



From monks to bankers

Back in the 12th century, the land on which University Park stands belonged to the Cluniac monks of Lenton Priory.

The priory was founded by Lord William Peveril in 1108. He was custodian of Nottingham Castle and laid the priory foundations within sight of the castle and near the River Leen. It was an 'alien house' — the French monks were directed by their order in Cluny until 1393 when they cut ties with France.

Over the next three centuries Lenton Priory's wealth and power grew and the monks controlled the area until the dissolution of the monastery in 1538.

The monks used the demesne
— the priory's land — for crops
and grazing. A coney (rabbit)
warren provided food and pelts for
garments and there was probably a
domestic fishpond. A tile workshop
may also have been in use.

There is evidence of two medieval communities along the ancient Cut Through Lane (then a narrow track leading from Beeston to Lenton). The village of Keighton, on the hillside east of the Portland Building, gives its name to the road there today, whereas Morton was near Lenton, in present-day Dunkirk.

After the dissolution of the priory, the Crown gave its land to Sir Michael Stanhope in 1539. It was owned by absentee landlords in the 17th century and let for grazing. In March 1798, much of the Millward estate was bought by Leicestershire bankers Thomas Pares and Thomas Paget for £34,000. Trent Wong, land next to the River Trent, was bought by Samuel Smith, another banker.

Pares and Paget immediately divided and resold the land. The first buyer, on 5 April 1798, was James Green, who was to build Lenton Abbey house. By 11 June the Nottingham banker John Wright had purchased land for building Lenton Hall and Joseph Lowe had secured land for the Highfield Estate.

So began the residential development of the area shown as Lenton Park, as mapped by the Ordnance Survey in 1886.



Highfields House Centre for Advanced Studies

Joseph Lowe, a wool and linen draper of Long Row, Nottingham, chose a prime spot for his family home, with views to the south and west overlooking the Trent Valley and a wide sweep of downland in front of the house. He commissioned Mr Wilkins, architect to the Duke of Newcastle, who designed Donington Hall, to design the house, which was probably completed sometime in 1800.

Approaching the house (pictured on the cover) via Cut Through Lane from Beeston Lane follows the original route of the carriage driveway. The 19th-century gatehouse was a little to the south of the two 1920s lodges seen today, and the path running along the fence follows the line of the ancient Cut Through Lane. The long drive terminated in a circular carriage turn at the formal entrance porch on the southwest side of the symmetrically built house.

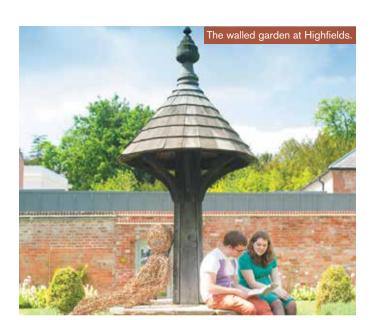
The two-storey, five-bedroomed mansion house is little changed, although the porch was unfortunately replaced by a French window in 1928. The Lowe family would have spied grazing cattle



esse boot donated Highlields.

from the lounge and library, while an extensive pleasure garden to the south offered woodland walks along terraces and down formal steps to an ornamental lake. This was probably an extension of the monastic fishpond and it was later enlarged again to become Highfields Park boating lake.

To the east side of the house is the walled garden. Edward Lowe, an astronomer, meteorologist and naturalist who lived at Highfields in the mid to late-19th century, filled the garden with vineries, stove houses and exotic ferns and plants.



Today's smaller walled garden has been beautifully restocked with many exotics. To the north side of the building were the servants' quarters and the stables, plus cowsheds, a piggery, carthorse stalls and a farmyard.

The Highfield Estate has played a significant part in the history of the campus. Highfields was one of the first houses to be built in an area associated with the grand homes of wealthy businessmen, and its sale to Jesse Boot in 1919 marked the end of this era. After much deliberation about building his dream township, in 1926 Boot donated the estate to the University (then situated on Shakespeare Street), so beginning a new era for Lenton Park.

2 Lenton Hall part of Hugh Stewart Hall

On the rise of Cut Through Lane, looking from Library Road, are the remains of the 19th-century ha-ha — a landscaped ditch with a retaining wall — which kept grazing cattle out of Lenton Hall's gardens. Library Road cuts through the ha-ha, the remains of which continue on the west side of the road.

