



The Ruthin Gaol Experience

Poverty, Punishment, and Reform.



headland design associates

Hamilton House
Hampton
Malpas
Cheshire
SY14 8JF

Tel: 01829 271329
Email: stuartj@headlanddesign.co.uk

Ruthin Gaol has an array of imposing limestone buildings on the edge of Ruthin town with an impressive history underpinned by a wealth of bespoke stories which spans both its time as a Gaol, from the early 1700s, to its time as a munitions factory during the Second World War.

Denbighshire's remarkable heritage asset has many unique selling points to celebrate including the grandeur of the architecture which was formally recognised in the 1950s as a Grade II* listed building by CADW and it is the only purpose-built, Pentonville-style prison open to the public as a heritage attraction in the U.K. In addition, the site is rich in archival sources providing opportunities for authentic interpretation and a unique visitor experience which connects to personal stories from the past. The Gaol's history reflects a deep connection to crime and punishment within the town and society over centuries and the munitions story's distinct legacy is marked by it being told in an original factory building within Wales.

To its acclaim, Denbighshire County Council renovated, alongside an Archives Service reopened part of the buildings as a museum and visitor attraction in 2002. The museum is externally assessed by the Welsh Government's 'Visit Wales' programme through the Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme (VAQAS) and has reached full accreditation standards in collection care by the Art Council scheme. It has also won the Visit Wales Hidden Gem accolade three times.



This document represents the work carried out by Headland Design Associates to develop initial outline concept design proposals.

Headland Design were asked to provide an initial conceptual look at what a future visitor experience at Ruthin Gaol could become. This work follows on from previous work for the development of 46 Clwyd Street and the Ruthin Gaol Interpretive Strategy from July 2021.

This work assumes a holistic site wide approach and reflects the future development of 46 Clwyd Street as the future starting point for the Ruthin Gaol visitor experience.

The ideas described in this document reflect the intention to create a modern engaging and immersive visitor experience that will become a must visit opportunity for both local people and visitors to the area.



Current set – up

- 1) Ruthin Gaol Museum has a great reputation with knowledgeable staff providing a good visitor experience. It is no. 1 rated attraction in Ruthin on Trip Advisor and attracts a good number of visitors. feedback and reviews are good.
- 2) The current museum set up however is very restricted. Only a small part of the prison can be visited and only part of it's stories told. The most common comments from visitors are: *'want to see more of the Gaol'* and *'disappointed there's no café'*.
- 3) The current visitor offer although generally well received is in need of a refresh to reflect up to date visitor expectations, new ways of interpreting the story and engaging with both audiences and the local community.



Opportunities

- 1) Turning the Archive spaces into Museum space will provide a significant opportunity to improve and modernise the visitor experience creating a must visit attraction for visitors holidaying in the area and a destination for day visits from a wide area. New experiences including augmented reality, outdoor play, dedicated education space, access to upper floors, space for bigger exhibitions and events, room hire for events and meetings. New interpretation of the chapel and infirmary, links to the local workhouse, and to tell more stories of the town and local area
- 2) A new improved offer will significantly increase footfall to both the site and the town benefitting local shops, cafes, car parks, accommodation providers and other businesses. A good example of the potential is the Gaol markets, local businesses who haven't done so before are now opening on Sundays with one business owner commenting: *'We take more on the Gaol market day than we do all month'*.
- 3) Estimates suggest an additional 2000 visits in year one when the Gaol is opened with the phase one proposal including the developed 46 Clwyd Street, the main Gaol, Munitions shed and outdoor experience all part of the new visit. This is without extending the current season and opening times.
- 4) We'd expect this footfall to be higher with extended opening, and once we establish the new offer and aim to be open 7 days a week in the main season of school summer holidays and have extended opening into shoulder seasons being open Feb half term to end of October half term but closed November, December, January whilst still catering for schools, pre booked groups and special events such as Christmas markets.
- 5) Improved facilities and extra space provide the opportunity of delivering an extended activity and events programme for the benefit of both the local community and visitors. This would include attracting national exhibitions and providing opportunities for varied types of exhibitions and performance. All of these creating footfall and importantly, increasing repeat visits
- 6) Having more space within the Gaol provides opportunities to house museum collections and resolves the ongoing issue of lack of space at Lon Parcwr Museum Store which is full. Having better access to the collections also provides an opportunity for the public to 'meet the collections' via behind the scenes tours and 'meet the Curator' experiences to learn about how we handle, conserve and restore our collections - we can't do this at the warehouse store on Lon Parcwr.

