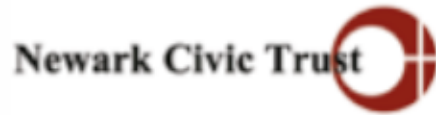
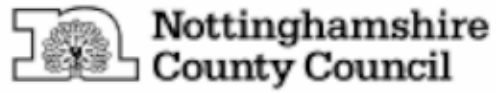


This is the seventh leaflet in a series of seven and the full range may be viewed on our website [www.newarkcivictrust.org.uk/](http://www.newarkcivictrust.org.uk/)

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NEWARK & SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL



The Gilstrap Trust

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# Newark graffiti and wall painting trail



## Newark Graffiti and Wall Paintings Trail

Distance: 1.4km

Time: 1.5 hour. Easy trail

Start/Finish: at the bronze model of Newark in the Castle Grounds

Wheelchair & pushchair friendly

*This trail covers buildings with graffiti and wall paintings in and around the town centre.*

Probably injured when thrown in and denied food and drink, unless family or friends brought it in, prisoners would have been forgotten. This is why they were known as oubliettes, from the French 'to forget'. During the final Civil War siege of Newark (Nov 1645 – May 1646) there were 7000 Scots troops to the north and west of the town. One of these was

**Move back onto the castle terrace and continue along the castle wall to South West Tower. If open you can now descend to the original level of the courtyard and enter a door that would have originally been at that level.** It leads to a passage that would have originally been at ground floor level. At the end of the passage is a prison with a sheer drop into it. The thick barrel vault roof would have stopped any noise disturbing the guests above. This was probably the **debtor's prison (2)**, where you would have been kept until a family member came to pay your debt.

The Knights Templar had been set up during the Crusades, to escort pilgrims to the Holy Land and fight off attacks on Crusader territory. By the late 13th century they had also become

bankers and landowners, to fund those on the front line.

They owned many estates in Lincolnshire, with Temple Bruer and Eagle amongst them. Philip IV of France saw the suppression of the Templars as a way of getting out of debts he owed them. The Pope was

persuaded that there was enough evidence of moral and spiritual offences to order their arrest. Whilst the leaders in France were cruelly executed there was less enthusiasm in England. Although they were arrested no charges were made to stick against them, although their properties were transferred to the Crown or Knights Hospitallers. Several were imprisoned in Newark and you can see the graffiti left by them on the window sill on your right as you leave the dungeon **(2A)**.

Mankind has always been keen to leave their mark, either to record their presence at a location, as part of the building process or to decorate the walls of a building. Today we view graffiti as a blight and defacement on buildings and structures, although some see it as an art form and there are many examples of this. However, graffiti has existed almost since mankind learnt to make their mark and was common and accepted in medieval churches. Wall paintings have been used in the area since the Roman's arrived and continues to be used to decorate otherwise blank walls today. Newark has fine examples of graffiti and wall paintings, some of which you will be able to see and others which we will describe as part of this trail.

**Start the route at the bronze model of Newark in the Castle Grounds and walk up onto the castle terrace overlooking the River Trent. To your right, set into the lower curtain wall are a set of gates leading to The Oubliette's or Bottle Dungeons (1)** Along the corridor, created in the 13/14th century and down the steps are the access to two dungeons. Known as bottle dungeons due to the way their entrance narrows like the shoulder of a bottle, if open you can descend the ladder into the first dungeon. Prisoners would have been thrown in through a trap door, similar to the one you entered by. Although they were so high you would not have been able to reach them, the trap doors were fitted with draw bars to make sure no one could escape.

captured and imprisoned here and left his mark in 1645 **(1A)**. In the second oubliette you can see the original stonework of the 13/14th century dungeon. Around the walls you can see crosses carved into alcoves **(1B)**. This is where some of the Knights Templar were imprisoned, at least at night. The alcoves in the walls are prayer niches. They prayed together in (usually) groups of seven and always in circles, as they believed that the power of the circle would amplify the prayer to God.



1a

1b

2a

It appears they were fairly well treated and allowed to leave the dungeons during the day, before being locked up at night. They prayed in a circle of seven, believing that this would amplify their prayers to God. The symbol for this is the circle split into seven segments. The other symbols are the Templars cross, a bird which is a phoenix-signifying rising from the ashes and also something resembling a fossil. This is in fact a snake coiled round eating itself-signifying rebirth.

**On leaving the dungeon turn left and head across the castle gardens to leave via the northern gate, turn left and cross the pedestrian crossing to the Ossington, turn right, then left and cross the pedestrian crossing on Castle Gate. Turn left then right onto Kirk Gate. Continue along Kirk Gate to the 16th century timber framed buildings (3),** on the left hand side of the road. Tradition has it that this is where Queen Henrietta Maria stayed during her visit to Newark between 16th June – 3rd July 1643, but this is not now believed to have been fit for a Queen. In one of what are now two flats on the upper floor there is a painting on the wall of a brown horse (3A). Apparently, no matter how many times the walls were whitewashed or painted, the image of the horse always came back through. Today it is preserved on a wall in the flat.

