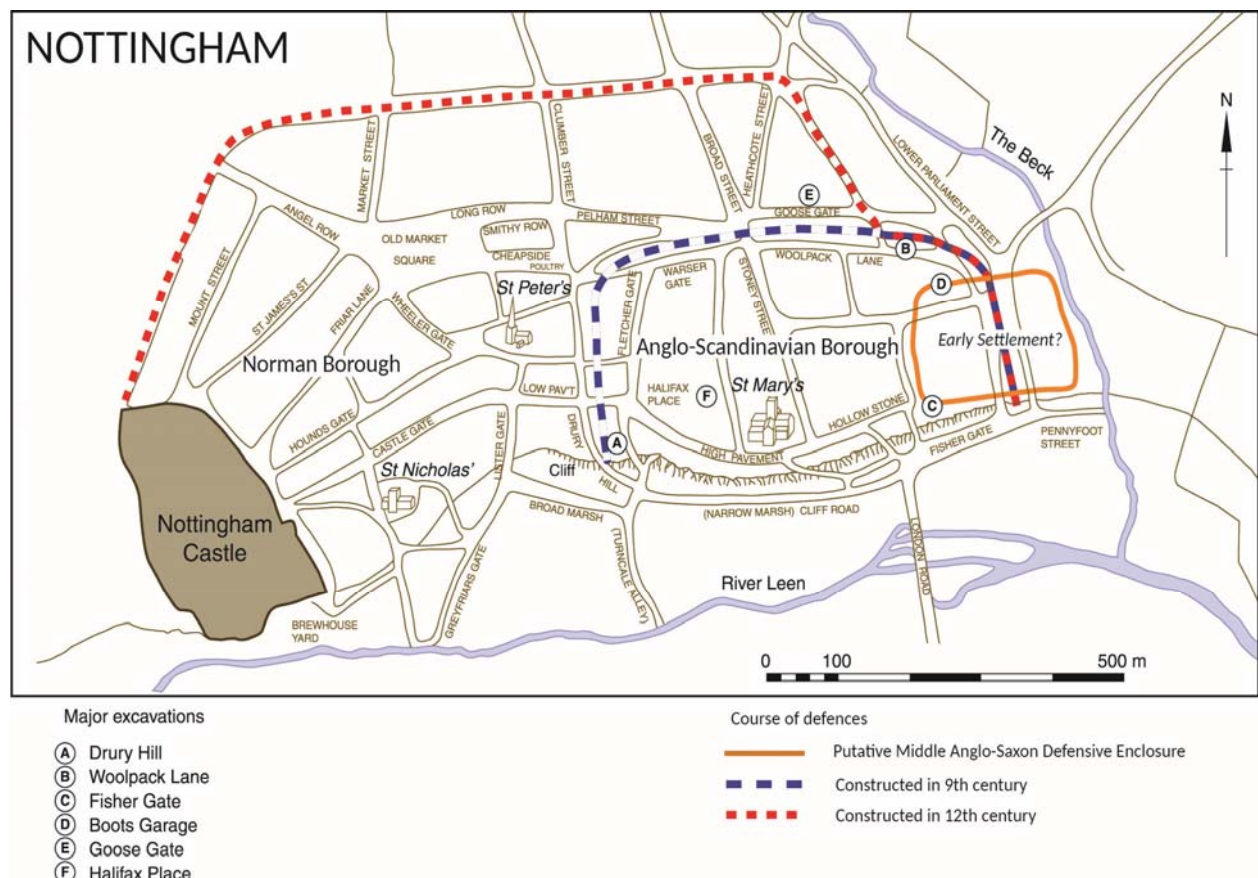


Recent Work on the Archaeology of Nottingham by Dr Gareth Davies, Head of Operations, Trent & Peak Archaeology, Sat. 1st February 2020. 2.15pm at the Town Close Auditorium, Castle Museum, Norwich

Dr Davies began by explaining the role of Trent & Peak Archaeology as the main provider of enabling archaeological surveys and preparatory works conducted in advance of major redevelopment proposals in the City of Nottingham. He also mentioned his own contact with Norfolk having undertaken a Phd on Anglo-Saxon West Norfolk and worked for the former Norfolk Archaeological Unit, and how his talk had emanated from the 2019 NNAS 4-Day Event at Nottingham last September.