The Archives

- 1) Create more access to the Denbighshire Collections – we have significant County and local area collections that cannot be displayed - the Gaol will provide this opportunity through 46 Clwyd street and the large Search Room Archives currently inhabit
- 2) Still have an Archives presence once a week – there will be free to visit spaces for this, also community meeting rooms ie for the local archaeology clubs, history societies, metal detectorist groups
- 3) More to offer local residents not just visitors - local history exhibitions, County exhibitions

Progress

We have already secured a LUF grant for the Phase 1 project and £65,000 is secured to develop the Phase 2 project.

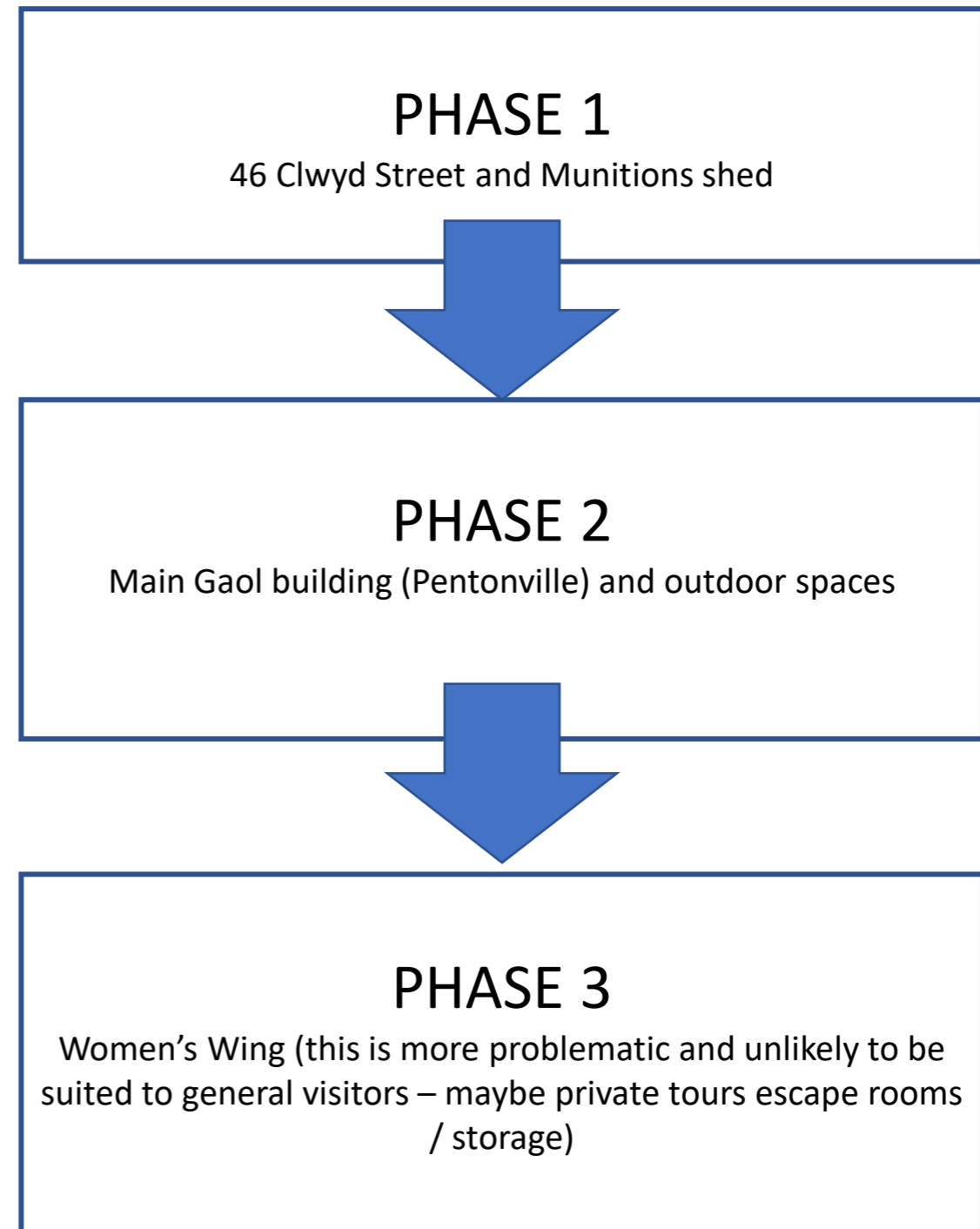
The Heritage team has successfully attained capital development grants and delivered development projects successfully before at Nantclwyd Y Dre house, The Lord's garden, and has upcoming LUF projects at the Gaol and Nant.

