

# WONDER WANDER NEWCASTLE WEST



NATIONAL INVENTORY  
of ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

Comhairle Cathrach  
& Contae Luimnigh  
Limerick City  
& County Council

## INSTRUCTIONS

### TAKE A 'WONDER WANDER' THROUGH NEWCASTLE WEST:

- Wander through our streets, find the picture clues and delve into the stories that our town tells through its rich architectural heritage.
- Take ten minutes to spot the variety of window types in our architectural scavenger hunt, or simply relax and enjoy our carefully curated self-guided tour of Newcastle West.
- Always remember to glance up, peer down, and never cease to WONDER!



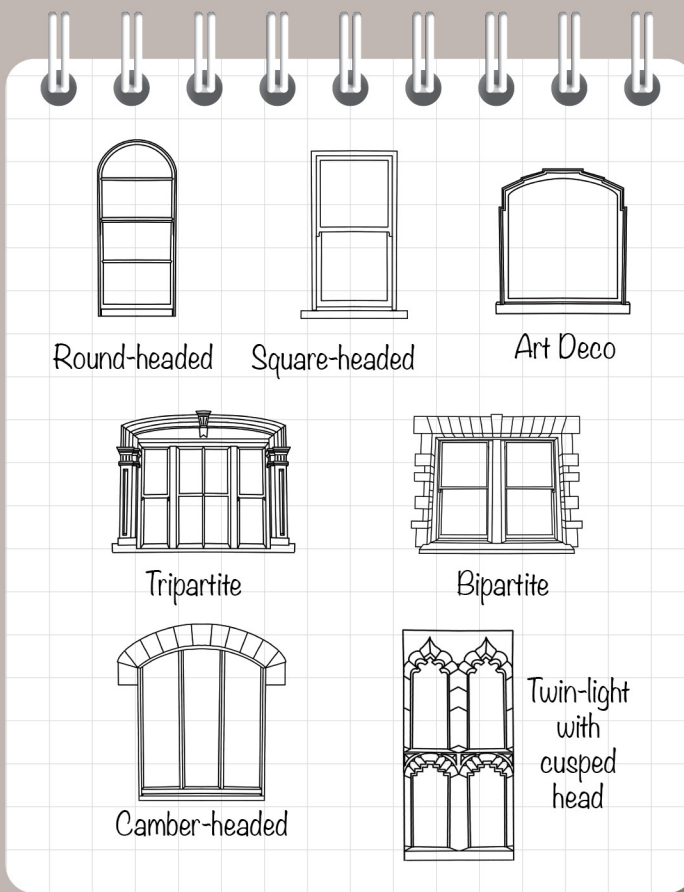
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## SCAVENGER HUNT

HOW MANY OF THESE  
WINDOW TYPES CAN YOU  
SPOT ON THE SQUARE?



## THE STORY OF NEWCASTLE WEST

The story of Newcastle West begins in the late 12th or early 13th century with the construction of a castle by the Norman Fitzgerald family, later Earls of Desmond. Its large banqueting hall, Desmond Hall, dating mainly to the 15th century and recently restored, is one of the finest medieval halls in Ireland.

The castle and lands passed to Sir William Courtenay in 1591, in the wake of the failed Desmond Rebellions. Under the Courtenay's, Newcastle West developed into a thriving urban centre known for its vibrant fairs, leather industry and agricultural trade.

The town continued to develop during the 18th and 19th centuries when a number of key civic and religious buildings were constructed. The arrival of the railway in the late 1850s improved access to the port city of Limerick and increased local trade and commerce.

The streets of Newcastle West bore witness to fierce fighting during the Civil War and a number of buildings were set ablaze. A monument commemorating the 17 local volunteers who were killed both during the War of Independence and the Civil War, stands on the banks of the River Arra.

In recent years Newcastle West has become an economic and social hub in west Limerick, a testament to the enduring spirit of a community deeply connected to its history, yet always looking towards the future.

