



How the transformation project will progress

Welcome to October's Nottingham Castle Transformation newsletter.

Here's what the project team has been up to over the past few weeks:

- We have procured [A Different View](#) as business planners for the project to support us with everything from ticketing and operations to creating an excellent catering and retail offer. They will be a key part of the team as we work on plans for the future management of the site.
- We've also been working closely with [Casson Mann](#) on photographing objects selected for inclusion in the new permanent galleries. Although our objects are well documented, 3D modelling for concept design requires specific standards of object photography. This work will continue over the next few months.
- Our very positive relationship with the City Council's Disability Involvement Group has been further developed this month. After initial meetings regarding the project it has been confirmed that members of the group will visit the Castle alongside our Project Access Consultant to give feedback on the proposed architectural and interpretative plans for the site.
- We worked with Nottingham Trent University for two days during half term week, to conduct an on site experiment to test an alternative entrance route to the site. Visitor journeys were tracked. The findings from this research will tell us if our proposed new entrance route into the Ducal Palace works for visitors. The decisions visitors made while finding their way around the palace will also go to inform our design plans throughout the development process. More detail on this study will feature in future newsletters.

Launching the new Nottingham Cave Trail and app

The rock on which Nottingham Castle sits is riddled with caves excavated by hand between the 13th and 20th centuries. These caves have fulfilled a vast array of functions including – secure access tunnels; wine cellars; ice-houses; slaughterhouses; gun emplacements; a rifle range; breweries; air raid shelters and even the venue for high-tech experiments measuring cosmic rays. The Castle's caves are also associated with many historical events and legends – most famously the capture of Queen Isabella and Roger Mortimer by the young Edward III.



As a result of the transformation project, increased and improved access to the caves within the Castle Rock will be provided. Guides will lead animated tours through the complex underworld, some parts never seen by the public, all with fascinating stories to tell.

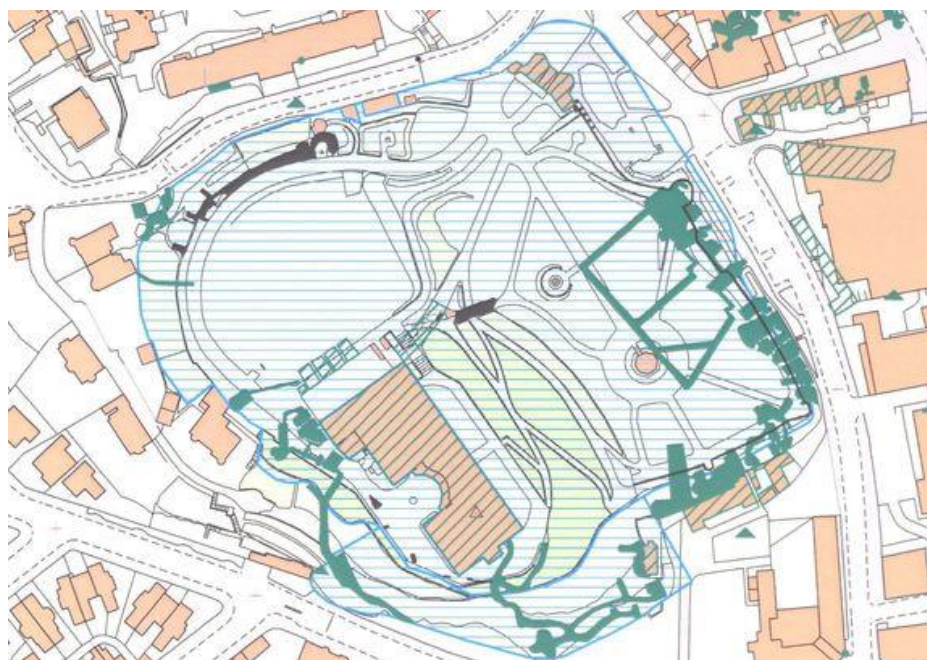
From 30 October, the new Nottingham Cave Trail and app feature a three-mile walk designed to give a special insight into what lies beneath just by looking at a screen. Using exclusive fly through videos and photos users can discover hidden treasures and 360 degree views of caves.

