Concept Development — Part 8

Nenagh Historic and Cultural Quarter 27 November 2023 Version 2

Introduction

This Phase 2 report outlines our intent for the Nenagh Historic and Cultural Quarter in light of internal workshopping and interim feedback from the client.

In essence, this feedback led to the more efficient and consolidated design of visitor experience in the Gaol with an option for equivalent intervention in the Castle for a later phase. These two attractions have a shared approach to storytelling, while insisting that the public realm work harder to connect and integrate these spaces for visitors. The balance of this report is split in two sections. Firstly, it holds an outline for a more considered approach to interpreting the iconic Nenagh Gaol. We have developed a narrative that ties many facets of Gaol life together through a single immersive experience at Nenagh Gaol, tracing the escape of James Ryan. Following this is an option for a future visitor attraction at Nenagh Castle. Here we have developed a 'Nenagh through the ages' concept where small and often ignored aspects, touchpoints, details, objects unlock surprising stories.

Introduction

With two primary activation points, the Gaol and Castle, we want to build a mindset around them that carries through to the public space between them.

Nenagh is a town of many people and many stories. Some are outstanding, some are everyday, some are surprising, but it is in their unique combination that their richness presides. Interventions in the public realm represent an opportunity to capitalize on the powerful storytelling locked within the Gaol and Castle.

- The Gaol (including the exercise yard and gatehouse) will be the primary architectural assets to be activated.
- The Castle (including the grounds) and the public realm works, strategically linking each experience, will be considered as secondary options.

Rediscover Nenagh. Trace the lines of yours and Nenagh's past.

 $\overline{4}$ 800 years of people, place, and time.

Nenagh Historic and Cultural Quarter – Site Overview



Nenagh Historic and Cultural Quarter – Narrative Overview

We want Nenagh to become a place where stories unfold, where characters are discovered and developed throughout a day, a weekend, or a lifetime. There are three strands of experience that braid around each other and that visitors can engage with at the Gaol, Castle, and the town.

Visitors will discover Nenagh and will show how the town has changed over 800 years. By stepping into and seeing what remains, visitors will be drawn to what has been lost and fill the gaps between, either physically or in their minds.

Visitors will meet Nenagh characters. The people who colour Nenagh's history with surprise, crime, daring, great feats, or simple everyday acts of kindness will be a cast of characters or voices that create a dialogue between visitors and the town.

And visitors will find out a bit more about themselves. Placing themselves at the horizon of Nenagh's next chapter, or discovering their personal links to the historic town at the genealogy centre, the experience works on a personal and empathetic level, too.

- Start your journey through Nenagh in the present day, trace your roots to Ireland, and get a very personal introduction to the history of Nenagh.
- Hear the alarms and get ready to search for James Ryan, who has escaped from Nenagh Gaol. Challenges and activities introduce visitors to the mechanisms of Irish gaols but also the people who make up Nenagh – inmates, their families, those who worked and lived in the town.
- Climb the 101 Castle steps and hear from furious farmers who took aim at the keep, listen to the Butlers who laid the first stones at Nenagh, and look out over the timelessness of the lush landscapes of Ireland's Hidden Heartland.

Nenagh Gaol

Nenagh Gaol

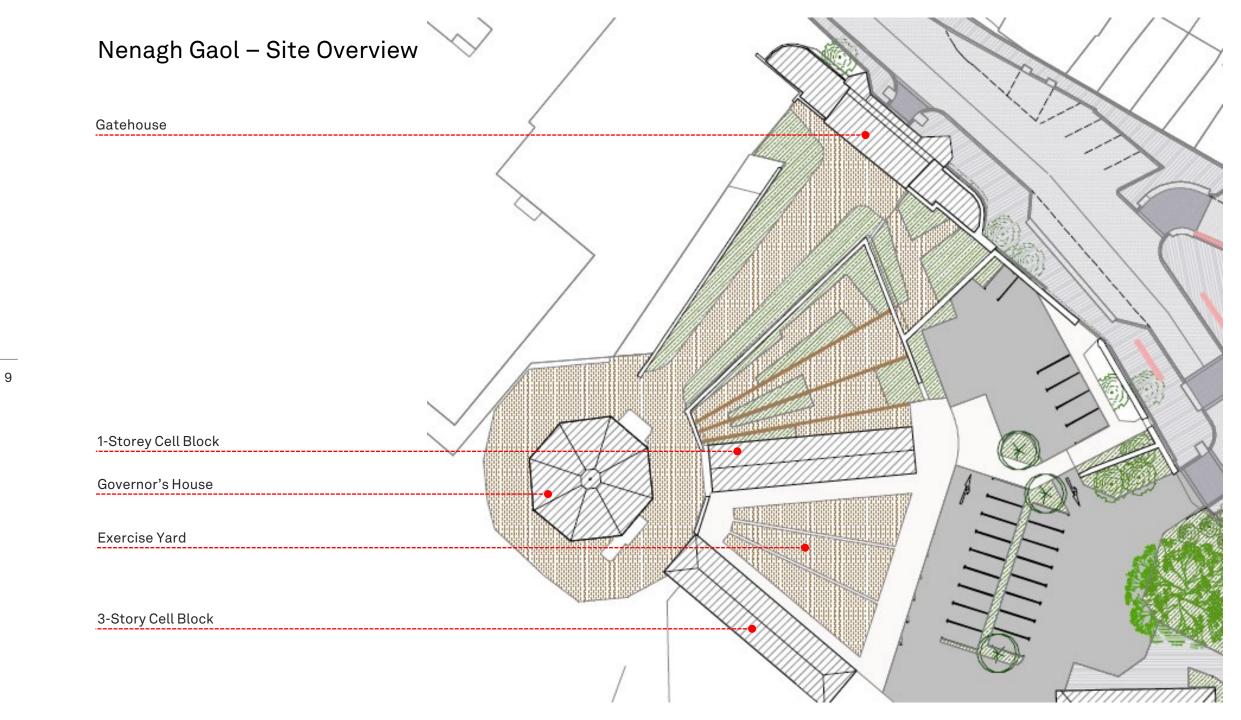
Nenagh Gaol is the home of plenty of lost, untold and iconic stories that touch on the historical, social, and political. By using characters and scenes to evoke a sense of presence and bringing universal themes to promote empathy, we will create an immersive introduction to Nenagh.

