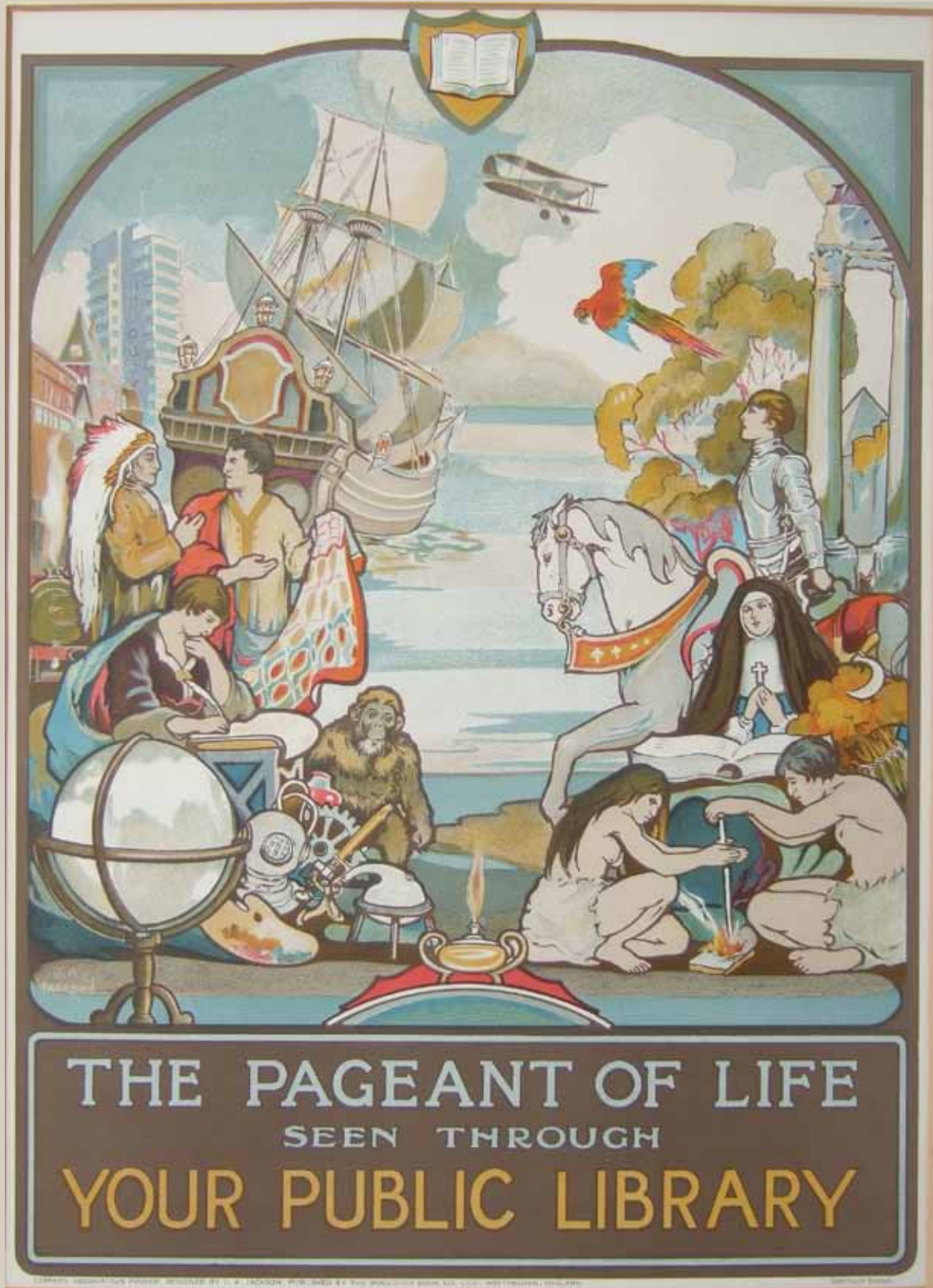


Newark Civic Trust

MAGAZINE

Caring about the town's environment

Issue 64



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Newark Civic Trust Magazine

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from the article by
Rupert Vinnicombe

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Recent Trails Leaflet launch in the Castle Grounds with County Councillor Richard Butler, Cabinet Member for Environment & Sustainability (centre)



A few words from The Chairman

Now almost 9 months into my year in office, it is a pleasure to be able to update you on what has been happening over the winter and what we have planned for your Trust.

As we go to press, the sad news of the death of Vernon Radcliffe has been announced. May I convey, on behalf of Newark Civic Trust, our most sincere condolences to his wife Gladys.

Vernon was a valued member and staunch supporter of the Trust and a great help to George Wilkinson during his period of office. When need arose Vernon could also be a very vocal critic. A friend to us all, he will be sadly missed!

Firstly, however, I would wish to place on record the warm thanks of all of us for the 8 years of devoted service given by our ex-Chairman, George Wilkinson, - and by Gillie, his wife - to guiding, informing, representing and enlivening all aspects of the Trust's work. A kenspeckle figure round the town with his fine mane of hair and distinctive dress code, George has embodied all that we

stand for over almost a decade so that my succession to the Chairman's role is a uniquely challenging one. Happily, he remains as Editor for a little while longer and his wise counsels still enlighten the Executive Committee - and long may they continue to do so.

Turning to the present and to the future, we are using this interregnum to focus on what we have to do, what we wish to and what we do best. Underlying everything, it is essential that we remain solvent and, as our Treasurer Amanda Ferguson delicately pointed out at our last AGM, recurring deficits are putting this at risk. We need to get income up or expenditure down- or preferably both! Happily, a flurry of fresh recruits and Vodafone's generous offer to host our Planning and Executive meetings free of charge have enabled progress in both areas but we must remain

energetic and vigilant here and - pace ASDA! - every little helps, most particularly the signing up of new members.

