

Anca Seaton

From: Planning Policy
Sent: 17 October 2023 16:39
To: Keith Kondakor
Subject: RE: history of Nuneaton Library
Attachments: Nuneaton Historian 44 Print Edition 1.pdf

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Ok many thanks for clarifying this; we will add it to the Reg 19 consultation but it will have to be recorded as a late submission to the Inspector, so it is up to him whether he accepts it or not.

No news re MOU we are still working on this.

-----Original Message-----

From: Keith Kondakor [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, October 17, 2023 2:48 PM
To: Planning Policy [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: history of Nuneaton Library

Good Afternoon,

In my consultation response I wrote about the existing Library in relation to the proposed housing allocation. I would want to speak about the site at the hearing. I will also be talking at borough plan committee meeting if we have one.

can you tell me about the new MOU?

Keith

On 17/10/2023 14:33, Planning Policy wrote:

> Councillor Kondakor,
> We have received the attached. As the consultation period has expired, we assume this has been sent for another reason. Can you therefore confirm the reason why it has been sent to us so we can pass it onto the relevant person.

>
>
>

> -----Original Message-----

> From: Keith Kondakor [REDACTED]
> Sent: Tuesday, October 17, 2023 8:40 AM
> To: Planning Policy [REDACTED]
> Subject: history of Nuneaton Library

>
>

> Dear Planning policy,

>
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> Here is a paper on history of Nuneaton Library by Peter Lee which is useful background.

>

> Keith

>

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The Nuneaton Historian

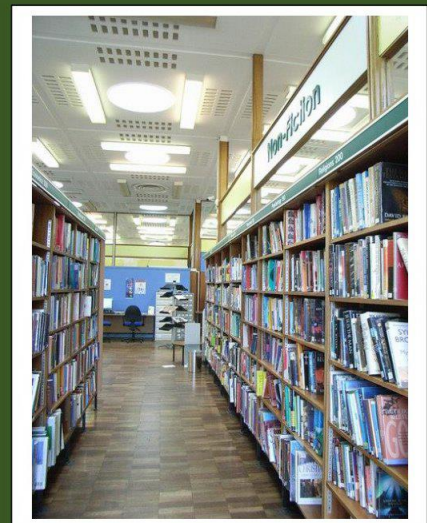
And North Warwickshire Genealogist



**A History of the Library
Service in Nuneaton from
1851 to the present day.**

Nr. 44

www.nuneatonhistory.com



INTRODUCTION

You will notice a new innovation as your Historian comes through the post this subscription year, paper envelopes!. We originally purchased a large quantity of strong light plastic envelopes and these have now all been used up. So, we made the decision to go green. If the magazine does not reach you in tip top condition please let me know.

In the meantime, this is the first Historian in our 2022/23 season and I hope you enjoy it. You will notice that we are featuring Nuneaton Library this quarter. I have always had a strong affection for our local library and my memories go back to the old library in Queens Road. I remember the brown lino on the floors. Is it me but did all public buildings have brown lino? I spent a lot of time in there and browsed the railway books. In my formative years I was an avid trainspotter (have you noticed?) and I doubt there was not a railway publication on those old shelves I did not borrow and thoroughly consume.

Library services throughout the country have taken a battering. First with the movement of so much information online, then the transition to online books, followed by books being readily available through internet book sales (Amazon etc.) Now post Covid the footfall has fallen away. It was a wakeup call to me when I was approached by the library service to help them promote their services and I have resolved to do whatever I can to help. My heart is in Nuneaton Library service, but the journey ahead is un-navigated. The first idea we have is to hold monthly drop-in meetings at Stockingford library. They have a lovely new Library in St. Paul's Road and we are keen to promote its use. Keep track of our activities up there and elsewhere there through Facebook and our Web Site.

For 50 years I have been a member of the London & North-Western Railway Society I have been keen on all things Crewe and have attended the annual Crewe luncheon for the past 31 years. One of my colleagues there said how the Crewe History Society was on the brink of folding. Like us they produced a magazine but I was surprised to find the lady now in her 80's who published the magazine had no-one to hand the batten on to. There is a thriving "Crewe in the Past" Facebook page, and I have corresponded with the lady running it. As usual the prospect of bringing out a magazine as well as the Facebook page is beyond her available time, with family commitments etc. so the lovely journal will no longer be printed. Again, this was a rude awakening for me.

Everywhere I look Societies are also going through difficult times. Has the bottom dropped out of formally organised societies? In some cases, I fear it has. When we formed the Nuneaton Local History Group we were looking for complete flexibility.

The full layout of what we do is set out before you. The magazine, the web site, the Facebook Page, and occasionally other things, but it is hard work. I am heartened to report that more and more people are willing to help out. Only a handful to start with but it is great to see progress. There is no shortage of material for the magazine and again our publishing philosophy is not to fill the pages up with "how to", "advertising" or "what's on" or where to buy your tickets online for our events other than at the door on the day, but just well researched material designed to complete a picture of our old district and to take you back in time. This has been a winning formula. If you can write an article, have comments to make or wish to take on some of the more complimentary roles (organising historic walks or bus trips possibly), let me know. The work is ongoing, the momentum is building and I hope we have fulfilled your expectations to date. No-one has so far complained and we are on track for a new season.

Pete


THE STORY OF NUNEATON LIBRARY

By Peter Lee

NUNEATON LITERARY INSTITUTE



The National School Vicarage Street

Nuneaton Library can trace its history back to the provision of a reading room in Vicarage Street school in 1851.

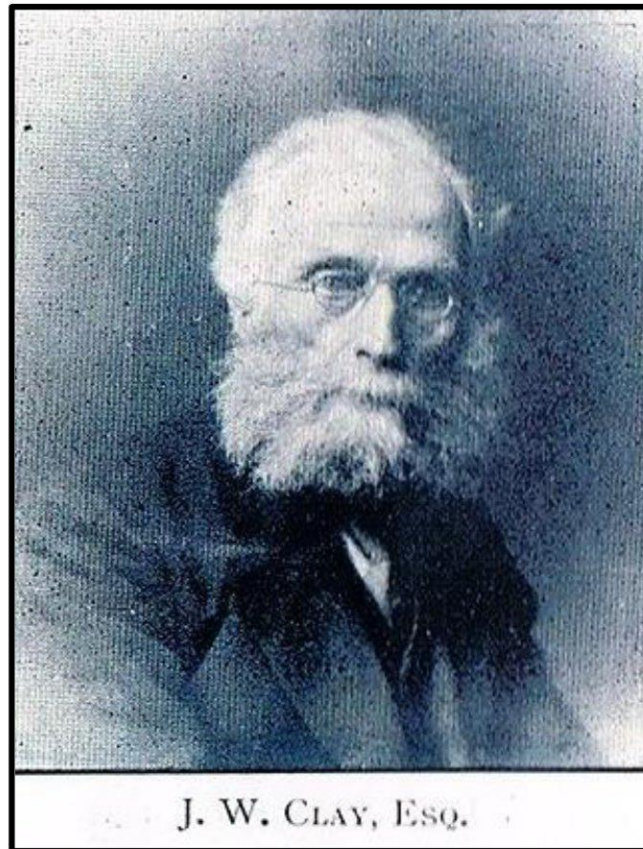
In 1866 the Reading Room was re-organised as the Nuneaton Literary Institute. Literary and Mechanical Institutes were a Victorian idea whereby the influential and trades people of the district could meet, discuss, have lectures, borrow books and read newspapers and magazines at a central location, and circulate information about the district.

Paid up members of the Literary Association could borrow books and take them home to read. In fact, a Library by another name. Bear in mind that it was always the educated class who could take advantage of this facility rather than the labouring classes who often could not read and write or chose not to avail themselves of the mental stimulus a library could offer. The Literary Association provided for the intellectual stimulation of the middle classes of the town.