A sweeping lawn drops down from the rear of the house into a dell featuring a circular flowerbed with central birdbath/sundial. A path leads to the east side of the garden and passes through a tunnel to tennis courts. This sheltered area was once a 'marlepitt', where keuper-marl — layers of mudstone and siltstone — was extracted for use as a soil improver. The 'Merpitt' is mentioned in rental documents of 1538 and other documents from the 16th century.

Another path rises from the garden and passes over the entrance tunnel and through an iron pergola, which, when it is covered with climbing plants such as honeysuckle, gives a pleasant passage through to a path along the top of the ha-ha.

In the southwest corner of Lenton House is a fine rock garden. The garden, thought to be Edwardian, was restored between 2010 and 2012 by student volunteers and members of the Friends of University Park.

The south side of the residence, as seen from the garden, is undoubtedly its most impressive aspect. Disregarding the 20th-century extension to the east side, the influence of 18th-century symmetry is evident. The design, by William Stretton and Mr Wilkinson, is in a pseudo-Gothic style, embellished with battlements and turrets — perhaps a statement of the owner's intention to protect family and property.

However, the architectural styles are a little mixed in the 1905 remodelling of the south facade by George Cresswell Bond. Greek, Baroque, and Jacobean styles are all in evidence. Although the house is said by Pevsner not to have been completed until 1804 there is an earlier date carved here: 1792-1905. The latter date is that of the re-modelling, but the earlier date has no obvious explanation,



as the land was not purchased for building until 1798.

The influence of 18th-century symmetry can be seen on the west side of the house, where 'dummy' windows, complete with mock lace-edged blinds and cords, were painted in the gaps between the windows. Now barely visible, the illusory windows also saved money on the window tax payable between 1696 and 1851.

On the north side of the property is Lenton Hall Drive at the end of Library road. Here stone-wall

pillars echo the turret design on the house. Also incorporated into the wall are sections of decorative iron-work. The original Lenton Hall Drive, as the name suggests, was the carriage access from Derby Road to the front door of the building.

3 Lenton Close Cripps Hall annexe



Alongside Lenton Hall Drive is the last private house to be built in Lenton Park. It was built in 1934 for Henry Bowmer Fletcher, a Nottingham property surveyor.

The gently curving facade of Lenton Close is typical of the 1930s and was designed to encompass the views of the sweeping lawn, the ancient beech tree and the downlands beyond. Tennis and croquet parties were popular in the 1920s and 30s and the tennis court is still in use. After Fletcher's death, his widow lived in the property until 1959 when it was eventually sold to the University. Today it is an annexe of Cripps Hall.

4 Lenton Firs School of Architecture and Built Environment



From Beeston Lane, an exposed stone outcrop and gazebo is visible.

This is the rediscovered Victorian rock garden, part of the Lenton Firs estate. Many of the structures in the rock garden are formed from Pulhamite stone, a Victorian composite. The pathways and steps of the garden were uncovered and restored by volunteers from the Friends of University Park and staff from the

University's estates team. The rock garden can be appreciated as an approach is made over the former grazing land of the estate.

Where the land levels out, is an area of formal garden which was once separated from the grazing park by a beechhedge with a 'kissing gate' in the centre. The gardens once boasted terraces and trellises, ballustrades and steps, classical statues, an aviary, a dovecote, large glasshouse and

Lenton Firs

a summerhouse (later destroyed by fire).

Thomas Wright Watson, a
Nottingham hosiery manufacturer,
built the original Georgian villa in
1800. By the mid-19th century it
was the home of Thomas Adams,
a well-respected lace merchant of
Stoney Street, Nottingham. Adams
was regarded as an outstanding
employer with great concern
for the health and well-being of
his employees, even providing
a chapel within his TC Hinedesigned warehouse on Stoney
Street. The stunning building is the
home of New College Nottingham.

In 1861 Adams supervised the extension and modernisation of Lenton Firs, resulting in the redbrick and timber facade seen today. Most of its rooms are large and some enhanced by bay windows. There was a library, drawing room, dining room and billiard room of note. Views from the front of the house were of fields and woodland, with Nottingham Castle and Lenton village beyond.

Following the stone path around the side of the house, the original

Georgian mansion becomes evident at the rear. Walking on, the 1860s stable block and coach house can be seen surmounted with a clock tower and weather vane. A number of 20th-century additions spoil the original appearance, so a little imagination has to be exercised to see the carriages or vintage cars at a later date, swinging in off Derby Road and in under the clock tower.