Now to the core services we provide - Planning, Conservation Watch, the Magazine and our programme of Library meetings. Michael Hawes' emergence as Planning Committee Chairman has allowed our regular meetings to resume on the first of each month and, with Mick Gill in post as our new Conservation Watch Officer, we may expect an informed, comprehensive and timely oversight in this area. As referred to above, George Wilkinson remains in charge of the Magazine until the autumn but with greater involvement from the Executive Committee and an iron control of costs. Finally, we are committed to publishing the 2011-12 programme of Library meetings in the autumn issue of the Magazine



Photo by Newark Advertiser

and to promoting it, where practical, elsewhere. These not only inform but also serve to bring our members together and, all being well, to attract new faces. As such, they deserve to be better attended and we must make it possible for them to be so.

The content of this release is self-evident and, I hope, representative of the progressive, substance and form evinced in recent times. Pride of place is taken by Rupert Vinnicombe's piece on the Libraries of Newark. Our Secretary and a former Principal Librarian for East Nottinghamshire, Rupert has here penned a fascinating history of our distinguished libraries down the years and, at a time when nationally the library service is facing

unprecedented pressures and funding reductions, it is perhaps timely for Trust members to reflect on the important role these have played in the town's education, recreation and information services and, indeed, its social history.

The developer's recent volte-face on the Robin Hood has energised the Trust and its Planning Committee, with 15 souls – including one new member on the night! – attending a meeting hurriedly convened and from which a robust submission to Kelham Hall emerged. This was enthusiastically covered by The Advertiser, albeit our call for a public meeting was lost in translation, since which time English

Heritage have weighed in with very similar observations to our own. Moreover, the letters columns of the Advertiser have been awash with correspondence on the subject, not all it should be said supporting our position.

Let us see what our elected representatives now elect to do in the best long-term interests of the town and of its citizenry.

Enough of me for one issue. I hope that you will enjoy what you are about to read and that it may encourage you to participate more actively in what the Trust has to offer.

Peter Duncan

New Executive Committee Member – Mick Gill

Recently there was a plea for members to join the Executive Committee. As I had been a member of the Civic Trust for around 10 years and served on the Planning Committee for 5 years, I decided to answer the call. I thought that members might wish to know a little about my background and interest in Newark.

Firstly, I am of that age where I can, and do, make full use of my Senior Railcard, national Bus Pass and all other "concessions" on offer. My working life was spent with the Post Office moving from Newark, to Nottingham and then to Post Office Headquarters in London where I had various roles in Training Division, Industrial Relations and Personnel – I refuse point blank to use the modern term "Human Resources". After the split of the Post Office businesses I found myself in Parcelforce Headquarters in Milton Keynes. After a short period finances became tight and volunteers for redundancy were sought. As I had been involved in the preparation of the redundancy package I offered myself for the chop. Thus, in April 1992, I found myself basically "retired".

I decided not to seek re-employment immediately but to have a "gap year". However, my time was quickly

taken up with gardening and my long-standing interests in family, local and postal history. I was soon Secretary of the Newark Scout District and became heavily involved in local history research, in particular the old yards and courts of Newark. It quickly became apparent that I would have no time to return to work.

In 1997 I was persuaded to sign up for a three-year, part-time course with Nottingham University, which culminated in my being awarded the Advanced Certificate in local History with Distinction. Along the way I joined the Civic Trust. I also joined the Nottinghamshire Environmental Association, of which I am Treasurer of the Eastern Branch, and the Midland (GB) Postal History Society, of which I am General Secretary. For some years a friend and I ran WEA local history courses and I continue to give talks on Newark and take groups around town to raise money for Beaumont House Hospice. After 17 years I recently stood down as Secretary for the District Scouts but have taken on the role of President.

My interest in Newark is very long-standing and my research on the old yards and courts has shown not just how much has been lost but also what has survived if you know what to look for. Whilst I am

conscious that the town today is the result of ongoing development over generations it is still vital for us to ensure that we retain the best of what we have inherited for future generations and that what we add is of quality and fits into the townscape. I am not against modern architecture but, unfortunately, we have inherited some 1960s examples we could have done without.

I have been asked to help re-generate the Trust's Conservation Watch – the need not only to monitor the condition of buildings at risk (we have some that are in desperate need of TLC) but also try to encourage the District Council, owners and occupiers to take remedial action before major problems arise. I have looked at how this aspect of the Trust's work has operated in the past with a view to how best to proceed. We clearly need interested members to be responsible for specific areas of the town to keep an eye not only on buildings but also other problems such as litter and inappropriate street furniture. The overall aim needs to be to protect what we have and to try and nip potential problems in the bud.

Conservation Watch is important – please let me know if you would like to help. I can be contacted on 01636 672868.

Planning Applications

Potterdyke

Corner Lombard Street and New Street

M F Strawson Ltd

Demolition of the remaining elements of the former Robin Hood Hotel and redevelopment to provide 5no. new retail units (Units 5, 6A, 6B, 7 and 8) with associated servicing

This is a major issue and we are preparing a detailed response to the application

Pending

Growth Point

Land South Of Newark Bowbridge Lane Balderton

Catesby Estates (Residential) Ltd

Outline planning application comprising up to 3,150 dwellings (Class C3); two local centres including retail and commercial premises, a 60 bed care home, 2 primary schools, etc

Although we support the development we have a number of concerns relating to key aspects, summarised as: The SLR will not be completed until 784 dwellings are occupied: that the two main vehicle access routes will both converge at Beaumont Cross; the proposed dwellings appear to the minimum size permitted: the first primary school will be single form entry and not available until 1000 units are occupied.