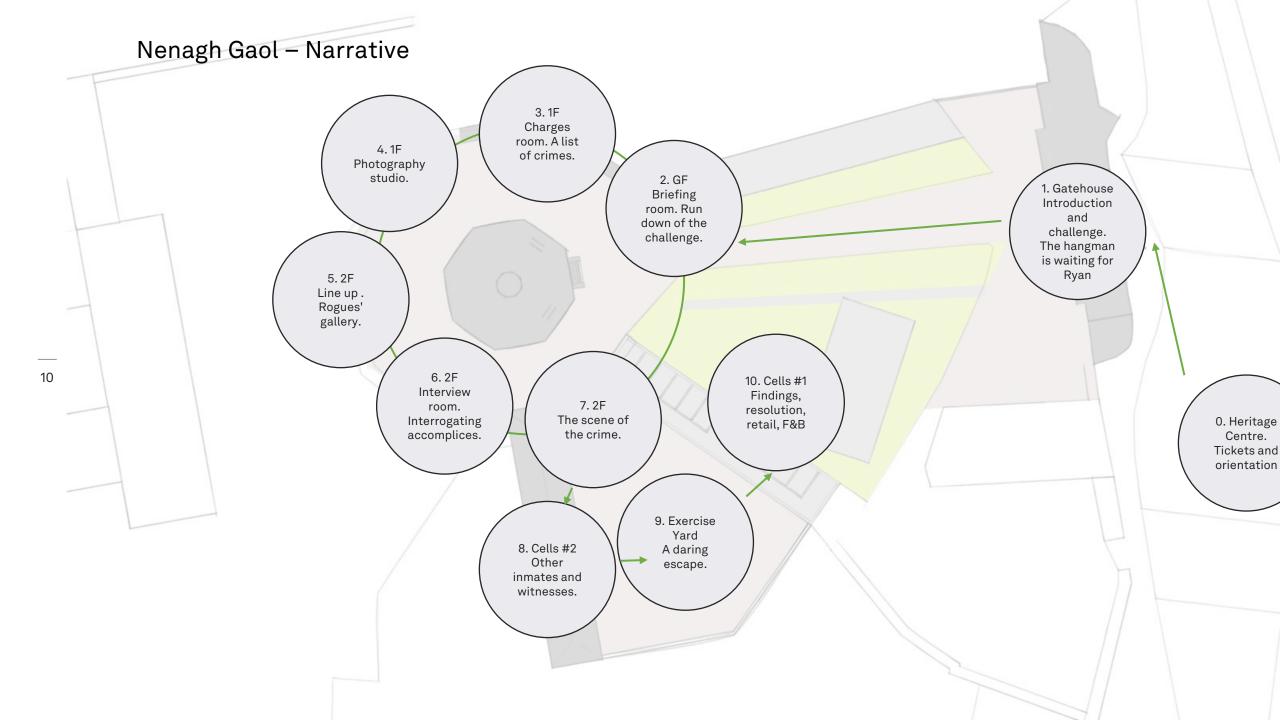
The entire experience is framed as a search for an escaped prisoner. The story is filled by a character that is never seen.

In the process, visitors will engage with others from Nenagh's history – the prison governor, other inmates, the escapee's family, concerned local residents. Part escape room, part heritage experience, this new Gaol experience is a framework that allows the history of Nenagh and the powerful aura of the Gaol to come to come to life in an immersive, atmospheric, and historical way.

Inspired by: immersive theatre, set design, escape rooms, historical fiction, and cinema, it will bring a theatricality to the narrative and social history the Gaol can tell.







Experience Overview



Regardless of the touchpoint – in the public realm, the Castle, or Gaol – this concept dramatizes history. We want characters to emerge out of the fabric of the Gaol, like ghosts stepping out of the shadows.

Despite the fact that the characters and stories here are unique, they have a sensibility that can be rolled out across the town. The visitor experience is entertaining tinged with fact, and efficiently plays with the space between the visible and the invisible. Visitors complete the experience and fill in the story.









