

Institution: University of Nottingham		
Unit of Assessment: History		
Title of case study: The Curator of Rebellion at Nottingham Castle: Transforming Museum Interpretation and Practice		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000-2018		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Dr Richard A. Gaunt	Associate Professor	Since 1 Aug. 2000
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2013-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1.Summary of the impact</p> <p>Research undertaken by Dr Richard Gaunt has influenced and enriched one of the most significant heritage regeneration projects in the UK. Nottingham Castle will reopen to the public in 2021, following a £30m transformation programme. Gaunt's research led to an academic residency as 'Curator of Rebellion' at Nottingham Castle; his work underpins the new Rebellion Gallery, which is at the heart of the historic transformation of the site, shaping the presentation of Nottingham's heritage identity, whilst contributing to securing the Castle's status as an international heritage destination. His input was vital at key points in the development of the project in determining which episodes of rebellion and protest to select, and why, and he was able to give the project team and partners confidence in confirming these decisions. His contribution was essential in: (1) helping to secure substantial (£14m), essential Heritage Lottery funding to make the project a reality; (2) shaping and curating the Rebellion Gallery, focusing on seminal moments in Nottingham's rebellious history; (3) establishing and procuring an effective range of objects for the gallery to deliver the interpretation; (4) providing specialist, high standard research capacity to Nottingham City Museums and Galleries service (NCMG) which it would have been unlikely to replicate; and (5) developing a model for collaborative partnership working between HEI and NCMG which has since been adopted at their other heritage sites.</p>		
<p>2.Underpinning research</p> <p>Research undertaken by Dr Richard Gaunt has led to a changed understanding of Nottingham's reputation for rebellious political activity during the first half of the nineteenth century. Through closely examining the attitudes of the town's population, its governing corporation, and its leading local aristocrat, Gaunt argued that existing characterisations of Nottingham as a centre of rebellion required significant modification. The town favoured radical reform pursued by peaceful methods. As such, episodes of violence and rebellion were untypical of Nottingham's underlying attitudes and its preference for promoting meaningful reforms through petitions and public meetings.</p> <p>Gaunt's initial focus was on studying the 4th Duke of Newcastle-under-Lyne, an ultra-Tory aristocrat with significant electoral influence and patronage resources, as Lord Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire and the owner of Nottingham Castle. Gaunt argued that Newcastle's relationship with Nottingham demonstrated the limits of that influence, especially in light of the reformist attitude of the town's corporation and its rapidly expanding population [3.1]. These ideas were expanded in subsequent work on Newcastle's personal diaries; Gaunt was the first academic to produce a scholarly edition of this important source, revealing much about Newcastle's motivations for his actions at the time. The book revised existing interpretations of the Duke's reactionary political views, by locating them within the context of his troubled personal life [3.2]. This led into a re-consideration of Newcastle's electoral influence, which was an important component of his political identity. Gaunt demonstrated that contemporaries over-estimated Newcastle's dominance in the constituencies where he held electoral influence, highlighting the local contextual factors which limited that control. Relations between Newcastle and the constituents whose votes he sought to control (as landlord and property owner) were subject to disagreement on a range of issues. This tested the boundaries of the Duke's role and influence as an electioneer [3.3]. Having significantly revised existing accounts of a prominent local individual, Gaunt went on to consider Nottingham's role in protest, dissent, and rebellion during the early-</p>		

nineteenth century; notably, at the end of the Napoleonic Wars (1814-15) and during the failed Pentrich Rebellion of 1817. He showed that, whilst Nottingham had a well-established reputation for radicalism, and supported measures of social and political reform, **its active role in maturing rebellious activity was limited [3.4]**. Whilst sections of the town's population were more heavily implicated in maturing plans for the Pentrich Rebellion than had previously been appreciated, those plans were **restricted to a small group of committed radicals**, rather than the town's population as a whole. The local magistrates were well-informed about Nottingham's contribution to the rebellion and were successful in punishing many of those who participated in these events **[3.5]**. Using the example of three local rebels, from the Luddite (1812), Pentrich (1817), and Reform Bill Riots (1831), Gaunt demonstrated how the Nottingham authorities successfully prosecuted prominent local rebels whilst containing demands for more extensive political reform, in the face of violence and threats of rebellion **[3.6]**. **Gaunt's research demonstrates that Nottingham's contemporary reputation as a historic site of rebellion should be qualified in important respects**. This has been crucial in ensuring that a robust, rigorous, and critically nuanced concept of Rebellion underpins Nottingham Castle's new Rebellion Gallery, which is due to open in July 2021, delayed by 5 months due to Covid 19.