It is no surprise then that the first Nuneaton library, or the forerunner of the Nuneaton Literary Institute was organised from the Church of England National School in Vicarage Street. The National School was opened in 1848.

A lockable glass fronted cabinet was available for the Reading Room attendees to store their books and borrowing the books was organised in an analogous way to libraries later on.

John Warden Clay and Nuneaton Literary Institute



John Warden Clay (1821-1904) Father of the Literary Society and Library Movement in Nuneaton

Bridge House, Coventry Street, Nuneaton, was for many years the residence of Mr. John Warden Clay, general linen and woollen draper at nos. 9 & 10 The Market Place.

John Warden Clay was born in 1821, son of Elizabeth Warden of Fillongley and James Clay of Nuneaton. He went to the same school as Mary Ann Evans (George Eliot) and the only memories we have of their mutual school days was when John Clay engaged in snow balling our young future authoress during one winter school time episode. I guess this might have been permissible because John Warden Clay was remotely related to Miss Evans through her mother's line. The school they both attended would have been "The Elms" in Vicarage Street, (then called Back Lane) to which the business classes sent their children for a private education. His father James Clay was a Linen and Wool Draper for many years in the Market Place. John Warden Clay went into business at the age of twenty-three in partnership with a Mr. Edwards. The partnership did not last long and was dissolved and both former partners moving into separate premises. Mr. Clay acquired a shop on the corner of Coventry Street and the Market Place . John married twice and with his first and then his second wife had seven boys and three girls.

As was the normal practice in those days, in addition to his business interests, he gave his time freely to voluntary causes and he became High Constable for Nuneaton. He was a member of the Local Board of Health. Mr. Clay also became a director the Nuneaton Cotton Factory trading from Anker

Mills when that business was set up to relieve unemployment in the weaving trade in the late 1850's. But it was his work on behalf of the Nuneaton Literary Institute and later the Free Library that interests us here.



John Warden Clay's shops in Nuneaton Market Place. (NLHG Archives)

In 1878 John Warden Clay held the ancient high office of "High Constable".

He was secretary of the Nuneaton Literary Institute of which he was a founder member. After his death, a bronze tablet was erected in his honour and this is still in existence but not on public display.

He was also a deeply religious man and was responsible for laying the foundation stone of the Congregational chapel in Coton Road where the family had a private pew.

It was said of him that *"The sterling qualities of his heart and mind shone out with conspicuous brightness as a beacon on a hill."*

John Warden Clay died in August 1904 aged eighty-three, a great old character in the history of Nuneaton, much loved within the community. His wife continued to live at their family home, Bridge House, for some years but regrettably the property with its beautiful garden was sold and shops, and the George Eliot Billiards Hall were built on the site in 1919.

The family are now scattered to the far corners of England and the last we heard of his grandchildren they were living in Leamington Spa and Hove. One great grandchild was Sir Frederick Gibberd C.B.E. F.R.I.B.A. designer of the reconstruction plan for the centre of Nuneaton in the 1960's as well as Nuneaton Library and Dempster Court flats.

Some records of the old Literary Institute have appeared in the local press:

In 1867 819 books were lent out, and the following year 1868 1219 were lent.

In 1880 there were approximately one thousand books in stock and in addition there were Bagatelle and Chess rooms. John Chitham was the Librarian in 1879 and the library was open from 7pm-9.30pm each evening. By 1875 James Whitnell was the Secretary a post he held for 20 years.

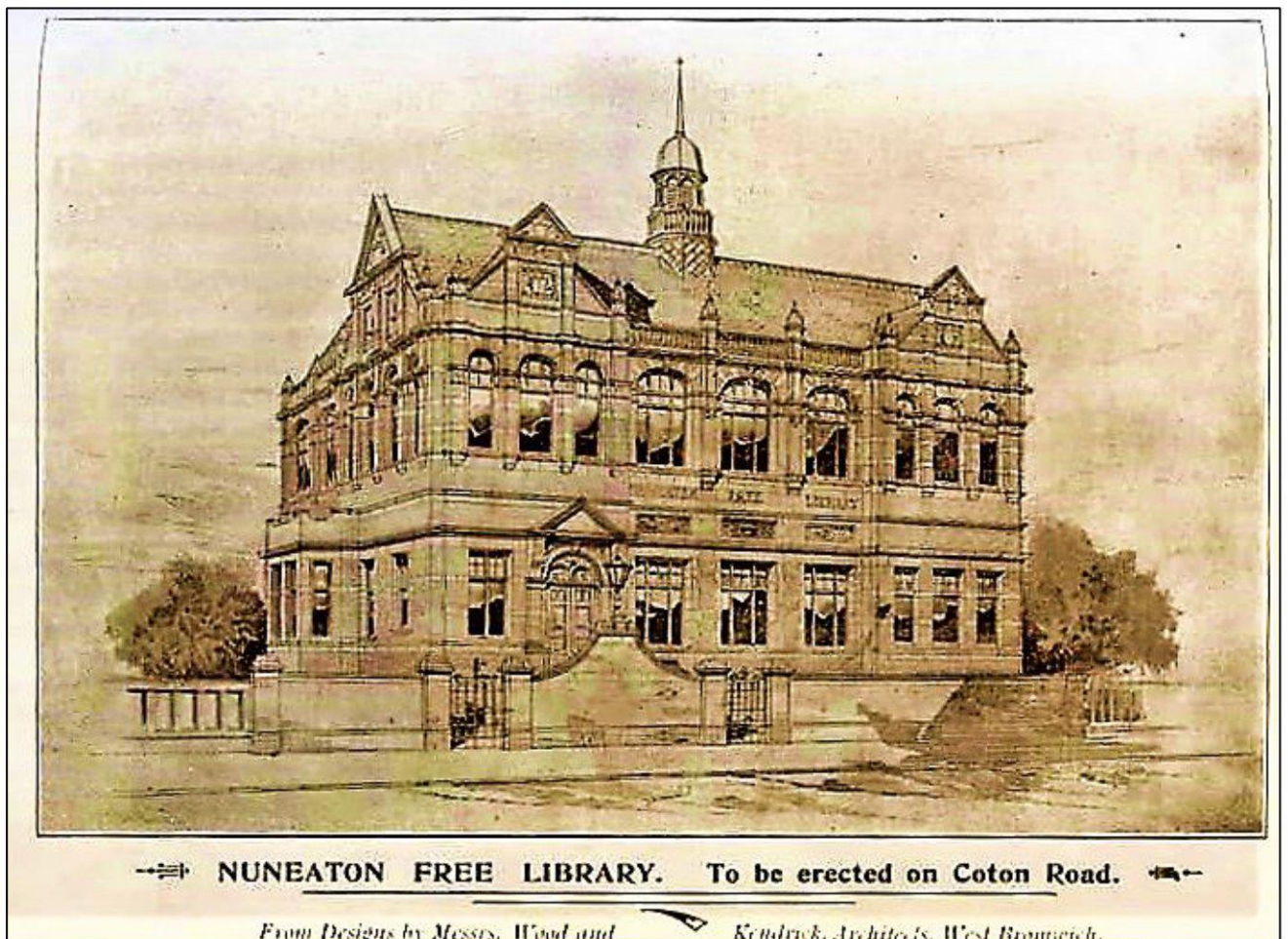
In October 1889, the Nuneaton Institute stocked daily, weekly and monthly issues of the following national newspapers and journals:

The following publications were subscribed to:

Newspapers: The Times, Standard, Daily News, Telegraph, Manchester Guardian, Birmingham Daily Gazette, Birmingham Daily Post, Birmingham Daily Times, Birmingham Daily Mail, Graphic, illustrated London News, Sporting and Dramatic News, Punch, Fan, Lady, Field, Bander, English Mechanic, Gardening, Exchange and Mart, Rock, Nuneaton Chronicle, Nuneaton Observer, Nuneaton Advertiser, Coventry Standard, Coventry Mercury, Leicester Advertiser, Midland Counties Herald and the Midland (Rugby) Times

Monthly magazines: Annual subscriptions were held for: Chamber's Journal, Cassell's Magazine, Harper's Illustrated Magazine, English Illustrated Magazine and the Animal World.