Pending

Thorpe's Warehouse

Navigation Yard Mill Gate

(Newark Egg Packers)

Willoughby 396

Alterations to allow conversion of existing Grade II listed warehouse building to provide 9 residential units and 6 small offices. External alterations to include provision of balconies to upper floors, replacement of existing external staircases.

We approve of the plans to develop and make use of this listed building. We are satisfied that the new balconies will be acceptable but we raised a concern on the design and materials proposed for the new entry lobby that will replace the current stairway.

Pending

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Potterdyke

Asda Stores

Proposed signage to the Asda store, external areas including the car park areas

Potterdyke, land at south of Lombard Street, west of Beaumont Cross, north of Portland Street/Pelham Street and east of and including Newark Bus Station and associated Depot.

We are surprised that Asda have decided to go for 24 hour opening straight away as, referring to the Advertiser, December 19 2008 'Summer start in mind for Asda Store' it was reported:

Mr Pickering said it would be a major Asda store that would sell George clothing, and would be a similar size to Morrisons in Newark. He said it would open until 10pm, six days a week, but if shoppers spent enough money it would no doubt open 24 hours at some point.

Pending

15 Cartergate

John Reynolds

Facia and hanging sign to new shopfront.

We SUPPORTED the application

Approved

32 Stodman Street

Marks & Spencer plc

Replace existing signs with new current branded non-illuminated and illuminated letters and fascias with the introduction of a non-illuminated blade sign.

We SUPPORTED the application.

Approved

18 Balderton Gate

Peugeot Motor Company Plc

Pratt & Gelthorpe Ltd

Erection of 4 illuminated fascia signs and 1 non illuminated totem sign

If our memory is correct the application for the redevelopment was made 2 years ago and at that time N&SDC approved the signage with the stipulation that the totem sign would not be a feature. We have made this point to N&SDC.

Application permitted

Wilkinson

St Marks Place

Wilkinson UK

Installation of a new fascia sign on building and new sign to car park entrance on Lombard Street.

We SUPPORTED the application.

Pending

109 Mill Gate

Heritage Care in conjunction with British Red Cross Society

Demolition of store, wall external staircase to 1970s block and various internal alterations to main building at Millbank House.

NO OBSERVATIONS

All the work is internal. We were concerned that the internal door was to be removed but on inspection it is a glass division with a plain wooden frame that is not, in our opinion, of any architectural merit.

Approved

Allspice Indian Restaurant

24 Castle Gate

Mr Asad Miah

The Shaan E Restaurant, Kirkgate

Display of individual letters on face of brickwork and hanging sign

We OBJECTED to the individual letters being affixed to the brickwork as we consider this to be a likely cause of damage to the façade – particularly in the case of the small letters. We think this will involve 50 fixings that, we suggest, will cause considerable damage and leave brickwork scars if they were removed at some future date.

We would recommend that a solid base sign requiring a maximum of say 4 fixings would be adequate and more appropriate.

APPROVED. All fixings for the hanging sign and individual lettering should be fixed into mortar joints unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority. To ensure that the fixing of the signage does not harm the fabric of the listed building. The individual illuminated lettering shall be in a brushed stainless steel finish (and not shiny) unless otherwise agreed in writing with the local planning authority. In order to preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area.

33 Appleton Gate

Mr Roger Greenfield

Change of use from office to single dwelling and demolition of single storey rear extension

We SUPPORTED the application.

APPROVED: There are a number of requirements to ensure that the works undertaken are in keeping with the special historic and architectural importance of this listed building.

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41 Market Place

Barclays Bank Plc

Removal of existing hanging sign.

Replacement of 2no. existing letter signs with 2no. non-illuminated individually mounted letters signs.

We SUPPORTED the proposal but would ask that consideration be given to, if this is possible, the old 'ghost' sign on the façade being reduced or removed without obviously making a worse feature!

APPROVED: All fixings for the individual lettering should be fixed into mortar joints unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority. To ensure that the fixing of the signage does not harm the fabric of the listed building.

Netto Foodstores, London Road

Netto Foodstores Ltd

Proposed extension to existing Netto foodstore, including additional parking and circulation areas

We OBJECTED on the grounds of lack of information regarding a plan showing the development on the front elevation.

APPROVED: The trees to be retained on the site are important amenity features within the locality. They should be respected and retained to enhance the development. The applicants are advised that a separate application for advertisement consent will need to be submitted for the new signs shown on the proposed plans.

Newton & Fallow,

12-14 Middle Gate

Mr Mark Newton

Display fascia and hanging sign

We AGREED with N&SDC that the original fascia and sign were out of keeping.

The revised signage has been APPROVED.

20 Pelham Street

Two appeal in progress. A second application was made in October with a revised site plan. Both applications have been refused.