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Nenagh Gaol - Narrative

Tens of thousands of prisoners passed through Nenagh Gaol. This is the story of one: James Ryan and his daring escape.

Visitors begin their journey buying a ticket at the Gatehouse, warned that someone has escaped. "Have you seen a man just over 5'5"? We may need your help to find him."

In the Governor's House, visitors are briefed on their task – to explore the Governor's House and Cellblock to find out as much as possible about James Ryan and work out where he might be.

It is a simple conceit but one that lays the groundwork for self-led exploration and opens up stories, both known and unknown, through this unexpected framework. 2. GF Briefing room. Run down of the challenge.

1. Gatehouse Introduction and challenge. The hangman is waiting for Ryan.

Ticketing and Briefing – Experience

Entering the gatehouse, visitors should feel that they have stepped back in time, into a space where a hangman waits for James Ryan. This will be through a combination of highlighting architecture and inserting media. Graphics will play a lead role here; one wall will be dedicated to picking up a printed guide that can be followed/filled in/scratched off.

Visitors should feel that they have stepped through a threshold and into a past world with a feeling of history and atmosphere.











Nenagh Gaol – Narrative

3. 1F Charges room. A list of crimes.

4.1F

Photography

studio.

Once visitors feel immersed in the story through the more operational aspects of the attraction, they enter the Charges Room. On a desk in the centre is a charges sheet showing James Ryan had recently be arrested for highway robbery and placed in an adjacent cell to his accomplice.

The Charges Room also has scores of reports from other inmates, outlining their crimes. This gives an overview of how turbulent Nenagh and Tipperary were as well as touching on social issues such as purposefully getting caught to have shelter and regular meals. Visitors will read about names they know – the Cormack brothers and Dr Langley, for example.

The Photography Room is testament to the fact Irish prisons were some of the first use photography to archive prisoners. Here visitors will be able to interact with prop cameras, interrogate real and staged photographs through interactive screens.

Charges Room – Experience

The room will be designed to look like a theatre set without any characters, a messy bureaucratic office that can be explored. In the centre, a large, heavy desk with a leather chair and drawers that visitors can open and explore with tactile props inside that give an impression of what prison guards would have used and needed daily.

On the surface of the desk is James Ryan's charge sheet so visitors are immediately drawn to the characteristics of the character the dates, the times, the crimes, the friends and accomplices. At the most basic, this could be a graphic panel, however, it could also be a interactive screen with multiple pages that visitors can flick through and explore.

Surrounding the desk in a semicircle configuration is a floor standing installation that holds many other charge sheets of different prisoners across the life of the Gaol. This will have a certain amount of floorstanding steelworks holding graphic panels no. 50-100. The material finish of the walls will be something of a chronology or/and geography of the local area so visitors understand when and where these prisoners came from.







Photography Studio – Experience

The purpose of this room is to look like an early photography suite from an Irish gaol, some of the first to use photography to keep a record of inmates. This is a playful rest bite for activity, interaction and secondary spend, if necessary.

A large projected wall has a number of settings: as a dynamic environmental backdrop that shows the inmates walking on and off stage, being photographed, surrounded by their details - name, age, height, etc. This then becomes a playful and functional backdrop for those who want to have their own mugshot taken.

There is one primary interactive: a camera set up for people to have their mugshot taken and added to a growing visitors' gallery. It is fully digital and functional but housed in a tactile casing mimicking a camera from the 1800s. The images are then added to a display on/around the backdrop wall. They will last the day before being deleted etc.







Nenagh Gaol – Narrative

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5.2F Line up . Rogues' gallery.

> 6.2F Interview room. Interrogating accomplices.

The first space visitors enter on the second floor is the Rogues Gallery. Here visitors will be able to approach those who are emprisoned in the cell blocks, to look in their eyes and humanise those they have read about. Who are these people? Are they old, are they young?

In the Interview Room, visitors will come face to face with digital avatars crucial to James Ryan's story. They will be Timothy Quilty, Ryan's accomplice to hear about how much crime was around Nenagh at the time and more about Ryan – he was a miner, could this give a clue as to how he escaped? They will also question Ryan's wife and hear about the personal, social, and political impact the criminal system had on families. Who else will they meet? Ordinary people and onlookers? Victims of robbery?

Rogues Gallery and Interview Room – Experience

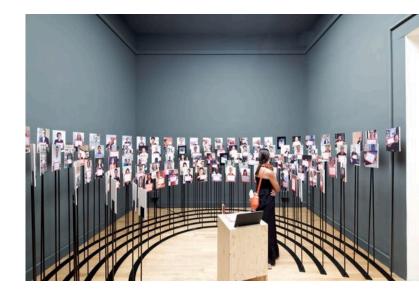
The installation will be similar to the charges room: floor mounted steelwork structures holding a combinations of screens and printed portraits mocked up to look aged. The walls will be a graphic treatment. The faces on the screens could look static and come alive to bring character to them, delivering content like narrators ("I am innocent, I swear!" or "I only did it to feed my family" etc), this needs to reinforce the human aspects of these characters.