**Want to learn more about Newcastle West Architectural Conservation Area and other Architectural Conservation Areas in the city and county? Contact the Limerick City and County Council Architectural Conservation Officer.**



With special thanks to the local community for their assistance in developing the trail.

## TICK THE BOX AS YOU WONDER

### 1. CAILÍN DEAS CRÚITE NA MBÓ

This monument commemorates the markets that once took place in the square. It is one of three sculptural pieces in the ACA by Clíodna Cussen, an acclaimed artist and native of Newcastle West (see stop 15 and 16). The milkmaid with butter pats in hand, together with milk churns and millstone, are set around the octagonal limestone base of a former water pump that once stood in this location.

Can you spot the cow beneath your feet?



### 3. THE TERRACE

Occupying one side of the square, this terrace of townhouses was built around 1830. The houses would have had round-headed door openings at ground floor, like the one that survives at No.10. Many were adapted for retail use in the late-19th and early-20th century when shopfronts were inserted.

*While on the square, why not hunt for some of the windows that can be found in our Scavenger Hunt.*



### 4. MÍCHEÁL Ó HAIRTNÉIDE

Facing Maiden Street is a statue of the Irish language poet Micheál Ó hAirtnéide. In 1980 Ó hAirtnéide published the acclaimed 'Maiden Street Ballad' that recalls his early years living in the area. Ó hAirtnéide's legacy continues to influence contemporary Irish poetry.

*Maiden Street is said to be among the oldest in Newcastle West. It was once home to a variety of thriving businesses including shoemakers, blacksmiths, bicycle shops, and even a cinema.*



### 5. ORDNANCE SURVEY MARKER

These crow's foot markings, or bench marks, were part of a system used by the Ordnance Survey in the 1830s to map terrain. They are often found on buildings, bridges, and other masonry structures. Completed in 1846, Ireland was the first country in the world to be entirely surveyed in such detail.



### 6. J.REIDY'S

The small scale window openings and steeply pitched corrugated-iron roof are typical of vernacular architecture. The roof form suggests that it may have originally been thatched, as were many buildings in towns and villages prior to the 1800s.

### 7. DUNNE'S

Like many shopkeepers in the past, Donie Dunne and his family lived on the upper floors above their tailoring business. The shopfront, with applied lettering and handsome fascia, is typical of early-20th century design. The window guard rails were designed to prevent cattle, horses, and other livestock from pushing against the large display windows, and were once a common feature of busy market towns.



### 8. COMMERCIAL PREMISES

This prominent building retains a traditional 19th century shopfront. Its richly carved timber detailing with ropework moulding, scrolled brackets, and fluted pilasters contrast with the comparatively restrained detailing of Dunne's 20th century shopfront (see stop 7).

### 9. NASH'S

Nash's began as a grocery and wholesale salt distributor in 1901. The business later expanded into bicycle sales, before Davy Nash opened a Ford car dealership and showroom. With its stepped gable, Nash's is typical of early-to-mid 20th century garages.

Locals recall that motorcars and tractors were delivered by rail to the former railway station that was located off Bishop Street. Opened in 1857, the line closed to passenger traffic in 1963 and freight traffic in 1974.



### 10. CURLING FOOTBRIDGE

Spanning the River Arra, this bridge was erected in 1866 in memory of Edward Curling, agent of the Courtney estate. It is constructed of riveted cast-iron in a simple braced truss system. The bridge provided mass goers with a direct route from the Maiden Street area to St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, which is located on the opposite bank of the river.

*If time allows, cross the bridge to Saint Mary's and the Old IRA memorial before returning to the trail.*

### 11. BOOT SCRAPER

Boot Scrapers, like this cast-iron example, were located beside doorways to allow for the cleaning of footwear. With regular livestock fairs held in the town, and in a period of horse drawn transport, a Boot Scraper was a simple yet necessary feature of 18th and 19th century urban life.

*Continue along North Quay where you will pass Cussen Solicitors. This family business has been here since the late 1890s. The building is typical of its time with a commercial use at ground floor level and family home above.*



### 12. THE BRIDGE

This bridge was built in the early 1800s over the River Arra. As a result of its construction, Bridge Street, once known as Bridge Lane, continued to develop during the period as a bustling commercial thoroughfare. The bridge's three limestone arches were built using a temporary wooden framework called 'centring', that was supported from the projecting stone corbels which can still be found below the arches.