Mr & Mrs D. Burke

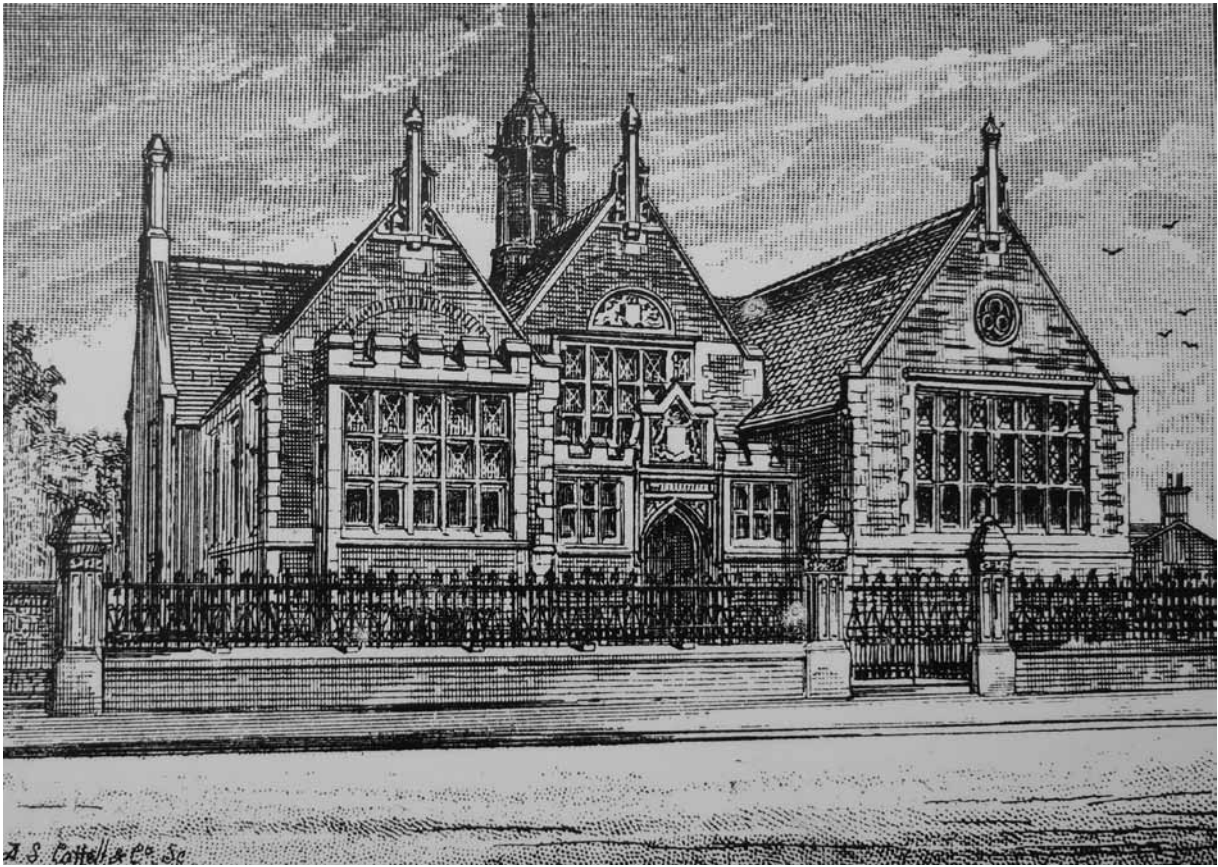
Demolition of existing residential property. Erection of 4 dwellings.

Our feelings were divided on this. Some members of the Planning Committee were in favour of demolition as the dilapidated property is an eyesore and there is little chance that the owners will be forced to refurbish. Others wished to see the property restored and objected to the development.

As soon as either appeal judgement is available we will publish the decision on the website.

TWO APPLICATIONS REFUSED & APPEALS DISMISSED. The existing building is a 1930s detached dwelling and is a fairly typical development of its period. It is part of a pair of dwellings on the road dating from this time. This side of Pelham Street has a range of buildings showing its evolution through the last century which all make up part of the variety and interest of the street scene. As such, the existing dwelling makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area and could be put back to effective use. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy C3 of the Local Plan.

The Libraries of Newark



Gilstrap Free Library 1883

When I was appointed to my post as Newark District Librarian in 1982, I was given the very unusual opportunity of organising the celebration of the centenary of one of the oldest libraries in Nottinghamshire.

I recall a staff team meeting to develop ideas for a programme of activities that resulted in a memorable commemoration. Central to the centenary, my colleague Elizabeth Gibson agreed to produce a history booklet that drew on the fabulous resource of material relating to the history of the library in the Local Studies Collection. The celebrations also included a lecture programme provided by local historians such as Rodney Cousins, Vernon Radcliffe and Keith Train conducted in the cramped space of the Reference Library. The attendances for a couple of the lectures would have exercised the Health and Safety Inspectorate had

they been aware of the presence of over eighty people!

The Centenary Lecture was held at the Palace Theatre and Alec Clifton-Taylor spoke on one of his specialist subjects of "The Smaller Georgian House" to a sell-out audience. Mr Clifton-Taylor had at that time produced three very popular series of BBC programmes on English towns and assured me that Newark was a favourite and scheduled to appear in the next series but sadly he died before completion.

The close links with Newark Town Council and the library service were celebrated by the loan of the beautiful original solid silver and gilt key used by William Gilstrap (later Sir

William) at the official opening on Thursday 26th May 1883.

Newark has an unusually rich library history for a town of its size and indeed, benefactors unequalled elsewhere in the county and I imagine very rare in the whole country. As early as 1689, Thomas White, Bishop of Peterborough, bequeathed his library to the town. Bishop White is thought to have been educated at Newark's Magnus Grammar School and was certainly Vicar of Newark around 1660. The collection is still housed above the south porch of the parish church and contains some 1,300 volumes many of which are of great value and beauty. In his will, Bishop White stipulated that

the room in which the books were kept "should be swept once a month with the books being brushed and rubbed once a quarter". I am sure the Rector, Rev. Vivian Enever and his predecessors has complied with this tradition as with White's requirement that no book be removed from the room and the entire collection checked over once a quarter as the library remains intact over 300 years later.

In 1771, the Newark Book Society was founded at the Kingston Arms later to be re-named as the Clinton Arms. Membership was restricted to between 12 and 21 people all of them prosperous middle class who would meet for dinner and discussion at regular intervals and exchange books that were rotated in strict order. The Society spent about the same on wine as it did on books and by the mid 1860s the meetings became more social than literary and it closed.