This is the only room with real 'characters' or the presence of people in it. Here we show a simulation of an interview set up, which gives visitors the experience of hearing how knowing someone in the Gaol (whether a spouse, friend, neighbour, or accomplice) affects people outside of the Gaol walls. A social history and social story of the system.

When visitors approach the seat an interviewee appears, walking from the shadows, up to the screen, and sits opposite the visitor. Using subtitles, visitors are informed of who they are listening to. There could be 2 version of this content - one that is delivered as a monologue and one that is visitor-prompted through screen or desk interaction.

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Nenagh Gaol – Narrative

Into the Cell Block, visitors can explore a single cell crime scene to ask if they can work out where Ryan might be from the clues left in the cell he escaped from. Ryan escaped from a top level cell, and this will be mocked up with props, scenes, and interpretation.

The other cells will be 'peek spaces' telling the stories of notable inmates at Nenagh Gaol as well as those of Ryan's accomplices in his escape. Visitors will be learning more about Ryan's daring escape and getting closer to finding him.

7.2F The scene of the crime. 8. Cells #2 Other inmates and witnesses.

James Ryan's and Other Cells – Experience

Like an empty film set, this is to feel like there is a space that once had someone in it, who is no longer there and prompt the visitor to look closer at specific details: which books were on the shelf? Is the bed still warm? How do you think James Ryan got out? Can you spot any tools, hints, clues? These are all aspects that can be inputted onto the visitors' examination card.

The cells will be eerie and subtle, seemingly devoid of life but full of the remnants of lives lived. However, step closer and hear the walls whisper their past, find out about the guilty and the innocent through the ghostly inhabitants of the Gaol.

With some architectural interventions to imitate Ryan's tunneling through the floor and an intelligent use of lighting, soundscapes, and media, the cell block will feel full and alive.















Nenagh Gaol – Narrative

In the newly walled exercise yard, visitors will not only walk on the footprints of the thousands of prisoners who craved this small outdoor space but also see the escape route that Ryan took.

Amazed at the courage required to scale the walls, visitors will have the opportunity to try the exhausting climb themselves.

> 9. Exercise Yard A daring escape.

Grounds – Experience

Placemaking interpretation including sculptural elements, embedded floor graphics and outdoor speakers. Wayfinding will be installed graphically on vernacular setworks such as walls, exercise equipment, clothes, shoes, etc. James Ryan's bespoke narrative setworks will consist of landscaped floor works (footprints, etc), props such as the tools he used to climb, and an installation of his escape method (sheets). A fun interactive could be a climbing wall - can you make the James Ryan escape?

Here, we have references for how subtle physical interpretation can transform the outdoor exercise yard, give the impression of previous inhabitants, and play with scale and perspective.

There could possibly be a signpost to Australia with interpretation to bring an end to James Ryan's story.

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Nenagh Gaol – Narrative

Over the wall, we find jump forward and find Ryan, now caught, and ready to board a ship bound for Australia. Not only is this a personal story about family links and the quest for a man to be reunited with his children, but also about the processes inherent within historic systems of punishment.

In the gatehouse we find out the fate of some of the other inmates visitors have encountered – whether they were freed to live their lives in Nenagh, hanged, found guilty or innocent.

10. Cells #1 Findings, resolution, retail, F&B

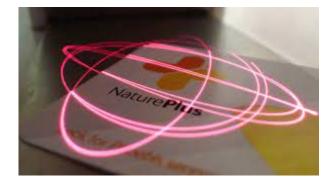
Gatehouse – Experience

The interior spaces of the gatehouse are the final space visitors experience and will be designed to resolve the narrative journey. The purpose of this space to reward visitors for searching for James Ryan as well as to tell them whether or not they found him, his fate, and also the fate of others at Nenagh Gaol.

The major interpretive elements here are graphics set works around the existing window, which looks out to the town – the site of hundreds of hangings.

A tabletop interactive with a scanner will be a major piece of media that visitors can interact with. By scanning their cards/handouts, visitors will see whether they found James Ryan as well as his eventual trip to Australia.











Founders and Survivors | Search

Nenagh Gaol – Narrative

While the experience has the theatricality of an immersive hybrid attraction, it is closely informed and true to the life and story of James Ryan.

Preliminary research has been undertaken on his Prison Ship Voyages on the prison ship Ratcliffe (or Ratcliff) to Van Diemens Land.

In 1845 Ratcliffe left Dublin on 19th May and arrived in Hobart on 30th August with 215 male convicts on board, including Ryan.

Other characters within the experience, including the Gaol Governor at the time - either Jonathan Smith or Thomas Rock - are real people informed by as much research as is possible.