3. References to the research

[3.1] Richard A. Gaunt, 'Neighbours from Hell. The Fourth Duke of Newcastle and the People of Nottingham in the early Nineteenth Century', *Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire*, 104 (2000), 99-111 **[Available on Request]**

[3.2] Richard A. Gaunt, (editor), *Unhappy Reactionary. The Diaries of the Fourth Duke of Newcastle, 1822-50* (Thoroton Society Record Series, Nottingham, 2003). ISBN: 0902719191

[3.3] Richard A. Gaunt, 'The fourth Duke of Newcastle, the 'mob' and election contests in Nottinghamshire, 1818-32', *Midland History*, 33 (2008), 196-217.

<https://doi.org/10.1179/004772908X346875>

[3.4] Richard A. Gaunt, 'Nottinghamshire and the Great Peace. Reflections on the end of the Napoleonic Wars, 1814-15', *Midland History*, 41 (2016), 20-36.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/0047729X.2016.1159856>

[3.5] Richard A. Gaunt, 'The Pentrich Rebellion – A Nottingham Affair?', *Midland History*, 43 (2018), 208-228. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0047729x.2018.1522464>

[3.6] Richard A. Gaunt, 'Three Nottingham Rebels in the Age of Reform, c.1800-32', *Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire*, 122 (2018), 187-202.

<https://nottingham-repository.worktribe.com/output/1413840/three-nottingham-rebels-in-the-age-of-reform-c1800-1832> **[Available on Request]**

4. Details of the impact

Nottingham Castle is **the city's principal museum and art gallery**, regularly attracting some 40,000 visitors per year. It occupies the site of the original Nottingham Castle, which was dismantled at the end of the British Civil Wars in 1660. The 1st Duke of Newcastle-upon-Tyne constructed a ducal palace in its place during the 1670s; the building was significantly damaged during the Reform Bill Riots of October 1831 and was subsequently converted into a museum which opened in 1878. The site is operated by NCMG on behalf of Nottingham City Council (NCC). In 2012, NCC *'made a commitment to completely transform this internationally important site'* **[5.5]** with a view to increasing its reach and reputation as a major heritage destination. Nottingham Castle Trust (NCT) was formed to raise funds for the transformation programme and proposals were developed for refreshing the interpretation and extending the galleries, by **focusing on Nottingham's historic association with Rebellion and the Robin Hood legend**. Visitors to the Castle expect that it will be *'what you see in the Robin Hood films'* **[5.6, pp.2-8]** and NCMG wished to address this misconception through creating a new Rebellion Gallery.

In 2013, NCMG's bid for a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Heritage Grant was rejected **[5.6, pp.10-16]**; in part, because the service lacked direct access to curatorial and academic expertise in *'a new area of both collections policy and content development'* **[5.5]**. This was a major set-back for their plans: *'a first-round pass is given when HLF has endorsed outline proposals and earmarked funding. Detailed proposals are then considered by HLF at second-round and as long as plans have progressed satisfactorily and according to the original proposal, an award for the project is confirmed'* **[5.6, pp.23-25]**. However, NCMG secured

separate funding from Arts Council England (ACE), the AHRC, and NESTA, to develop a 'Riot 1831' gallery, focused on the Reform Bill Riots. Gaunt was invited to be the **historical consultant for the gallery, which drew heavily on his research [3.1-3.3]**. His involvement proved *'essential...in the historic re-interpretation of the riots and the 4th Duke of Newcastle, who owned Nottingham Castle at the time'* [5.1]. The gallery, which operated from 2014-18, received extensive local media coverage, generating enthusiastic visitor comments: *'the original artefacts which have been collected along the way are so precious...I was so excited to see what had been collected'* [5.6, p.9].