The Literary Institute moved to more commodious premises next to the Market House Inn fronting Newdegate Street around 1866.



An architect's rendition sketch for the new library included a wall in front which does not seem to have materialised as the library fronted directly onto the road. The architects were Wood and Kendrick of West Bromwich. Wood & Kendrick also designed the town clock in the Market Place on behalf of Mitchells and Butlers the Birmingham brewers. (NLHG Archives)



The Nuneaton Free Library in Coton Road (as built) in 1899. Part funded by the Andrew Carnegie Foundation. (NLHG Archives)

THE FREE LIBRARY

Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) is a name still remembered around the world as one of America's richest businessmen, and a great philanthropist. His was a classic "Rags to Riches" story. Born of humble weaving stock in Dunfermline in the county of Fife, Scotland he came to Pittsburg in America with his parents at the age of twelve. His first job on arrival was as a telegrapher, a position which earned him the sum of \$1.20 per week. Andrew was a bright lad, and through his advancement and then by building up his own businesses in railroads and steel he became one of the richest men in America. In 1901 he sold his steel business to J.P. Morgan and in turn has become the giant corporation known as US Steel. The sale in 1901 yielded a great fortune for Mr. Carnegie of \$480 million (the equivalent in 2021 of \$13 billion). Approaching his retirement Mr. Carnegie set out to give away the vast majority of his wealth on the premise: "The man who dies rich dies disgraced."

Even before his retirement he had set up a Carnegie Foundation and libraries were high on his list of priorities. As a youth he had been given access to a lending library, and their value was recognised by him as the "University for the Working Man."

The rules of giving were strict and had to comply with the "Carnegie Formula":

- Communities had to demonstrate the need for a public library.
- Provide a freehold building site.
- Pay staff and maintain a library.
- Use public funds to run the library.

Annually provide 10% of the cost of the library's construction to support its operation.
Provide a free service to all.

Eventually Mr. Carnegie's legacy led to the opening of 3500 libraries in the United States, 660 in the United Kingdom and Ireland. 125 in Canada as well as others around the world.

Nuneaton applied to the Carnegie Foundation and this grant led to the formation of an impressive new Free library in Coton Road. In 1896 it was estimated that a new library would cost £900 and provision for an architect's fee was set at £10 10s. 0d. This would ultimately prove to be a low figure and the cost of the library more than doubled, although whether the original figure was for the shell of the building and not the fitting out is unclear.

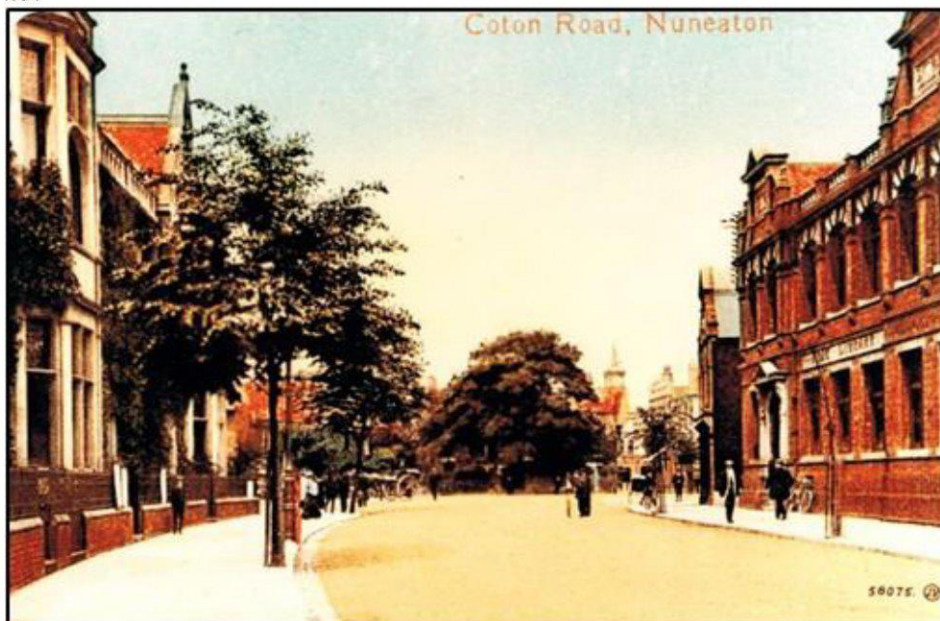
In the event Mr. Carnegie contributed more to the town of Nuneaton than just the library.
In 1903 he gave a sum of money towards the cost of half the pews for Chapel End Congregational Church.

He gave £225 in 1905 for half the cost of an organ for the Nuneaton Baptist Church in Manor Court Road, and in 1907 he provided £150 towards a new organ for the Primitive Methodist church in Queens Road.

On 25th March 1899, the Newdegate Street premises was closed. On 7th April 1899, the reading room of the new library in Coton Road was opened, followed by the rest of the library a few weeks later. The ultimate cost of the "Carnegie Library" in Coton Road was £2000. It was a very impressive building.

(It was tragic to note though that Mr. James Whitnell who was the Secretary of the Library for 20 years was killed on 28th March 1899 when he was crossing the tracks between platforms at Nuneaton Trent Valley station and he was run over by the London-Aberdeen express only a few weeks before the new library was opened.)

The furniture from the old library in Newdegate Street was sold to the Reliable Clothing Company for £5.



Coton Road looking towards Nuneaton town centre before WW1. The library on the right. Nuneaton Police station on the left and behind the trees in the distance stood Bridge House, home of John Warden Clay, father of the library movement in Nuneaton. The town's famous clock can be seen in the far distance. (NLHG Archives)

THE TRANSFER TO QUEENS ROAD



The Nuneaton Council House was built to the rear of the Coton Road Library seen here in the centre of the picture c. 1934. Demolition of the former library would soon follow and be replaced by a bus stop and a fountain. A Midland Red bus is on its way to Coventry. (NLHG Archives)

In the meantime, the work of Nuneaton Urban District Council had been continued in various parts of town.

The original Town Hall in Nuneaton Market Place was not adequate for all the town's affairs and was mainly used to manage the town market and provide meeting rooms for assemblies and public functions. Part being let out for commercial purposes to John Warden Clay.

By 1900 the inadequate Market House was sold by public auction and the money raised from this sale was put into the bank to gain interest in order to procure land for proposed new municipal offices.

A substantial new municipal building had already been erected in 1893 (in Queens Road) to house the Fire Brigade, and a ladies toilet, the council offices above. Stabling and a council yard was provided at the rear. It was to this building that the local authority moved their office facilities in 1900 after the sale of the Market House premises.



The old fire station with council offices above and ladies lavatory, the only WC for females available in town at the time. The fire station was converted into the library in 1934, but would prove inadequate accommodation by the 1950's. (NLHG Archives)

The Great War intervened and it would be another twelve years after the end of World War One that Nuneaton Borough Council could obtain a grant from the Unemployment Grants Committee (a government fund to relieve some of the effects of the great depression at the end of the 1920's), which allowed them to build the new and impressive Council Offices in Coton Road.

This led in turn to the demolition of the former Carnegie funded Free Library and the transfer of its stock to the old Council Offices and Fire Station in Queens Road. The Fire Station moved to Newtown Road.

By 1930 several important offices in town were scattered about the town centre. The Council, Borough Surveyor and Water Engineer in the Council Offices in Queens Road. The Medical Officer of Health in premises over the Midland Bank in Newdegate Place. The town's electricity supply was in municipal hands and organised from an electrical generating works on Coton Road at the back of the Library on Coton Road. The Borough Treasurer was based in the Barclays Bank Chambers in the Market Place and the Director of Education operated from the former schoolhouse called "The Elms" (The school associated with George Eliot) in Vicarage Street. These could then be transferred and consolidated in the new Council Offices in Coton Road. In December 1931 work started on the new Council House to bring together these departments under one roof.

