

Newark Civic Trust

MAGAZINE

Caring about the town's environment

Issue 68 | February 2013



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Front cover photo

A seasonal photograph of Dr Bernard Wilson's house on Baldertongate



A few words from the Chairman

Many cubic metres of water have flowed beneath the bridges and many more have by passed such edifices but to all of you that haven't been washed away, a trouble-free New Year to you all.

Most of you will already be aware that the malting complex at 33/35 Northgate has for some years been a cause for concern. Indeed, a previous developer had a stop notice imposed by the District Council for non-permitted alterations to listed premises. On Friday 4th January a new developer commenced work there, mostly clearing debris left by previous miscreants. The Thursday following I had the opportunity to photograph anything on site that I chose. Civic Trust Chairman of planning Michael Hawes and I duly presented ourselves at 9.00am, toured the whole site and took a lot of photographs, because as you will recall malting and brewing is my passion and for years I have yearned to get inside the gate. Early the following day I was alerted to the fact that the roof was alight. I have therefore a series of before, during

and after the event. The extensive "looting" by the previous developer has to be seen (the evidence of removal) to be believed. When René Mouraille wrote his dissertation some years ago he opined that it was the best preserved such complex in Newark.

The saga regarding the Gilstrap Centre still continues, although almost from the beginning I have always had the feeling that the original plan to rehouse the Registry Office there come hell or high water, was a done deal. Several councillors have tried to assure me that it was all open to public consultations and that public opinion would be actively received and acted upon. I have yet to be convinced.

The revamped Conservation Watch scheme promised in the Chairman's Address at the last AGM is now a

reality thanks largely to Mick Gill who is now fully fit and mobile again. The parlous state of disrepair of the former Corn Exchange is being addressed. Much activity, (well noisy anyway) is afoot and investigation is also afoot to determine exactly what is proposed.

Planning applications have no regularity, ranging from none to a daunting heap. It is well known that the bigger developers use this periodic overload situation to sneak something under the wire. We are not blind to this technique.

Lastly, but not for the first time, if anyone has a topical article that they feel would look good in the magazine, please send it, to the editor or me, or discuss the possibility with us otherwise you will have to endure more ranting from me.

George Wilkinson Chairman

Message from the editor

Following on from the last edition of the Magazine, I am very pleased to be able to report on the successful updating and launch of the Malting and Brewing Trail. We were able to obtain funding from Councillor Stuart Wallace, Newark CAMRA, Just Beer Micropub and the Maltsters' Association of Great Britain and the launch took place in Just Beer during August.

At very short notice (mid-November), the Trust was offered the opportunity to bid for under spends from Trent Vale Landscape Partnership; we were successful and this enabled us to reprint a further four Trails – Civil War, Timber Framed Buildings, Art Deco and Georgian Buildings. The time scale was extremely tight as all revisions, new photographs, working with the NCC Graphics Team to update each leaflet and have 60,000 leaflets printed and delivered with a 31st December deadline! George and I met to revise the texts and I re-photographed several buildings that had changed ownership and then visited County Hall to complete each title.

A major logistical problem arose from this success story – where to store around 80 boxes of Trails? Newark Town Council came to our rescue and they are safe and sound in the Cemetery Lodge with an initial supply dropped off at the Tourist Information Centre and Newark Library. We could not bulk deliver to the TIC as the decision to re-house the service in the Unique Coffee Bar had yet to be taken and there was really no point in carrying these down to the cellar only to need bringing up again. A personal view of the decision to use a building



(L to R) Duncan Neil (Just Beer), Jennie Richards (MAGB), Councillor Stuart Wallace (Nottinghamshire County Council), Rupert Vinnicombe, Michael Hawes and George Wilkinson.

so remote to the town centre seems an error of judgement regardless of comments in the local press as to its suitability. I hope this arrangement proves to be short term and the service can find a more central home as soon as possible - ideally in the National Civil War Centre if there is space.

There is a fascinating selection of articles for Trust members in this issue and I am very pleased to be able to include a timely piece from my former colleague, Tim Warner, on the town's first theatre. The present article is based on two first included in Tim's superb Newark Advertiser columns which I always considered to be a major contribution to the written history of the town. The article

is timely as the future of the Palace is under discussion with the possibility of a third party being brought in by Newark & Sherwood District Council to manage the Theatre. A development I am sure all Trust members will be following closely.

Patty Temple has written a piece about the Town Hall and provided some excellent images to accompany the article. Trust Executive Committee members Sarah Willis, Michael Knapton and George Wilkinson have also provided articles for this issue and if any Trust member has a similar piece to offer, do please let me know.

Rupert Vinnicombe – Civic Trust Secretary

The Mount School Refurbishment



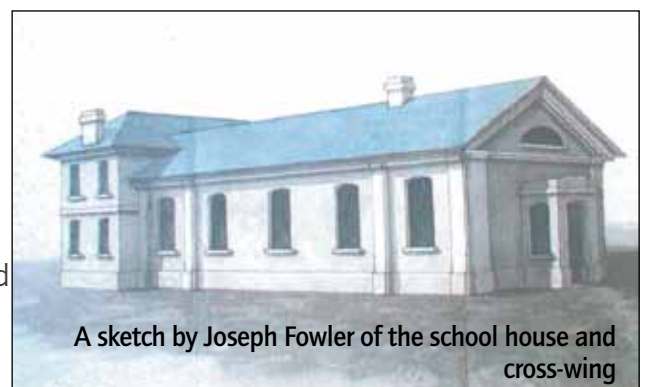
Awards Co-ordinator Michael Knapton presents Guy Taylor and Keith Rodgers of Guy St John Taylor Associates with the award certificate

The 2012 Annual General Meeting of the Trust opened with Guy St John Taylor Associates being presented with the Newark Civic Trust Award for their refurbishment of the former school room at Mount Lane. Work commenced on the site in June 2011 and was completed by the end of July 2012. The school room will form warden accommodation and a residents' lounge with the remainder of the site seeing the construction of a series of eco-apartments under the ownership of St Leonard's Hospital Trust.

For much of Newark's history the site of the Mount School was situated to the north of the medieval town walls (which may have followed the route of Mount Lane) and therefore remained open fields. The site did however contain an earthwork known as "Parson's Mount" the exact nature of which has not been established although it is thought

to form a 16th century artillery post constructed during the Pilgrimage of Grace. The remains of this feature were lost when the school site was developed in the 1820s.

The first part of the school was constructed in 1826 by design of W.M. Fowler (1761-1832) whose other works included the original part of Number 1, Church Street, now the Sir John Arderne public house (which for 50 years was the Newark Stock Library until it fell into decline after the construction of Gilstrap's free library). The school was built in the classical style that was very much in fashion throughout the Georgian and Regency periods and was defined by features such as pedimented gables, semi-circular windows, pilasters and brick/stone porches (see below). The cross-wing to the north was



A sketch by Joseph Fowler of the school house and cross-wing

constructed by 1829 (as it appears on John Woods A Plan of Newark from Actual Survey where it is labelled as the "Girl's National School") along a more traditional Georgian design.

The school was extended in 1838 with the construction of a 7-bayed brick building running parallel to the original building. This was further extended in the early 20th century; an extension which featured the stone entrance-way which has now been incorporated into the brick bell-tower of 1877. The original school-room was also extended by removing the original entrance and adding an extra bay to the south. Additional small buildings were added and the site extended through the first half of the 20th century and the immediate post-war period.



Stone entranceway in brick bell-tower



The Mount School before and after completion of the works

The site remained vacant after the school's departure in 2004 and was entered on the Newark and Sherwood District Council's "Buildings at Risk" register in the same year due to the poor condition of the buildings (exacerbated by theft and vandalism). It was then purchased by St Leonard's Hospital Trust who tasked Guy St John Taylor Associates with designing and delivering phase 1 and 2 of the project.

The project has been given the Newark Civic Trust Award because it has guaranteed the survival of an important local building through high quality renovation and refurbishment work. The 1829 extension now forms the warden's residence to enable

on-site accommodation while the original school house forms the residents lounge for those occupying the yet to be built eco-apartments.

Michael Knapton – Civic Trust Awards Co-ordinator

All images are courtesy of Guy St John Taylor Associates except for the Joseph Fowler sketch, the source of which is unknown and any necessary acknowledgement will be made in a future issue.

Sketch of proposed eco-apartments viewed from Kings Road



Rising Damp

It is appreciated that the following piece will be at variance with some members. Furthermore the opinions expressed are mine and as such do not necessarily represent the views of the Trust Committee. George Wilkinson.