The Newark Stock Library opened in 1825 and in 1828 moved to the first floor of premises of what is now the Sir John Arderne public house in the corner of the Market Place. The move was made possible by the generosity of Henry Willingham, 6th Lord Middleton and the Stock Library complemented the Middleton Newsroom on the ground floor where members could consult news sheets from London in a club-like atmosphere. The Duke of Newcastle was the first President of the Newark Stock Library and an original shareholder and William Ewart Gladstone, when MP for Newark, was also a member in its early days.

A number of circulating libraries began to develop around the middle of the 18th century and the earliest known is that of William Allin started between 1770 and 1780. Allin's daughter married John Ridge and founded the firm of Allin and Ridge in the building in the Market Place that is now Porter's. In addition to the circulating library, they were stationers and printers and published

the first volume of Byron's works, "Fugitive Pieces" in 1806. Around this time a number of other subscription or circulating libraries existed over differing periods – Allin and Ridge, James Tomlinson, John Wright, Daniel Holt, Hage and Sons on Stodman Street and James Bridges on Church Street. Others included two related to political parties – The Conservative Association and Reading Society and a Liberal Reading Room in Stodman Street. A Ladies' Book Society had Mathew Hage and Sons as librarians and probably folded around 1829 and recent research has uncovered the Medical Book Society of Newark, Southwell and the Neighbourhood, apparently founded in 1795 and running until around 1801. Other religious libraries included a Methodist Chapel Library around 1828 and the SPCK Library on Wilson Street in 1853.

The Byron Library in Middlegate was originally run by a Mr. E. Renard and based on second-hand stock from Ridge's Bookselling business and by 1902 it was run by Samuel White in Stodman Street and continued until 1930. After 1930, several other circulating libraries started in the town – the Argosy Library run by Mr. Page from his toyshop in Cartergate, The New Way Library and Boots

Boots Subscription Library

the Chemists nationally available Subscription Library.

Although all these libraries closed in the fifties and sixties the question must be asked why they existed at all when the Gilstrap was free? Perhaps their stock at that time was of a more popular nature than that in the public library though eventually, free public library services provided too much opposition to subscription libraries?

The final early library of note was that of the Newark Mechanics Institute established in 1836 in premises in the Saracen's Head Yard and moving to the building next to the Boar's Head formerly Snaith's hardware shop in Middlegate in 1848.

The Institute gave as its objective the usual one of "The cultivation of useful knowledge, avoiding everything connected with party politics and controversial divinity". As well as a range of classes generally aimed at "skilled artisans", the Institute provided a Library and Reading Room. Annual membership was 10/- (50p) and the rules included the inevitable fines for books kept too long – "Persons keeping them beyond the time prescribed, shall forfeit for a pamphlet or duodecimo, one penny, and for other books twopence per day; but...a country subscriber may keep them until the market day succeeding the time allowed" – a kindly provision.

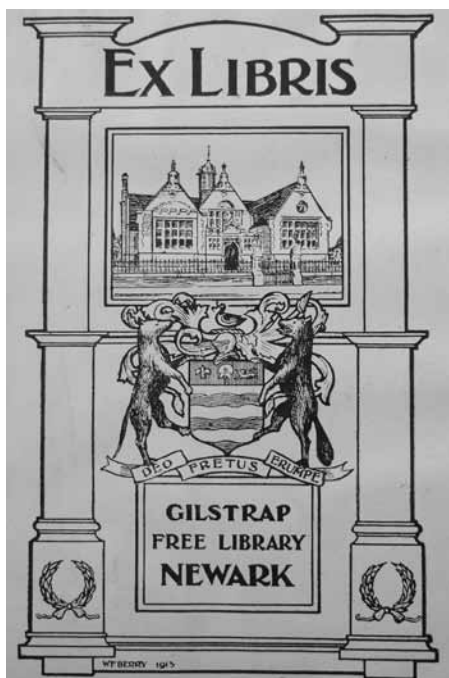
Again the Mechanics Institute suffered from the opening of the Gilstrap and whilst its social side continued with such events as "Penny Readings" featuring such luminaries as Mr. H. Branston, Mr. T. Earp and Mr. W. Cafferata, it finally closed its doors in 1923.

To return to the Gilstrap Free Library, the Public Libraries Act of 1850 allowed towns with a population of 10,000 or more to spend the product of a halfpenny rate on the provision of a library service but not on the purchase of books - Newark's population at the 1881 Census