The Town Hall building there now was built at the rear and to the side of the of the Carnegie Library; top allow library functions to continue without interruption. In January 1934 the stock of Nuneaton Library was moved to the former fire station and council offices in Queens Road under the supervision of the head librarian Mr. B. Moreton and his staff. Demolition of the former "Free Library" started during the second week of January 1934.

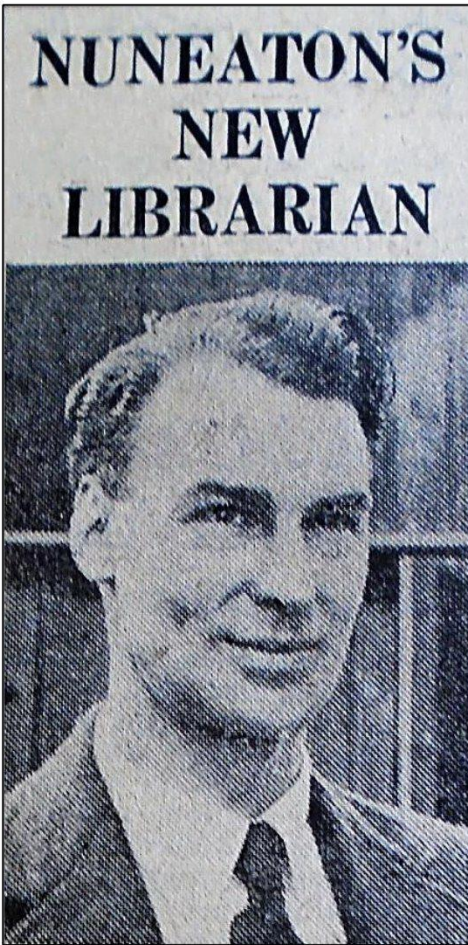
A shortage of funding support from the rates led to the new Queens Road library again seeking largesse from the Carnegie Library fund. Ms Elizabeth Haldane who was the first President of the George Eliot Fellowship when that organisation was formed in 1930 wrote to support a request for funding and Nuneaton Library was able to obtain a gift of £700 spread over three years. In 1935 they received a donation of £300 and in the following two years £250 and £150, respectively.



Queens Road before WW1 with the fire station and council offices above which would be converted into the library in 1934. (NLHG Archives)



Demolition of the Library has begun. It will be replaced by a new Tesco store and Woolworths. (Reg. Bull / Courtesy of Ruby Atkins)



Many older members will remember Nuneaton's Chief Librarian – Sidney Barlow. (Nuneaton Observer) Sid. joined the library in Nuneaton on discharge from the Royal Navy in 1946. He was born in Canada and was thirty-four when this newspaper photo was taken in 1948.

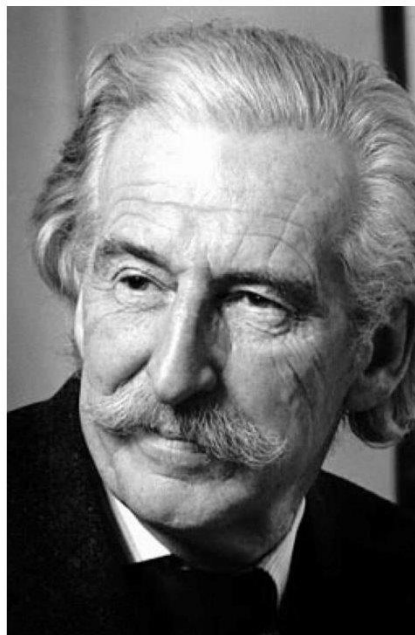
The previous Borough librarian at Nuneaton, Eric Bryant, was appointed Director of Library Services in Jamaica. Mr. Barlow's early career was in the library service in Bolton Public Library where he became a senior assistant in the reference department. In 1939 he joined Leeds City Library where he was in charge of the Dewsbury Road branch library before enlisting in the Navy although he returned to Leeds in 1946 then came to Nuneaton in December 1946.

On his arrival he took a great interest in the Local History section of the library. He deciphered and typed up a copy of the Nuneaton Diary (1810-1845) as well as assembling the extensive documents and books in the George Eliot Collection.

He compiled several scrap books of press cuttings and photos relevant to old and industrial Nuneaton. His was a golden age of local library service.

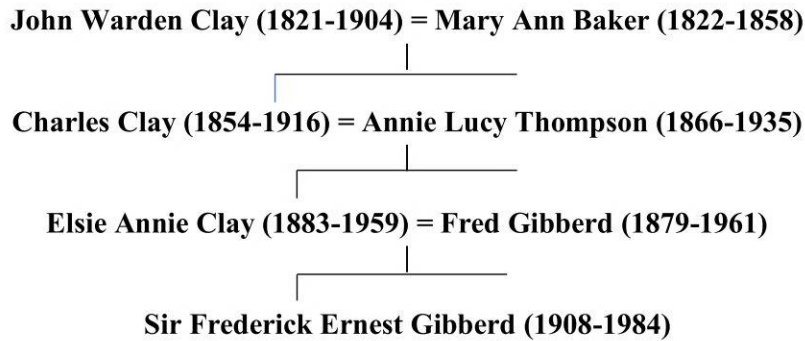
Mr. Barlow retired in 1974 when Nuneaton library service was taken over by Warwickshire County Council.

THE NEW LIBRARY IN CHURCH STREET



Sir Fredrick Ernest Gibberd (1908-1984) C.B.E. A.R.A. F.R.I.B.A. M.T.P.I F.I.L.A.

Family Tree From John Warden Clay to Sir Frederick Gibberd,



Sir Frederick Gibberd was initially consulted by the local council during 1949. The Church Street area had been very badly bombed in 1941 and the clean-up operation during and after the war had left large areas of Church Street and Vicarage Street as open derelict land. We are not sure how Sir Frederick became involved. He had local roots and may have seized the opportunity of putting his stamp on his great grandparents' district. Alternatively, it could be that Sir Frederick was chosen at random by the council as his reputation as a town designer and modernist architect appealed to the local authority at the time, and they did not know about his roots.

Another nine years would elapse after Sir Frederick was first contacted. In 1958 he had roughed out details of a new library in Church Street which would culminate in the building we see today.

Sir Frederick was one of the leading architects of his generation and his portfolio of projects was impressive including Liverpool Cathedral and Harlow New Town. He was what became known as a "Modernist" architect making reference to the great "Modernist" French architect Le Corbusier.