The redbrick gate lodge to the property was designed by TC Hine. Dated 1861, it is on the edge of Derby Road near the north entrance of the University and for many years was the home of the gardener and his large family.

Lenton Firs became the home of the local brewer Thomas Shipstone in the early 20th century. He left a legacy of stained glass to adorn the billiard room. Shipstone also acquired Lenton Hall working farm and land, including Lenton Hall Lodge on Derby Road, which was recorded as belonging to Lenton Firs from 1920. At the end of Lenton Hall Drive, this early 19th-century lodge can be seen next to the road.

Paton House

Department of Architecture and Built Environment

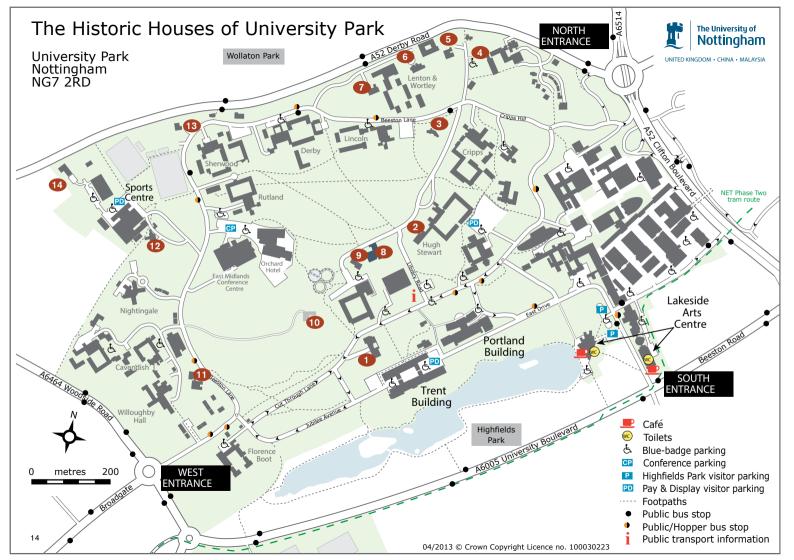
This property can be reached from Lenton Hall Drive, on the west side of Lenton Firs Lodge. The brick building, with its large canopy over the entrance and a conservatory opening off the library, has a Baroque-style interior. Orginally called West Hill House, it was built by Evans and Jolly for Samuel Herrick Sands JP in 1884. A lace and hosiery manufacturer. Samuel was also a director of the National Telephone Company and Nottingham Patent Brick Company, and chairman of Nottingham Joint Stock Bank and the Nottingham Suburban Railway Company.

In 1905 Herbert D Snook acquired the house and renamed it The Cedars. Snook, a director of J Snook and Company, a family-owned clothing firm on Hounds Gate, Nottingham, lived for 40 years at The Cedars. The cottagestyle lodge house on the Derby Road side was occupied by Snook's chauffeurs and prior to the turn of the century probably by Herrick's coachman.

Snook's widow eventually sold to the Paton Congregational College, a theological college established



in Nottingham in 1866, and The Cedars became Paton House in honour of the Reverend JB Paton, founder of the college. This name is retained today, although the college moved to Manchester in 1968. The building was taken over by the Department of Architecture and Built Environment.



6 Redcourt private house

Redcourt, to the north of Lenton and Wortley halls and adjacent to Derby Road, was designed by architects Martin and Hardy. The redbrick house has turret and battlement features as well as Tudor chimnevs and timbering. which probably lead to the description 'old English'. It was built for John Lambert, another member of the family of bleachers and dvers of Talbot Street, and was built in the same year as neighbouring West Hill. It is less symmetrical than other houses. but has the attributes of a large residence of the era: a drawing room, library, billiard room, and, on the first floor, a nursery.

The garden's simple layout includes an attractive stone gazebo. The gatehouse probably housed a coachman and later the family chauffeur. There is evidence of 20th-century alterations to the main entrance but a quirky little feature of the original house can still be appreciated high on the western gable apex. Above the timbering, there is a terracotta dragon.

This combination of timbering,



terracotta and redbrick is reminiscent of the renowned Victorian architect Watson Fothergill.

In the early 1940s Redcourt was owned by the entrepreneur Sir Julien Cahn, the owner of Stanford Hall, Loughborough. He may have briefly used Redcourt as a town house although there is no evidence for this. A cricket-loving eccentric, Sir Julien ran a furniture empire and was a benefactor of Nottinghamshire Cricket Club. He gave Newstead Abbey and its grounds to the people of Nottingham in 1931. Sir Julien died in 1944 and his widow sold Redcourt to the University in 1946.