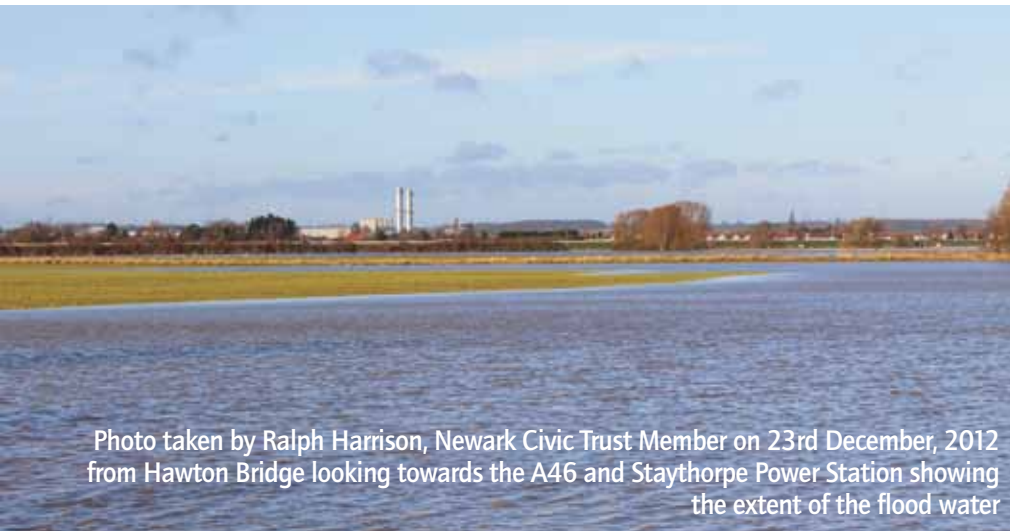


Photo taken by Ralph Harrison, Newark Civic Trust Member on 23rd December, 2012 from Hawton Bridge looking towards the A46 and Staythorpe Power Station showing the extent of the flood water

In the whole of Britain the latter half of 2012 has been exceptionally wet although some pundits forecast that a dryish spring followed by a wet summer and autumn is a pattern that we can expect henceforth. Other "experts" assure us that it is due to a temporary shift of influences, notably the Jet Stream. These seemingly opposite views are neatly summed up by a Meteorological Office representative when ribbed about a series of wrong prognoses, opined that if, like big business, you get your calculations right 51% of the time, you are successful but at 49% you are a failure. Is it not a fact that not doing more than the average is what keeps the average down? 5/10 – could do better! See me! Said a teacher long ago and name forgotten.

A couple of years or so ago, many will recall that the Growth Point Development Plan made front page news. Lots of people raised objections, a considerable number concerning the probability of flooding, vociferously at the public display. We are assured by the Department for the Environment that the devised flood prevention scheme will protect

the housing estate proposed, a view still irascibly maintained by a County Councillor recently whilst viewing the flooded area (shown above). Doubtlessly the planned scheme would protect the area that, however, only addresses the problems therein.

A gentleman from Tolney Lane, seeking a planning application to raise the level of a plot for a caravan hard standing has, on at least two occasions, had permission denied. On each occasion the main reason given is unacceptable displacement; that is the volume of floodwater unable to settle there, a reasonable explanation one might say. The displacement by the Growth Point development including the flood banking is far in excess of that in Tolney Lane. To provide a balancing lagoon on adjacent land (an artificial lake) is the proposal. Apart from the "unnecessary" use of agricultural land, the lake, it is proposed will be a water feature, envisaged to be permanent.

If the designated purpose is to provide an alternative flood plain then for most of the time it will be dry. If it is intended that the lake be

a permanent feature, where will the flood water go in subsequent years? If it is to be dry for long periods, will the area be maintained and if so, by whom or will it be neglected like the one at the end of Manners Road, for most of the year a plantation of docks and thistles, the latter when seeding is a notifiable weed.

In times of persistent heavy rain flooding occurs often because smaller tributaries of the main river are quickly filled and need to drain quickly, a need that cannot be satisfied if the Trent for instance is already full. Thus the River Dove causes problems in Lowdham, the River Greet and Pingley Beck have outflow at Kelham. In Newark our inconvenience is the River Devon. Originally a meandering water course, many of the bends have been straightened thus speeding the flow, but if the water can't get out into the Trent, Hawton gets the overflow. What will happen to the excess if the flood defences proposed are put into place? Who will then be the recipient?

Some of these problems are not easily solved and some don't yet exist and need not. To iterate an earlier statement: "there is no sale for properties on land off Northgate with planning permission already." Since latest forecasts of recovery from the financial situation presently upon the UK vary from 2015 from the most optimistic to 2020 or so from the doom merchants, the Growth Point development will remain dormant for some time, hopefully may even expire. Without dreams they cannot come true.

George Wilkinson - Civic Trust
Chairman

Dr Bernard Wilson

In the Newark Civic Trust Georgian Trail, Dr Bernard Wilson - who was Vicar of Newark from 1719 to 1772 - is described as a "wealthy and controversial" figure in the history of the town. The description is a fair one as Wilson did lead an extraordinary life and was Vicar of Newark during a spectacularly contentious period in the town's political, social and cultural history. However, it would

be a shame if interest in the more salacious aspects of Wilson's life continued to divert attention away from his important contribution to the built heritage of the town.

We already know that Wilson was responsible for building two important Georgian landmarks in Newark: the house on Baldertongate, built in the 1720s, which now

backs onto the Library and then, in 1766, Wilson Street, the two rows of terraced houses near the church. The original design of the Baldertongate house has suffered through the later addition of two wings and a porch; one side of Wilson Street was demolished in the 1960s although the "pavilion" houses at each end of the street were retained. In addition to these buildings, there is evidence to show that during his lifetime Wilson also owned a lot of other property in Newark and the surrounding villages.

Most significantly, documents survive in the Newcastle Collection at the University of Nottingham to show that in the 1740s, Wilson bought The Kingston Arms, now The Clinton Arms in the Market Place in Newark and an intriguing reference in another source strongly suggests that it was Wilson who was responsible for building or remodelling this important Georgian building.¹ In 1761, Wilson also purchased an interest in The Ram Inn but is it possible that he was involved in the 18th century rebuilding of The Ram as well as The Kingston/Clinton Arms? If further research could prove that Wilson was the owner or part-owner of these buildings at the time of their rebuilding and remodelling during the 18th century, then surely it would be time to reassess his status in the historical development of Newark?

Bernard Wilson's controversial reputation has been mainly shaped by an article published in 1948 by A.C. Wood, then Reader in History at University of Nottingham.² Wood's work later formed the basis of articles in the Newark Advertiser, firstly by Dr John Samuels and then, Tim Warner.

Wilson Street



Going back to the original source material used by Wood (although, sadly, there are no references cited in his article), it is clear that much of the content and certainly the tone and bias of the article derives from a handwritten MS dated 1791 which is now held by Newark Museum Services. These *Anecdotes of Dr Bernard Wilson* are anonymous although part of the title page where the author's name might have been written has been cut off.

To provide a flavour of the *Anecdotes* this is an extract:

"A complete history of this extraordinary man, related at large, would fill many volumes. His violences, robberies, rapes, seductions, meditated assassinations with their overt attempts, forgeries, perjuries, subornations of perjury, thefts, frauds, extortions, persecutions, oppressions and multiplied crimes... commenced in early youth and accompanied him through life..."

Quotes from the MS - in similar vein - appear throughout Wood's article and although he does use material from other sources, possibly the records of the Nottingham Archdeaconry Court, also held at the University of Nottingham, it is the overblown tone of the *Anecdotes* that is recognisably carried over into Wood's own work. The *Anecdotes* were never published but it is possible that they were written for the use of William Dickinson when he was preparing *The History and Antiquities of the Town of Newark*, first published in 1806. The details in Dickinson's account of Wilson's life broadly tally with those in the MS.

In the introduction to his book, Dickinson refers to his sources and cites material he received from the late Thomas Heron, writing that Heron:

"... drew up, for the use of the present publication, a compilation of narratives, traditions, and anecdotes, which had been handed down to

him, relative to Newark and its inhabitants."

He goes on to write that:

"... such as relate to particular events, or to the conduct and character of individuals, have been corrected, softened, or partially suppressed, in proportion as they appeared to interfere with other authorities, or to be too highly coloured by party zeal; which had been particularly prevalent at Newark during the earlier period of his life..."

Is it possible that Thomas Heron was the anonymous author of the *Anecdotes*? The use of the term "anecdotes" by Dickinson is suggestive as is his admission that he found it necessary to soften or partially suppress some of Heron's contributions, particularly as they related to individuals. Since he was involved in many disputes with Wilson, it is a possibility.

It is interesting that other historians of Newark and Nottinghamshire do not write about Wilson in particularly negative terms. Further, Wilson does not have a nationally renowned bad reputation and character and is little known outside of Newark. In Worcestershire, where he had an estate at Wick, near Pershore and was a Prebend at the Cathedral, he was described in nondescript terms by John Chambers, author of the *Biographical Illustrations of Worcestershire* of 1820, who goes on to state simply that Wilson had, *"...the ill fortune to be frequently in dispute with his town's people."*

The *Anecdotes* present a conundrum in terms of research. The author presents Wilson as such an irredeemably wicked, caricature villain that it is tempting to disregard everything written in the MS as unreliable. However, there are kernels of interesting facts to be found in the surrounding hyperbole. For example, the following passage, which describes a visitor to Newark who:

"... passing through Newark, called at Wilson's house, but he was away from home; in the market-place, looking upon the inn built by Wilson..."

Was this the Kingston/Clinton Arms as Wilson didn't own any other inn in the Market Place?

The facts of Wilson's life are as follows:

- He was born in Newark in 1689. His father, who was also named Bernard Wilson, was a mercer or draper and his mother was Anne Jenison.
- After the death of his mother in April, 1695, Bernard's father married again, his new wife being Mary Twentyman. Of the three daughters from his father's second marriage, only one - Mary - survived to adulthood.
- In Newark, Bernard was a pupil at Magnus Grammar School. Then, probably with the support of family and friends, Bernard moved to continue his education at Westminster School in London.
- Bernard Wilson went up to Trinity College, Cambridge in his late teens and was ordained in 1712; he also spent some time at the Inns of Court, where he would have studied law.
- It was at Westminster School - then, as now, one of the most prestigious public schools in England - that Bernard met Thomas Pelham Holles, usually known simply as "Newcastle".
- Wilson and Newcastle knew each other for over 50 years and, at various times, were allies and enemies.
- Newcastle was one of the most important Whig politicians of the 18th century. He held great power as a landowner and a patron, and exerted enormous political influence at national and local level.