**Continue along Kirk Gate and cross Church Street to enter Church Walk North. Continue along Church Walk North until you reach Appleton Gate. Diagonally across the road is the National Civil War Centre – Newark Museum (NCWC) (4).** If you visit the NCWC there is historic graffiti in both the Tudor Hall and in the Tudor attic, which was once used as a dormitory for boy boarders at the school. The dormitory graffiti is quite remarkable, in that it records names and dates of ex-pupils. Some of the examples are fairly basic and incorporate names and dates, but some are quite elaborate. One of those is that of 'Isaac Richter, Aged 14, 1708', (4A) which appears to sit within a bell design. Another piece records 'R Disney 1608' (4B). Norton Disney, home to the Disney family since the Norman Conquest is a few miles away in Lincolnshire and is possibly where Walt Disney's ancestors originated. There is some uncertainty whether the date is 1608 or 1668, but if the former it could also relate to graffiti in the dungeon at Warwick Castle left by a Royalist by the same name, captured at the Battle of Edgehill in October 1642.

Memorial designs, generally, are interpreted as just that – memorials – recording the memory of a person in death. But, the examples here show that memorial designs can be used in other ways. Here they record the pupils of the school, possibly as they were about to leave. Over the fireplace to the right of the entrance door can be seen 'W B Darwin, 1790' (4C). This is William Bates Darwin, a cousin of Charles Darwin. The family home was at Elston Hall, around 8 miles from Newark.

**Going down to the Tudor Hall,** there is graffiti carved into most of the exposed wooden beams, alongside small symbols and Double-V 'witch marks'. A particularly nice example is that of 'T. Stanley' (4D), carved into a horizontal beam on the west-facing wall. An associated date suggests this was done in 1687. Although several names and initials have the W's done in the style of a Double-V motif, they were still interpreted as initials, but four obvious Double-V 'witch marks' were identified on beams on the west-facing wall (4E). Given that the majority of the graffiti here appears to be 17th century, it would suggest the witch marks are too. The purpose of the Double-V motif, at least in the Medieval period, was to call upon the 'Virgo Virginum' – Virgin of Virgins, ie. The Virgin Mary.

**Turn left on leaving NCWC, then turn right onto Church Walk South and head to the south door of St Mary Magdalene Church (5).** A survey of graffiti in the church found almost 600 examples, but we will concentrate on a few of the best examples. In the south porch there are witch marks and a swastika pelta design to the left of the door from the porch into the church (5A). **Enter the church and walk directly ahead, turn right into the central aisle of the nave** and the first pillar on your right, surrounded by pews, has an outline of a church building with the date 1660 (5B). **Walk down to behind the High Altar and in the niche directly above the stairs to the crypt** there are a beautifully carved set of double initials complete with crown design and tassels (5C). **Turn right at the southern end of the niches and walk past the Dance of Death painted on the Markham Chantry Chapel. Turn right into the Choir and turn to look at the rear choir stall immediately on your left.** On the ledge beneath there is a very confidently carved post mill design (5D). When we look at graffiti in a church we see designs or initials carved into white washed

walls, but must imagine that before the Reformation of the church in the 16th century most of the walls would have been brightly painted with biblical or other scenes. The graffiti carved then would have stood out more than it does today, but doesn't appear to have been viewed as vandalism, as we might view it today, but as a common everyday occurrence.

**Leave the church by the South door and walk into the Market Place. Head straight across the Market Place to the Old White Hart (6)** with its beautifully restored and painted decoration of saintly figures. The range of buildings continues back through the arch on the left. Some of the timbers have been dated to 1314. Through the downstairs windows you can see what appear to be fruit growing on vines painted in red onto the white background (6A). You can see other examples of a similar motif at the Governor's House. Although you won't be able to gain access, there are further examples of wall paintings in the upper storey rooms (6B) and also carpenters marks. These consist of numbers carved into two separate pieces of timber, indicating which will join with which (6C).

**Walk through the Market Place and continue on Stodman Street to the Governor's House (7),** so called because it was the home of the 4 military governors of Newark between 1643-46. If you climb the stairs to the first floor the wall to your right on entering the room has similar vine motifs to that of the Old White Hart (7A). If you look at the wooden supports around the windows facing onto the street you can see the outline of plant foliage all over them. Maybe you can imagine what it would have looked like when it was all painted. If you look carefully at some of the beams you can see carpenters marks, as described at the Old White Hart. If you then take the stairs up to the next floor, past the door of what looks like a cupboard, but is a medieval garderobe or toilet, the walls around the fireplace and on the opposite wall are painted in a deep red with decoration (7B). This may be the site where King Charles I and his nephew, Prince Rupert, had an argument in October 1645. It is certainly decorated as if it might have hosted a king.

**Leave the Governor's House and continue down Stodman Street to the Prince Rupert (8).** Take the stairs to the first floor and enter the room to your far left as you reach the top of the stairs.

**KEY**

- Green areas
- Car parks
- Main shopping area
- Pedestrian area
- Public buildings
- Tourist Information
- One-way streets
- Public toilets
- Cycle route
- Main places of interest
- Taxi Rank
- Trail route

3a  3a

3b  3b

3c  3c

4a  4a

4b  4b

4c  4c

4d  4d

4e  4e

5a  5a

5b  5b

5c  5c

5d  5d

6a  6a

6b  6b

6c  6c

7a  7a

7b  7b

8a  8a

8b  8b

8c  8c