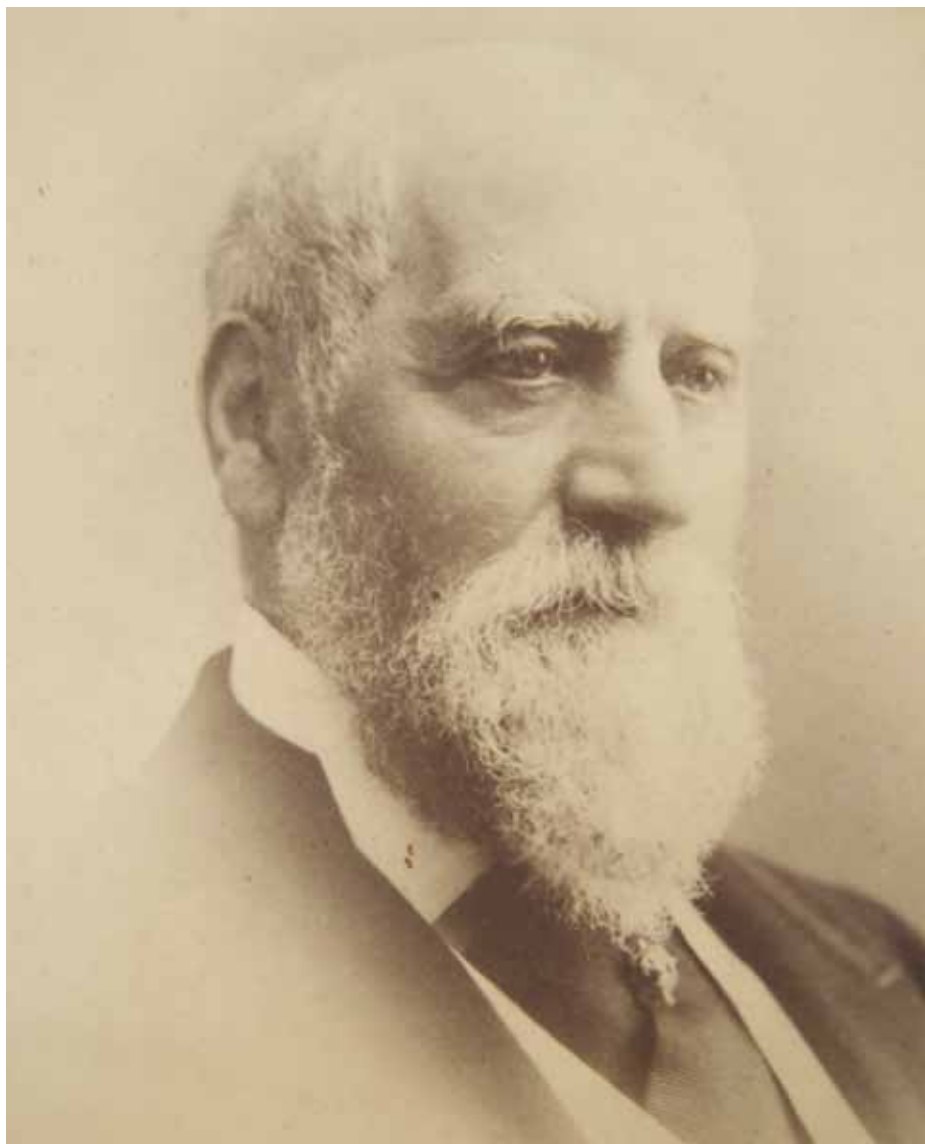
was 14,018. A second Act in 1855 lowered the population limit to 5,000 and allowed authorities to spend the product of a penny rate not only on buildings, but on books, newspapers and maps. Whilst take up was slow – in 1870 only 48 authorities had adopted the Act, the foundations of the free public library service had been created.

William Gilstrap was born in Newark on the 20th December 1816, son of Joseph Gilstrap, a maltster. He followed his father into the business and it certainly thrived with kilns in operation in Grantham, Lincoln, Retford, Wakefield and Grimsby by the time Gilstrap moved to Suffolk in 1862. Here he became Deputy Lieutenant of the County and subsequently High Sheriff. During his life, Gilstrap became a benefactor to hospitals in Newark and Bury St. Edmunds, the Royal School of Music and the Imperial Institute as well as endowing the library in Newark. His generosity and business success were recognised in 1887 when Queen Victoria conferred on him a Baronetcy and he became Sir William Gilstrap, Bart., of Fornham, Suffolk.

It is important to note that there were no public libraries as we know them until the late 19th century



Gilstrap Library bookplate



Sir William Gilstrap

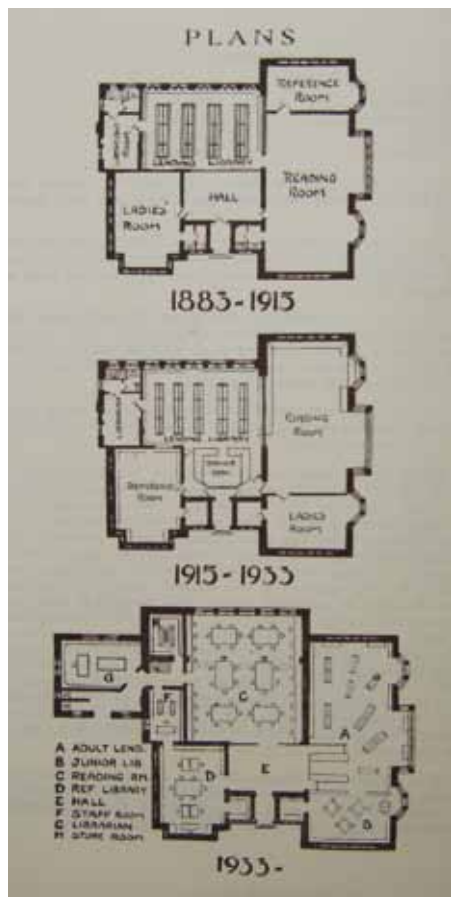
and it was not legal to use public funds for anything so frivolous or educational until after the 1850 Act. Even then a majority of the local ratepayers had to be persuaded and many were violently opposed – often brewers and innkeepers – but equally strongly supportive was a temperance movement supporting libraries as a way of keeping working men out of pubs. It is interesting that in a brewing and malting town the development of temperance at this time was encouraged by the opening of Lady Ossington's Coffee Palace on Beastmarket Hill in 1882 and the Free Library in 1883.

In 1881, William Gilstrap wrote to the Mayor of Newark offering to present a library to the town, and "to completely stock the library with books, and also to make permanent

provision of the salary of a custodian, leaving to the Corporation the management and maintenance of the institution under the Free Libraries Act". A Birmingham architect, Mr. William Henman was engaged and by Whit Monday of 1882, Mr. Gilstrap returned to lay the foundation stone.

The official opening took place on the 26th July 1883 and was performed by Mrs. Gilstrap and Mr. Gilstrap handed over the Deed of Gift, which included the library and endowments for the specific purposes of maintenance of the books and the salary of the librarian totalling £10,887. The obvious comparison here is with Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) who made a huge fortune in the American steel industry and spent the last 19 years of his life giving grants to "...produce the most

beneficial results for the community". In the UK, his grants supported the building of no less than 660 libraries but they only covered building costs and were given on the understanding that the local authority must adopt the Libraries Act and levy the full one penny rate. The far sighted approach of William Gilstrap ensured the library in Newark was fully supported and when his endowments were transferred to the County Council at Local Government Reorganisation in 1974 they were still generating a small but significant income that in turn transferred to Newark and Sherwood District Council in 1988 on the building of the new library.