- The Manor of Newark, together with the right to return one Member of Parliament, was inherited by Newcastle in 1711. The other Parliamentary seat in Newark was controlled by the Dukes of Rutland.
- In 1715, Newcastle made Wilson Rector of Firsby and Vicar of Great Steeping in Lincolnshire. Then, only four years later, when Wilson was thirty and had proved himself a satisfactory protégée, Newcastle promoted him again, making him Vicar of St. Mary Magdalene in Newark. At the same time, Wilson became Rector of Winthorpe, a living in the gift of the Corporation of Newark.
- Of course, to repay this generosity from his patron, the expectation was that Wilson would protect, support and further all of Newcastle's interests in Newark, particularly his political interests. That was how the patronage system worked. Further, it was a pyramid system and it fully accepted that Wilson, for his part, would use his position in the same way as Newcastle: to reward family and secure the loyalty of friends and associates.
- It was in the 1720s, when he was newly in post as Vicar, that Wilson built the house in Baldertongate which now backs on to the Library. This house would have looked very different when it was first built,

without the two wing additions and the porch, and surrounded by a high wall for security. The photographs below give some idea of how the house would originally have been approached. In Wilson's Will, the house is described as having gardens, a paddock and appurtenances. Inside the house, there was a library, of which Wilson made special mention in his Will.

- Over the next 10 years or so, Wilson's clerical career moved forward as he became a Prebend at Lincoln, Lichfield and Worcester Cathedrals.
- Then, in 1736, Wilson was offered the post of Rector of St. Mary the Virgin Church at Bottesford, Leicestershire by the Manners family, Dukes of Rutland.³ This was a very significant offer as it gives an indication of how much Wilson must have been respected and trusted by the Manners family, the political partners of Newcastle in Newark.
- However, Wilson never became Rector of St. Mary's, Bottesford although his name can still be found painted on the presentment board in the Church. This was probably because, also in 1736, Wilson unexpectedly inherited the very large estate of Sir George Markham, a former MP of Newark, whose family seat was at Sedgebrook, near Bottesford.

- Wilson had been acting as an estate manager (of sorts) for some years for Sir George, who owned property in East Keal, Lincolnshire, adjacent to the parishes of Firsby and Great Steeping where Wilson had once held livings.
- Initially, it was been reported in The Gentlemen's Magazine that Sir George's estate would pass to George Ogle, the son of Sir George's sister, who was his nephew and nearest male heir. There were two other nephews, who stood to share in the inheritance, too and a niece, Meliora.
- Sir George's Will was challenged by the Ogle family in Chancery and there are many fascinating documents relating to the case - witness statements, in particular and an inventory of the contents of Sir George's house in London - in the National Archives and in the Cracroft papers at Lincolnshire Archives. In the event, the case was settled out of court.
- As Bernard Wilson was now independently wealthy, his relationship with his patron, Newcastle, inevitably changed.
- Although he still needed Newcastle's support if he wanted to progress in his clerical career, Wilson was no longer bound to Newcastle by financial necessity; he now had money, power and influence in his own



Baldertongate c.1920 Reproduced courtesy of Newark & Sherwood District Council Museum Service.

right. Moreover, if he chose, he had the resources to challenge Newcastle's authority in Newark, and elsewhere.

- For a while, Wilson continued to support Newcastle but their relationship gradually soured. Newcastle did nothing to help Wilson become a Dean or a Bishop and then, in 1741, Newcastle put forward Job Staunton Charlton of Staunton Hall as his parliamentary candidate for Newark.
- For some unknown reason, Wilson quickly became opposed to Charlton, politically and personally. For his part, in a letter to a colleague, Job Charlton described Wilson as *"Our old Infernal"*.
- For the next 20 years or so, through some of the most contentious, violent and corrupt election campaigns of the 18th century, Wilson and Newcastle remained at odds, in Newark, Nottingham and Lincoln. However, after Charlton - who had proved by this time to be generally unpopular in Newark - retired in 1761, Wilson once more pledged his support to his former patron.
- Newcastle died in 1768, and the Manor of Newark was then inherited by Newcastle's nephew, the Earl of Lincoln who became 2nd Duke of Newcastle under Lyne.
- Alongside Wilson's involvement in national politics and election campaigns during this period, he also became enmeshed in a myriad of local conflicts in Newark.
- As Vicar and, therefore, an important parish official, it would have been natural for Wilson - who seems to have been generally known as *"The Doctor"* - to play a significant role in local politics and town government.

There are many fascinating documents in the Nottingham

Archdeaconry Records, York Diocese records and elsewhere that set out details of disputes - often violent - at Vestry meetings; over the election of the Churchwardens; the misappropriation of the Easter Sacrament money; the management of the Newark town charities; and the conduct of the Master of the Magnus School...to name just a few!

Probably the most significant dispute led to a case in Chancery, successfully brought by Wilson and other key townspeople against the Town Council for misappropriation and misuse of charity monies and property. Management of the town charities remained an issue for Wilson throughout his life and in his Will, he even left a sum of money for a sermon to be preached on the topic in the church every year.

It may have been that Wilson was a traditionalist who was opposed to any move to sell off any part of the town charity estates to fund "improvements". It is notable that directly following Wilson's death in 1772, an Act went through Parliament in 1773 which enabled the use or sale of some of the charities for improvements in the town.

In his personal life, using his great wealth and influence, Wilson carefully promoted the interests of his family

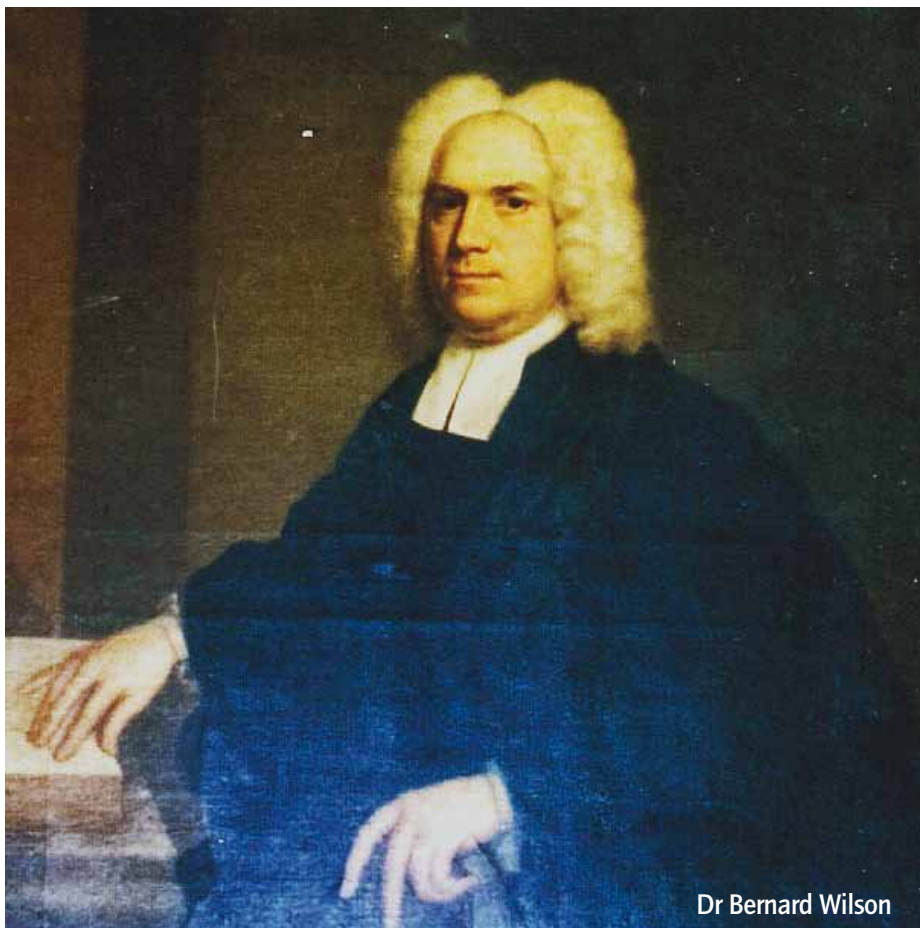
and friends. He had many family connections in Newark, being related through his mother and stepmother with two well-known Newark families, the Jenison family and the Twentyman family. One wonders how friends and family reacted when Wilson unexpectedly became enormously wealthy?

His only surviving half-sister, Mary, married Edward Waldegrave, a mercer of Louth and they had three daughters: Rebecca, Mary and Ann. In 1745, Wilson's niece, Rebecca was married to Wilson's friend, Robert Crockcroft of Hackthorn, near Lincoln and Wilson provided the £6,000 marriage portion. At the age of thirty-nine, Mary was married in 1759 in Newark Church to the Revd. William Green who was a native of Newark and a former Fellow of Clare College who went on to become Vicar of Hardingham in Norfolk and a famous Hebrew scholar. Wilson's youngest niece, Ann, married the Newark "attorney" Edmund Hynde.

In 1747, when he was nearly sixty years old, Wilson was successfully sued by a Miss Jane Davids of Castle Yard, High Holborn for breach of promise! Shortly afterwards, in 1748, Wilson finally married Elizabeth Bradford, whom he had known for at least 30 years. She had initially boarded with his parents when

Dr Bernard Wilson's Baldertongate house.





