



HOWITT BUILDING

STUDENT CASE STUDY

OVERVIEW

The Howitt Building is an office building from the Interwar period, designed for the Raleigh Cycle Company by architect T Cecil Howitt. It is now in use as a community and cultural centre, business centre and entertainment venue.

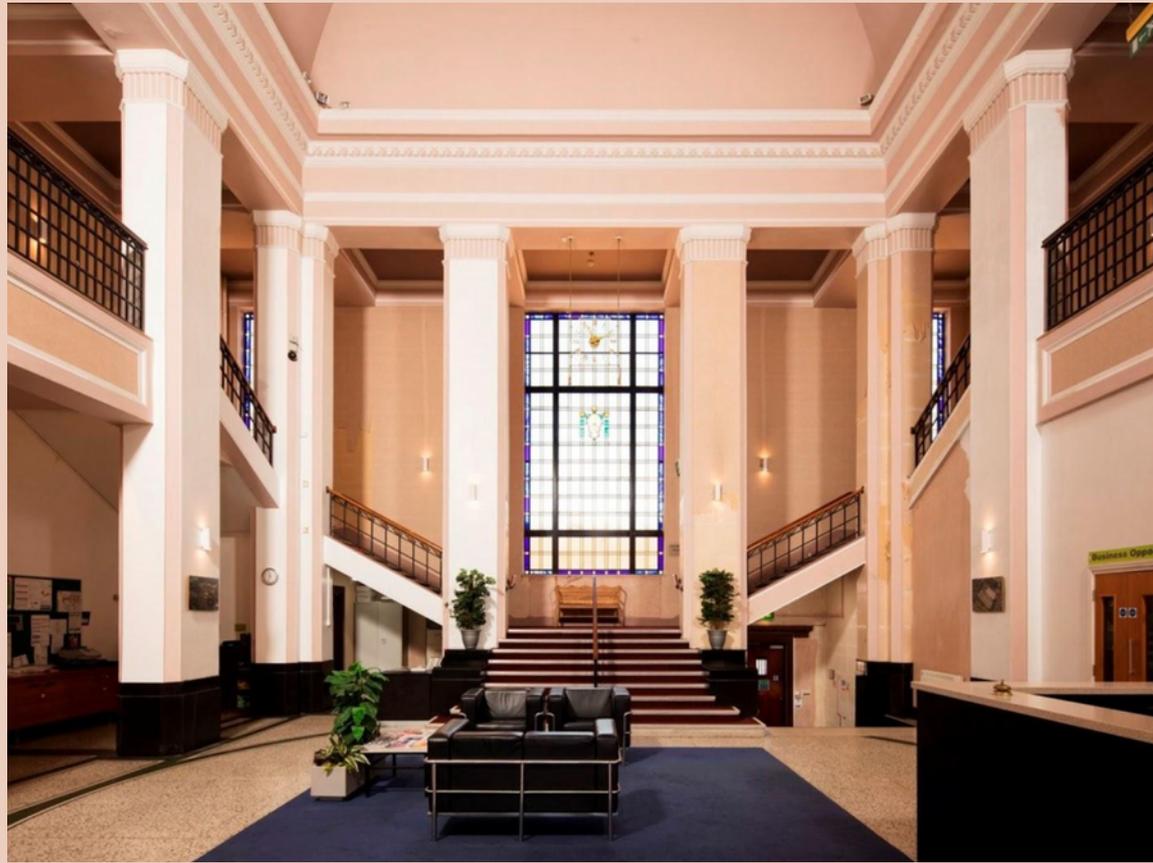
This large art deco building has many names as a result of its various uses - from headquarters for Raleigh, a bicycle manufacturers, to the Marcus Garvey Centre and Ballroom. Despite it having been updated over the years, the building has been well looked after and largely unchanged.

The space is an important structure in the history of the Black community. Oswald George Powe, a community activist for racial equality, campaigned for change to the Raleigh company's discriminatory employment policies. Having failed to negotiate with Raleigh, Powe sought the assistance of Jamaica's first Premier, Norman Manley, who promptly placed an embargo upon bicycle imports from England. This action helped change the company's employment policy and led to Raleigh becoming one of the largest employers of people of African and Caribbean heritage in Nottingham.