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Survivora

Sailed 1845-08-30 Ratcliffe Ship Name Sailed From Dublin Ship Master Jas. Gilbert Rbt. Dobie Ship Surgeon Surgeon's Log ADM 101/63/3 : Ratcliff : 1845 (215 males) 103 Days at sea Arrived 1845-08-30 To Colony VDL Population Embarked:215M/Landed:215(VDL)M VDL convict records 1845-08indent 16278 30 1 om21743 Offence Detail same as tim quilty on board; stealing flannels om21743 16278R Police Number om21743 Social and Family 1845-08-Family Relationships w. ellen; m. fanny; s. biddy np. 30 2 om21743 reads Literacy om21743 Marital Status married om21743 Number of Children om21743 Religion roman catholic om21743 Trade miner om21743 Trade miner om21743 Trade well sinker om21743 Physical Description AFTER ? 33 Age om21743 Height Calculated Total 65.25 om21743 Inches Height Feet om21743 Height Inches 5.25 om21743

prosecutor mr hayes a pedlar

Prosecutor Details

Nenagh Gaol – Programming

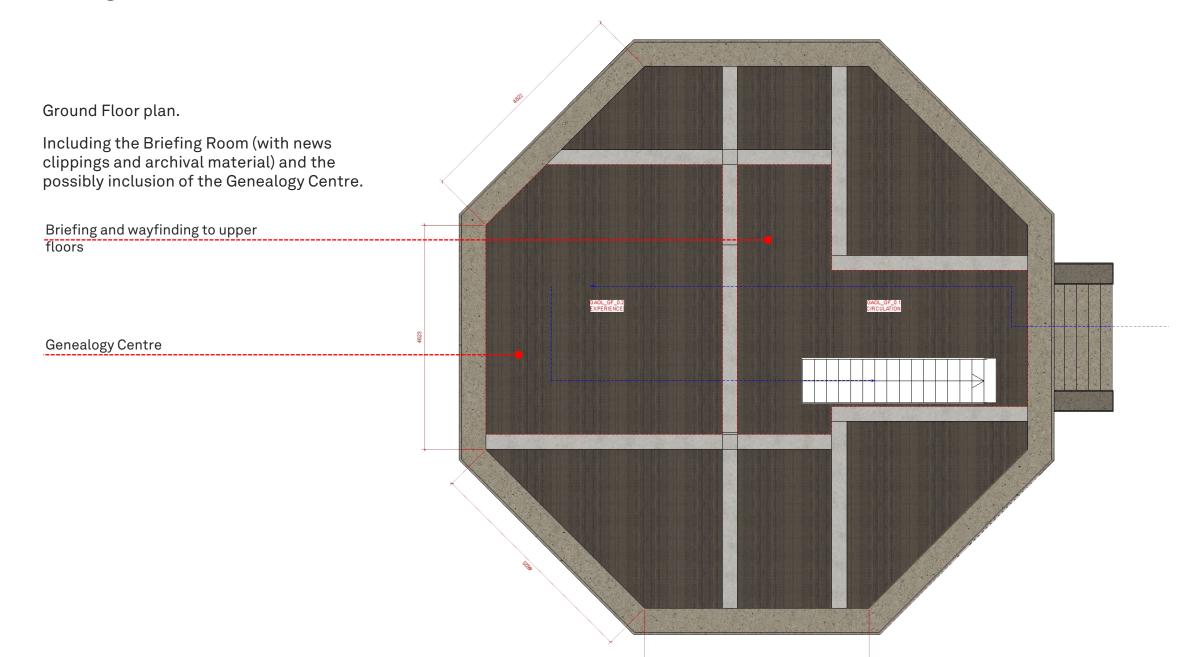
The outdoor spaces and the renewed architectural elements are a canvas for evening and seasonal events or ticketed experiences.