Dr Bernard Wilson

they were living at The Friary and then moved with them into Wilson's Baldertongate house.

In 1772, Bernard Wilson died at his house in Newark at the great age of eighty-three. Wilson left money to several women in his Will but, in fact, these women were all either female relatives or servants. The exception was Mrs. Hester Thrale, the close friend of Samuel Johnson, to whom Wilson left £100 for a ring. In a letter, Mrs. Thrale wrote of her inheritance, referring to her benefactor as, "Old Dr Wilson" which

raises a fascinating question? If Wilson knew Mrs Thrale, did he also know Dr Johnson?

It was specified in the Will that the Baldertongate house and its contents was to be retained for the use of Elizabeth, Wilson's "dear wife" during her lifetime with particular instructions that his library and books were to be kept in the house for her use. Sadly, after this reference, Elizabeth disappears from the historical record.

After these and various other legacies, the bulk of Wilson's fortune

passed to his great-nephew, Robert Wilson Cracroft of Hackthorn Hall in Lincolnshire. A large portrait of Bernard Wilson - the Doctor - is still in the possession of the Cracroft family and the names "Bernard" and "Wilson" continued to be used in the Cracroft family for several generations.

The inheritance did Robert Cracroft little good and in the 1780s, he sold most, if not all of the property he had inherited in Newark to the 2nd Duke of Newcastle and died not long afterwards in 1787⁴. He was buried at Hackthorn where he was succeeded by his brother, John Cracroft.

The 2nd Duke of Newcastle was already the principal property holder in Newark through the inheritance from his uncle, the 1st Duke and the property purchased from Cracroft would have further consolidated the Newcastle interest in Newark. Wilson's legacy was quickly subsumed into the vast Newcastle estate but documentary evidence remains in the Newcastle-Clumber Collection⁵ at Nottingham University and further research could be carried out to discover just how much property Bernard Wilson did accumulate in Newark. More importantly, it might reveal if Bernard Wilson deserves credit for building more of Georgian Newark than we know!

Sarah Willis - Civic Trust Events Organiser

References

¹ The document reference in the Newcastle-Clumber Collection is NeD 3163-3168

² *An Eighteenth Century Portrait*, by A.C. Wood, published in 1948 in the *Transactions of the Thoroton Society*

³ The church houses the tombs of several members of the Manners dynasty, including the famous and unique "witchcraft tombs". In 1618, Francis Manners, 6th Earl of Rutland, accused three local women of murdering his two sons by witchcraft and the women were ultimately executed for their supposed crimes. The case is commemorated on the Earl's tomb in the church, part of his tomb inscription reading:

"In 1608 he married ye lady Cecilia Hungerford, daughter to ye Honorable Knight Sir John Tufton, by whom he had two sons, both of which died in their infancy by wicked practises and sorcerye"

⁴ Anecdotally, whilst doing my original research, I was told by one of the Cracroft family that Robert Wilson Cracroft was known in the family as "Black Robert". Unfortunately, I wasn't given any more details!

⁵ As Note 1: NeD 3163-3168

Curtain rises on the town's first theatre

A look at venues around the town which have been used for "theatricals" in the past.

Today, Newark's theatrical needs are well provided for by the Palace Theatre on Appletongate, but, in the

past, plays have been presented at a number of other locations around the town. Both the Corn Exchange

and Town Hall have fulfilled the role at one time or another, and, in the early part of this century, Newark's first cinemas - the Picturedrome on Sherwood Avenue and the Kinema on Baldertongate - often doubled as theatres, presenting short farces or variety acts.

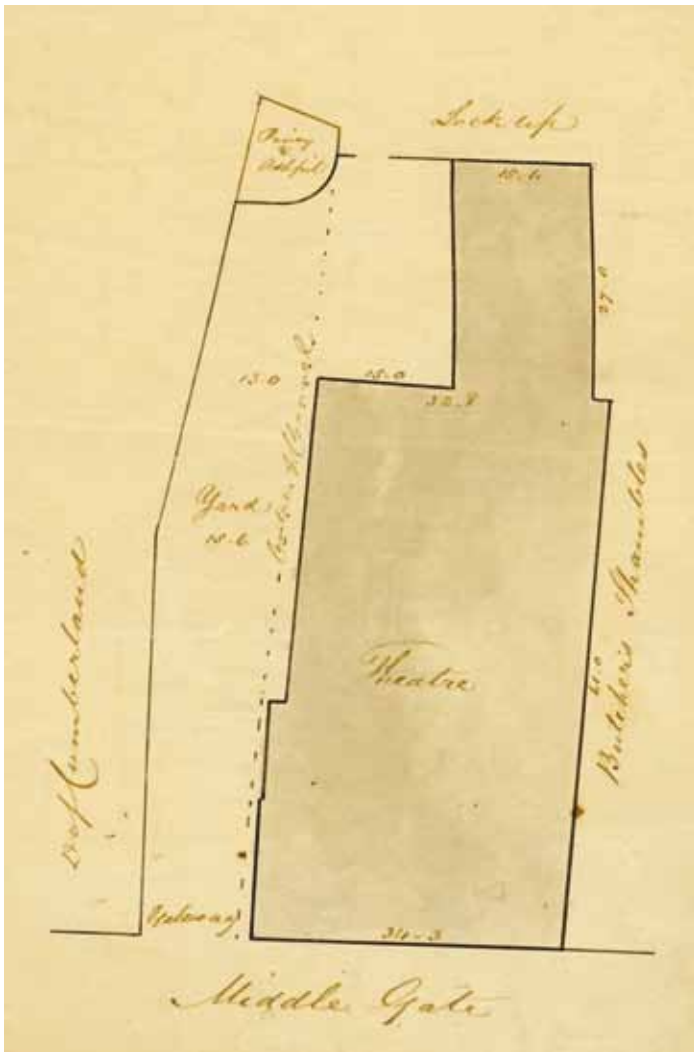
What is believed to be Newark's first true, purpose-built theatre, however, pre-dates all of these by well over a century. It was built in 1773 on Middlegate on the site now occupied by Millets', the Outdoor Store.

Although no illustrations of the original theatre building are known to exist, we can glean a certain amount of information from the building accounts (preserved in the Nottinghamshire Archives office) and contemporary descriptions.

We know, for instance, that work on the theatre was begun in November 1772 and that the final cost was £360 3s 2d - a price which included



Millets' store on Middlegate



Sketch plan of Newark's Middlegate Theatre (date unknown)

the cost of demolishing the previous building on the site.

A sketch plan of the theatre showing its location between the Duke of Cumberland public house and the butchers' shambles behind the Town Hall also survives and is shown above.

The first recorded play to be performed in the new building was staged in June 1773 when Mr Whitely's Company of Comedians announced that they would perform six nights at the "new-erected theatre" in Newark on their way to Nottingham races.

Thereafter the building was incorporated (and, indeed, leased to) the Lincoln Circuit Theatre Company which toured theatres in the Lincoln, Boston and Grantham area. They gave an annual season at Newark lasting between six and eight weeks in November and December. At other times the building was let, probably

for retail purposes. Things progressed in this manner until 1803 when the building was subject to major alterations and enlargement.

Upon completion, one of the area's early newspapers, the *Nottingham Journal*, commented: "The design and execution of the theatre cannot be too highly spoken of. It is truly elegant and Newark may now boast one of the handsomest Provincial Theatres in the kingdom."

During its 100-year history the theatre saw appearances by many famous actors and personalities. Charles Kean appeared here as indeed did the noted politician, essayist and agriculturalist William Cobbett. In the second volume of his *Rural Rides* Cobbett noted that, travelling from Lincoln, he arrived in Newark on the

Theatre, Newark.

BY DESIRE OF
THE MEMBERS
Of the Newark Library.

This present **THURSDAY Evening, December 22nd, 1825,**
Will be performed Sheridan's Comedy of The

SCHOOL for SCANDAL.

Charles Surface, . . . Mr. W. ROBERTSON. Joseph Surface, . . . Mr. HART.
Sir Benjamin Backbite, . . . Mr. HAZELTON. Moses, . . . Mr. GURNER.
Careless (with a Song), . . . Mr. BUTLER. Sir Oliver Surface, . . . Mr. CHESTERTON.
Trip, . . . Mr. HODGSON. Crabtree, . . . Mr. CHIPPENDALE. Rowley, . . . Mr. REED.
Sir Peter Teazle, Mr. FRASER.
Mrs. Candour, Miss MARINUS.
Lady Sworeswell, . . . Miss ROUTH. Maria, . . . Miss STANNARD.
Lady Teazle, Mrs. T. ROBERTSON.

~~~~~

End of the Play

A COMIC SONG, . . . . . by Mr. GURNER.  
A COMIC SONG, . . . . . by Mr. CHIPPENDALE.

~~~~~

To conclude with the laughable Farce of

High Life Below Stairs,

Lovel, Mr. W. ROBERTSON.
Freeman, . . . Mr. HAZELTON. Phillip, Mr. CHESTERTON.
Tom, Mr. CHIPPENDALE. Coachman, Mr. HODGSON.
Auguston, . . . Mr. REED. Sir Harry's Servant, . . . Mr. BUTLER.
My Lord Duke's Servant, Mr. GURNER.
Miss Kitty, Miss MARINUS.
Lady Hall's Maid, Miss ROUTH. Lady Charlotte's Maid, . . Miss STANNARD.
Cook, Mrs. MURRAY.

~~~~~

In Act the Second,

The Song of " ALL IN A LIVERY," by Miss ROUTH.  
AND THE MOCK MINUET.  
BY MR. BUTLER AND MISS MARINUS.