IN 2018, IT
WAS MADE
GRADE 2, THE
FOUR
HUNDRED
THOUSANDTH
BUILDING TO
BE LISTED.

ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES



It exists as a red-brick structure with an almost neoclassical frontage, which was awarded the RIBA Bronze Medal in 1933. This building was erected in 1931 and is the work of T C Howitt, whose flagship building was Nottingham Council House. It is constructed in Portland stone, often found in public interwar buildings, and highly valuable in its contribution to the streetscape.

The Little Ians, a frieze visible along the front of the building, depicts cherubs building bicycles. These are reminiscent of the cherubs visible both on the façade of the Council House and in the council chamber. There is the story that Howitt's son had been used as the model for these sculpted decorations by Joseph Else and Charles Doman.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

HOW IS THE SPACE USED BY THE COMMUNITY? WHAT DOES IT SERVE THE COMMUNITY?

The Howitt Building serves many, notably the Black community of Nottingham. We looked into how the relationship between the space and the community is evolving and how architecture shapes identity in the area. Regionally, the East Midlands' Black population is estimated at 4.4%, relatively low compared to the rest of the country. According to the 2011 census, Nottingham's Black British population is at 7.6%. The biggest movement into the area and city was of the post-war Windrush generation in the 1950s and 1960s.

Panya Banjoko, writer, activist and founder of Nottingham Black Cultural Archives platforms the stories of one of the city's oldest residents of diverse heritage. She highlights the work of Oswald George Powe, who made the first and very substantial contribution to the archive and campaigned for access to social justice.

A former RAF pilot and leading member of Nottingham's African-Caribbean community, Powe campaigned for employment equality. He went on to establish the African Caribbean National Artistic (ACNA) Centre in 1978, with the hope of "improving the quality of life for African-Caribbean people living or working in Nottingham" in the years following the creation of the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) and the implementation of the UK's first Race Relations Act. He passed away in 2013.



THE BUILDING'S SPACIOUS ATTIC CONCERT HALL, NOW THE MARCUS GARVEY BALLROOM, OR 'THE GARVEY', IS NAMED AFTER THE CELEBRATED BLACK NATIONALISM ACTIVIST, JOURNALIST AND POET. IT WAS RE-OPENED IN 1981 AS A MUSIC VENUE, AND STILL OPERATES AS SUCH TODAY.

USE

HOW HAS THE COMMUNITY USED THE SPACE IN THE PAST, TODAY AND HOW WILL IT BE USED IN THE FUTURE?

PAST

Originally, the building was the Raleigh Headquarters, before becoming the Marcus Garvey in the 1980s, which housed the Association of Musicians and Artists' recording studio, the West Indian Cavaliers Sports and Social Club and the Matsimela creche facility.

PRESENT

Today, there are over 100 tenants inside what the Lenton Business Centre, a part of the Howitt Building. The Marcus Garvey Ballroom still hosts public parties and dance classes. The Marcus Garvey Day Centre provides care, activities and meals for older people with dementia and disabilities, primarily from the African-Caribbean community.

FUTURE

The building itself is operated by an independent management committee, which makes its own decisions about how it is run. Largely, it continues to thrive within the community, however in 2018, the council were offering a new site to the Marcus Garvey Day Centre to run its services from.



REFLECTIONS

HOW HAVE COMMUNITIES OF
DIERSE ETHNIC HERITAGE HAD A
VOICE IN THE PLANNING AND
DESIGN OF SITES THAT ARE
SIGNIFICANT TO THEM?

“I mean, its semantics isn't it? We're moving the day care centre to another site. Well, by doing that, you are effectively closing the Marcus Garvey Day Care Centre because it will cease to exist there. And you're moving it somewhere else, so you're going to then incorporate it into mainstream day care provision. Essentially it won't be the Marcus Garvey Day Care Centre...”

- Panya Banjoko

The Black community has been historically connected to the Howitt building in a political sense, mostly due to the campaigning work of George Oswald Powe. The community and social activities which followed and the crucial services provided by the Marcus Garvey Day Centre have rooted down the use and significance into bricks and mortar. Unfortunately, due this hasn't yet translated into design or planning.

The Howitt building has been re-thinking it's use and re-telling its story since 1931. It's various names and tenants at once gives it multiple leases of life, but the value of it's heritage on that particular site, for the communities that have known it, is key.