



March 2017

## Welcome to the latest Castle Transformation Newsletter

Our March 2017 issue features:

- Project update
- Luddite Sword purchased at auction
- Simon makes the Museums Association board
- Scott's column - The Gatehouse, bridge and archaeology
- Object of the month - Escape Artist by Sam Taylor-Johnson
- Date for your diary - Big Day Out 30 April - Free entrance to the Castle



### Project update - March

Here is the project news for March.

**Brewhouse Yard repairs** - As featured in a previous newsletter, Brewhouse Yard Cottages have recently undergone repair work including roof repairs, re-pointing, and repairs to window casements and gutters. We are pleased to announce that this work has now been completed, and the scaffolding has been taken down. The cottages now look fantastic and we can rest assured that the improvements made will contribute to the longevity of the building and the collections contained therein.

**Historic England Conference** - Earlier in the month, Programme Manager - Cal Warren was invited to speak at the Historic England 'Place branding, pride and prosperity' conference, which was held at the University of Leicester. The Castle Project was featured as a case study, and was able to illustrate the potential impact of heritage projects on the surrounding locality. This was a great opportunity to raise the profile of the project and meet with others embarking on similar projects throughout the East Midlands.

**Student workshop** - During March, project exhibition designers Casson Mann participated in a 'meet the designers' workshop for students from New College Nottingham. As part of their work on the Castle's new Project Lab theme 'Faces', students enjoyed quizzing designers on the theme of portraiture and gained inspiration for their future work.

**Photography** - Our project photography team has been hard at work during March finishing off the last of the object photography. Based mostly at Newstead Abbey (home of the Nottingham City Museums and Galleries Costume and Textile collection), the three strong team has been photographing and measuring objects selected for display at the Castle. These images will be passed over to Casson Mann for spatial planning and 3D modelling of our exciting new exhibitions.



## Nottingham Castle purchases Luddite sword at auction

Nottingham City Council's Museums and Galleries Service has successfully secured an important artefact from the history of Nottingham after a bid at auction was accepted last week. The purchase was made possible with donations from the [Nottingham Civic Society](#) and [Nottingham Castle Trust](#).

The relic, known as John Blackburn's sabre, resonates with events that shaped history. Blackburn was one of the ring leaders of a gang of Nottingham men who carried out one of the most infamous of Luddite attacks.

To read more about the sabre and its history, please visit the [Nottingham City Council news page](#).

**Heather Mayfield, Chief Executive of Nottingham Council Trust said;** "This sabre is a compelling link to the stories of Luddites in Nottingham and beyond. We are thrilled that the City has been successful in purchasing this

significant object to be displayed in the re-developed Nottingham Castle galleries. The stories that we tell are brought to life by real objects from their day, to have such a rare survivor is very special, we look forward to seeing it on display soon.

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## Simon is elected to Museums Association Board

The Museums Association's (MA) membership has elected three new board members: Simon Brown, Sue Mackay and Gillian Findlay. They will join the board from 1 April for a three year term.

The MA is the largest membership organisation in the UK for museum professionals. The organisation champions the value of museums to society and supports and develops the people who work in them.

Simon is the curator of social history and world cultures at Nottingham City Museums and Galleries. He stood for election in order to address the unique challenges facing local authority museums in England, represent staff below management level, and campaign to increase representation in the workforce.

Simon said: "I'm thrilled to be joining the Museums Association board, I'm very grateful to those who voted. This is a fantastic opportunity for Nottingham and the wider region. I look forward to getting started, and representing our interests on a national level."

Read more about [the Museums Association](#)

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## Scott's Findings

Welcome to the thirteenth column from City Archaeologist, Scott Lomax. This month, he explores the excavations currently taking place at the Gatehouse.

"Visitors to Nottingham Castle in the past few weeks may have noticed excavation work being undertaken at the bridge leading to the gatehouse."

### What work has been undertaken?

"Two trenches, each measuring 1m in width and up to 7m in length, and a small test pit, have been excavated by Trent and Peak Archaeology. The reason for the excavation was to better understand the construction of the bridge, to establish at what depth historical elements of the bridge exist and to what extent it has been altered during the 19th and 20th centuries."

### What will this tell us?

"This will help us to ensure that the historic fabric of the bridge is fully protected during any future maintenance works. As part of the Castle Project the bridge will have structural work and these archaeological investigations will provide valuable information to ensure this nationally significant structure is preserved for centuries to come."

The excavations have revealed, beneath modern surfaces, a number of services including a brick drain of probable early 19th century date. Importantly, at a depth of approximately 1m, the northern wall of the bridge has been found. For almost two centuries this wall has been covered and revealing it enables us to establish how wide the bridge was and gives us more detail of how it was built and what it was built of."