The **'Riot 1831' gallery successfully tested the concept of re-interpreting Nottingham Castle through its connections with Rebellion**, whilst Gaunt's role in the project demonstrated access to the necessary academic expertise. This was borne out in 2014, when **NCMG's revised HLF bid for a Heritage Grant was successful [5.6 pp.17-25]**. NCMG also secured separate funding from ACE to create the post of **'Curator of Rebellion'**, specifically to develop the Rebellion Gallery. *'Having worked with [him] previously on the Riot 1831 Gallery'*, NCMG wanted Gaunt's *'perspective, knowledge, and understanding available for the interpretation and design of the new galleries'* [5.2]. He was invited to undertake the role, on a three-year 0.5 fte academic residency (2015-18). This *'was crucial in enabling him to shape and evolve the content and interpretation of the Rebellion gallery over an extended period rather than in a shorter, full-time placement'* [5.5].

NCMG subsequently secured ACE National Portfolio Organisation funding for Gaunt's post-doctoral student, Dr Hannah Nicholson, to continue work on the project after the residency concluded (0.2 fte, January 2019-October 2020) [5.6, pp.61, 80, 99, 118, 137, 156, 175]. Supported by HEI funding, through institutional leave (2019-20), Gaunt continued to work on the project during the gallery build and installation phase, offering the same *'academic rigour afforded during the academic residency, building upon the consistency of approach required and providing the team with invaluable guidance and support'* [5.5].

Gaunt's contribution to *'one of the most significant museum developments in the East Midlands in the past decade'* [5.3, p.1], has thus resulted in the following impacts:

1). **Helping to secure substantial (£14m), essential HLF funding to make the project a reality.** Gaunt's initial focus (Mar. 2015-June 2016) was in ensuring that NCMG achieved a successful second-round outcome resulting in major project funding. This led to the development of a **detailed gallery design and interpretation scheme, underpinned by his research.** *'Content development is an iterative process of check, challenge and balance and [Gaunt] was rigorous in ensuring that the Rebellion Gallery did not include inconsequential narratives and events'* [5.5]. He *'provided the solid academic foundation for the content development and the basis for the learning programme for this gallery'* [5.5]. His involvement in determining *'the content underpinning the successful HLF Stage 2 bid'* [5.3, p.1] provided the *'academic rigour and credibility required by local stakeholders and national funders'* which it would otherwise have lacked [5.2]. This resulted in the award of £14m of HLF funding, towards total project costs of £30m, in November 2016 [5.6, pp.26-32]. This represented a **major economic stimulus to the region** in terms of cultural investment because, historically, the East Midlands has compared poorly in terms of Arts Funding [5.8, pp.29-39].

2. **Shaping and curating the Rebellion Gallery, which is key to the transformation programme,** focusing on seminal moments in Nottingham's rebellious history, with the highest quality academic research. Gaunt *'has played a key role [in] shaping and determining the interpretation, content and display of the Rebellion Gallery, ensuring it is underpinned by the highest quality academic research'* [5.3, p.2]. He determined core aspects of interpretation and design for the displays, including the interpretation strategy and design briefs, interactive displays, Audio-Visual films, and infographics. The new gallery offers *'a daring interpretive strategy'* [5.5] which explores three moments in Nottingham's history where citizens rose up against what they perceived to be injustice, illustrating what drove people to rebel, what happened to those involved, and the wider impact of their actions. The episodes selected are the British Civil Wars, the Luddite/Pentrich disturbances, and the Reform Bill riots. The main challenge has been how to present the concept of rebellion in a sensitive, nuanced way, avoiding crude or clichéd representations. Drawing on his research [3.1-3.6], Gaunt set

the tone for the interpretation, upskilled NCMG staff in their knowledge of these events and secured buy-in from the curatorial team. He *'helped our staff think more critically about the role of rebellion in modern society, encouraging visitors to reflect on the consequences of taking up arms, the alternatives to violent forms of resistance, and the causes which provoke modern rebellion today'*. He has thus been *'instrumental in helping the project to think about how to take a challenging historical subject, like rebellion, and present it in a way which will enable visitors to think about its origins, progress, and consequences in different historical periods'* [5.2].