~~~~~

Doors open at Six, to begin at Seven.
Lower Boxes, 3s. 6d.—Half Price, 2s.—Upper Boxes, 3s.—Pit, 2s.—Gallery, 1s.
Places and Tickets for the Boxes to be taken of Mr. CHAPMAN, Hair-dresser, Middle-gate.
Also, Tickets to be had of Mr. Robertson, at Mrs. Wright's, Kirk Gate.

On Monday, December 26, (By Desire and for this Night only.)
Will be performed the moral and instructive Play of
GEORGE BARNWELL.

To conclude with the original Scene of
BARNWELL & MILLIFOOD at the place of Execution, the Gallies, &c.
ATTENDED BY THE OFFICERS OF JUSTICE.

To conclude with the celebrated Melo-drama of
THE FLOATING BEACON.

On Wednesday, December 29th, By DESIRE of
THE NEWARK TROOP
of NOTTINGHAMSHIRE YEOMANRY CAVALRY,
Will be performed the Comedy of
THE JEALOUS WIFE.

TO CONCLUDE WITH THE LAST NEW PETIT COMEDY
(By the Author of *Simpson & Co.*) called
TRIBULATION: Or, UNWELCOME VISITORS.

~~~~~

S. and J. Ridge, Printers.

**A full evening's entertainment at Newark's Middlegate Theatre**

evening of April 23, 1830 and gave a lecture in the theatre to about 300 persons.

In local terms, however, possibly the most noteworthy person to appear at the theatre was the young Thomas William Robertson who went on to become the most celebrated and successful playwrights of late Victorian England.

The Lincoln Circuit, under the managership of successive generations of Robertsons, flourished until the late 1830s when, for no obviously apparent reason, attendances at Newark began to fall off. By May 1847 the opinion expressed in the local press was that "the inhabitants of Newark do

not seem to have much relish for theatrical performances, as they are carried on to almost empty benches. One night, there were but six in the house, consequently there was no performance."

In 1850 the theatre was sold at auction and converted into a house and shop with workshops at the rear. The shop eventually passed into the proprietorship of a Mr Welch who ran his "celebrated tea-pot grocery store" there; the back portions came to be used as a nail-making shop by Howitts.

The theatre building continued in existence until 1884 when it was partially demolished to allow for construction of the covered market (now the Buttermarket) behind the Town Hall. Even so, traces of the theatre may still be identified in the present Millets' frontage on Middlegate. The ground-floor plate glass windows are, of course, modern but the three first-floor windows

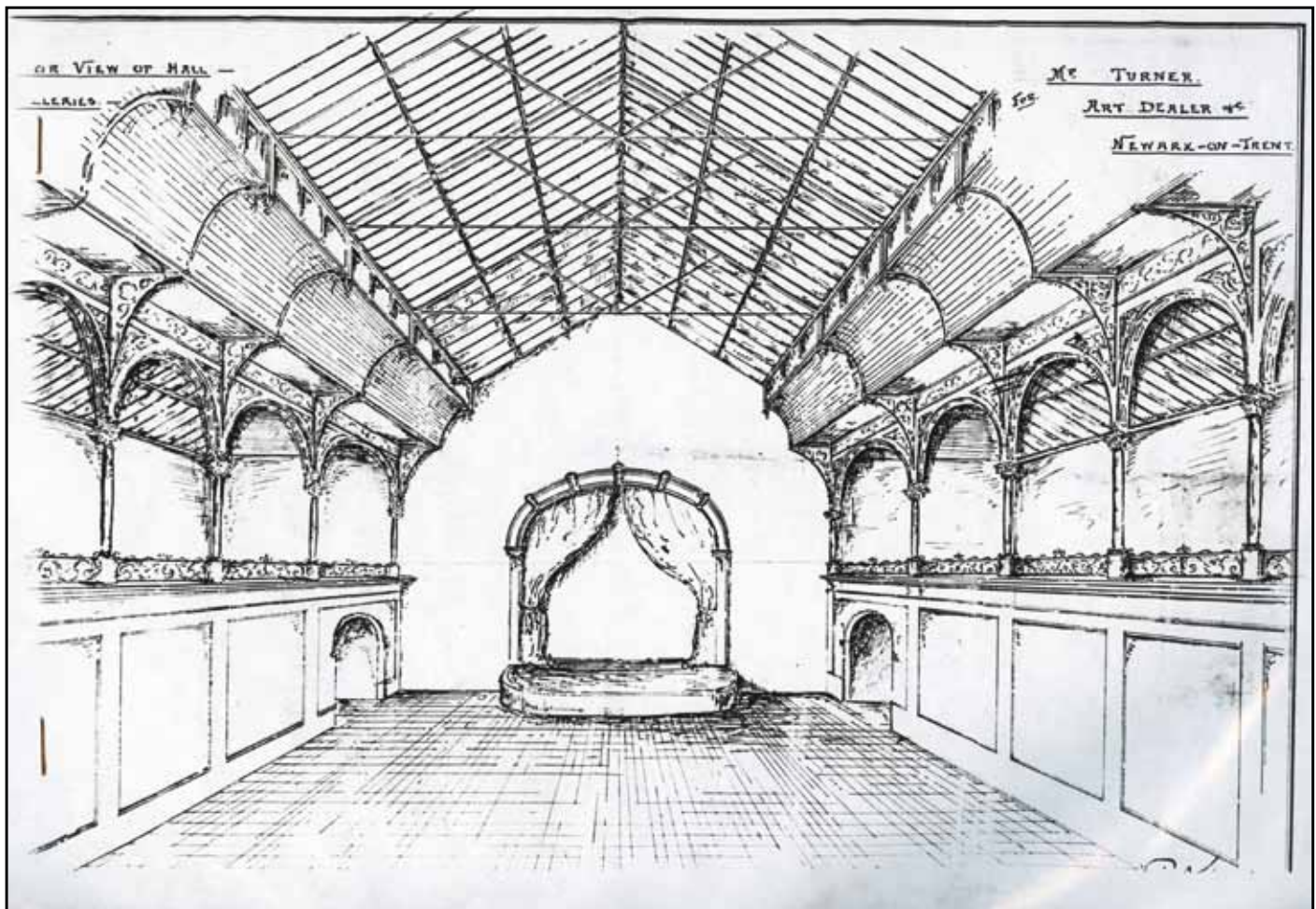
possibly date from alterations made after the 1850 sale. It has also been suggested that a considerable part of the present structure of the building, with its hipped roof, survives from the rebuilding of 1803, and perhaps even from the original building of 1773.

Following the cessation of performances at Middlegate in 1850, Newark was, once again, left with no proper theatrical venue. Although the Town Hall and Corn Exchange occasionally presented

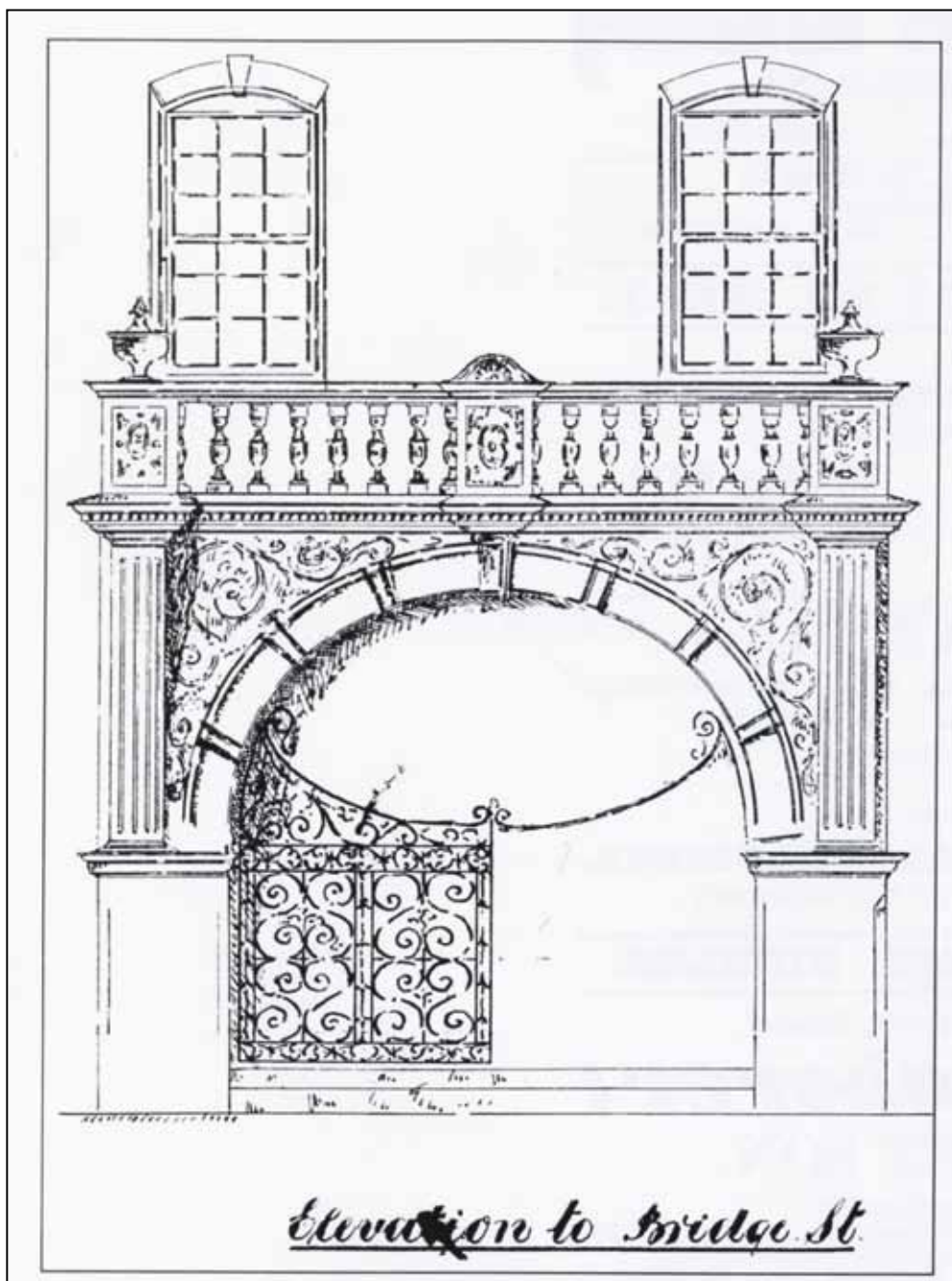
plays, or at least stage productions, there was no regular venue where the itinerant companies that toured England could perform.

**THEATRE, NEWARK.**  
**MR. ROBERTSON**  
**M**OST respectfully informs the Town and Vicinity of Newark, that Mrs. BRUNTON's engagement expired at the end of Lincoln Season; but he has prevailed on Mrs. BRUNTON  
**To perform TWO NIGHTS,**  
 PREVIOUS TO HER DEPARTURE FOR LONDON,  
 And conceives himself unfortunate, that her positive engagements in London prevents him the gratification of her continuing for the Season.  
*The two Nights of Mrs. BRUNTON's performance are the following:*  
**On SATURDAY Nov. 6th 1802, the Tragedy of**  
**DOUGLAS.**  
 WITH THE FARCE OF THE  
**PADLOCK.**  
**Leonora,.....Mrs. BRUNTON.**  
**On MONDAY Nov. 8th, the New Musical Piece of**  
**THE CABINET.**  
**Floretta,.....Mrs. BRUNTON.**  
 Days of Playing, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

Advert for one of Thomas William Robertson's theatrical presentations at the Middlegate Theatre, 1802.



Architects' drawing of the interior of Mr Turner's proposed theatre in Imperial Buildings opposite Bridge Street, 1895.



**Proposed entrance to Mr Turner's theatre in Imperial Buildings opposite Bridge Street.**

Newark's rail link (via the Castle station) had opened in 1846, and in spring 1850 it was reported that "during the last winter the cheap trains to Nottingham have been more largely patronised than ever" as "large sections of the Newark public" were obliged to travel out of town in search of theatrical diversion. This situation persisted for a number of years after 1850 with Newark almost entirely missing out on the rise in popularity of music hall and the re-emergence of serious contemporary drama that occurred in late Victorian England.

By the 1890s, however, calls were beginning to be made for the

establishment of a new permanent theatre in the town. The first of these schemes, dating from 1895, was put forward by a Mr Turner, an art dealer, who had plans drawn up for converting the upper floors of Imperial Buildings (now Boyes department store) into a combined theatre and concert hall.

The plans show that the entrance was to have been opposite Bridge Street, complementing the grandeur of the Town Hall on the far side of the market place. Inside, the theatre was to be 114ft long, with a cellar to be used as a public auction room.