Meetings with the National Trust and Visit Wales to discuss our ideas have been extremely positive and both suggested that our ideas are right for the site and would largely benefit the area



A three stage project

The overall project would be phased as shown below.



Key principles to telling the story

The approach to interpretation would be based on six key principles, which will inform and shape everything we do to interpret and engage visitors with our heritage.

Connections

Forming and interpreting connections will be one of the key principles of the interpretation. This includes, but is not limited to, treating the site as a whole site experience; connecting the past and the present; connecting visitors to place (“it happened right here”); and connecting visitors with one another and with our communities.

Immersive

The original historic building complete with stairs and floors worn by the feet of the people who once walked through them. Interpretation will complement, and be integrated with, this **immersive and emotive experience** for visitors, rather than detract from it.

Collections-based

Our interpretation will be **borne out of our collections** (both historic sites and associated objects) and will celebrate the strength and unique nature of those collections. The stories we tell will be authentic and historically-accurate, firmly rooted in thorough research into our collections and associated archives.

Personal stories

Personal and individual stories of the people who lived, worked, or passed through the Gaol will form the basis of all the interpretation. Through this focus, it will evoke **empathy** in visitors with the real-life experiences of those connected with the site.

Contemporary relevance

The interpretation will emphasise the continuing relevance of the themes, through the inclusion of contemporary voices and stories. The interpretation could develop through work with charities, community groups, organisations and individuals to include the experiences of people still affected by the themes, **in their own words**.

Co-curation and co-production

To achieve the principles listed here, current best practice in co-curation and co-production will be utilised to **empower and enable our communities and audiences** to have a strong voice in our interpretation.

The 'Big Idea'

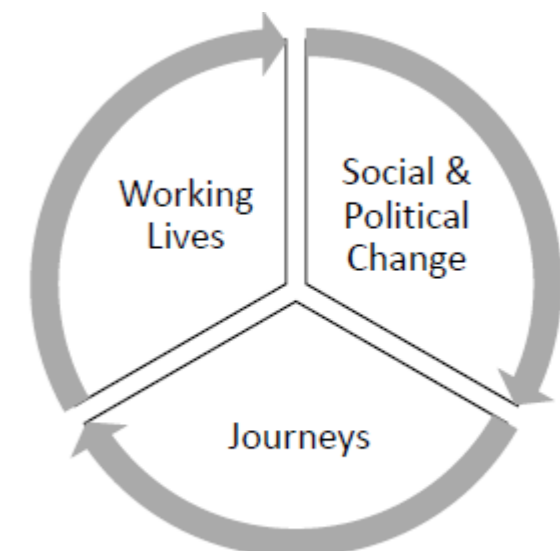
A defining statement, which encompasses the primary message that we want the visitor to leave knowing. It will provide visitors with an understanding of the history and what to expect during their visit.

Poverty, Punishment, and Reform

The tragic and remarkable stories of the people who worked and lived in this building over 400 years and how outside influences impacted their lives, evidencing the tenacity and courage of the human spirit.

The narrative story of Ruthin Gaol Museum would be set out in a thematic, rather than chronological approach and focuses on the stories that we would like to tell.

The themes evoke stories of **adversity, resilience, courage and tenacity**, which will enable the site to provide a range of stories that will appeal to a wide audience. The Museum's interpretive stories can be divided into the following overall themes:



Interpretive themes

A clearly structured interpretive framework identifies the key messages and stories we want visitors to know and helps to organise the interpretation into a cohesive visitor experience. Interpretation will be accessible will appeal to a wide range of visitors. The range of stories and messages we want to tell is highlighted in section two. These can be reviewed in terms of the following themes:

The tragic and remarkable stories of the people who worked and lived in this building over 400 years and how outside influences impacted their lives, evidencing the tenacity and courage of the human spirit.