The site of the new library in Church Street before development. The former car showroom garage fronted Church Street and the workshop at the rear was on the side of the library. The garage building, was used by the library builders G.E. & W. Wincott of Coton Road, Nuneaton for storage of materials once construction work on the new library started. The workshop we

see here with petrol pump stands where the two-storey block of the new library would later be built. The photo was taken shortly before work commenced.
(Reg. Bull / Courtesy of Ruby Atkins)



The old garage used as a temporary builders depot as the new library is built behind it.
(Reg. Bull / Courtesy of Ruby Atkins / NLHG Archives)



The new library takes shape 1962. By this time, the “temporary” wooden shops on the opposite side of Church Street were also in use. (Reg. Bull / Courtesy of Ruby Atkins)

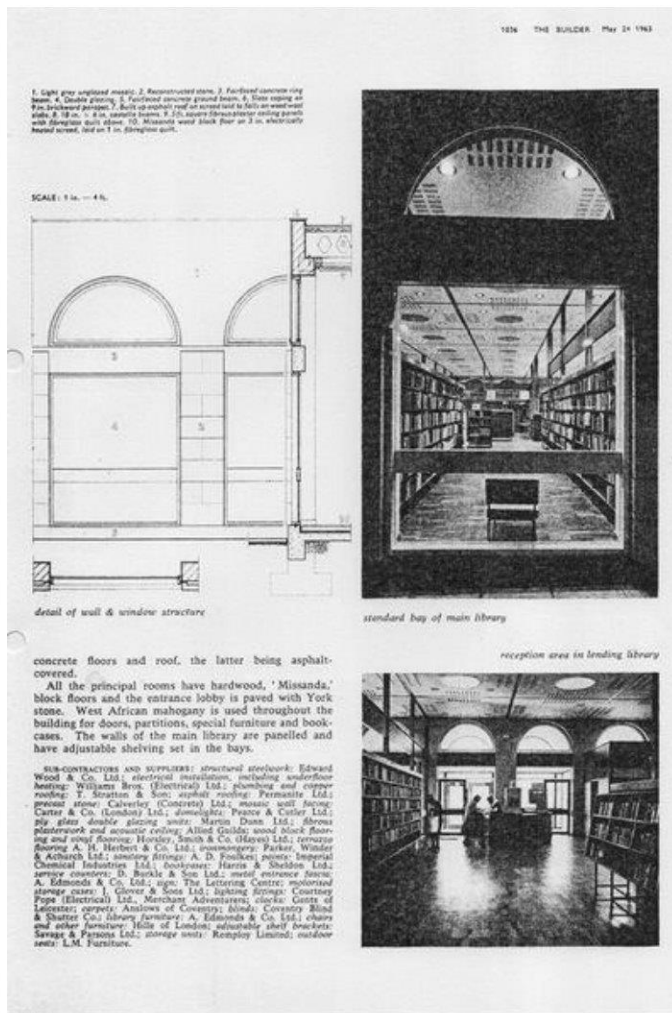
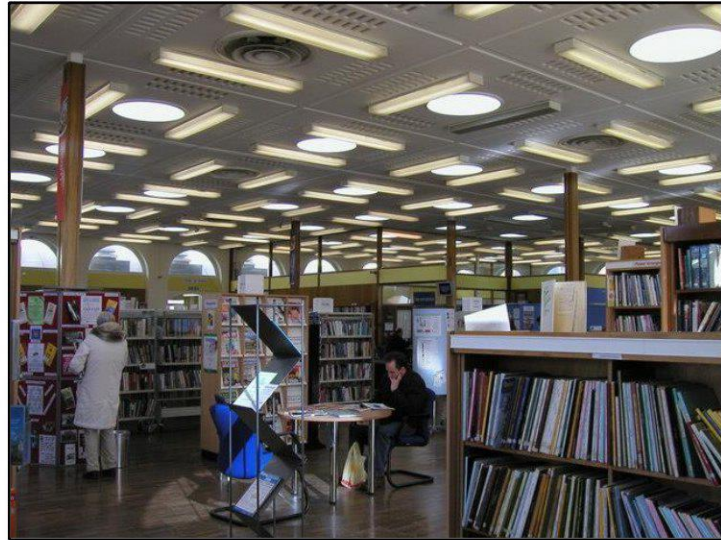


Nuneaton Library at night (Gibberd Associates)



The library in 2010 in its setting. Powell House beyond. This view has now altered because the McCarthy and Stone apartments were built across the entrance to the car park in the foreground. (NLHG Archives)

An interior view in more recent years before the tall shelves were replaced by new ones. (NLHG Archives)



Nuneaton Library appeared in the *The Builder*, 1962. The shelves filled with books that created generations of local people find inspiration and adventure. (The Builder / NLHG Archives)

In preparation for the new library an exact model of it was made at a scale of one quarter inch to the foot and took 200 hours to build by Mr. Jack Bacon of Bacon Paints (Nuneaton) Ltd. This was exhibited in the main entrance. It was clearly labelled showing the layout of the library and lit internally as well so it gave a very welcoming feature as you entered the new library.

The whole general library area was designed to be a flexible space.

Some of the principle sub-contractors engaged in the construction of the new library were:

Edward Wood & Co. Ltd – structural steelwork

Calverley (Concrete) Ltd – precast stone

Horsley Smith & Co. (Hayes) Ltd. wood block flooring

T. Stratton & Sons Ltd – plumbing engineers

Harris & Sheldon Ltd – bookcases

A.Edmonds & Co Ltd – library furniture

The cost of lighting the new building was estimated at £1000-£1200 per year, and the heating running costs £700-£800 per annum.

Much of the co-ordination for the design, utility and layout was carried out by Sid Barlow.

The transfer of books and documents from the Queens Road Library to the new Church Street library took place over four weeks. The staff retained popular lending stock until the final phase of the transfer, moving back stock first. As the final part of this transfer the library service closed down for a week.

The new bookcases were laid out on a grid system.

The public were allowed to use the library from October 29th and the first week saw 19000 books borrowed. Over double the normal 8000-9000 which was the average borrowing in the old library. On the first Saturday alone 4693 books were lent. The increase in use did not present a problem.

The Official opening date was Thursday 15th November 1962 at 7.00pm by the mayor at the time Councillor G.C. (Joe) Thomas. The chairman of the library and museum committee at the time was Councillor Ernest S. Reekie.

With Sid Barlow as the new Borough Librarian and Mr. N. Taylor as his deputy with Miss Stevenson and Mr. Sheasby in senior support. The caretaker was Mr. Rylance.

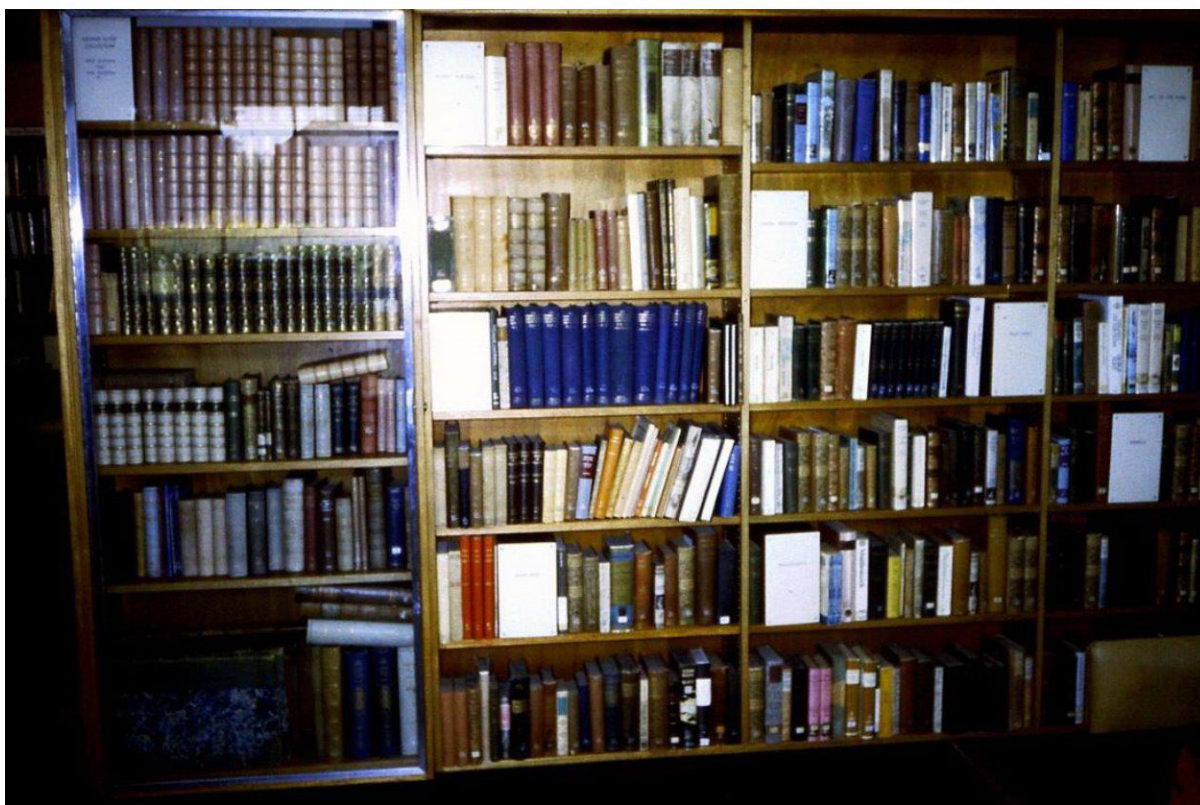
The new library was arranged in four sections with separate entrances for the Children's Library, the Newsroom and the main library. All public rooms were arranged on the ground floor with a lecture room being available on the first floor for public use. An omission was that there were no public toilets, although rectification of this would not be a major problem if this was felt necessary but in the event this has never been carried out.