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*Excavation images*

**Photo 1:** (top) Tom Hooley of Trent & Peak Archaeology excavating through 19th/20th century deposits at an early stage of the excavation

**Photo 2:** (bottom left) One of the partially excavated trenches over the eastern arch, showing electricity cables (foreground) and partially exposed probable medieval masonry forming the 13th century bridge structure (centre).

**Photo 3:** (bottom right) The northern edge of the bridge, with partially exposed masonry of possible 16th/17th century date, part of which may date to the time of the construction of the Ducal Palace in



the 1670s. Within this masonry is a re-used window jamb, of likely 16th century date, which was probably part of the medieval castle.

### **Origins of 'Hollows'**

"Up until the early 19th century, the bridge, with its two arches, spanned a ditch which ran down Castle Road. The ditch formed the outermost defences of the castle and prevented the castle from being captured during many sieges in the medieval period and during the Civil War. The existence of a ditch here led to Castle Road originally being known as 'Hollows'."

### **19th Century developments**

"During the early 19th century, when Lenton Road was formed, the ditch was filled on the northern side of the bridge and the brick walls, which can still be seen inside both of the bridge arches, were built. At this time the arches were used as cottages and stables."

### **The Gatehouse**

"In 1251 Henry III ordered the Sheriff of Nottingham to build a stone gatehouse and it is likely the bridge was built at the same time. Today, much of the original 13th century structure survives. The easternmost arch (furthest from the gatehouse) is original, though partially modified over the centuries.

The westernmost arch is much more recent, having been built in the 17th century, and certainly replacing an earlier timber draw-bridge. In 1525 it was recorded that the bridge was in 'great ruine and decay'. In 1536 it was ordered that a 'new draw brig made at the entre to the castell'. In 1575 a new timber bridge was built, which was replaced with a complete stone structure at some unknown later date. It is likely it was repaired during works to strengthen the castle in the Civil War and again when the site was developed for the late 17th century Ducal Palace."

### **Summary**

"The excavation has provided important new information about the Castle. Every archaeological investigation at the site enables us to gain another insight into the development of the site over its 950 year history."

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## Object of the month

**What is it?** The object we have chosen is a photograph from our Visual Arts Collection entitled - **Escape Artist (Multicoloured)**, made in 2008 by [Sam Taylor-Johnson](#) OBE (formerly known as Sam Taylor-Wood).

**Why is it significant?** Photography was collected in the early years of the Museum and Art Gallery from it being founded in 1878. There was then a long gap, before a renewed focus on collecting photography from the 1980s to the present day. In 2009 this object by internationally renowned artist Sam Taylor-Johnson's was acquired.

**Tell me more** The photograph is one of the "Escape Artist" series exploring ideas of weight and gravity. It shows the artist, apparently suspended by 8 helium-filled balloons. The bold balloon colours contrast with the vulnerability of her slumped figure whose face is

hidden by her hair and who is dressed only in pale coloured underwear.

This is a cibachrome fine art photograph, created by a hand colour printing process which produces pure, clear images which will not readily fade, discolour or deteriorate.

**In our opinion** "We chose this work because of its immediate visual impact - the colours of course, but also the mysterious way in which the full weight of the artist's body is held aloft by a few party balloons. It gives the whole image a feeling of both tension and fragility.

"We also wanted to show the importance of our contemporary 'art photographs' collection. Sam Taylor-Johnson studied at Goldsmiths College in London alongside Jake Chapman, Tracey Emin and Sarah Lucas and like them made an impact of one of the generation of so-called 'YBAs' ('Young British Artists') in the early 1990s. She was nominated for the Turner Prize in 1998 and is known for her video portrait David (David Beckham sleeping) for the National Portrait Gallery and her films Nowhere Boy about the early life of John Lennon (2009) and Fifty Shades of Grey (2015)."

**Deborah Dean** - Visual Arts Collections and Exhibitions Manager - Nottingham City Council

*Escape Artist (Multicoloured) will feature in the new Art as Inspiration Gallery currently being designed by exhibition designers Casson Mann.*



## Radio Nottingham Big Day Out - 30 April

Many museums and heritage tourist attractions across Nottinghamshire are offering free entry to their exhibits for the next "Big Day Out" on Sunday 30 April 2017.

This will include the Castle which is open from 10am-5pm - come down and meet the Castle Transformation Team - we are working on some fun activities for all the family to get involved in. We'll keep you posted on those!

The event is a celebration of the county's history and heritage and is organised by BBC Radio Nottingham. Thousands of people took part in last year's event.

A full list of venues taking part in this year's event will be available from mid-April