Lenton Hurst

offices and accommodation



Lenton Hurst, also near Derby Road, was completed in 1896 for William Goodacre Player, then youngest son of John Player, the tobacco manufacturer.

The L-shaped design, by architect Arthur Marshall, once more makes use of turrets, crenellations and timbered gables on this ninebedroomed house. With the addition of lonic features at the porch entrance and Tudor brick chimneys the overall style is 'old English', as emphasised by the oak-panelled main hall.

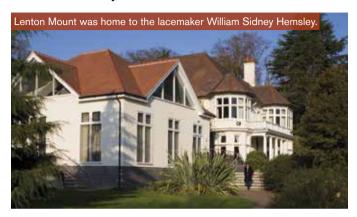
The site was purchased from the

Lenton Hall estate and was on the Sawley turnpike road at its junction with Derby Road. The Lenton Hurst garages are formerly carriage houses and are possibly on the site of the 18th-century tollhouse.

Around 1903, more land was purchased from Lenton Hall estate, enabling the establishment of Lenton Hurst Farm, complete with workers' cottages, as seen next to Derby Road. The extra land also led to an extended garden. The sunken garden to the south was created by Gertrude Jeykll, the renowned Victorian garden designer, in 1911.

8 Lenton Mount

The Hemsley staff club and restaurant



Near Lenton Hall. Lenton Mount was built by William Sidney Hemsley, a lace and hosiery manufacturer, on the remaining land sold by Lenton Hall estate in 1904. Hemsley lived there until the 1920s and lends the building, now the University staff club and restaurant, its current name. His coachman Frederick Nurse lived next door: this coach house and stables later became garages. The house overlooked the extensive gardens, the park and the Trent Valley. Hallward Library now stands on the garden to the south.

Lenton Mount was owned for a

short time by Frederick Mitchell before it became the property of Captain John Eric Greenwood JP in 1926. The Greenwood family lived there for 27 years. John Greenwood was closely involved in the business and financial affairs of lesse Boot.

Greenwood created tennis courts and a bowling green at Lenton Mount, which are now beneath Hallward Library. There was also a croquet lawn, which remains as the level area south of the house. Greenwood was also proud of his rock garden, which is now under the house's west extension.

The Orchards

University Counselling Service



West of Lenton Mount is The Orchards, a property built on the site of the Lenton Hall orchard. Fruiting trees in the area are a legacy of this era.

The house was built — around the same time as Lenton Mount — for Alfred Thomas Richard, managing director of Imperial Laundry of Radford Boulevard. Richard wished to take advantage of the view over the Downs and the building faced south west.

Two other notable occupants of The Orchards were Harold Toone, director of a Jacquard card punching factory, and Mrs Barnsdale, a cigar manufacturer and director of the Daybrook Laundry.

The building is now occupied by the University Counselling Service.

10 Lenton House privately owned by Boots

More old properties lie along Beeston Lane on the northwest edge of the campus, along the old Nottingham to Sawley turnpike road. This originally left the Nottingham to Derby turnpike near the former tollhouse at Lenton Hurst. The divergence was later moved opposite Wollaton Hall Derby Road Lodge, now marked by the pedestrian access onto the campus and Beeston Lane.

Starting at the higher ground on the north side of Beeston Lane, Lenton House is owned by Boots. Please note that the house and its driveway are private. The best view of the house is in the winter, from the gate in the boundary hedge on Beeston Lane.

It was built for Matthew Needham, a master hosier. His father, Matthew, was a surgeon and apothecary of High Pavement. His maternal grandfather was William Lee. inventor of the stocking frame.

In 1798, Pares and Paget had sold the land to the sitting tenants, Richard Hooton and William Hopkin, who in turn sold to John Wright to add to his Lenton Hall estate. Matthew Needham bought the remainder for £2,931,5,0d in 1799. The house apparently has the date 1800 carved in slate high on the wall and was built in two stages. The western part of the house was built as two storeys and then extended in 1816 on the east side to three storeys. This provided a nursery with servants' quarters.

In the late 18th century the property was described by Lawson Lowe as "a large mansion of irregular form". A county council publication of 1972 described a "stuccoed villa with pilasters". There is also mention of "bow" and "bay" windows and "eaves to a hipped slated roof".

