

To the Castle!

A Walk through Nottingham retracing the Reform Riots

Between Sunday 9th and Tuesday 11th October 1831 the streets of Nottingham once more became the scene of fierce clashes between an “infuriated rabble”¹ and (special) constables, soldiers and paramilitary Yeomanry.

Events came to a head on Monday 10th October when rioters made a bonfire of Nottingham Castle, property of the loathed Fourth Duke of Newcastle.

This is one of the most famous events in Nottingham’s long and turbulent history of social struggles,² in which the town’s inhabitants earned a distinct reputation for being a “combustible and dangerous mob”.³ The fighting was part of a series of uprisings which became known as the Reform Riots. The destruction of the Castle is referred to in almost every account on the history of Nottingham, but little is known about those who torched it.

The ‘To the Castle Walk’ and our booklet of the same title look into the question of who the rioters were and what motivated them to engage in their direct action.

This short handout provides you with a map of the route, but not with the images referred to in the narrative. Please download the recorded files for all stops straight to your MP3 player and play the tracks when you reach a stop or use the equipment we gave you.

Recommended Reading

People’s Histreh (2010):

To the Castle! Nottingham’s crowds in the Reform Riots

Free to download from
peopleshistreh.wordpress.com

For a printed copy please visit the Sparrows’ Nest
or contact

peopleshistreh@riseup.net

¹ Hicklin, John (1836): *The History of Nottingham Castle – From the Danish Invasion to its destruction by rioters, in 1831*; London; p. 125.

² Other famous examples include Luddist or Chartist activities. The legends of a certain fictional archer fighting for good governance are primarily of relevance for those interested in the study of literature.

³ Thomis, Malcolm I. (1969): *Politics and Society in Nottingham 1785-1835*; Basil Blackwell; Oxford; pp. 1-2.



People's Histreh

Nottingham & Notts Radical History Group



We are a group of people with different political backgrounds, joined by a strong disinterest for the history of ‘great leaders’, kings, queens, ‘heroic’ generals, etc.

We are interested in that which has been called ‘history from below’, ‘grassroots history’ or ‘social history’ and as Nottingham and Notts have long history of socioeconomic transformation, disturbance and conflict, there is a lot to be unearthed.

We have also been working on e.g. Chartism and the 20th anniversary of the fight against the poll tax. People’s interests also include the local history of slavery, the General Strike of 1926 and the Miners’ Strike.

We regularly use and often work with The Sparrows’ Nest (thesparrowsnest.org.uk), a library and archive of anarchist materials located in St. Ann’s. In a friendly, comfortable environment it contains some of the most significant historical archives of anarchist materials in Britain as well as a large and rapidly growing local studies section.

If you are interested, visit our website and/or contact us by email.

peopleshistreh.wordpress.com
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