Working Lives

- Types of jobs
- Work incentives
- Faith
- Diets
- Working conditions
- Health

Social and Political Change

- Political reforms
- Social reforms
- Attitudes
- Welsh culture
- Welsh language
- Personal stories

Journeys

- Denbighshire connections
- Piecing together the past through sources
- Personal stories

Interpretive framework

The table below provides an interpretive framework and describes the sub-themes within each of the three themes, the key messages for the themes and the people linked to this aspect of the history. The people will bring the story alive and personalise the history. The final column shows heritage assets, which will include aspects of the historic building, images, prints, photographs and objects in the collections as well as reference wider material.

Subject areas on the Gaol's history has, for the most part, been researched and used in current interpretation but the method of conveying the material could be conveyed better in relation to the themes and key audiences. There are new areas requiring research.

Social and political attitudes impacted on everyday lives when the building served as a Gaol

Key Story:	Key point	Heritage Assets
The poor in the early 1800s were neglected by society	Social problems such a poverty were seen to be the result of idleness and weak morals. Society believed that the crimes of the poor were inevitable and the individual should take full responsibility.	Norman Pearson's description of the poor Laissez-faire statements
Rural poverty; the precursor for crime	Poverty in rural Wales was not recognised, yet it was more challenging than urban poverty due to sanitary issues and fewer work opportunities over larger geographical areas.	Map of Ruthin pre 1820s; Period sketches of poverty; Extracts from Kier Waddington's book <i>Rural History</i> ; Common transport routes Personal stories relating to stealing for survival e.g. food and clothing
Retribution was savoured for many centuries	Public punishment allowed the whole community to take revenge on the criminal. Ruthin has a strong historic connection to retribution. Transportation of criminals to penal colonies	Photographs or images of St Peters' Square and gibbet (public hanging area); Timber courthouse in Ruthin with historic cells; Nantclywd yr Dre town house as a lodging for judges. Assizes posters. Documents relating to the public hanging of Franciscan priest Charles Meehan in 1679.
Initial lack of empathy for the welfare of prisoners generally	There was little leniency towards crimes committed due to poverty. Criminals of this nature were normally mixed with more serious acts of crime. <i>Did Ruthin Gaol always follow the rules?</i>	1841 Census 1803 Building Plans (an attempt at Ruthin Gaols to segregate); Clwyd Street Gaol photograph. Early Bridewell description
Educating the poor to be self-sufficient	Workhouses were established to re-educated the poor and put them to work. However, many were	Contemporary quotes – Political and Literary Ruthin Union Workhouse photograph 1965

and to deter people from crime	described as prison-like in terms of rules, welfare and work. <i>Did any criminals access the workhouse?</i> <i>What similarities were there with Ruthin Gaol?</i>	Ruthin workhouse map of 1910 Street view of Llanrhydd Street, the site of the workhouse Rules and Regulations Flyer Research to be undertaken as part of the project
Attitudes and legislative changes Divided opinions	Political campaigners attempt to improve prison welfare: John Howard (1726-1790), Sir George Onesiphorus Paul (1746–1820) and Elizabeth Fry (1780-1845). Contrast with Edmund Du Cane (1830-1903) when prisons were made even tougher and administered the system of hard labour (penal servitude) which made the work deliberately hard and degrading. The effects of transportation to penal colonies <i>Was legislation effective at Ruthin Gaol?</i> <i>What rights did the prisoners have?</i> <i>Did the welfare and living conditions improve?</i>	Extracts from published work and campaigns by reformers Newspaper articles Etchings of the period Extracts from political acts passed Extracts from inspections at Ruthin Gaol Clwyd Street prison build Clywd Street plaque Joseph Turner of Chester's Gaol designs Plans to extend buildings and overseer's criticism of the build Transportation legislation Transportation stories based on research Modern legislation
Welsh Culture Attitudes towards the Welsh language	A general disregard for the Welsh language has occurred for centuries. English court systems were insensitive to native Welsh speakers and conducted trials in English which meant at the trial the convict could not understand proceedings; The English language was primarily used in Gaols. The Victorian era was staunch in this view and sought to prioritise the English language over Welsh even in schools. There was a later move to provide a Welsh Governor at Ruthin Gaol - a softening of opinion?	Extracts from 'the blue books' inspector reports on education in Victorian times relating to Welsh regions Extracts in to the 'Inquiry of Education in Wales' 1847 Report focusing on the decision to introduce a Welsh Language Governor Welsh Not in schools
Criminal profiling begins	Robert Peel's introduction of the police force to prevent crime. The start of crime detection methods used such as mug shots; character descriptions, case profiling and later fingerprinting	Extracts from Robert Peel's Policing principles Wanted posters Local newspaper articles on criminals Ruthin Gaol's mug shots of criminals Extracts from Galton's finger-print system Ruthin Gaol's report logs on prisoners

