

A Day of Common Celebration

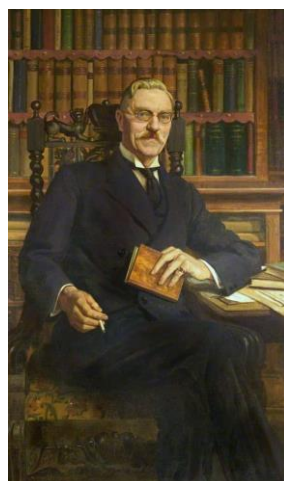
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For those who work and study at the University of Nottingham, it is hard to imagine that 94 years ago on Tuesday 10th July 1928 the Trent Building and Woodthorpe Grange Park shared two similar events, that being the fact that both were visited by King George V and Queen Mary.

As part of a Royal visit to Nottingham and having stayed overnight at Welbeck Abbey the ancestral home of the Dukes of Portland, and in weather suitable for a Royal occasion, at 2.30pm King George V and Queen Mary arrived at Woodthorpe Grange Park. Upon their arrival they were met by 17,000 schoolchildren who, along with one thousand privileged ticket holders, gave the Royal couple a rapturous welcome. In the midst of all the rapturous welcoming, a 21-gun salute could be heard, being fired from as far as the Forest Recreation ground. This was then followed by the raising of the Royal Standard over a specially erected dais which was draped in scarlet and overhung with an awning in scarlet and white stripes as the regimental band of the 7th Battalion of the Robin Hood Rifles played the National Anthem.



After the official welcoming and following a welcoming speech given by the Town Clerk Mr William Board, King George bestowed on Nottingham's Chief Magistrate the title of Lord, thus enabling the Mayor of Nottingham to become Lord Mayor, which for 1928 was Councillor Edmund Huntsman who was also the University College Nottingham's Chairman.¹



Alderman Edmund Huntsman

For 67 years from 1881 to 1948 the University of Nottingham came under the direction of the University College London, hence the title University College Nottingham. However, it wasn't until 1948 that Nottingham was granted university status and could set its own degrees and was able change its name to the University of Nottingham.

Following the formalities that took place on Woodthorpe Park the Royal couple left by a horse-drawn carriage to officially open the new Trent Building on the Highfields Estate.



King George V and Queen Mary leaving Woodthorpe Park

Described in the official opening brochure as: “When seen at night from University Park the building becomes almost ecclesiastical in its appearance as it is modelled in the style of Sir Christopher Wren’s churches and Vignola’s Church of the Gesu in Rome.

Apart from King George V and Queen Mary visiting Woodthorpe Park, and officially opening the Morley Horder designed Trent Building, the visit also saw the Royal couple make an official visit via a chauffeur driven car to Trent Bridge Cricket Ground. Then, following the visit they were then driven back to Welbeck Abbey via Radcliffe Road taking in the Fosse Road and Gunthorpe Bridge, which was opened a year earlier on the 17th November 1927 by their eldest son the Prince of Wales.



As Tuesday the 10th July 1928 was an important day in the history of Nottingham, the Nottingham Evening Post for that day wrote:

“Nottingham is en-fete today on the occasion of the visit of the King and Queen to the city for the opening of the new University College buildings at Highfields.”



An aerial view of the Trent Building following the official opening on 10th July 1928

It was also on the occasion of the Royal visit that Sir Jesse Boot had 25,000 special medals struck for the occasion so that every schoolchild of eight and upwards could receive one.

Looking back over 94 years to the opening of the Trent Building by King George V and Queen Mary and the visit beforehand by the Royal couple to Woodthorpe Park, both parks have a shared history of Royal patronage they also, along with the Victoria Embankment, share an historical significance in as much as all three parks were made possible by a generous donation by Sir Jesse Boot. The donation of £350,000 (**£14.1m**), enabled the Nottingham Corporation to purchase not only the Woodthorpe Estate but also the Highfields Estate, the home of the University of Nottingham, and the parkland adjacent to what became the Victoria Embankment and Memorial Gardens.

As part of the donation of £350,000, £10,000 was given by Sir Jesse Boot, of which the Nottingham Corporation raised £5,000, towards the £15,000 purchase of the Woodthorpe Estate in 1921, which was followed a year later on Tuesday the 1st June 1922 with the official opening of Woodthorpe Park by the Mayor of Nottingham, Councillor Frederick Berryman.

Finally, fast forward to the 15th July 2010 to my graduation ceremony as a mature student from the University of Nottingham. Following the ceremony, the school of which I was a student, the School of Sociology and Social Policy, laid on a buffet reception in the Trent Building for those who had just graduated. Being as my mother along with my wife were both at the graduation ceremony and later the reception, my mother was able to tell the story of her experiences when as a child, along with other school children, she shouted and cheered when King George V and Queen Mary came to open the Trent Building in 1928. Needless to say, my lecturers were more interested in my mother's story rather than my own experiences as a mature student!

For more information about the Royal visit to Woodthorpe Park and to download a copy of the brochure relating to the opening of the University of Nottingham's Trent Building on the 10th July 1928, visit the Friends of Woodthorpe Park's website on www.woodthorpefriends.co.uk and click on the Items of Local Historical and Topical Interest, which can be found on the top right hand of the home page.