WONDER WANDER NAVAN

NATIONAL INVENTORY of ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

comhairle chontae na mí
meath county council

INSTRUCTIONS

TAKE A 'WONDER WANDER' THROUGH NAVAN:

- Wander through our streets, find the picture clues and delve into the stories our town tells through its rich architectural heritage.
- Pause to discover often-overlooked architectural details in our scavenger hunt, or simply relax and enjoy a carefully curated self-guided tour of Navan.
- Always remember to glance up, peer down, and never cease to WONDER!

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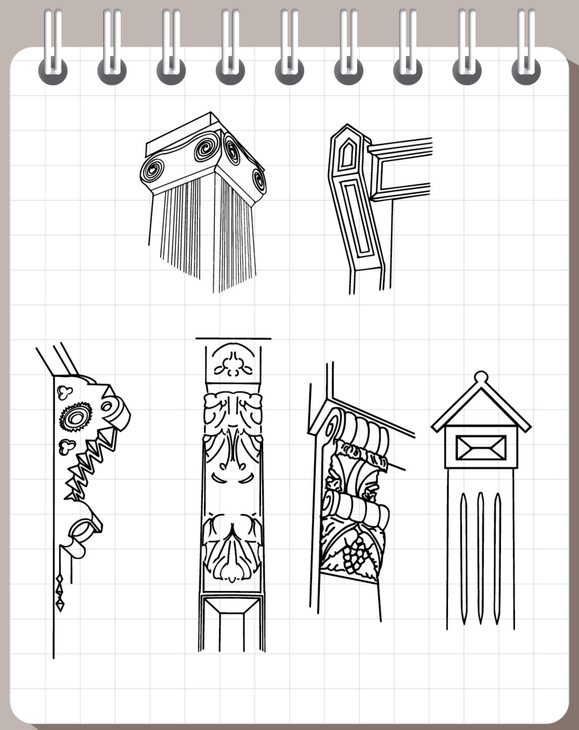
SCAVENGER HUNT

HOW MANY OF THESE SHOPFRONT DETAILS CAN YOU FIND ON WATERGATE STREET?



THE STORY OF NAVAN

The history of the modern town of Navan, or 'An Uaimh' in Irish, can be traced to the 12th century and the Anglo Norman invasion of Ireland, when a motte and bailey castle was built and the abbey of St. Mary's was founded.

Navan's strategic location on the Boyne secured its position as a key market town during the later medieval period. A fragment of a 16th century cross, which is thought to have stood on the Market Square, is now proudly housed in the Solstice Arts Centre.

The town prospered during the 18th and 19th centuries, aided by improved road, inland navigation, and railway connections, linking business and commerce with the sea port of Drogheda, as well as the nation's capital and other key regions.

Agriculture and industry made a significant contribution to the development of Navan. In 1853 the 'Great Leinster Fair' was established on the town's fair green. Reportedly one of the best monthly livestock markets in the country, it drew large numbers from near and far.

Mills on the banks of the Rivers Boyne and Blackwater provided trade and employment, with some reaching substantial scales of operation by the late 19th century.

The opening decades of the 20th century witnessed a shift in county administration to Navan and its ascendency as the county town of Meath. It was also a period of considerable expansion and economic growth, sustained by the development of specialised industries, such as furniture and carpet manufacturing, as well as lead and zinc mining. Today, Navan remains a thriving county town with a unique sense of identity and a strong vibrant community.

In recognition of the special character of Navan's historic core, Meath County Council has designated an Architectural Conservation Area. Together with the diligent efforts of the local community, this designation helps in the management and enhancement of its unique social history and wealth of architectural treasures.

Want to learn more about Navan Historic Core Architectural Conservation Area and other Architectural Conservation Areas in the county? Contact Meath County Council's Architectural Conservation Officer.

With special thanks to the local community and the Navan and District Historical Society for their assistance in developing the trail.

