

The Castle



Newark Castle is one of a group of castles originally built as a Bishop's Palace and was built for the Lord of the Manor, Bishop Alexander of Lincoln.

The Castle was started in 1123. Built overlooking the river, with a fine Norman Gatehouse for the main entrance, there was a bridge leading from the castle onto the main road leading into the town. Much of the gatehouse remains today and is considered to be one of the finest remaining in the country. In 1216 King John died here on his way back from Swineshead. It is alleged that he died in the south-west tower of the Castle, but it is more likely to have been the Gatehouse.

Towards the end of the 13th Century the Castle was substantially re-built with a new riverside curtain wall being constructed. During the 15th and 16th centuries fireplaces were added and windows enlarged and glazed, as the Castle became more of a palace and less of a fortification. In 1547 the Castle passed from the Bishops to the Crown and was then leased to eminent figures including as [Thomas Manners](#) (Earl of Belvoir) , [William Cecil, Lord Burghley](#) (Exchequer to Elizabeth I) living there.

During the [English Civil War](#) , Newark Castle was an important royalist stronghold, controlling the main route North. The town and Castle withstood three sieges by Parliamentarian rebels in 1642, 1644 and 1646. However, in 1646, following the King's surrender, Cromwell and Parliament ordered it to be destroyed. The demolition started but was not completed due to an outbreak of plague.

In the early 1700s the Castle was leased to the Duchess of Newcastle and stayed with the family until 1836 when the crown land was sold off with the

exception of the Castle. In 1881 a local benefactor, William Gilstrap, offered to build a library in the Castle Grounds and this building was opened in 1885, the former library now houses the [Newark Tourist Information Centre](#).

In 1887 it was proposed that the Castle grounds were laid out as gardens for the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. They were officially opened on 24 May 1889, the day of Queen Victoria's 70th birthday.

In 2000 a Heritage Lottery Fund allowed the grounds to be refurbished with new paths, extensive planting and a bandstand; something which was on the original 1887 plans, but that never constructed.