Floor Plans 1883 - 1933

The library user in 1883 would have encountered a very different type of service to that found in libraries today, technology apart, the main difference was "closed access". In the room opposite the main entrance books were shelved on lofty stacks but with no public access and readers selected from a printed catalogue. In the hall was situated a device known as an indicator board; readers checked a

book's identifying number in the catalogue and this was printed on sliding counters, blue at one end and red at the other. When a book was in the blue end faced the reader, when out, the red end showed and this was popularly known as "blue in/red out".

Trust members may recall the lending library area to the right and originally there was a smaller room to the left that became a staff work area. The plans show the changing use up to the 50th anniversary when lack of space demanded an extension and the creation of a children's library. The room to the right was used by the gentlemen whilst ladies had their own room to the left. The ladies were allowed two magazines – "Illustrated London News" and "The Graphic", but the gentlemen had a choice of twenty-four including "Titbits" in addition to six newspapers.

At its first meeting in 1883, the Library Committee had to address the problem that local people did not know how to behave in the library and six large SILENCE notices were ordered for display in the Reading Rooms. The Committee also agreed to provide a Suggestions Book but this did not last long after a request that gin be served and also that a brass band play from 8.00 to 9.00pm on Saturdays!



In 1919, open access was provided which demanded much alteration to the shelving and to the Reading Rooms and even then it was clear that space was extremely tight. Also in 1919, Mr. Arthur Smith was appointed as Librarian and in 1920, the penny rate limit on library expenditure was removed and these two factors resulted in considerable service development. Mr. Smith began introductory talks for children, story times, a picture collection for teachers and even the provision of a wireless

set during the General Strike from which news sheets were typed and displayed on the wall slopes where the newspapers were normally on view.

As the Jubilee Anniversary of the Gilstrap Library approached plans were formulated for a small but useful extension to the building. Dr. Ernest Ringrose had been a member of the Library Committee since 1908 and Chairman from 1921 and oversaw the bringing together of the plans and the building works. The Jubilee extensions were opened on 27th July 1933 and Dr. Ringrose invited Miss Josephine Gilstrap, Sir William's niece to open the door with the original key used by her uncle and aunt fifty years before.

The Second World War halted any further developments that had included the idea of a mobile library to serve the new estates on Lincoln Road and Hawtonville. Many Sheffield children were evacuated to Newark at this time and Sheffield City Libraries actually sent books to the Gilstrap for their use. During the war the library remained extremely busy with space again proving to be a problem and in 1943 rooms were rented in the Market Place and fitted out as the Children's Library and Miss Gilstrap performed the opening ceremony. This must have been one of her last engagements, as she died three weeks later having been an enthusiastic and knowledgeable member of the Library Committee for 25 years.

In 1958, 20 years after Arthur Smith's original proposal a mobile library service was commenced though the overall service to the town had dropped behind many independent borough authorities. Arthur Smith retired in 1960 and in the same year Mr. R.P. Blatherwick resigned after 25 years as Chairman of the Library Committee. His place was taken by Mr. R. Sheldrake who remained as Chairman until 1970 with Mr. Blatherwick remaining on



50th Anniversary official opening of the extensions by Miss J. Gilstrap with Thomas Turgoose, Mayor's Officer at left (author's Grandfather)

the Committee until the same year having completed a magnificent 45 years as a member.

Following Local Government Reorganisation in 1974, Newark Library became and remains part of the County Library service at that time serving the whole of Nottinghamshire. Newark Library was the headquarters for the service in Newark and Sherwood District with 12 branches and 3 mobile libraries which again created huge pressures on working space as many new and different support functions were being provided from the Gilstrap. Mr. Tony Cook was appointed as the first District Librarian followed by Rupert Vinnicombe in 1982 and it was during the centenary celebrations that the announcement of a new library for the town was made.

A range of buildings were examined for possible conversion including a beautiful scheme for the Old White Hart now occupied by the Nottingham Building Society and

WHSmith that had to be abandoned on cost grounds. The Corn Exchange was considered but access was too difficult and even then was in poor condition. The vacant Woolworths building on Stodman Street could have housed the library and other County Council services but was too large and on two floors. The Georgian buildings opposite the Gilstrap - Charlesworth's Garage then and Ann et Vin now - proved too expensive, had too many floors and sitting tenants.

The County finally decided upon an ambitious plan for the Cuckstool Wharf which it owned and the late Dr. John Samuels was commissioned to carry out an archaeological dig that found 12th century remains of a castle or town wall and the Civic Trust campaigned long and hard against these proposals. The plans would have continued using the Gilstrap but the busy Castlegate traffic and descending access would have been highly inappropriate.

Negotiations between the County and District Councils resulted in the offer of the Beaumont Gardens site and a financial contribution ensured the Gilstrap building and Sir William's endowments reverted to them. The design that is as now seen was prepared by the County Architect and a scale model and plans were put on show. There was a marked lack of public interest shown but a few prominent local councillors and individuals had a field day in the letter columns of the Advertiser. Regardless of some ridiculous comments made, the County Council pressed ahead and building work commenced in June 1987 with completion by the end of March 1988 and after fitting out, opened to the public on the 12th May 1988.