Gaunt also *'defined narratives for these key episodes and provided the development team with reassurance that displays would be based on sound evidence'* [5.3, p.2]. His *'skilful advocacy'* with curators and stakeholders ensured that *'the gallery tells the stories of real people, with first-hand accounts and evocative objects'* [5.3, p.2]. Gaunt's involvement gave the project *'greater depth...than would otherwise have been the case, through his expert understanding of the nuances and complexities in the episodes considered and selected, and [in] communicating this understanding to partners'* [5.3, pp.4 and 10]. Through this, he **influenced curatorial practice** and helped to make museum colleagues *'feel comfortable with this challenging interpretation, which is a very innovative concept both regionally and in the national context'* [5.2]. Without his involvement, *'the selection of episodes for the Rebellion Gallery would have lacked any meaningful underpinning and rigour'* [5.3, p.4]. For example, *'the Luddite story has become very important to the Rebellion Gallery, and the narrative and displays will have a rigour that they would not have had otherwise'* [5.3, p.2]. NCC's *'confidence in the approach we have taken and the accuracy of the displays has been underpinned'* [5.5] by the crucial role which Gaunt played in the project. He has delivered a permanent gallery which is *'central to the redevelopment'* programme [5.3, p.1] and will shape how visitors perceive the history of Nottingham for decades to come.

3. Establishing and procuring an effective range of objects for the gallery to deliver the interpretation. *'Identifying objects of significance and strength to be included within the displays that would resonate with and engage visitors'* [5.5] was a crucial aspect of Gaunt's work, especially as NCMG did not start with an established tradition of acquisition in this area. Gaunt was pivotal in evaluating what was worth financial investment, in terms of purchase, and in brokering relationships for securing long-term gallery loans. His *'ability to broker a range of relationships and build consensus was a key part of [his] success'* [5.3, p.3]. Gaunt **secured permanent new acquisitions** for the displays, including a sabre owned by a local Luddite-turned-informer, John Blackburn [5.6, pp.33-40]. *'These key acquisitions are stellar objects helping to illustrate key events in the Rebellious history of Nottingham'* [5.5]. Gaunt established the provenance and importance of the objects, which will *'help to engage visitors and draw them into the story'* [5.2] behind them and provided the project team *'with complete assurance'* [5.5] of their historical value. He was *'able to identify key objects for each period, and gently but firmly explain why they were important'* [5.3, p.4]. Gaunt highlighted these acquisitions, in the context of NCMG's existing collection, through blogs [5.6, pp.41-45], appearances on regional television (10 April 2017 [estimated reach: 12,000], 18 Sept. 2017 [700,000], 25 June 2018 [500,000]), local radio (17 Apr. 2015, 18 Oct. 2016, 16 Nov. 2016 [60,000 each]) [5.6, p.183], the local press [5.6, pp.46-49], and a ten-minute interview on the BBC Local Radio network (16 Nov. 2016 [1.2m]) [5.6, p.183].

4. Providing specialist, high standard research capacity to NCMG which it would have been unlikely to replicate. At a time of local government reorganisation, including the restructuring of NCMG, Gaunt offered essential support, in terms of academic research, content lead, and quality assurance for the Rebellion Gallery: *'every detail has been checked for accuracy'* [5.5]. His position *'developed into what one consultee described as "editor in chief", a role that would be taken by a lead curator in similar developments, and not an academic'* [5.3, p.2]. Crucially, he created the vision for the gallery and ensured that it successfully **tells a coherent and engaging story**. Without Gaunt's involvement, *'the project would have lacked the essential direction in dealing with the range of material in a subject matter with which we had no in-house expertise'* [5.3, pp.2-3]. Projects of this nature can generate *'considerable anxiety...as they are expensive to produce and very difficult to change*