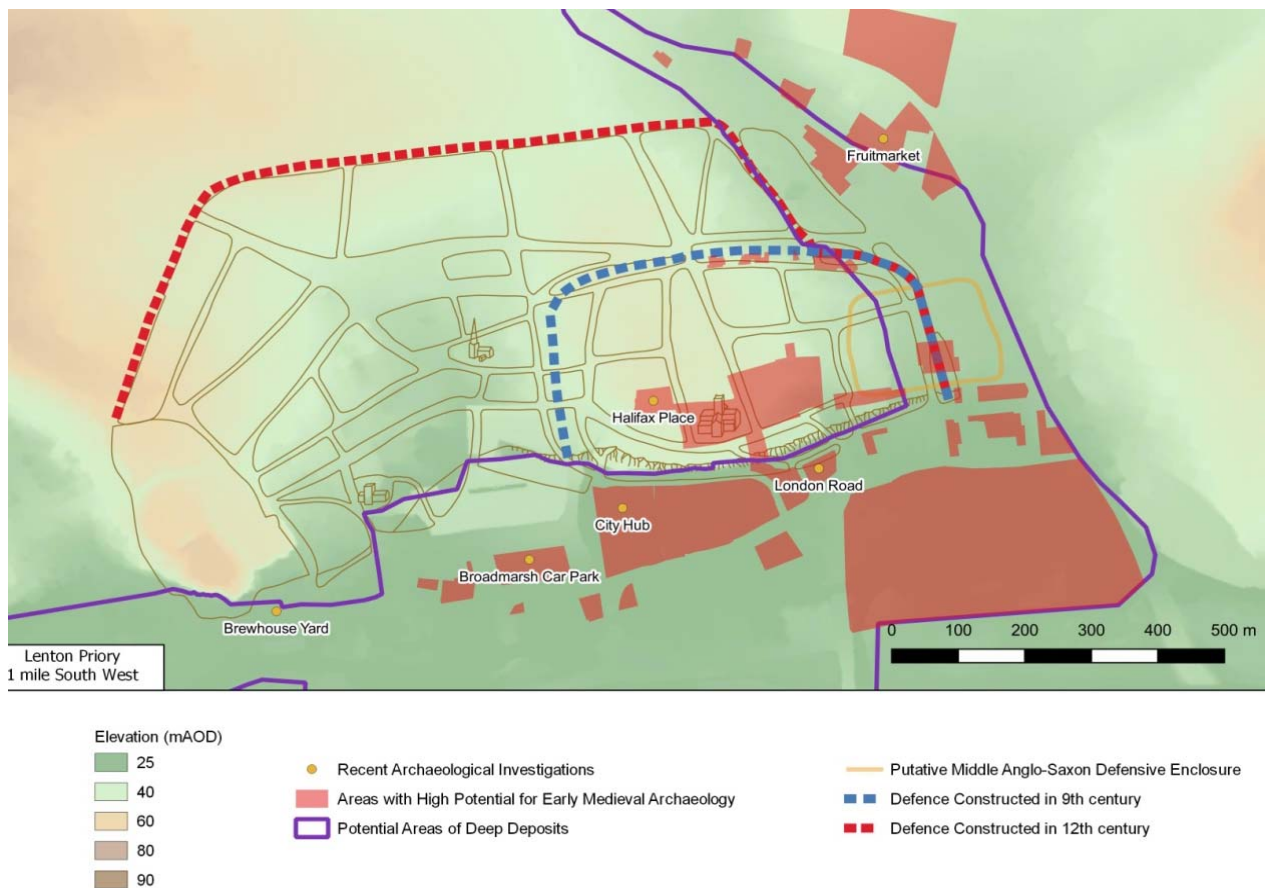
Previous Excavations

Historically Nottingham was one of the Five Boroughs of the Danelaw, a key strategic pre-conquest site for the Anglo-Saxons and for the Vikings, who overwintered there in 868 AD. For the Angevin Kings (1155-1216) it was an important royal governmental hub and a centre for Medieval trade such as leather and alabaster. However, the study of its origins and early development has been somewhat neglected. Between 1968 and 1980, keynote investigations/excavations on the borough defences and interior of the city took place but have not been published. David Knight (Honorary Research Fellow at Nottingham University) has been trying to consolidate these archives on the Archaeological Data Service website. North of the River Trent, **Fisher Gate** and **Boots garage** show pre-conquest activity as does **Drury Hill** a few streets away. At Drury Hill it was established that the defences were constructed at some point in the ninth century, perhaps by the Anglo-Saxons and then renegotiated by the Vikings. Within the interior of the burgh, **Halifax Place** has a pre-Conquest boundary ditch 1000 AD, plus timber buildings and artefacts demonstrating Scandinavian-influenced high-status occupation. The nearby **Goose Gate** site revealed a medieval pottery kiln and a 12th century pottery kiln. At **Fisher Gate**, dated from somewhere between 1100-1350, caves were found.