In 1831 rioters protesting at the defeat of the Reform Bill ransacked Colwick Hall and burned down Nottingham Castle. Beeston Silk Mill also went up in flames. The rioters passed through Cut Through Lane and Derby Road, targeting Lenton Firs and Lenton Hall. At Lenton House, Matthew Needham was away and the rioters ransacked the property as the female family members hid in the shrubbery.



The Needham family owned the estate until 1865, when William Needham sold it, 25 years after the death of his father, Matthew. William Paget became the owner, the property passing to his son upon his death four months later.

By 1871, John Thorpe, a corn merchant and malster, was resident. His son, William Blaneley Thorpe, bought the estate in 1886 and lived there until his death in 1914. The estate became the property of John Campbell Boot, son of Jesse Boot and chairman of the Boots Pure Drug and Associates Company, in 1920. In the 1930s, the Lenton House gardens were used for horticultural

research with glasshouses erected and support given for the Grow More Food campaign. By 1944 the estate was known as Lenton Research Station. In 1946 it was sold by JC Boot to the Boots Pure Drug Company for £40,000 and the house became the company guesthouse. The lodge at the drive entrance is an early 20th-century replacement. Visitors should note Lenton House is private.

The Jesse Boot Conference
Centre, along the lane from Lenton
House, is on land gifted to the
University from the Lenton House
estate. The renovated cottage
housing offices for the centre was
also one of the estate cottages.

Lenton Grove Department of History



At the west end of Beeston Lane is Lenton Grove, its entrance marked by two sturdy stone gateposts with large spherical finials.

Lenton Grove was also once known as Lenton Shrubbery and was built around 1800 for Francis Evans, a Nottingham attorney. It has a south-facing aspect and its land runs to the edge of the Lenton parish boundary. It does not have the symmetrical box plan typical of the probable date of the building — the 1881 Ordnance Survey map shows a T-shaped plan, although

this is disguised today by several extensions.

On the north side, the main door is now enclosed by a protective glass link between the main building and one of the original courtyard buildings. The slightly bowed window seen above the door is the original stair light. At the other end of the building, the lounge looked out to the sunny aspect of the south, and on the 1881 plan there appears to be a verandah along this south wall. This was possibly added 1841-42.

After the death of Francis Evans and his widow, the estate was put in trust for Evans' eldest daughter and tenanted throughout the late 19th century. Richard Spendlove was the final tenant and the trust was concluded in the early years of the 20th century.

Sir Louis Pearson purchased the property in 1926. Sir Louis, who was born at Chilwell House and was head of the Beeston Foundry Company, was a generous benefactor of Nottingham General Hospital and was president of the hospital in 1924-25. His many gifts included an operating theatre and a hall for nursing staff.

When Sir Louis died in 1943 he bequeathed Lenton Grove and its two cottages to the hospital. It was used as a rheumatism clinic until 1950 and bought by the University in 1952. Today it is the home of the Department of History.

12 Lenton Fields The Playcentre

Almost opposite the East Midlands Conference Centre. Lenton Fields was built in 1836-37, also by Matthew Needham, It stands on 41/2 acres of land acquired from James Green of Lenton Abbey and was built for Catherine Turner, a family friend and schoolteacher. The remains of the boundary stonewall can be seen, and the drive can be followed to the front entrance. Here, there is a later addition of a portico supported by Doric columns. The basic symmetry of the facade is recognisable, although there is only one groundfloor bay window, to the right of

the entrance. The south west side of the building reveals the long, purpose-built, schoolroom and the bay almost on the corner of the building. The bay was probably a late 19th-century addition.

Catherine Turner taught the younger daughters of Needham here, and in 1841 there were ten girl boarders being looked after by two teachers and three domestic servants. This was obviously an expensive education and used mainly by the wealthy Unitarians of Nottingham. Turner kept school at Lenton Fields until the late 1850s.

Lenton Fields



By 1861 Henry Haddon, a hosiery manufacturer of Stanford Street. Nottingham, was the owner and in 1867 Lenton Fields was bought by James Holwell Lee JP. owner of Lee & Gee. Throughout the remainder of the century, tenants changed and its land was bought and sold. The tenancy of Lenton Fields went to William Heape Walker (brother of Benjamin) when Lee moved to Newcastle Drive in The Park, Nottingham. This tenancy continued to about 1888. William Griffiths Forster, followed by Joseph Spendlove, and then lace manufacturer Richard Granger in 1908, were the next tenants.