once an exhibition has opened' [5.3, pp.2-3]. Gaunt had 'to challenge, successfully, well established positions and perspectives, ensuring that ideas [were] well tested and agreed', and signposting 'good researchers and research resources' where relevant [5.3, pp.2-3]. For example, he 'was instrumental in providing contacts from his highly-developed academic networks within the University and more widely' [5.5] in respect of Robin Hood. Through his involvement, Gaunt brought 'an appropriate and dynamic level of challenge' [5.2] which will enable NCT (the site's future operator) 'to use his work through a variety of means to help visitors learn more about the role of Nottingham citizens in rebellion' [5.2].

5. Developing a model for collaborative partnership working between HEI and NCMG which has since been adopted at their other heritage sites. 'The relationship between the University and the Museum Service has...been pivotal in the design, implementation and delivery of the Castle project programme' [5.5], and Gaunt's work has offered a successful model of collaborative partnership working with an important non-HEI partner. NCMG describes Gaunt's academic residency as 'a unique venture within the field of museums and the higher education sector' [5.4]. **Collaborations of this nature are still uncommon;** Gaunt was able to reflect upon his experience more widely, as part of a Museums-University Partnership Initiative (MUPI) project exploring different types of academic residency [5.7]. In terms of **strengthening the relationship** with NCMG, Gaunt was 'a pioneer for what has since become an extended programme of...Academic Residencies', encompassing post-doctoral researchers and academic colleagues from across the University. **The academic residency model has subsequently been adopted at NCMG's key heritage locations,** Wollaton Hall and Newstead Abbey. Gaunt's work 'cemented and deepened NCMG's relationship with the University' and 'paved the way for a more comprehensive approach to partnership' between NCMG and HEI [5.3, pp. 3 and 5]. Without it, 'it is unlikely [that] NCMG would have written the University...into its National Portfolio Organisation bid...at a time when they were facing funding cuts' [5.3, p.5]. NCMG secured £2m of funding to support non-core activities (2018-22) [5.6, pp.61, 80, 99, 118, 137, 156, 175], including four postdoctoral academic residencies.

NCMG also works closely with regional HEI through the AHRC-funded Midlands 3 Cities/Midlands 4 Cities doctoral training partnership, offering short-term placements as well as co-designed Collaborative Doctoral Awards (CDA). In September 2018, Gaunt recruited a CDA to research the history of Wollaton Hall, with NCMG's Registrar as a co-supervisor. This model was replicated in September 2020, when Gaunt and NCMG secured a separate CDA to research the colonial context within which Nottingham Castle Museum developed its founding collection between 1878 and 1929. Gaunt's contribution has thus been crucial in developing an important research partnership between NCMG and regional HEI 'at institutional, as well as individual collaborative level' [5.4]. The project has contributed 'significant added value' [5.4] to NCMG, at a time of increased financial pressures on local government.

Gaunt's work in transforming the region's most significant heritage site has facilitated a deep and continuing partnership with NCMG which has been extended to its other heritage assets and made a 'significant contribution' [5.4] to the development and achievement of its Research Strategy.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

5.1 Quotation from 'Riot 1831' website: <http://www.riot1831.org/project-partners/>

5.2 Testimonial, NCT, Chief Executive (Jan. 2020).

5.3 *Academic Residency: Perspectives and Achievements. An Independent Evaluation Report by DC Research* (Oct. 2018).

5.4 Testimonial, NCMG, Chief Operating Officer (Museums), (Jan. 2020).

5.5 Testimonial, NCC, Nottingham Castle Project Programme Manager (June 2020).

5.6 Newspaper coverage, dossier of articles, 2013-20.

5.7 MUPI Final Report: *Academics in Residence* (Feb. 2018).

5.8 Noel Dempsey, *Arts Funding. Statistics* (House of Commons Library Briefing Paper, CBP 7655, 27 April 2016): <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7655/CBP-7655.pdf>