The four sections consisted of the General Library shelved to house the bulk of the lending stock. This was 60' x 50' in plan. The Reference Library, a Study Room, and a Music Alcove where sheet music could be borrowed. There was also a section for lending paintings and framed pictures which was a brand-new idea.

On opening the library had eleven staff, but this soon expanded to twenty, and even within a year of opening that number was felt to be inadequate.

The overall building cost for the new library was about £96,000 with £75,500 expended on the building, the cost of furniture set at £17,400 and £6,000 expended on other items.

The new library was very popular and book loans increased at record rates. Five hundred framed reproduction paintings were available for loan. In the local history section, the Jodrell collection had 400 documents and the Cross Collection contained 1000 documents which were very useful regarding the history of the town and district from George Eliot's association with the town.



The George Eliot Collection was once open to the public in the local history section of the library, although the first editions were kept under lock and key in the glass fronted section to the left. (P.Lee / NLHG Archives)

In 2007 local people first became aware that the library was threatened with demolition and the Nuneaton Society wrote to English Heritage requesting that the library was listed. This was their response.

Dear Mr Lee,

The Secretary of State, after consulting English Heritage, the Government's statutory adviser, decided not to list the above building on 23rd January 2007.

The reasons were:

- Nuneaton Library occupies a prominent position opposite the parish church within the 'civic area' which formed part of the post-war redevelopment plan for the war-damaged centre.
- Nuneaton Library, designed by Sir Frederick Gibberd in 1959, is clearly a locally regarded building with strong social value and it has some success as an open, flexible building.
- The library is, however, modest architecturally, and has undergone significant losses. Nuneaton Library lacks the ambition and the innovation of other listed post-war libraries.
- Similarly, it lacks the completeness of the more modest Westcliff Library, Southend on Sea (listed Grade II) or Kensington Central Library (listed Grade II*).

On balance, therefore, although Nuneaton Library does have some merits it is too modest architecturally and too altered to merit listing in a national context.

It therefore was not of sufficient special architectural or historic interest to merit listing.

If you consider that the decision was wrongly made and you have any significant evidence relating to the special architectural or historic interest of the building which was not previously considered please reapply referring to the adviser's report that I have attached.

I hope this helps.

Danielle Lippcombe

Bibliographical Sources:

Nuneaton Observer October 1879 The Annual Meeting of the Nuneaton Institute

Kelly's Directory Notes on the Nuneaton Institute

Nuneaton Chronicle: August 26th, 1904, The Death of Mr. J. W Clay

Midland Counties Tribune 12th January 1934 Notes on the transfer of the Nuneaton Free Library from Coton Road to Queens Road

Nuneaton Chronicle 28th June 1935 Nuneaton Library Matters, Carnegie Trust Grants

Nuneaton Evening Tribune September 29th, 1959, A photograph of the model of the new library designed by Sir. Frederick Gibberd

The Library World (magazine) Vol LXV Nr. 757 July 1963 (A feature on Nuneaton Library - Nuneaton's New Library by S.H. Barlow (Borough Librarian)

Nuneaton Borough Council The Nuneaton Library Thursday 15th November 1962

The Builder May 24th, 1963, An Article on Nuneaton Library

The Observer (Nuneaton) November 16th, 1963, Historic Occasion for Nuneaton (front page) Mayor opens New Library.

An article: Nuneaton makes more use of its library than most towns.

The Observer (Nuneaton) November 16th, 1963, An exciting new experiment in dealing with an unknown quantity by Sir Frederick Gibberd CBE AEA FRIBA MTPI FILA

English Heritage: 5th February 2007 Letter of rejection of The Nuneaton Society bid to have the library listed. Includes advisers report.

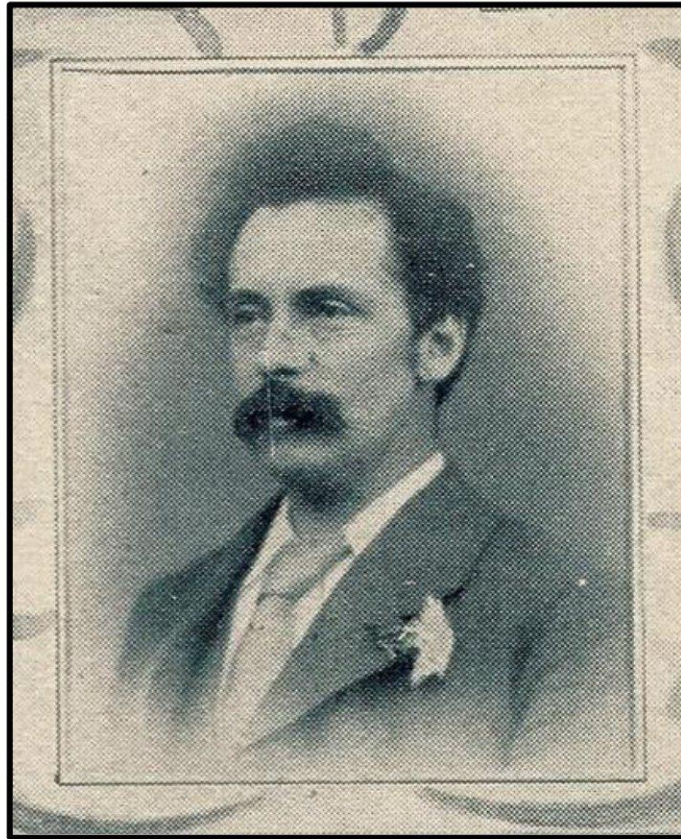
Nuneaton News June 30th, 2010, An article: Library site in Limbo.

THE STORY OF 100 MANOR COURT ROAD, NUNEATON.

(Now the Abbey Grange Hotel)

By Peter Lee





**(Photo of Alfred William Rose (1859-1938) in 1902
Photo by Claire Speight - NLHG Archives)**

Before 1880 much of the roadway we now know as Manor Court Road was little more than a cart track. In 1876 St. Mary's Abbey Church was built out of the ruins of the former Abbey and was a catalyst for development at the Midland Road end of the Manor Court Roadway.

Around this time Reginald Stanley (1838-1914), the local brickmaker, had purchased local land which he intended to develop, but that would still be a decade into the future.

Although Manor Court Road was unmade up it did provide, in a basic form, a short cut into the top end of Abbey Street and horses and carts and pack horses would bring coal and bricks into town by that route.

There is a note in the Nuneaton Diary: 1811 *"The Manor Court Bridge having fallen Mr Dorsey indicated the Township for the road as being impassable but gave it up after subjecting the Township to £54 expenses in preparation of resistance."*

About halfway along Manor Court Road there was a bridge over the Wash Brook and this had fallen down and prevented horse traffic from passing over it. William Dorsey was the owner of Haunchwood Colliery, and regularly used the roadway for delivering coal to Abbey End customers. Instead of using this route he had to send his traffic down Wash Lane into the Market Place and along Abbey Gate back into Abbey Street which was a long detour. (The cut throughs we know today High Street, Broad Street and Stratford Street did not exist back then).