This scheme failed to materialise and

was soon eclipsed by a much more ambitious plan - to build a theatre across the road in Cartergate.

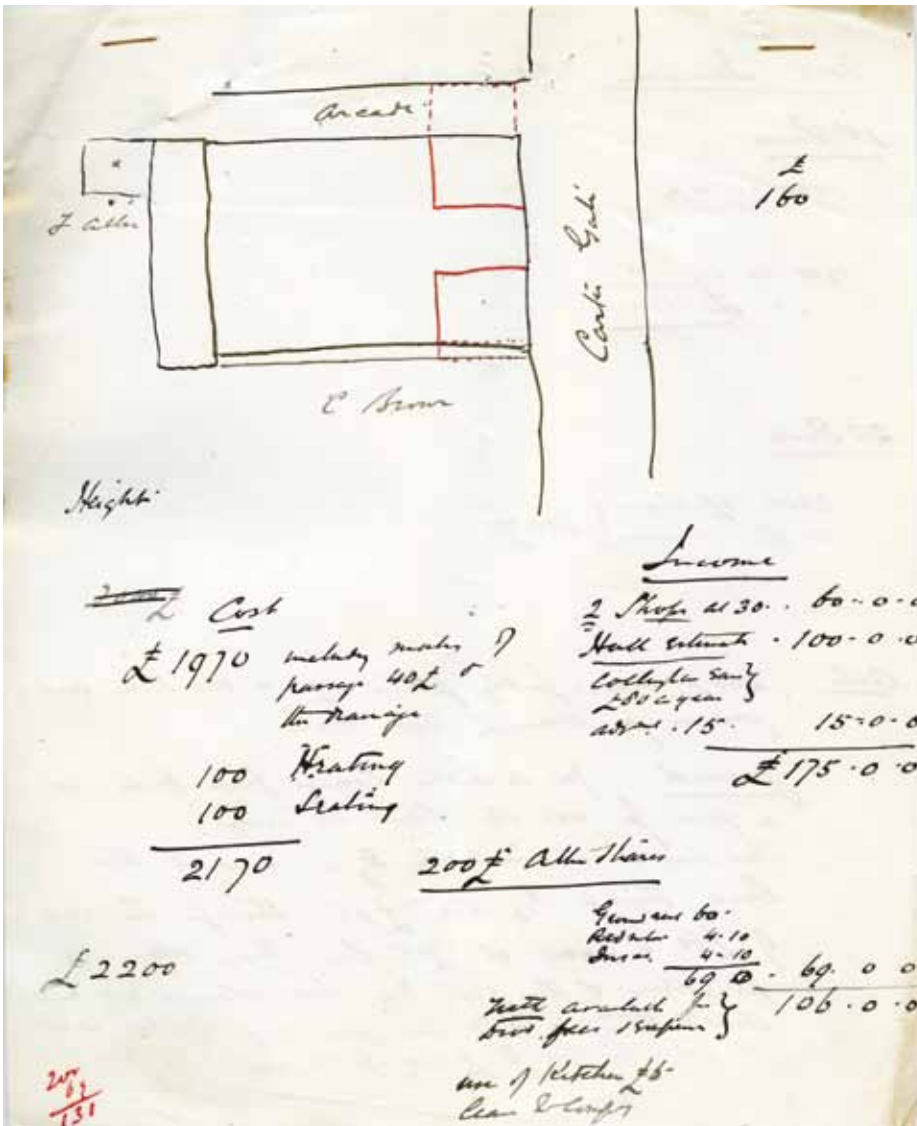
The scheme, for which a prospectus was issued in May 1898, was headed by a consortium of local businessmen including Mr Frederick Atter. It was he, together with his brother Charles, who had been responsible a year earlier for opening up and developing The Arcade. Now, by promoting the construction of a fashionable theatre at the entrance to their development, the Atters hoped to realise their aim of making The Arcade the most exclusive shopping area in Newark.

The entrance to the theatre was to be to the left of The Arcade (on the site now occupied by a sweet shop on Cartergate) with the auditorium running behind the shops on the south side.

This location, commented the prospectus, could not have been better suited, lying as it did almost directly opposite the town's main post office (then located at 15 Cartergate which later became Whistler's Chemist). Plans for the theatre were drawn up by architects

Sheppard & Harrison of 17 Kirkgate, who also supplied detailed specifications for the internal fixtures and fittings.

Having entered through an impressive glazed porch, patrons were to reach the auditorium by a short passage with a box office, and ascending "a spacious and easy staircase." The main hall would contain 520 seats with a stage 30ft wide and 16ft deep. Behind the stage there were to be artists' dressing-rooms, kitchens (for cooking when the theatre was being used for private functions), and a caretaker's house. Part of the cellar was to be used for the storage of scenery and props, and the remainder was to be fitted up as a drill hall.



Sketch plan and costings for the proposed "Arcade Theatre", 1898.

The prospectus promised that the main theatre would be "supplied with the latest design of heating apparatus, and to ensure perfect ventilation and healthfulness the foul air will be carried through two openings in the ceiling assisted by patent air pumps." The floor was to be of pitch pine and polished for dancing.

Building costs were calculated at £3,000 and this was to be raised through an issue of 3,000 £1 shares. The Atter brothers set the ball rolling with a subscription for 200 shares, and the other principal members of the consortium (the maltster William Deeping Warwick, seed and coal merchant W.E. Knight, and Cornelius Brown, editor of the *Newark Advertiser*) each pledged similar amounts.

With the confidence of many speculative Victorian entrepreneurs, the scheme was laid before the public and shares offered to anyone who wished to be part of what was heralded as a public improvement of no mean order. Two months after the share issue had been launched, however, only 46 potential investors had come forward, and only 911 of the 3,000 shares had been sold. With such a disappointing response, clearly the scheme could not continue.

Three months earlier, when the prospectus had been released, the consortium confidently claimed that there "will never again be a more favourable opportunity to secure such a building on such an eligible site." Indeed, in retrospect, the Arcade Theatre must be classed as one of Newark's great lost buildings.

Tim Warner  
Local Studies Librarian – Newark Library

Revised and expanded from two articles which first appeared in the *Newark Advertiser* on 18th June 1993 and 25th June 1995.

Reproduced courtesy of the Newark Advertiser.



Frederick Atter's proposed "Arcade Theatre", 1898. The building would have fronted onto Cartergate: the entrance to the Arcade may be seen on the right of the picture.



Newark Market Place aerial view

# Newark Town Hall

*"...a town hall should be the most dominant and important of the municipal buildings."*

*Sir Charles Barry<sup>1</sup>*

Town halls are the visual statement of civic pride and civic dignity. Civic architecture showed what a town thought of itself, its aims, ambitions and optimism for the future. Town halls, guildhalls or moot halls, were often sited close to the market place, the bustling commercial area and focus of the Town and therefore an ideal meeting place.

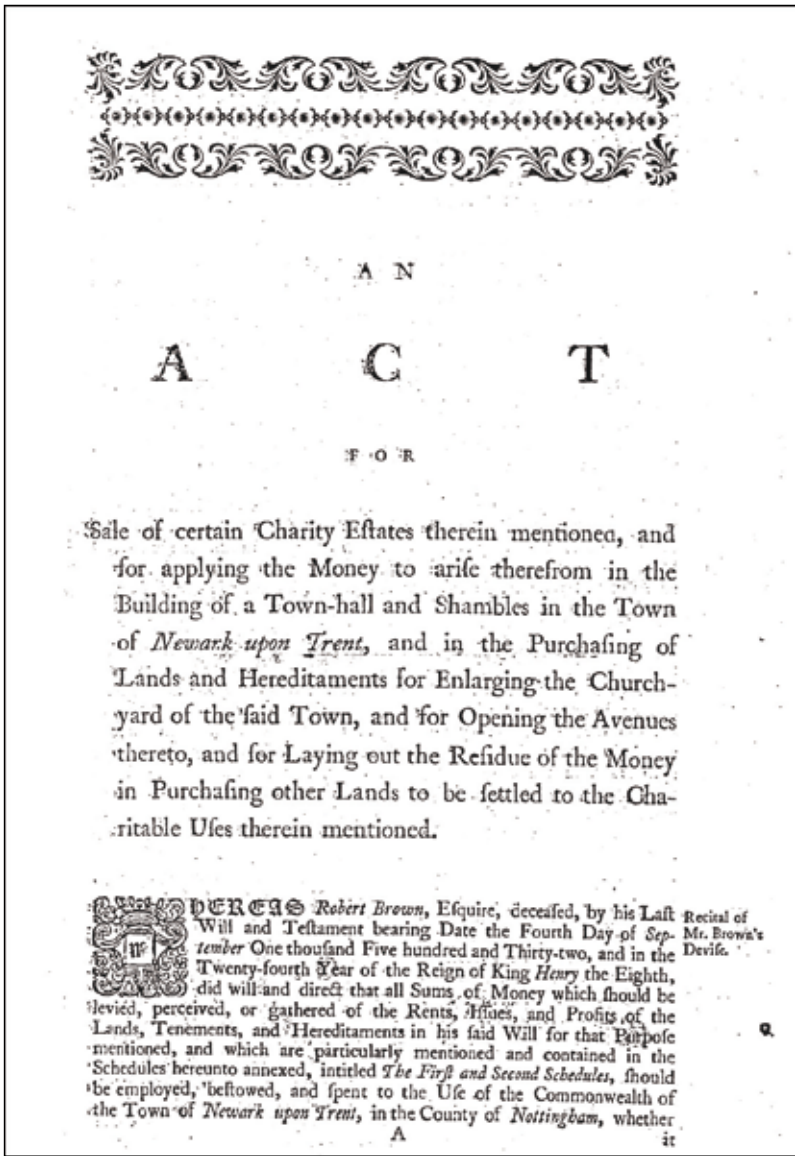
Their principal purpose was to provide an administrative headquarters for the guild or the corporation. It was in these halls that decisions were taken about the welfare and commercial life of the town and where justice was dispensed in the form of Petty Sessions and Quarter Sessions<sup>2</sup>. To mark their role as a public building, there would often be a large hall or assembly room where people could gather for business or to enjoy entertainment.

The building of town halls responded to the emergence of new towns in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As urban life became increasingly attractive, town halls had to match the growing need for the administration of services

in the developing town. Meetings, markets and magistracy were of the essence and often in multi-functional spaces. Town halls also introduced the element of entertainment for local people, fostering a sense of community and identity.



John Carr's elevation of 1774