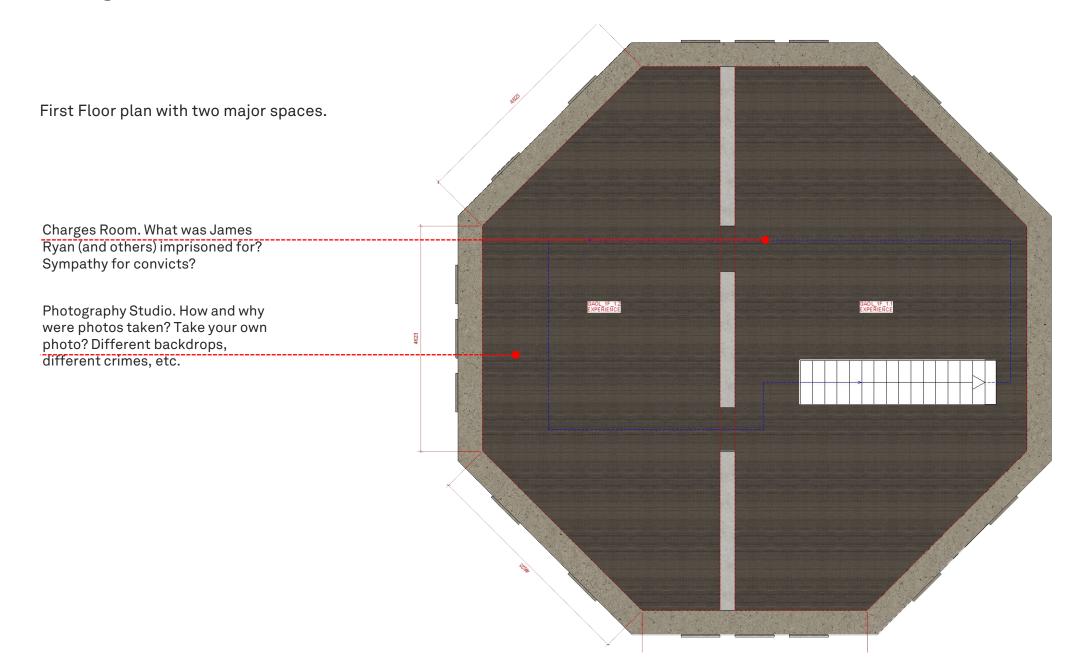


Drawings – Circulation

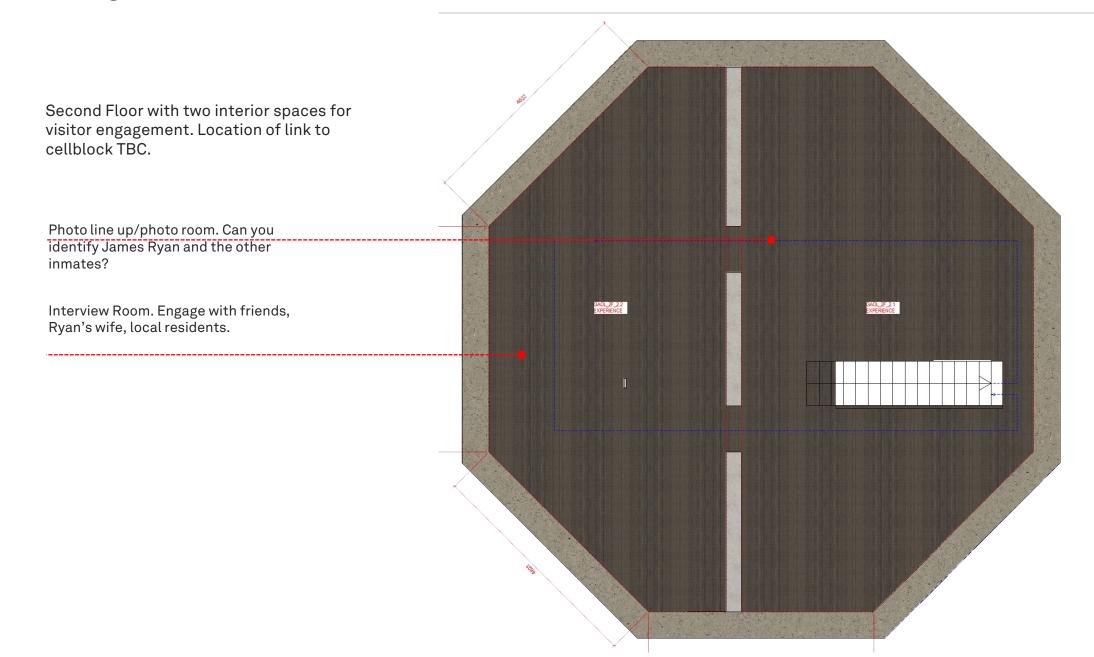
Nenagh Gaol – Governor's House



Nenagh Gaol – Governor's House



Nenagh Gaol – Governor's House



Nenagh Gaol – Escape Experience

Section shows the visitor journey through the Governor's House. SECOND FLOOR XXX Exhibit Second Floor 3. Identify Ryan from the line up (photos) ----2632 4. Interview cell mates, family etc. FIRST FLOOR First Floor XXX Exhibit 1. Charges Room 2676 2. Photography Studio Ground Floor GROUND FLOOR Entrance lobby Scene setting and briefing. Link to 2838 genealogy via people that lived in Nenagh / emigrated. 762

Phase 2 Options

Introduction

In addition to the visitor attraction outline for the Gaol, we have also considered the Castle as Nenagh's icon and how it could be worked into a complementary visitor attraction.



Nenagh Castle

Nenagh Castle

Nenagh Castle is the town's greatest icon. It represents 800 years of history, as an original seat of the Butlers, and physically places within Tipperary, which can be viewed from the spectacular viewing platform.