The bridge would eventually be reinstated but there was no improvement to the surface and width of the roadway for decades to come. Meanwhile the Manor Court end of town was farmland. A

farmhouse stood until quite recent times by what was to become Manor Park School just off Countess Road. No buildings either side of Manor Court Road of any consequence existed except Mr. Astley's farmhouse and barns, a cottage and the old Cock & Bear public house.

The main redevelopment of Manor Court Road started in the late 1880's with the Abbey Green end being widened and metalled. In 1891 planning permission was granted to extend the roadway through to the Cock & Bear end and this work was 450 yards long and 50' long completing a new road half a mile long. The lengthening scheme cost £1300 which was defrayed by a payment from a loan account.

The scene was set for development of Manor Court Road. In 1892 trees were planted along the full length and plots marked out for development. Reginald Stanley was a key player in this development having purchased a large amount of land in the area and in 1896 laid out Lansdown Terrace, a row of smart town houses. He also built his own mansion Manor Court in the newly laid out road.

Unfortunately, Mr. Stanley had invested heavily in the mining industry in South Africa and at the outbreak of the Boer War saw his investment evaporate, although his brickyards in Nuneaton were still profitable; he had to bring in fellow townsman Joseph Fielding Johnson to invest money and as a result Mr. Johnson was given a prominent place on the board. Further wealthy businessmen from outside the town were also appointed to the board and Mr. Stanley liquidated some of his investments in the building plots he had laid out in Manor Court Road the early 1900's.

In 1905 A piece of ground on the town side of Manor Court Road was put up for sale and one of these was sold to Alfred William Rose (1859-1938) who was an employee of Mr. Stanley. A clerk in the brickyard office, but he also had a side-line as a draper. (I assume Mr. Rose's wife ran the drapery business).

Mr. Rose came from a prominent local family and his great grandfather had purchased a plot of land on Abbey Green called "Rose's Patch" next to what would become Abbey Green School and laid out courtyards lined with tenement cottages some of which were occupied by members of the Rose family. This development took place between 1821 and 1828 and eventually consisted of twenty cottages.

In 1905 Mr. Rose had built on a plot he now owned, the house which was to become the Abbey Grange Hotel, but at the time was called "Nethersole". I am not sure if the origin of the name "Nethersole" had anything to do with a district near Tamworth by that name. Possibly Mr. Rose had connections there. The architect of "Nethersole" was Mr. R.H. Smith who also designed houses for Mr. Rose at what was to become Nrs. 102-104 Manor Court Road. Mr. Rose's House would later be numbered Nr. 100.

By this time Manor Court Road aspired to become a middle-class area of town where professional people were the principal residents. By 1912 the owner of "Nethersole" was Mr. F.W. Broadbent MD FRCS also a director of Stanley Brothers. Mr. Rose had retired by then to Ilfracombe in Devon after having worked at Stanley Brothers brickyard for 30 years.

In 1920 Thomas Henderson Forrest (1883-1969) D.S.O M.B. Ch.B. purchased the property and for over 40 years 100 Manor Court Road was a doctor's surgery. Mr. Forrester had a partner and operated as Forrester & Clare. Mr. Forrest was a Scotsman born in Kilmarnock, educated in Medicine at Glasgow University. Before coming to Nuneaton, he worked in Birmingham. In 1908 he joined the Royal Army Medical Corps as a Lieutenant. He was awarded the D.S.O in 1918 whilst serving as a Lieutenant Colonel with 5th Mounted Brigade Field Ambulance seconded to the Australian Mounted Division. In 1956 he retired to North Connell, Argyll, where he died in 1969.

In 1957 he was followed at the surgery at "Nethersole" by John Lewis Bleakley (1919-1996). This is the last date I have for 100 Manor Court Road being used as a doctor's surgery and before becoming the Abbey Grange Hotel, however it was considered as a home for young offenders in 1968 when it caused some ninety local residents to object to the application which was rejected. It listed as a hotel in 1972 by which time it had been purchased by John and Jacquie Shirley. The Shirley's extended and refurbished the hotel in 1976 incorporating a bar and dance floor and it remains a popular venue to this day.

(Photo Alfred William Rose (1859-1938) in 1902 - Photo by Claire Speight - NLHG Archives)

A Bedworth Man in the First Fleet to Australia

I correspond regularly with people seeking out relatives where they have drawn a blank otherwise. Peter Lee seems to be being dubbed the choice of last resort.

It was interesting to receive an email from Grant Uebergang in Queensland whose ancestor originated in Bedworth, and a remarkable story unfolded: Not least because it revealed the travelling conditions of those first free people to take up residence on that far flung continent. Here is my response:

Hi Grant

Thank you for contacting me. I can see that you know quite a bit about Henry your side of the ocean but very little this. If it is true he had seventeen children, then he must have populated quite a bit of Australia back then. I hope I can put a little flesh on the bones from my end. In the 1841 census he is living at New Buildings, (Bedworth) after looking around the adjacent streets I assume that New Buildings is in the block of tenements which later became Mill Street:

These were probably newish around the date he lived there and I cannot think of a block of buildings in proximity to the adjacent roads that would fit the bill.

I also found this press cutting which must definitely be him, and that somehow the letter was printed in a Newcastle Upon Tyne newspaper, how or why I cannot imagine other than as he was a pioneer non-felon immigrant to the new colony it was felt it was worth encouraging others to go there. Could it be as Newcastle was a seaport that the Artemisia (or another boat) returned there with his letter and rather than deliver it to his family straight away the local newspaper got hold of it to publish it in the hope of getting others to follow in his footsteps. Maybe someone would know. I do hope the family received it eventually to give them comfort.

I will just try and verify the New Buildings location for definite then send you an extract from a map for your records:

Pete

HENRY NEALE, (1819 - 1898)

Henry Neale was born on March 1, 1819, in Bedworth, Warwickshire, England, United Kingdom, to Daniel Neale and Sarah Ann Neale.

Henry had seven siblings: Thomas Neale, Daniel Neale, Sophia Neale, William Neale, Edward Neale, Frances Fanny Asquith and Caroline Neale.

Henry married Elizabeth Fennell on September 2, 1839, at age 20 in Bedworth,.

They had seventeen children: Ephraim Neale, Daniel Neale, Henry Neale, Sarah Frances Lynch, Lucy Campbell, David Neale, Unnamed Infant Neale, Betsy Neale, Frances Fanny Houston, Elizabeth

Neale, Mary Ann Neale, Elizabeth Mary Ann Babe Cooper, Emma Neale, Joseph Neale Twin, Martha Neale, Alfred Neale and Jane Neale.

Henry passed away on October 24, 1898, at age 79 in Drayton, Queensland, Australia.