Act of Parliament to enable the building of the Town Hall (front page)

Newark's Town Hall story dates back to the use of the Moot Hall<sup>3</sup> on the north side of the Market Place leased from the Duke of Newcastle. Newark Corporation had previously met in this smaller building. However, with the increasing demands of the Town to provide the necessary services that were part of improved town governance, it meant that more administrative facilities and meeting space were needed.

Having successfully petitioned Parliament in 1773 to access two 16th century charities (Phillipot and Brown)<sup>4</sup> to sell land and property necessary to provide a site and capital for the development, Newark Corporation proceeded to build its own new Town Hall between 1774 and 1776 at a cost of around £17,000<sup>5</sup>. Several properties,

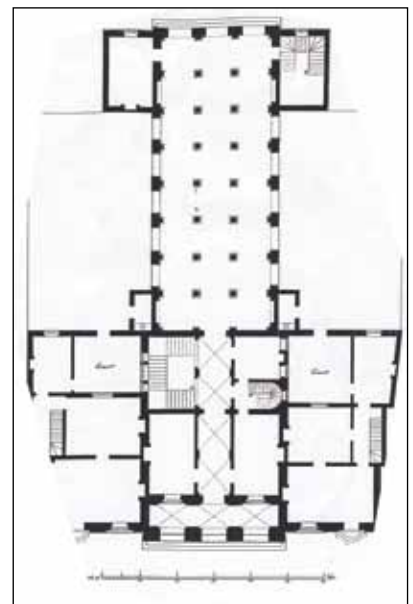
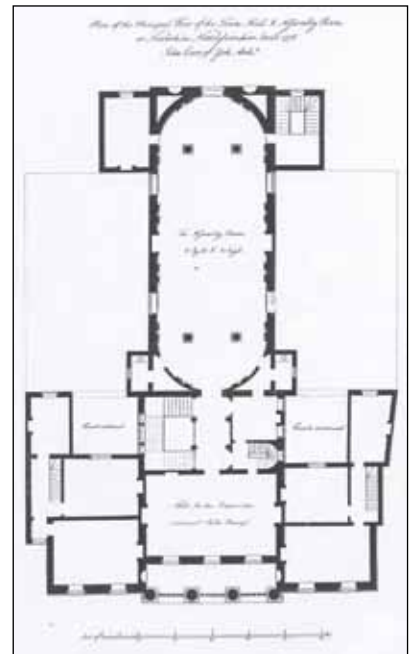
shops and a public house had to be removed to make room for it. The fine building reflected the increasing powers and dignity of the Corporation, that would enhance the prestige of the Town as a thriving



John Carr of York (1723-1807) by George Dance

commercial and social centre.

The chosen architect with a prestigious portfolio and a background in local government was John Carr of York (1723-1807)<sup>6</sup>. His design provided space for both borough and market administration with an Assembly Room/Ballroom on the first floor for use as a public meeting room which could accommodate Quarter Sessions. It also included a well proportioned Council Chamber where Petty Sessions were held twice a week. This room had a balcony (loggia) facing the market place for the convenience of making speeches or announcements by mayors and local dignitaries to the people below.



John Carr's drawings of the ground and first floor, Newark Town Hall



Newark Market Place by Edward Eyre (? – 1823) pen and ink with wash

The classical graceful Town Hall was built in the fashionable Palladian<sup>7</sup> style of the 18th century. Its design, in honey-coloured Mansfield stone, dominates the ancient market place. The building did not conform rigorously to the symmetry of Palladian architecture because of its 'T' shaped layout and staircase set to one side but Carr adapted his design well to the long, rather awkward shape running between the Market Place and Middlegate.

Carr's original concept was a civic building with two town houses on either side, each with its own entrance but all brought together as a cohesive whole united by rusticated arcading on the ground floor and the entablature across the top. His multipurpose building on the ground floor provided a Corn Exchange, indoor market with shops for perishables such as butter and cheese and at the back towards Middlegate, the Shambles for the butchers. Whereas the civic rooms on the first

floor (piano nobile)<sup>8</sup> provided space for civic and mayoral functions, social functions and courts.

Evidence from the Edward Eyre drawing of 1776 shows the building without the town house on the south side. However, there is no information in past Corporation Minutes to say at exactly what point the second of the two town houses was added to complete the building. In an article in the 1990s on the Town Hall by Dr Ivan Hall (English Heritage consultant) he seems to suggest that by 1789, the last house was complete. Nor is there any evidence in the Corporation Minutes from 1776 to 1835 that mentions when the three buildings merged into one civic unit.

*"Here the municipality hold their judicial consultations and on festive occasions it is dedicated to tea."<sup>9</sup>*

The building's smooth rusticated basement, simple classical exterior with four columns beneath a pediment containing the symbol of ownership, belie the stunning features within. The main entrance to the grand civic rooms on the first floor is up a sweep of stone steps on the left hand side with the market place behind you<sup>10</sup>. On the landing and immediately to the left are magnificent large double doors that take you through to the Assembly Room (rear cover illustration) with twinned Corinthian columns at either end of the apses<sup>11</sup>. This room is simply stunning. It is restrained and elegant with soft duck-egg blue walls<sup>12</sup> and two Italian marble fireplaces. The distinctive cream and gilded pairs of pilasters between the long arched windows lead your eye upwards to the sumptuous elaborate coved ceiling delicately executed with decorative motifs in low relief. This is said to be Carr's adaption of Robert Adam's ceiling at Harewood House<sup>13</sup>.



Detail of Newark Town Hall today from a water colour painting by Jurij Sulimow in 2007

Both the afternoon sunlight through the windows or in the evening when the Assembly Room is lit by a central chandelier, the room is breathtakingly beautiful.

Significant dates in the building's history in more recent years would be in 1950<sup>14</sup>, Newark Town Hall was given Grade I listed status by English Heritage as a national monument. This means that the building has exceptional national architectural and historic interest and no alterations may be made internally or externally without consultation and approval with English Heritage and local authority conservation departments. To continue to preserve the building's integrity, high quality restoration work in 1989-90 was carried out under the direction of local architect Guy Taylor Associates. This won the prestigious Europa-Nostra award in 1993. A few years later the Town Council set up a museum within the Town Hall enabling daily access (10.30-3.30)