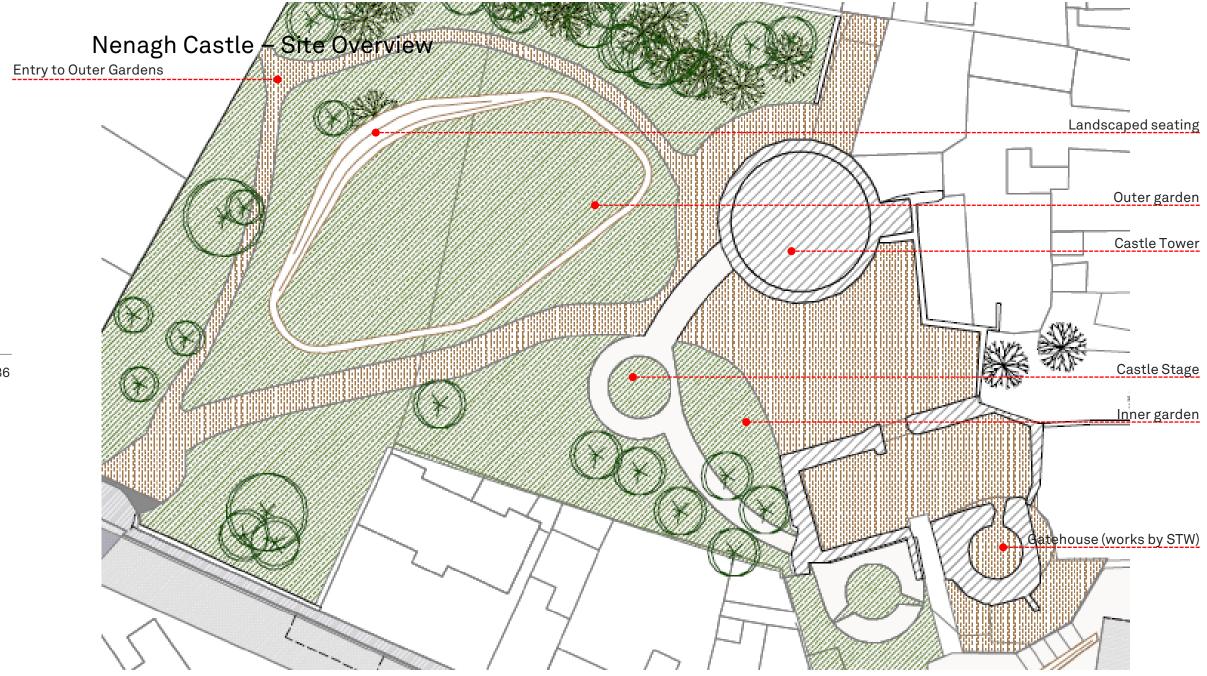
The Castle will remain Nenagh's icon but augmented by a diverse suite of characters across time; we want to the Castle to be the lens through which Nenagh is seen anew.

The landscape around the Castle evokes the history of Nenagh but brings bridges to today. The footprint of the Castle holds a stage and seating for tomorrow's stories to emerge.

In the Castle keep, each floor is a stage for immersive media - characters and their voices fill the 800-year-old building with dramatized versions of some of Nenagh's greatest moments, passing from today to yesterday.

The pinnacle of the tower is a viewing platform. Standing on the history of Nenagh's leading people, we want Nenagh Castle to be a torch that highlights the eternal beauty of the Tipperary landscape, through natural views of technological intervention.





Nenagh Castle should speak for itself but have the potential to take visitors though history.

With added written and graphic interpretation, the Castle will be the best version of its current self.

However, each layer of the Castle drops visitors into a different era of Nenagh's 800 years. Through immersive projection, abstracted looped media, and soundscapes, the history of Tipperary takes over the Castle. And disappears as quickly as it arrived.

Nenagh's crowning glory is its place in the landscape, a sight that is framed in the Castle's own 'crown'.





Crown/Roof

Timeless Tipperary (Forever)

Third Floor

The Seat of the Butlers (c.1200)

Second Floor

Prisoners and the O'Kennedys (1330s)

First Floor

Dismantling: The Williamite Wars (1690s)

Ground Floor

The Furious Farmer, Solomon Newsome (1750-1760s)





Improved interpretation in the Castle overlays a narrative that takes visitors back in time, level by level, to a time when the Castle didn't exist in Nenagh. Five stories bring five different types of characters into dialogue with visitors to show the spectrum of cultures and perspectives in the town.

Each group of people is present through a soundscape, evocative lighting, and projecting directly onto the fabric of the Castle.

Major moments in the history and fabric of Nenagh will be explored - agriculture and the land, conflict and war, the highs and lows of politics, dynastic nobility, and the richness of a town across time - over hundreds and thousands of years.

We imagine this will add value to the cultural offer of the Castle, and the town more generally, as well as increasing dwell in this part of the Historic and Cultural Quarter.

With 5-minute looped media on each level, the entire experience should last around 30 minutes.

Section through

The first into the Castle is through the basement door, blasted in the 18th century by Solomon Newsome, an infuriated farmer enraged by the sparrows, which were nesting in the ivy of the keep.

From a blast, a host of sparrows whirl around the keep. A cacophony of squawks and Newsome's rage fills the space. Then, as if he is in the room with visitors, the words of Solomon Newsome tell visitors why he blasted a new entrance to the Gastle in the 1750s.

The Furious Farmer, Solomon Newsome

Each level will unlock a deeper layer of history. A shared approach to storytelling (projection, light and sound with a first-person account) hold distinct aesthetic palettes together.

As time stretches back, memories become less precise, and history softens, the story leads from distinct people to 'types'. It also develops from active and noisy to timeless and meditative.









Prisoners and the O'Kennedys





The Founding of Nenagh

Williamite Wars

Nenagh Castle – Tower Viewing Platform

Once visitors have travelled back through time, hearing the voices of 800-years of Nenagh, they look at over the landscape that inspired people to settle here in the first place.

Across Tipperary, the views will not be altered. Across the town, translucent windows show either historic views of how Nenagh used to look, or animated/illustrated views that are now lost – the footprint of the Castle or the more recent O'Meara's Hotel on Pearse Street.



Virtual viewers



Talking heads





Opening overlays

Nenagh Castle – Interpretation Aesthetic

Once visitors have travelled back through time, hearing the voices of 800-years of Nenagh, they look at over the landscape that inspired people to settle here in the first place.



Interpreting the fabric and material of the Castle



Environmental graphics



Interpretation designed into projections



Approach to signage and information

Understanding that Nenagh Castle, by its very nature, will never be the most accessible heritage site, we can do our best to design narrative accessibility into the experience.