Source of letter below: Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury, Saturday 16th June 1849

Letter from Melbourne. Moreton Bay.—*The following letter has been received from three pauper emigrants on the Artemisia: —"Dear Father, Mother, Brothers and Sisters, and all our Kindred Friends,—We set sail for Moreton Bay in July, and arrived December 17. The reason you had no letter from us before was because we put at no port, as we expected we should, before we reached our journey's end. During our voyage we were sixteen weeks and never saw any land. You may be sure that we feel very thankful that we have got safe over this fatiguing voyage, which, had not providence been kind to us, could not. It's true our vessel was new and very strong, but it was a good deal too light, which caused us to be tossed about very much by high winds. We have seen many wonders since we left you, not only in the deep, but also in the firmament and on these distant shores. The natives in this part of the world are quite black and they go quite naked in the bush; but, when they come to town, they are partially clad. We are happy to tell you that we are in the midst of plenty of food, and raiment to wear, but our drinks are very dear, which may prove a good thing in this colony. We are glad to tell you there were plenty of masters who wanted servants; the servants they wanted were shepherds and house-servants, and hutkeepers and cooks for the shepherds, etc. We are all engaged—Henry is engaged for a house-servant for Pitts and Boniven, the wages £30 a year and rations. William, a shepherd for Pitts and Boniven; wages year, with weekly rations—8 lb. of flour, 12 lb. of meat, 2 lb. of sugar, and 1/2lb. of tea. Thomas is farm servant for Tiphson; wages £2 a year, with rations. We are all hired at Darling's Downs. You must not think much about our wages, as are new hands; we expect to get more in another year as we shall improve in our labour. The work in this colony is not very laborious, it depends on stock, such as cows, sheep, etc; some keep many horses. You must remember inert is no house rent to pay out of our wages all houses for servants are found by the masters. This is a fine country and we are very happy; should be more so, if our dear parents and dear brother and wife and family, and our little sister were with us. We often wish our uncle **Thomas Kinder** and his little lot were in this country; there is no hunger felt here, —there is plenty and to spare. We are all in good order; my wife is much stouter than she was when we left England,—in fact, we are all getting quite fat. If ever you should come, or any one from Bedworth, be sure to bring a few things to make you comfortable during the voyage, such as a bit of oatmeal and treacle, a few onions, and bit of cheese, for, when the biscuits are soaked, these help to get them down. I assure you that the sea diet is very rough till such time as you get used to it; and the seasickness very bad, but they soon better if they will eat their food. We should very much like to see you, but we fear you cannot come; but hope and trust we shall be able to keep you in old age, and we meet no more on earth, I hope shall meet in heaven, part no more. May God bless you both, and us with his grace, so that we may get to heaven at last, for Jesus Christ's sake.*

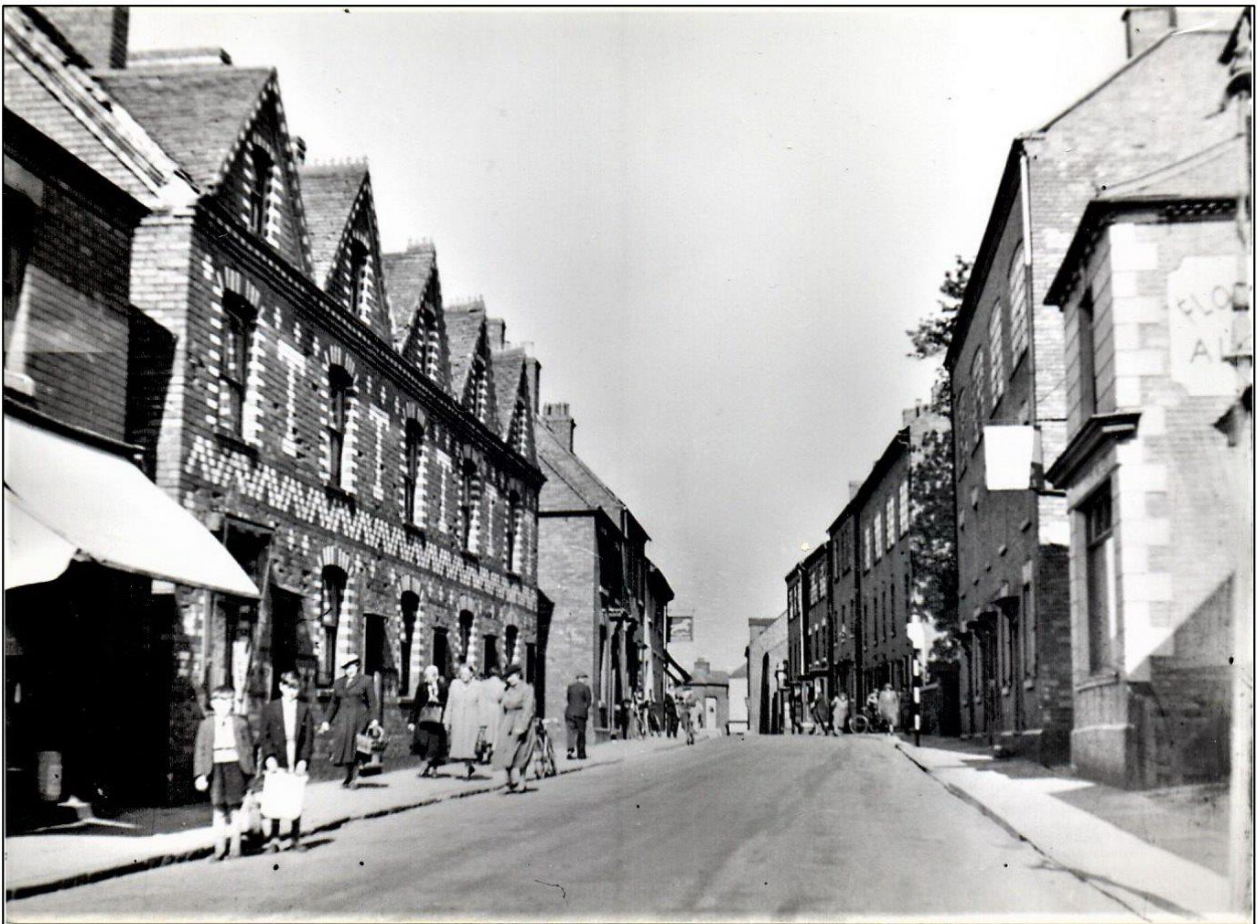
"Henry Neale, Thomas Neale, William Neale."

This was published at the same time:

South Australian News:

A Word to Intending Emigrants.—At the present: time, when so many of our countrymen are leaving the land of their early years, for a home in the colonies, it may not be amiss to say a few words on the subject of emigration. The classes of people who most feel the benefit of it, are those who, well-educated and accustomed to respectable, nay good, society, cannot " make both ends meet,*' and who, consequently, are in the most unpleasant plight: and poor persons unable to obtain work, with starvation staring them in the face. To such, emigration appears the most natural means of improving their circumstances; but no matter in what rank of life, a man should have a real reason for abandoning the inconceivable benefits of perfect civilisation—the luxuries and comforts induced by centuries of labour and millions of expenditures. We cannot too often repeat that, for the Englishman

can hold his ground—and to do that, must keep marching pretty sharply—there is no place like England; but for the man who can't, who finds himself surely, slowly slipping back—his income, whether it be £1,000 year not £50 a year, not increasing, while his expenses increase, then it is time to ask himself, "Am I fit to emigrant? Can I bear to sacrifice present comforts with future independence?" Be this man labourer, farm surgeon, clergyman, or ruined country gentleman, pressure from without and within, the debt, or the fear of debt, the diminished capital, or the inability to save capital, form his first qualification. To the steady industrious man, one who is not afraid to soil his hands, our Australian colonies offer good prospects of success but let him not think that he will pick up money on the streets of Adelaide, or that his pockets will be filled by idleness. He will have work to gain a livelihood, must as he has done had he remained in England; but then, with more rapidly gain a competence, will not be to subject the intense competition prevailing in this country, nor feel anxiety for the future provision of his family. There can be no doubt (to use the words of *Sidney's Journal*, from which we have previously quoted) that "almost all grants regret their change for the first year:" but after six years residence in new country, no colonist can bear the smoky air, frigid manners, measured civility, perpetual payments, and constant cares of old-world life. It is, of course, impossible for us to say whether it would do well to emigrate, whether he would be fitted take the rough and the smooth together, or whether it should engage in this or that occupation; he roust for his own opinion on the matter and must obtain the copious and trustworthy information regarding the colony in which he proposes to take up his abode.



Mill Street, Bedworth, in the 1950's. This view is towards the town centre. The block on the right incorporated "New Buildings", although by then over 120 years old. These are fitted with large weavers windows on the top floor with tenements below. On the left the buildings with the elaborate brickwork pattern were built later in the 19th century Around the middle of the 19th century a lot of the buildings in Bedworth displayed patterned brickwork of which this was one of the most spectacular. (NLHG Archives)