

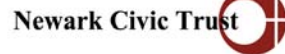
Newark

Historic Riverside

Trail

This is the fourth in a series of leaflets and the full range may be viewed on our website www.newarkcivictrust.org.uk

This trail was made possible by the following organisations:



Co-authors: George Wilkinson and Bill Davidson of Newark Civic Trust
Registered Charity Number: 1015046



Printed on 80% recycled paper

D&P/01.12/EXT/6192

Newark Historic Riverside 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 a good deal of the riverside area upstream of Trent Bridge.

Continue along Castle Gate then, just past the next set of metal gates, turn right to follow the steps or ramp down to the riverside at Cuckstool Wharf.

The tall tower is a ventilation shaft for the stage area within (limelight gives off toxic fumes), where evening entertainment was provided for traders- as well as maximising the use of the building, socialising in this way was akin to the modern practice of meeting business associates for a round of golf.

Continue upstream to the Town Lock.

Immediately to your right you will see two small locks - both disused and much smaller than the one further over, which we will come to later. William Jessop built the lock in 1772, while the extension was built in 1808. The locks were installed, along with weirs, to augment the natural depth of the river, thus providing for bigger barges.

Opposite the point where the two locks meet is a private house, also dating from 1772, which was the original **lock-keeper's cottage** (4). A quaint café

now occupies the second lock keeper's cottage - built when the lock was extended and the first cottage proved too small.

Just past the older cottage, look for a passage entry on your left. Follow this and look out for the dog mural made of bricks. Take the turning to the right just before this and continue to arrive in Navigation Yard. To your front is a large warehouse and **industrial unit** (5). It still bears the legend Newark Egg Packers, for a company which in addition to packing eggs, a task performed in a smaller building nearby, used the larger one in front of you for warehousing and to house a provender mill and a bagging plant producing pig and poultry feeds.

For centuries this was a hive of industry, with warehouses and maltings enjoying immediate access to the river; you passed one of the **maltings** (2), long since converted to housing, on your left as you descended. Until 1801, the area by the river also accommodated the **cuckstool** or ducking stool, a popular punishment for scolds and for merchants who gave short measure - both genders were eligible but women were predominantly the victims!

Turn left to move upstream. The ornate building high up on the left is the **Corn Exchange** (3), built in 1847 to a design by London architect Henry Duesbury. Its grandeur serves as a memorial to the success and scale of the trade in grain, in particular barley for malting and brewing.

Start the route at the bronze model of Newark in the Castle Grounds and then leave via the iron gates, turning right to walk along Castle Gate. To your right you soon find another set of gates leading to **The Gilstrap Centre** (1) - opened in 1883 as the town's first free public library. It was the gift of Sir William Gilstrap; originally a very successful hotelier, he turned to malting when the arrival of the railways spelt the end of the coaching trade. At one time, a cattle market occupied part of the castle grounds. The cattle market was moved to the far side of the river in 1885 - a site we will visit further on in this trail.

The River Trent and its Devon tributary have played an important role in Newark's life for many centuries. Before highways, canals, railways and finally motor transport were established, the rivers were the only practical means to transport large and heavy goods over long distances; rivers also provided access to the sea for international trade. Newark was built at the lowest fording point on the Trent, which was eventually protected by the castle and then bridged, so it was natural that it should become a centre for river-borne commerce, particularly trading in wool. The river banks hosted a thriving inland port with wharves, warehouses, mills, maltings and breweries bringing people, employment and wealth to the town. This trail covers a good deal of the riverside area upstream of Trent Bridge.



Proceed through the arch to see a malting, now converted to housing. The oval wall plate (6) over the passageway, similar to those mentioned in our *Malting and Brewing Trail* leaflet, attests that Corcoran, Witt of London, malt kiln builders, were responsible for the building or perhaps its modification. The firm, which probably employed local tradesmen, supplied all types of malting equipment and may have been brought in for the expertise it had gained in the long-established London malting industry.

Immediately beyond the passageway note the **patchwork haulage path (7)** - two tracks made from granite setts with tarmac between (the tarmac is a recent addition, the areas between the setts would originally have been rough stone). These tracks were designed to help dray horses to grip as they pulled their loads from the wharf and from the town weighbridge - the site of which can just be made out as a slightly depressed rectangular pattern in the setts. The wharf itself is now *The Otter Park* with an artwork, by Judith Bluck, consisting of bronze otters atop limestone rocks.

Follow the Riverside Walk sign under a low roof, then turn right to see a range of buildings that used to be the workshop of a wheelwright. This is evident from the **hooping base (8)** - a circular concrete slab in the ground that once was used to centre and stabilise wagon wheels during construction. After assembly of the hub, spokes and rim, the iron tyre would be heated to dull red and then dropped over the wheel. As the tyre cooled and contracted it drew everything together to make a sound structure.

Moving on, the 5-storey building (9) seen ahead was originally a malting but was extended in 1880 by the Trent Navigation Commissioners and converted into a warehouse. Adjoining this is *Millgate Museum* (well worth a visit), housed in what was once an oil-seed mill owned by James Clark - the wall plates bear the letters "JC 1870".