Stephen Cecil Armitage, a
Nottingham solicitor, became the
final private owner in 1927. The
property was eventually sold to
University College Nottingham in
1946. A conveyance document
refers to its outbuildings including
offices, stables, a lodge and
a croft. We know that Richard
Spendlove's coachman, Joseph
Rule, occupied the lodge in 1904.
Many of the outbuildings remain
but the lodge, which was near the
roadside, was demolished.

Lenton Fields, as The Playcentre, now provides childcare for University staff and students.

13 Lenton Eaves

University Sports and Social Club



Now the University Sports and Social Club, Lenton Eaves can be found where Beeston Lane bends to run parallel with Derby Road. Just after the bend a footpath marks the point where the two turnpikes joined.

Lenton Eaves, built in 1875 by lacemaker Benjamin Walker Junior, was the first Victorian villa to appear in the campus area. It was built on land purchased in a complex transaction involving Thomas Bayley of Lenton Abbey, Lord Middleton of Wollaton Hall and JH Lee of Lenton Fields. The redbrick, Victorian Gothic building

is in the style of a shooting lodge. It has two hound kennels, together with stables and a coach house, all backing onto Derby Road. Its overhanging eaves obviously inspired the house's name.

It was sympathetically extended in 1984. The Latin inscription to the right of the entrance, Deus Major Columna, God is our Great Pillar, tells us Walker was a God-fearing man. There is also a quirky window feature, possibly described as an oriel window, projecting from the north corner of the house. Small examples of stained glass can be seen in the windows, with

Lenton Eaves

armorial designs or depictions of human characters. There is also a decorative course of brick corbels around the building and the slate roof is capped with crest tiles typical of the era.

In 1895-96 the house became the property of John Piggin. About eight years later, colliery owner Walter Carrington Fowler took over before John Morris, a laundry proprietor, lived there from 1911 to 1941. The final owners, Reginald Lionel Kemp, a company director, and his wife Evelyn, sold to the University in 1948.

The coachman's cottage east of Lenton Eaves has a wall plaque dated AD 1880, shortly after the house was built. Coachman Mark Wilshaw and his wife Hannah were the first to live there, and a succession of gardeners lived in the cottage in the 20th century.

14 Lenton Abbey

The name is inventive, as the property is some distance from the site of the medieval priory at Lenton, but it is thought to incorporate the thick walls of a priory farm building.

It was built between 1798 and 1800 by James Green, the superintendent engineer of the Nottingham and Grantham Canal. He was also a churchwarden at Lenton in 1808, and an overseer of the poor for Lenton. The estate was created after a succession of land deals involving James Green, Matthew Needham and John Wright. James lived at Lenton Abbey until his death in 1829 when the auction brochure described the house as having four best bed chambers, two spare bed chambers and three attic chambers, plus male sleeping guarters. The property, which featured offices, a brewhouse and laundry, two coach houses, stables, farmyard and barn, was bought by Lord Middleton of Wollaton Hall in 1830. He leased to various tenants, before Thomas Bayley, of the Old Lenton Tannery

and Leatherworks, took the lease in 1859. He bought the property after Lord Middleton's will was processed, which also allowed JH Lee to buy Lenton Fields, and Benjamin Walker to purchase the land for building Lenton Eaves.

The Bayley family occupied Lenton Abbey for over 60 years. They added a two-storey bay and in 1914 a new entrance lodge was built on Derby Road. The lodges were home to farm bailiffs, coachmen, gardeners and chauffeurs.

Wilson Fulford Marriott Weston Webb, a yarn merchant, became the owner in 1923. But, griefstricken after his wife's death and in poor health, Webb moved to the south of France and sold Lenton Abbey to the Corporation of Nottingham in December 1925.

The Lenton Abbey Housing Estate sprung up, with surplus land along with the house and other buildings sold to Douglas McCraith, a solicitor. The private development of Charles Avenue also took place. TDC Taft was the final private owner of the Lenton Abbey properties and after 40 years he sold to the University in 1976.

Lenton Abbey is on private residential land and can be viewed by arrangement with the University's Estates Office. Please contact Grounds Manager Desmond O'Grady: t: 0115 9513649 e: desmond.ogrady@nottingham.ac.uk

Compiled by Janet Jones Additional photography by Lewis Stainer

Acknowledgements

Sanctity and Scandal edited by David Marcombe and John Hamilton 1998, Continuing Education Press, The University of Nottingham.

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