TICK THE BOX ✓ AS YOU WONDER

1. MARKET SQUARE ☐

The town's distinctive three sided Market Square has been a centre for commerce and public assembly since medieval times. In 1879 Charles Stewart Parnell, leader of the Home Rule Party and Member of Parliament for Meath, addressed over twenty thousand supporters from the upper windows of No. 22 Market Square.

The Market Square is now dominated by a sculpture of two men grappling with a bull, a fitting reminder of the thriving livestock fairs that were once held in the town.

2. MEDICAL HALL ☐

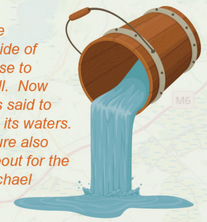
Dating to the early 1800s, a fine late Victorian shopfront was added to the building, complete with carved brackets, a retractable awning and decorative raised lettering. The term "Medical Hall" recalls a time when the roles of pharmacist, general practitioner, and even surgeon were often practiced by a single individual.

While many of the buildings along this street now have exposed rubble stone walls it is likely that these would have originally carried a traditional lime rendered finish that provided further protection from the elements.

3. OLD COURTHOUSE ☐

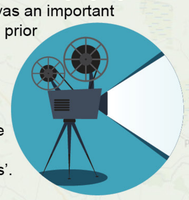
Built in the wake of the 1798 Rebellion, this early 19th century building served as town hall, gaol, and courthouse. Its neoclassical façade, with pediment, arcade of round-headed openings and overall symmetry, reflects the architecture of ancient Rome and its associated values of justice, law, and order.

Take a moment to stroll down the laneway at the side of the old courthouse to Tubberorum Well. Now dry, St. Patrick is said to have drunk from its waters. The well enclosure also served as a hideout for the highwayman Michael Collier, dubbed Navan's Robin Hood.



4. THE PALACE ☐

This early 20th century cinema is distinguished by its modern streamlined style, with a curved canopy and its eye-catching signage fin. The building was an important social venue, prior to the arrival of television. Locals fondly recall trips to the nearby sweet shop before enjoying a night out at 'the pictures'.



5. P. BERMINGHAM'S PUBLIC HOUSE ☐

Established in 1884, Bermingham's is one of Navan's oldest public houses, renowned for its well preserved pub front and Victorian-style interior.

The low stone bollard, or 'jostle stone', to the side of the carriage arch, protected the corner from damage as horse-drawn vehicles navigated the narrow opening.

6. COUNTY INFIRMARY ☐

When the Meath County Infirmary first opened in 1754, it initially had ward facilities for just 10 beds. Having served the community for over 200 years, the hospital finally closed its doors in 2010. The plaque over the doorway is inscribed with a verse from the bible reading - *"I was sick and you visited me"*.

7. ST. MARY'S CHURCH OF IRELAND ☐

St. Mary's was built c.1815, replacing an earlier church of the same name. The man credited for raising the new church was the Rev. Daniel Augustus Beaufort, father of Sir Francis Beaufort, of Flower Hill, Navan who is famed for devising the Beaufort wind scale.

The clock housed in the church tower dates to 1823 and was proudly maintained by the Walsh family, Navan's oldest watchmakers and jewellers, for over 150 years (location 17).

8. FORMER BELFAST BANK ☐

This bank was built in 1908 to designs of the Navan, and later Drogheda, based architectural practice of Anthony Scott & Sons. With its distinctive corner turret and use of red brick, a material synonymous with the architecture of Belfast, its design was a deliberate attempt to set the building apart from its more established banking counterparts on the town's Market Square (location 1).

9. BEDFORD PLACE ☐

Built in 1835 this short terrace reflects the restrained neo-classical style of the Georgian period with simple repetitive detailing, arched doorways and prominent steps. Note the decorative cast-iron boot scraper at the entrance to No.2 which resembles the fan-shaped leaves of a palm tree, a popular motif in the architecture of ancient Greece and Rome.