*If you have time, follow the pathway along the north bank of the river to*



*Fuller's Folly, a small castellated building dating to the mid-19th century. Built by linen merchant William Fuller Hartnett, its construction is said locally to have contributed to his bankruptcy.*

### 13. COMMERCIAL PREMISES

Built during the 1840s, this corner premises was remodelled during the early 20th century in the Art Deco style. The decorative detailing is similar to the Richard Nash building on the town's square (see stop 18), with eye-catching geometric motifs both at eaves level and between window openings.



### 14. FORMER COMMERCIAL PREMISES

This fine historic shopfront, with ornate mouldings and decorative fanlight, was retained during the conversion of the ground floor into residential use. The continued use and adaptation of historic buildings, like this one, is essential in ensuring that our urban centres remain vibrant and attractive places to live, work, and socialise.

### 15. ST. THOMAS'S CHURCH OF IRELAND

The low walls to the north of the Desmond Hall form the footprint of a former church that was built in 1777 by William, second Viscount Courtenay. St. Thomas' was deconsecrated in



1958 and demolished in 1962. It is thought to have been built on the site of an earlier medieval church.

The sculpture of a rider on horseback represents Gearóid Iarla Fitzgerald, the third Earl of Desmond. Legend has it that the earl resides below the waters of Lough Gur and rises every seven years riding on a white horse with silver shoes. It is said that when the horse shoes have worn down the Desmonds will return to rule. This is the second of three sculptural works in the ACA by local artist Clíodna Cussen (see stop 1 and 16).

*Before continuing on the trail why not visit the Desmond Hall. Built during the medieval period as a banqueting hall by the Earls of Desmond, the building was later used as a cinema, before its recent restoration. The baptismal font from the now demolished St. Thomas's church is on display inside.*



### 16. SOPHIE PEIRCE PLAQUE

This plaque honours a trailblazing daughter of Newcastle West, Sophie Peirce, the first female pilot to fly solo from Cape Town, South Africa to London. She also made history as the first woman to undertake a public parachute jump in 1926. A pioneering sportswoman, Peirce was a powerful advocate for the inclusion of female



athletes in the modern Olympic Games.

The commemorative plaque by local sculptor Clíodna Cussen is mounted on the former Munster and Leinster Bank. Built in 1920 to designs by James Finbarre McMullen, a prolific Cork-based architect, the banks' stripped back classical detailing embodies an air of respectability and confidence.

### 17. BANK OF IRELAND

The former National Bank was built in 1864 by William F. Caldbeck, who also designed the courthouse in nearby Bishop Street. Caldbeck was the preferred architect of the National Bank and designed many of its branches across the country. An almost identical bank by Caldbeck can be seen in Roscrea, Co. Tipperary, which includes the very same male and female keystones.



### 18. RICHARD NASH & COMPANY LIMITED

Built as one of a pair, this remarkable building showcases Art Deco detailing. The distinctive geometric windows at ground floor level and the decorative render with repetitive chevron and fan detailing are typical of the style. Richard Nash ran a successful company that was famous for its red lemonade. He later went on to co-found the well-known bottled water company, Ballygowan.



# NEWCASTLE WEST

## ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION AREA

# WALKING TRAIL

AN CAISLEÁN NUA

WANDER THE ROUTE USING THE PICTURE CLUES OR BREAK IT UP AND WONDER...







### AN CHÉ THUADH NORTH QUAY

#### Where do streets get their name?

Quays were usually built to accommodate the loading and unloading of ships. As the River Arra is not navigable, North Quay probably refers to the quay-like stone walls which form the riverbank.

Have a look around and try and find the more unusual street names

#### MAP LEGEND

-  Architectural Conservation Area
-  Walking Route, 0.75km
-  Trail number
-  Picture Clue Number
-  Parking
-  Scenic View

