe custody, but Charles I's action in appropriating this accumulated wealth and applying it to his own purposes had completely shaken the confidence of the nation in any such method of guarding their treasures and folk were reduced to devising hiding places wherein to secrete their wealth so that Thomas Smith's suggestion was distinctly apropos. It was found to work very well indeed and such was his fame and his honesty that folk came from far and near to avail themselves of his offer. From this small beginning he gradually extended his operations and laid the foundations of the great banking business which has come down to our own days and which is still carried on within a very few yards of the site upon which its founder started operations 270 years ago.

EXCHANGE WALK.

Exchange Walk was made in 1868. It was originally a yard which went by the name of Gears' Yard, after a certain William Gears who occupied it and who was a fishmonger in Nottingham Market Place. Then its name was changed to Farmer's Yard after James Farmer who established the drapery business upon its western side. James Farmer and the authorities of Smith's Bank saw the great benefit that would accrue to the town and to themselves by forming a thoroughfare from St. Peter's Square to the Market Place, so at their joint expense they made Exchange Walk, which was private property. The town was given a chance to secure this thoroughfare upon easy terms but refused. And so the tremendous advantage which would have accrued from a main thoroughfare suitable for vehicles passing along this roadway was lost. However, to-day it is in the hands of the town and it carries a large amount of traffic, thus relieving Wheeler Gate and saving hours of valuable time in the course of a year.

ST. PETER'S CHURCH.

St. Peter's Church is an imposing medieval structure left as an island in the midst of the turmoil of modern civilisation. Mr. Guilford says that its proper dedication is to St. Peter and St. Paul, which dedication is of extreme antiquity, witness the joint monastery of St. Peter and St. Paul founded at Jarrow and Monkwearmouth by Benedict Biscop in 685. There is, however, no trace of a pre-Conquest church on the site of St. Peter's, Nottingham, nor indeed are there any remains

of Norman workmanship to be found in the building. The first reference that we have to it is that its living was granted by Peveril to the Prior and Convent of Lenton Priory when he established that monastery between the years 1103 and 1108. I think we must be content to believe that it, together with St. Nicholas formed the two churches in the French Borough and that possibly St. Nicholas would have something of the flavour of a court chapel about it and would be the church resorted to by the governor of the castle and his entourage, while St. Peter's might possibly be the church of the burghers of the French town.

The building consists of a nave with north and south aisles, a north porch, a tower surmounted by a spire, and a chancel, and of these buildings the south arcade of the aisles is the earliest portion. It is a fairly good example of the Early English style of architecture and belongs to the concluding years of the reign of Henry II, sometime about 1180. Although its age has given it a certain picturesqueness there is nothing particularly striking about this arcade nor can it for a moment compare in architectural interest to the later work in St. Mary's Church.

The north arcade is of the 14th century and has been so much mutilated by the introduction and the withdrawal of galleries and so forth that it is really of very little importance. It is probably contemporary with Richard II. and is a little later than the "Salutation Inn" in Houndsgate.

The roof and the nave and the south aisle although very much restored still retain the old designs. They were a gift of the Strelley family in the 15th century. The roof of the north aisle is modern. In ancient days there were various chapels and altars in the church,

the site of only two of which have been identified. St. George's Chapel was in the north aisle where the organ now stands, St. Mary's Chapel was in the south aisle. In 1315 there is a curious note in the Borough Records of a grant "by the service of keeping a lamp burning before the altar of St. Lawrence in St. Peter's Church, Nottingham," and there is also mentioned about the same time a chapel of All Saints, but where these were it is now impossible to say.

The south aisle was used as a Consistory Court during the Middle Ages and many of the records of this court remain, much interest being extracted from them and published in the *Transactions* of the Thoroton Society by Colonel Hodgkinson. A well-preserved rood stair remains to the south of the chancel arch and is curious from the fact that at its upper end an altar has been discovered, but whether this is the high altar of the old church or some other altar is unknown. It is curious to notice that both the chancel arch and the tower arch are not squarely centred with the nave and this has led to considerable difficulties in maintaining proper balance during modern restorations.

The chancel itself is quite modern and has succeeded to one which was erected during the Civil Wars. It appears that St. Peter's Church was a danger point and suffered from bombardment during which the medieval chancel was completely destroyed. It must have been restored pretty quickly for when St. Nicholas Church was pulled down in 1647, owing to the danger of its proximity to the castle, the congregation thus displaced was accommodated in a loft prepared for them over this chancel. The outer walls of the aisles were rebuilt in the early part of the 19th century, the southern aisle being rebuilt in 1800 and the north in

1806 and to this date I think we may assign the wretched clerestory windows. There are thus many restorations in St. Peter's Church, but until modern times they have not been undertaken in any scientific spirit, however, use has been made of most unsightly Roman cement, brick stucco and other mean materials, so that the beauties of St. Peter's Church have been very much diminished.