The experience design elements are intended to complement staffed tours, adding elements of media to illustrate stories that are difficult to explain in words, or to add atmosphere to storytelling. This is an approach we have successfully employed elsewhere, most recently at Elizabeth Tower to help the Big Ben guides (images, right).

We recommend working closely and collaboratively with local historians and guides to select the most appropriate stories to tell.

Furthermore, the ground floor should have an overview of the narrative to aid those who can't or would rather not use the stairs. This is likely to include a model of the complete castle as it would have been 800 years ago.





Recent exhibition design elements by Event to help facilitate timed tour groups, installed at Elizabeth Tower, London, 2023.



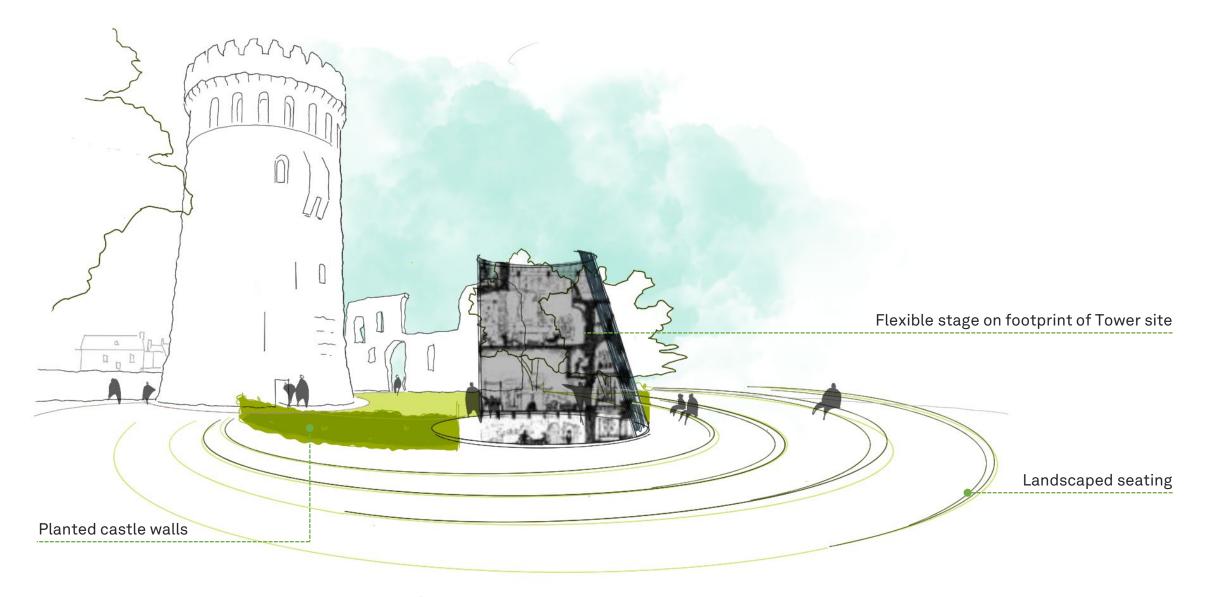


Filling in the ghostly spectres of the previous castle, putting the remaining keep in the context of its history.

Rich and tactile materials that are sympathetic to the conservation of a heritage building, combined with progressive landscaping, with make the interior and exterior Castle experience spaces that are informative, immersive, and promote wellbeing.

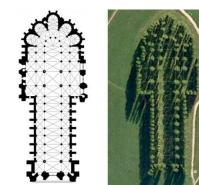
This is a piece of living and evolving landscape interpretation as well as a platform for groups to animate the town.





As much as possible, the Castle grounds will be alive and raised to show the original footprint of the now lost Castle.

Planted and raised earth seating will offer an undulating social space for events and relaxation, while natural living walls and impactful planting will bring the scale of the Castle into the 21st century with completely different views from the ground and the Castle tower.

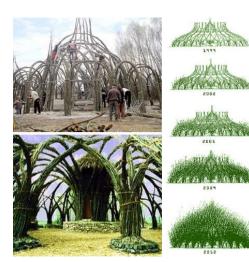


Views from above (tower)





Constructed castle walls





Planted castle walls



Raised earth seating

In the spirit of raising the list footprint of the old Castle, flexible public infrastructure will sit atop the locations of the lost towers and walls.

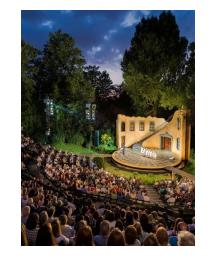
Circular motifs indicate the lost towers. A permanent bandstand or stage creates a space for Nenagh to evolve into a town of stories that stretches into the future. Tomorrow's festivals and events will have a home, combining heritage and innovation.



Landscaped seating



Mesh or reflective sculpture, evocative of one of the lost towers





Flexible 'stage' for programming and events

Reference imagery for events and programming opportunities in Castle Grounds



Food + drink festivals

Live events







Festivals of light

Seasonal planting



+44 (0) 20 7378 9900 eventcomm.com Event, India House, 45 Curlew Street London SE1 2ND