10. ST. MARY'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH ☐

Built in the 1830s to designs by the Dublin architect James Bolger, St Mary's is inspired by the Romanesque architecture of the 11th and 12th centuries, with round-headed openings and doorways of multiple concentric arches. The galleried interior is designed so the congregation is seated within easy sight and sound of the priest.

On the Trimgate Street side of the church you will find statues of the Virgin Mary and the Crucifixion by local sculptor Thomas Curry. Can you find Curry's name on one of these monuments?

11. NOS. 1-3 RAILWAY STREET ☐

By 1875 the railway line had been extended to Kingscourt, Co. Cavan, which was renowned for its brick and tile works. This resulted in the increased availability of building materials, such as the brick, seen here at Nos.1-3 Railway Street. Note the addition of an eye-catching circular window at No.2, which is framed in red brick in reference to the original material.

12. PADDY FITZSIMON'S PUBLIC HOUSE ☐

Built in 1892, this building is a fine example of Victorian architecture, enriched with Gothic Revival features such as the central gablet complete with crest and a crowning ball finial.

13. TOWN WALLS ☐

A plaque on the corner of Ryan's Public House marks the rebuilding of a section of the town's medieval defenses.

Believed to have been first built in the 13th century, the town walls featured gates at Watergate, Dublingate (Ludlow Street) and here at Trimgate.

A surviving section of the town wall survives at the council yard on Abbey Road.

14. FORMER POST OFFICE ☐

Designed by Edward Kavanagh, Surveyor of the Board of Works in 1908. The use of polished granite and limestone, together with the red brickwork produces a striking visual contrast. Kavanagh was responsible for many civic buildings throughout the country including several post offices such as this one.

15. NO. 46 TRIMGATE STREET ☐

Built in 1896 this red brick commercial premises, with its decorative stained glass windows, reflects the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement of the late 19th century. A reaction against industrialization, the movement marked a renewed interest and a return to the decorative arts.

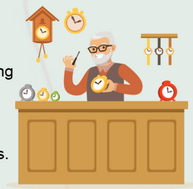
Locals recall that in the years following Irish Independence, 'Teach Earride na nGaedheal' (The Irish Warehouse) was proudly displayed above the shop.

16. JOHN MCEVOY'S ☐

McEvoy's originally opened as a public house c.1870. Its traditional timber shopfront, with simple pilasters, molded fascia and hand painted signage, remains part of the town's unique identity and a rarity in the fast-paced changing world of commercial architecture.

17. WALSH AND SONS ☐

Navan's oldest watchmakers and jewellers is distinguished by an impressive projecting clock which dates to 1902. Note the rich ornamentation of the supporting bracket which is embellished with shamrock and harp motifs.



Did you know that before 1916, Irish time was set from Dunsink Observatory, outside Dublin, and was some 25 minutes behind Greenwich Mean Time.

Watergate Street boasts some of the town's finest traditional shopfronts, dating from the 19th and 20th centuries. Pause to discover the wealth of decorative features in our Shopfront Scavenger Hunt.

18. TOWN HALL ☐

Originally built as a bridewell in the 1830s to designs by John Hargrave, architect to the Board of Works, the building showcases Greek-revival architecture. A style commonly used for civic buildings, it was intended to symbolise stability and democracy.

Take note of the iron stocks to the side of the entrance which once stood outside the old courthouse (location 3). Stocks like these were used as a form of punishment and public humiliation from medieval times to the 19th century.

Within the grounds of the Town Hall is a monument to the town's people who had served in the First World War. In common with many towns and villages, Navan saw men serve in the British Army, while also witnessing strong Irish Volunteer membership and activity.

NAVAN

ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION AREA

WALKING TRAIL

AN UAIMH

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

CAOLSCRÁID LANEWAYS

As you wander Navan, be sure to observe the many medieval laneways branching off from the town's main streets. Names like Bakery Lane, Foundry Lane, and Smyth's Lane were often linked to the trades or families associated with them.

MAP LEGEND

- Architectural Conservation Area
- Walking Route, 1.4km
- Trail number
- Picture Clue Number
- Parking
- Scenic View

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