The thoroughfare through the lower stages of the tower is closed by a vault and the tower itself is 160 feet above St. Peter's Square, that is to say, 30 feet higher than is the castle platform above Castle Boulevard. The tower contains eight bells which are extremely tuneable and which are well known to campanologists. They were all recast in 1771 and the most interesting of them is the seventh bell which was given in 1543 by Margaret Doubleday, a washerwoman, together with a legacy of 20/- per annum for the sexton of St. Peter's to ring this bell at four o'clock each morning. Originally the spire was crocketed, but the crockets were sawn off in 1825. The vane was placed upon the summit in 1789 by a man called Wootton, who at that time rebuilt the upper four yards of the spire and ever since that time the spire has been very troublesome to the Church authorities. It was repaired in 1825 when, unfortunately, Mansfield stone was used which has always remained light in colour and has given the spire a very patchy look. In 1841 it was again repaired, and, finally, some modern and satisfactory reparations took place in 1914 and 1915 from which repairs we may hope that long life and less trouble will ensue to this landmark. The expense of keeping the clock in order is borne by the town, for St. Peter's clock is of considerable public utility. The organ was placed in the church in 1811,

but there must have been an older organ for the case is Jacobean and is quite good, while the chamber in which the organ at present stands succeeds to the site of the burial vault of the great Smith family.

But in spite of all its deficiency the interior of St. Peter's Church is extremely picturesque, particularly so on a sunny Sunday morning when the children of the Bluecoat School in their quaint dresses attend service and this picturesqueness is much enhanced by the associations which St. Peter's has with the past, for many events of interest have taken place in and about the church. For example in 1794 a man called Isaac Rooke was found apparently dead in a close near Nottingham. He was prepared for burial and taken to St. Peter's Church where his body was left for a few hours during which time he revived and one can imagine what his feelings must have been. Then we have the fact that in 1660 Huntingdon Shaw, the great iron worker who was associated with Tigau in his great artistic achievements was brought as an infant to this church to be baptised, but the most stirring story about the church and the one which brings home to one the continuity of ancient life more than any other is the story of Henry Steeping. In 1515 Henry Steeping came rushing down Wheeler Gate and took sanctuary in St. Peter's Church confessing that he had attempted to murder Thomas Mellors, Mayor of Nottingham. Mellors was peacefully drinking and conversing with the Abbot of Dale, the Prior of Lenton and others in Alderman Williamson's house when Steeping walked into the room and without more ado produced a dagger and stabbed him. Of course when Steeping got into the church he was safe and it is a very interesting reflection to realise that by stepping aside a few yards

from the turmoil and bustle of modern traffic we may recapture something of the peace and safety which extended even to those wretched criminals of the 16th century.

SOUTH PARADE.

Returning now to the Market Place and continuing our perambulation we pass along South Parade which in 1407 was called Timber Hill because as we have seen, timber was stored and sold under the row of seven great elm trees which ran parallel to it. In 1795 this name appears to have been abandoned and the row was called "The Market Place," South Parade being a modern name.

There are two interesting sites in this row the first being number 12, for the modern shop stands upon the site of Dunn's book shop which was a very well known rendezvous for all interested in literature and culture a century ago. In addition to being a bookseller Mr. Dunn was a patron and friend of all literary men. It was in his rooms that Philip James Bailey read "Festus" aloud before publication and we know that Wordsworth was here upon one occasion, while Montgomery was not an infrequent visitor. The name of Bailey and Wordsworth are household words, but Montgomery's name is not so well known, although certain of his poems are very much more frequently quoted than is generally supposed. He was born in 1771 and died in 1854. Son of a Moravian Pastor, his poems have been described as "bland and deeply religious" and nobody dreams of reading them nowadays, but his hymns have come down into general use. "Angels from the Realms of Glory," "Go to dark Gethsemane," "For ever with

the Lord," and "Hail to the Lord's Anointed," together with others of his writing are frequently sung by congregations nowadays.

Next door to Dunn's book shop stood a fine house which was one of three traditionally supposed to have been built by Marshal Tallard about 1704. It was a fine old house and displayed the twisted columns which were a feature of the architecture of his day, but it was pulled down to make room for the really impressive block of buildings that now houses the National Provincial Bank which was originally erected for the great banking house of Smith whose origin we have just seen.

(To be continued.)