Map of Nottingham showing the location of the 1969-1980 excavations and proposed extent of town defences (with permission of Trent and Peak Archaeology)

Recent Investigations



Map of Nottingham showing location of key new sites (with permission of Trent & Peak Archaeology)

Since 2017, the appointment of a new City Archaeologist, Nottingham has seen significant developer funded archaeological investigations (37 new projects). These have mainly occurred in the River Leen floodplain to the south of the borough defences, although there has been the occasional opportunity to look within the borough itself. For example, the University of Leicester excavations at High Pavement near St Mary's church which didn't reveal pre-conquest material but a C13th-C15th building plot and some caves in the sandstone outcrop (one of 800 caves so far identified in the City).

Sites in the south around the River Leen and the Beck, from Brewhouse Yard eastwards, were disused. At **Brewhouse Yard**, borehole deposits revealed a deep sequence back to the Mesolithic 6000 BC. **Grey Friars Broadmarsh** (a Franciscan Friary 1224-1230 dissolved 1539) contained medieval occupational waste and beyond its outer wall tanning residues. However, its layout is unknown except for a 1610 map. The waterfront along **London Road** existed from 4600 BC to 1282 AD but during the C14th to C15th the frontage was a wealthy area with fulling or dye works for tanning. Finds included a boiling hearth plus a human skull from the C11th. **Pemberton Street** contained tanning clay-lined pits for the leather industry dating to C13th-C15th.

To the north of the City, "**The Woodlark**" Excavations on the site of Nottingham Trent University's confetti building, revealed medieval caves and ditches around the medieval **St. John's Hospital**. Later the cave was reused as the Woodlark Pub cellars with flagons left in situ from the old pub. To the east of the City, the **Sneinton Fruit Market site**, three hundred metres east of the old Anglo-Saxon defence, was investigated just before Christmas 2018 and revealed C9th and C10th ditches.



Ditches under excavation at the Fruitmarket site looking east (with permission of Trent and Peak Archaeology)

Such finds throw doubt on the assumed site of the Viking camp equated with the borough, and are corroborated by the 1851 Antiquarian find of two Viking swords near the Victorian Baths c900. Radio carbon dated the ditches to between the C7th and C12th but this was not supported by artefact finds which were restricted to a glass bead, crumbs of pottery and hammerscale from iron production. On the basis of existing evidence, a date for the ditches at some point in the 10th century seems most likely, between Edward the Elder 918 and the Viking Conquest of 939 AD. It is interesting to suggest that the early Viking encampment may have been in a different place than was previously thought (as has now been revealed at Repton, Derbyshire). It might have been on the highland areas outside the borough.

The Lenton Priory Project

The remains of Lenton Priory and its associated buildings are well-preserved providing a rare example of a wealthy Cluniac monastery founded in 1106/7.

It lies one mile south-west of Nottingham Castle and was a leading fair in England during the Middle Ages with substantial houses called booths where stallholders could lodge with their goods. Previous excavations have shown structural, artefactual, skeletal and environmental remains beneath the current ground surface. Recent exploration of the market area demonstrate a C11th to C17th sequence: a Gold Noble of Edward III was found in the market area plus other tokens and coins; selected finds of plot boundaries, stall post holes, lead weights and scales are from the C15th to C16th; also stoneware from the chapel and pre conquest pottery found under the cloisters. Geo-physics surveys have shown churchyard anomalies.

The cloister of Lenton Priory, beneath which was buried soil containing Anglo-Saxon pottery (with permission of Trent and Peak Archaeology)



Excavating the Castle

A £29.4m transformation is expected to be complete by 2021 with 25 separate investigations of the history of the Castle, C11th to 1649 when it was destroyed on Parliament's orders. A replacement building, the Ducal Palace, built for the Royalist Duke of Newcastle, was set alight during the Reform Bill riots of 1830. Keyhole observations have been made in the interior of the Palace revealing burials; two set-piece investigations have revealed galleries and a service courtyard. Various finds from C16th-C17th, including pottery, a flute and a jaw of a monkey found in a rubbish tip (a Mrs Kirby in the 1790s kept an ape as a pet), are on display at the Visitor Centre. Excavations deep into the sandstone foundations have revealed the collapsed ramparts of C13th and C14th and a grave cover. Boreholes enabled radio-carbon dating 5 metres down.

Conclusion

A lot of material to be analysed as well as unpublished findings. Themes drawn out from these, towards a future Programme Search Plan with the aim of a Resource Assessment Agenda and Strategy to include publication.

1. To establish the extent of Medieval activity.
2. To describe C9th-C10th developments.
3. To examine Town and Hinterland Connections
4. To explain the origins, development and morphology of caves
5. To build on methods developed in other places like Norwich and York.

The President, Andy Hutcheson, thanked Gareth for an interesting, informative and well illustrated lecture. Gareth then answered a series of questions from the audience.

Edmund G. Perry
Hon. General Secretary
NNAS