to the people of Newark to enjoy the building and its treasures.

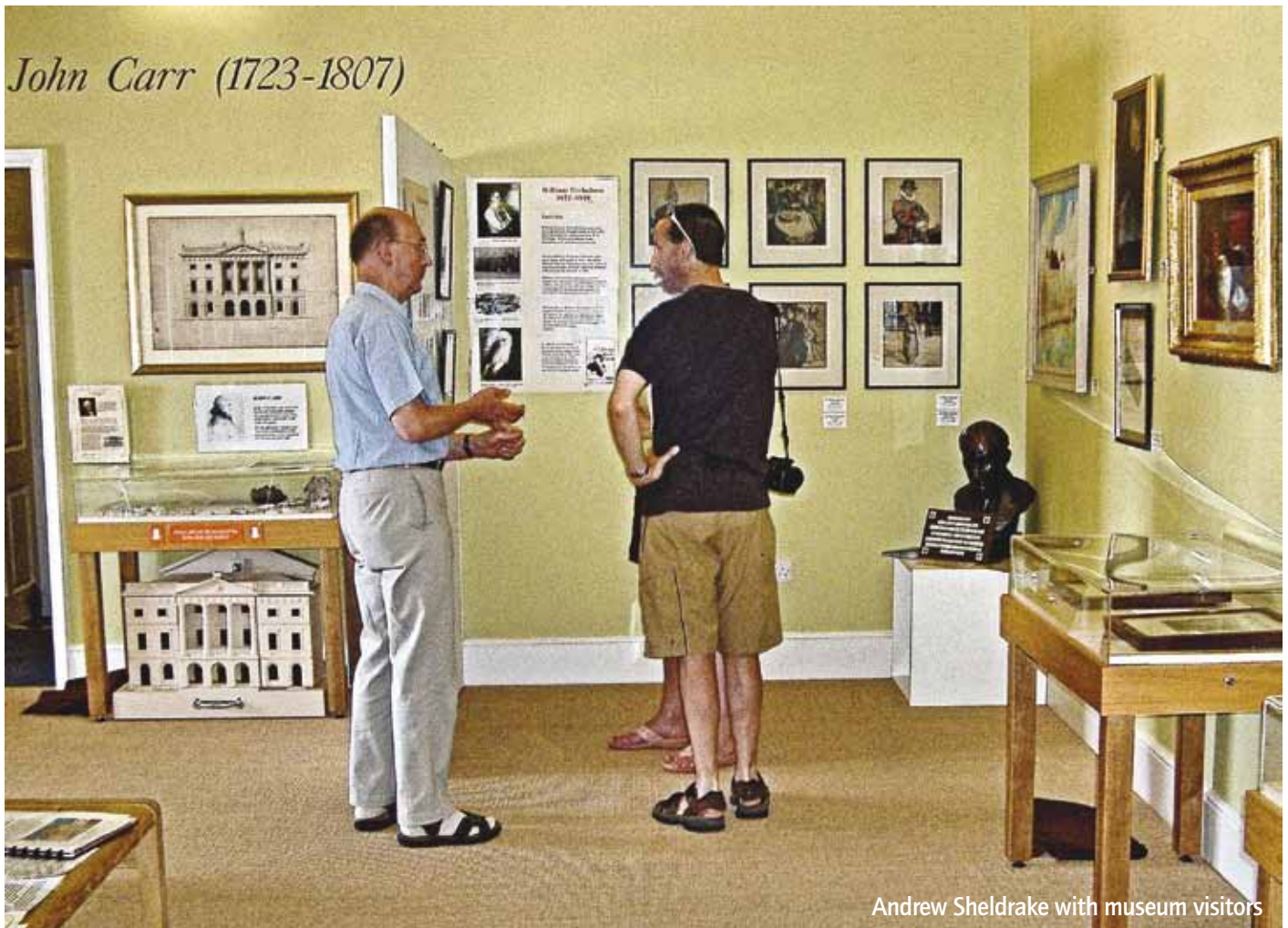
But what of the Town Hall's relevance 250 years on? Nowadays, modern Council administrative centres have buildings that are low key, with offices usually on the edge of a town where car-parking provision is more likely to be available. Today, Newark Town Hall is a notable historic monument in the heart of the Town's landscape and its listing status makes it a unique tourist attraction. However, the spirited 18th century Aldermen who invested so much effort in providing Newark with a worthy Town Hall would have been delighted to find that despite changing times, the building remains relevant today as a working town hall and hub for the people of Newark. The brilliance of Carr's 18th century multipurpose design is that it has been able to adapt so well to 21st century needs.

*"Wonderful building, enjoyed the tour and information given, will come back with grandchildren." – local visitor*

*"We had a wonderful and most interesting tour. We felt honoured to see some of the rooms which we did not expect to be of such a high standard. Thank you, we will remember Newark." – visitors from Durham City.*

Recent quotes from the Visitor's Book

## John Carr (1723-1807)



Andrew Sheldrake with museum visitors

Patty Temple  
Curator, Town Hall Museum  
Newark Town Council

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Architect – 1795-1860. Quote in 1859

<sup>2</sup> Quarter sessions had a judge or recorder present; Petty sessions were held twice a week in front of magistrates

<sup>3</sup> The first Moot Hall (also known as the 'King's Hall' or 'Market House' of which we have evidence was built in the 14th century, but the site is believed to have been the centre of Newark's manorial and local government since the Architect – 1795-1860. Quote in 1859 time of the Norman Conquest. In 1708, a new Moot Hall was constructed by the Duke of Newcastle, who leased most of the land around Newark from the Crown. It was used by the Mayor and Corporation until the present Town Hall was erected in 1776. C. Brown Vol 1 p256

<sup>4</sup> These charities were set up by Robert Brown in 1532 'for any good works to be done in the said Town of Newark' and William Phillipot in 1566 left land and almshouses to the Town. The reason the Corporation had to obtain permission from Parliament was because they were Trustees for the two selling Trusts and were also the buyers.

<sup>5</sup> Several sources seem to confirm this amount

<sup>6</sup> Mr Kenton Course, Board of Works architect, also submitted designs to be considered. It is possible there was a third contender but to date there is no hard evidence. Carr was an Alderman and Mayor in York in 1770 and 1785 and had an advantage in being familiar with civic requirements.

<sup>7</sup> Palladian style refers to the 16th century architect Andrea Palladio (1508-1580). He used the classical features of Roman architecture in a way which drew on symmetry and harmony but also made the internal space very serviceable to everyday living.

<sup>8</sup> 'piano' is Italian for floor or storey and 'nobile' is Italian equivalent for the noble/aristocrat. 'Piano nobile' - principal floor in large houses above the noise and smells of the town.

<sup>9</sup> RP Stilton History of the Town of Newark, 1820 p34

<sup>10</sup> Today you have to enter the building on the opposite side using the lift or the stairs to the second floor.

<sup>11</sup> The apses had different functions – by the double doors, it was a vestibule while the furthest away apse functioned as a court

<sup>12</sup> Major refurbishment in 1989-90 involved repainting to John Carr's original colours using a flat based oil paint

<sup>13</sup> Robert Adam (1728-1792) and John Carr worked on several buildings together and were probably at Harewood House in 1759.

<sup>14</sup> Resurveyed in 1992.

# Civic Trust Events Programme 2012/13

27th September, Annual General Meeting followed by a Newark Quiz set by Mick Gill

25th October, How to Read a Church - Dr. Matthew Godfrey, Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire

29th November, Battle of East Stoke - Dr. David Marcombe

31st January, Newark Castle - Dr. Philip Dixon

28th February, Favourite Newark Buildings - Members' open evening. Do you have a favourite building in Newark? This is your opportunity - in a 5/10 minute presentation to other members - to spotlight and talk about your favourite Newark building.

28th March, The Cafferata Family of Newark - Richard Cafferata

25th April, Newark Museums Service Resource Centre

23rd May, visit to Staunton Hall

27th June, visit to Staythorpe Power Station

Full details and any changes to the programme will be noted on the website and announced at meetings as necessary.

Talks take place in Newark Library and commence at 7.30pm

# Newark Civic Trust

## MAGAZINE

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