The building was described as "unashamedly modern" with its structure provided by a steel frame and exterior walls almost entirely glazed with bronze tinted sealed double-glazing. A distinctive green carpet was specially woven and

carried a scone motif reflecting the importance of these fortifications in the town's history, as does the statue of a Roundhead and Cavalier by Neale Andrew in the gardens beside the windows. The carpet has had to be replaced but the statue remains as an important gathering point for certain elements of the town's younger population – occasionally a concern for Trust members attending our regular talks held in the library. The building was constructed on the CLASP system often used in school buildings around the county and the integral bracing can be seen where not concealed by display panels. The library has a floor area of 9000 square feet, which is three times larger than the Gilstrap, and the District headquarters functions were transferred to the adjacent Municipal Buildings formerly the offices of Newark Borough Council.

A huge investment in stock including new services such as compact disc and video and a computer based

library management system ensured rapid success for the new library with membership rocketing from 4,500 to over 18,000 and issues up 100%. The building won a Regional Award from the Royal Institute of British Architects and an energy efficiency award from East Midlands Electricity Board. The doubters and cynics were quickly proved wrong by local people making use of a major library development and these successes were regularly covered by the Advertiser at the time.

As Newark Library approaches its quarter century in 2013 an ever changing and evolving service can be seen. Public access computers now feature prominently and are as they do in all libraries in the country. The once familiar "front counter" has been replaced by self-service machines removing some of the social interaction so important to many library users and I am sure Newark Library is following other worrying national trends of declining book issues and library usage as changes in

society impact on traditional reading and reference. The all pervasive internet is replacing the enquiry service and cheap books and other media available from sources such as Amazon coupled with ever busier life styles has contributed to the recent decline in library usage.

As a library user from the other side as it were, I remain supportive and totally committed to the principles of public service provided from local government and in particular from the service in which I worked for over forty years. The work of libraries and librarians in the cultural and educational life of any community cannot be underestimated and must be vigorously supported by us all particularly at this time of economic restraint impacting on staffing levels, book funds and library opening hours around the County.

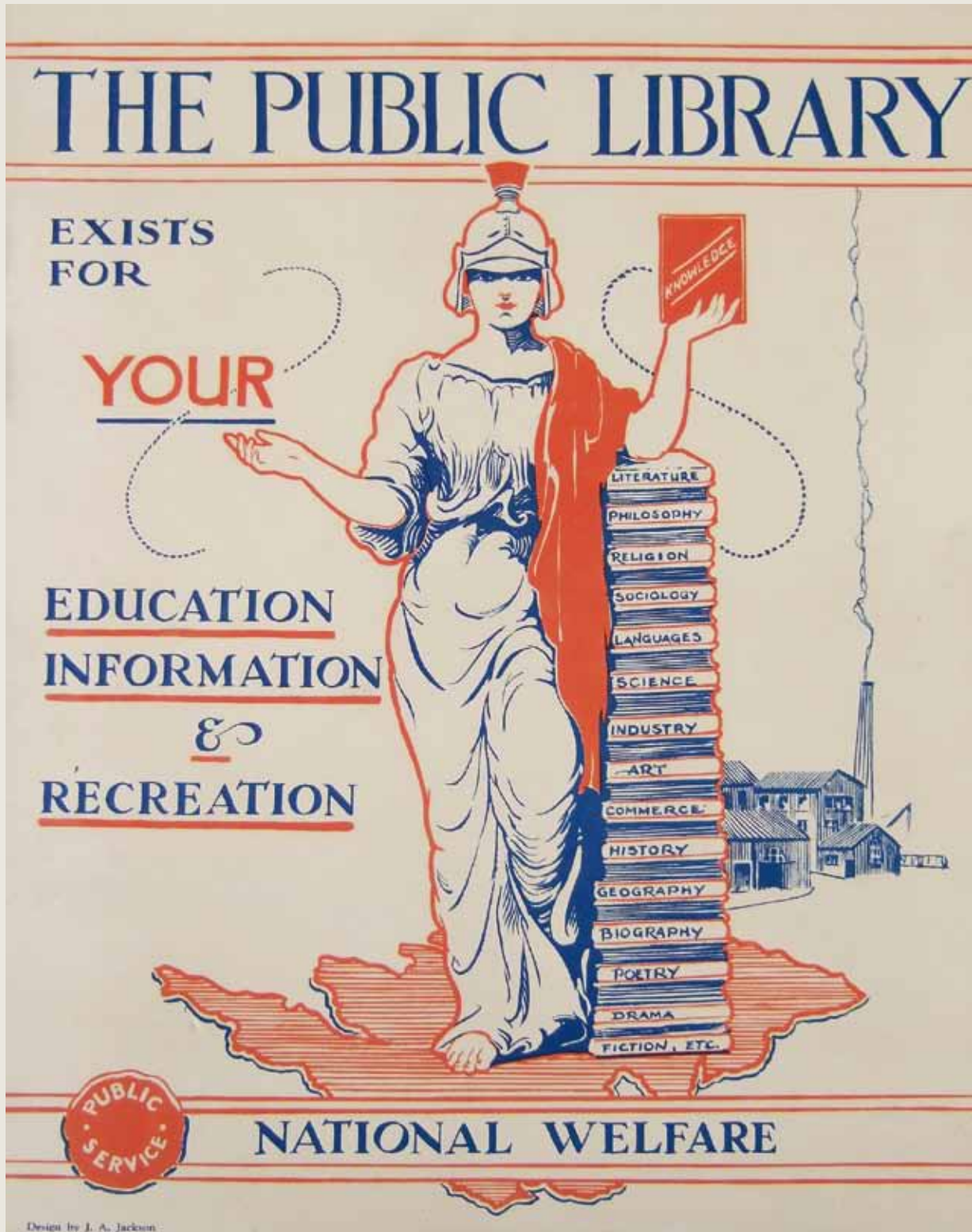
Rupert Vinnicombe
Secretary – Newark Civic Trust



SILENCE

The Libraries of Newark

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