Past the museum and through the arch, turn right; several more wall plates can be seen at eye-level, giving a rare opportunity for a close-up inspection. In front now is *Mill Bridge*. Formerly a hump-backed brick built bridge gave access to *Parnham's Mill* which was destroyed by fire in 1965. The present bridge was built in 1952 as part of the town lock expansion works.

Once across the bridge, turn left and head for the 2 stone parapets which form the sides of **Longstone Bridge (10)**. This was built to carry the towpath across the back-stream which takes the main flow of water, since the lock gates downstream block the flow most of the time. From the bridge may be seen the weir, designed to ensure a head of water for the mill and lock and now often enjoyed by white water canoeists. The millstream, which once served three water wheels, can also be seen to the right of the weir.

Returning past Mill Bridge, the wide stretch of water which can be seen in front of the museum is known as *Newark Basin* - always full of barges in its heyday. From here there is a good view of the building opposite, with its hoist tower and the two large arches of what was once the boiler room. Above these can be seen the stump of the chimney which once rose to 52ft (16m).

Just beyond the British Waterways workshop buildings on the left, the route crosses the gates of a **dry dock (11)** - the largest inland dry dock in Britain. Barges were once built and maintained here while work is still occasionally done on British Waterways' smaller working boats.

Just a little further downstream is the latest and largest of the three locks. Over 90ft (27m) long and 32ft (9.75m) wide, this lock was constructed in 1952 to accommodate four barges at a time. At the time of construction, numerous petrol tanker barges regularly passed through to discharge their loads at Colwick. In the 1960s a pipeline grid for the transport of oil took over this role and the traffic in large barges virtually ceased. As you pass the lock, to your left is a sensory garden and the third and latest lock-keeper's cottage (1952). Ahead is the *Girder Bridge* - functional but not elegant, it replaced an earlier wooden structure (named the *Hayling Bridge* - a version or corruption of 'hauling'), which fell victim to the construction of the much bigger lock.

Cross the bridge to see the **Millennium Monument (12)**, built in the form of a sundial. Thirteen slate markers are sunk into the turf to mark the hours. Each is inscribed with an event significant in Newark's history. The gnomon (the bit that sticks up) bears a wavy blue line signifying the river as well as dates relating to the events portrayed on the markers.

Follow the path past the sundial towards the small clock tower in the distance. Cross the road and pass between the bollards to reach the Riverside Arena - the site that the cattle market was relocated to in 1885 (it has since been moved to its present site, further along Great North Road). At the far side, at the foot of the wall, can be seen the tops of **seven arches (13)**. These are the remains of some of *Smeaton's Arches*. In 1772, John Smeaton FRS, designer of the Eddystone Lighthouse, founder of the Institute of Civil Engineers and known as 'the father of civil engineering', was commissioned to create a viaduct from Muskham Bridge to Newark Trent Bridge to allow winter passage across the flood plain of the lucrative coach traffic on the Great North Road. The arches you see are in fact 16ft 6in (5m) tall from top to (underground) bottom and are set on brick piers 16ft 6in (5m) between centres; they were filled in when the ground level was raised as a flood control measure in 1932. Eighty-five of the original 105 arches still exist and some may be seen beyond the A46 roundabout, still performing their original role whenever the Trent floods.

Turn away from the Riverside Arena, cross the road and head towards Trent Bridge (14). Just before the bridge, a turn to the right and then to the left gives access to the board walk that passes underneath. From here it can be seen that the bridge is built of brick with stone facings. Constructed in 1775 - immediately after Smeaton's Arches - it replaced a wooden bridge with stone piers which had been too low and too narrow to permit larger river craft to pass upstream to Nottingham. The concrete and steel cutwaters of the present bridge were added in 1952 to afford protection from passing vessels. Above can be seen the cast iron beams which carry the walkways, added in 1848 to accommodate the passengers and traders using the recently opened Midland Railway station (1846).

Follow the path up to the bridge and cross to see, at the halfway point, the date of 1848 shown in Roman numerals on plaques on the railings (15). There are four plaques in all - two facing the road and two facing the river - emphasising the continued importance of the river to the town. The plaques also bear Newark's coat of arms and the motto "DEO FRETUS ERUMPE" - referring to the Civil War period and translating as "Put your trust in God and sally forth".

Continue on over the bridge, pausing to look to the right, where stands the tollhouse (16), with unusual 'crow step' gables to its rear extension, now the HQ for the Nottinghamshire Federation of Women's Institutes. Although partly rebuilt and overshadowed by the Romanesque gatehouse of the castle beyond, it still commands a certain authority over passers-by.

Cross the road ahead with care and pause again outside the magnificent Tudor style **Ossington Coffee Palace (17)**. Founded in 1882 as a temperance hotel by Countess Ossington, it provided an alcohol-free alternative for travellers and visitors to the markets until shortly before the Second World War, when it was converted for use as government offices (a sign painted on the wall of the

single storey building at the far end refers to billeting for airmen). Various unsuccessful businesses occupied it in later years, but now it stands in good health, having been converted to mixed residential and restaurant use.

Traverse the zebra crossing (noting how considerate Newark drivers can be) to end the trail back at the castle.