For information on how to download the free Nottingham Caves app, please visit the [Caves of Nottingham website](#)

Daily cave tours run at 12pm, 1pm, 2pm and 3pm every day that Nottingham Castle is open and cost £5 per person.

The Nottingham Cave Trail is thanks to a partnership between Historic England (previously known as English Heritage), The Arts Council England, Nottingham City Council, Trent & Peak Archaeology and Experience Nottinghamshire, and aims to showcase the caves of Nottingham, and the many cave-related attractions in the city centre.

Map of the caves at the castle site





Meet our team - Ann Inscker

Ann is Curator of Archaeology and Industry at Nottingham City Museums and Galleries and currently leads the 'Explore!' section of the Castle Transformation Project.

Currently researching the archaeology and history of the castle site, Ann's role is to create a digital guided tour of the grounds to help visitors understand the former medieval castle and how to see the parts that remain.

Along with help from a team of interested volunteers and colleagues, she is researching the numerous Castle Rock caves, their stories and looking at new tours and tour routes, to enhance this unique offer on site.

Ann also contributes objects and research to the other interpretative themes; 'Rebellion,' 'Inspired By' and 'Made in Nottingham.'

Ann said "I am visiting parts of the Castle I have never been to before, such as the roof and the South Castle Road caves, and it has been fascinating. I hope that some of my enjoyment and enthusiasm for the site will be experienced by our future visitors."

Object of the month

This month's object is perhaps a little unusual, as we don't yet have all of it. Originally excavated by Christopher Drage in 1978, it is a skeleton believed to date from the English Civil War and to have come from the area where the medieval chapel was once located.

Further excavations on the Castle Green by [Trent & Peak Archaeology](#) over the winter will hopefully reveal the rest and provide much needed clues as to both the age and sex of the skeleton.

We know from the memoirs of Lucy Hutchinson, wife of the local parliamentary leader Colonel John Hutchinson, that Royalist supporters captured during the conflict were held in the chapel at the Castle and some had their wounds attended to by Lucy.

Pathological evidence from the skeleton suggests that it was a young adult, although the teeth are extremely worn on the right side, possibly as the result of a bad tooth in the upper jaw. The teeth on the left side, whilst only very lightly worn, are covered in calculus (what we know as plaque) and thus, have a poor appearance. Hopefully locating the rest of the skeleton will enable the height, age, sex, and possible cause of death to be determined; and confirm the period of deposition, fingers crossed. The site where the skeleton was found, on the green, is one of the points of interest on the digital tour of the castle which visitors will be able to use as part of 'Explore! the grounds.'



Bubonic plague and the caves

During the fourteenth century, when the bubonic plague was ravaging Europe, Africa and the Middle East, plague hospitals were established in the castle rock caves to isolate those affected by this tortuous pandemic.

As [Brewhouse Yard](#) was outside the official town boundary, it was decided that sufferers from the county could be housed there, while those within would be housed just around the corner in the Castle Road caves.



The majority of these caves would have been excavated at a later period, so those available would have been far more limited than the number of entrances visible on Castle Road today. Records suggest that funds were laid aside to pay for basic comforts for the sick, such as the drawing of water.

Nottingham devastatingly lost half its population during this period of the Black Death, some 3,000 individuals, while across Europe as a whole some 25 million people died.

When a further plague arrived in 1510 and another in 1541, the town elected to build wooden huts on the higher ground of Gorsey Close [[now Gorsey Road](#)], Nottingham, near the modern [Hungerhill Allotments](#), to house the sick. Brewhouse Yard, however, continued in use, although this would have put the Castle at some risk, with supplies from the fishponds, mills and brewery all potentially using the communication tunnel of [Mortimer's Hole](#).

No royal visits are recorded for Nottingham during these periods of sickness.

If you'd like more information about the Nottingham Castle Transformation project or would like to get involved, do please drop us a line – we'd love to hear from you!