Social and political attitudes impacted on everyday lives during the Second World War

Key Story:	Key point	Heritage Assets
Business owners effected by war	The Lang pen company of Liverpool relocate and cease production of fountain pens to make munitions at Ruthin. A secondary site in Abergavenny, Monmouth is obtained to make radiators for spitfires at the Cooper's Factory.	Trade directories, Street Map of Hope Street Photograph of the Liverpool Factory and Wade owners Cooper's factory Research to be obtained and artefacts as part of this project
Women's lives change from domesticity to working for the war effort	New work opportunities presented itself to women. Women in and around Ruthin contributed to the war effort through work e.g. Women's Voluntary Service (WVS); working on farms and in factories. The Gaol is repurposed as a Munitions Factory in Ruthin. The factory workers experienced new social freedoms After the war and by the 1950s most women returned to domesticity. <i>How were women empowered?</i> <i>Did women accept the return to domesticity?</i> <i>The impacts of the V.C visit</i>	Propaganda posters Munition artefacts Numbers on the walls on their the cells Munitions shed in the prison yard Photographs of trucks loading munitions in the yard and factory workers Newsreel footage held by the Imperial War Museum of a visit to munitions factory based in former Ruthin Gaol by Squadron Leader J.D. Nettleton V.C. – which shows women working Stills of the footage enlarged Contemporary audio clips about women in factories to be sourced e.g. British Council Films Interview records of two factory workers at Ruthin Lan Pen company archive records to be researched Local stories to be researched as other archive records Farming work to be researched
Men's lives	Men's conscription to military service and its impacts on their own life and the family lives in Ruthin <i>What local soldiers served in the war and what happened to them?</i> <i>What were the impacts on local families whose relatives died at war?</i>	Photograph of Ruthin war memorial Artefacts relating to WW2 e.g. War medals, uniform Research external collections relating to the story of J.D. in the National Archives; Imperial War Museum, Common War Graves Commission, (e.g. photographs, film footage, bomber plane image, military reports, The London Gazette 24.04.1942 Ruthin newspapers etc.) Research family stories in Ruthin
Welsh families children's lives	The government viewed rural Wales as a safe location to remove inner-city children from places like Liverpool to live with Welsh families. The	Relevant artefacts relating to the home front to be sourced BBC website extracts e.g. Major Bromfield WW2 newsreels, photographs, newspapers

	<p>children experienced Welsh culture for the first time through language, Sunday service, singing, and diet in a semi-rural landscape. Many evacuees came from Liverpool.</p> <p>The Clwydian range was used as a decoy for Liverpool which was at threat from bombing.</p>	<p>Maps showing train routes to Ruthin</p> <p>Photograph of Ruthin train station</p> <p>Research the house and family of 11 Upper Clywd Street, the home of a munitions worker, Eunice Smith</p> <p>Research family stories in Ruthin</p> <p>WW2 evacuee collections to be sourced</p>
Welsh Culture	<p>The factory workers often sang songs during the production line; the Eisteddfod was still a key cultural event in which some factory workers participated in; Chapel Sunday service still relevant</p>	<p>Sources relating to the 1940s National Eisteddfod to be researched</p> <p>Welsh songs</p> <p>Photographs of local chapels in Ruthin</p> <p>Research to be obtained as part of this project</p>
Welsh Farming	<p>POW's were sent to Welsh farming communities to alleviate labour shortages. There was a Prisoner of War Unit held in Denbighshire. There was pressure by UK government to yield more produce in wartime</p>	<p>POW camp in Ruthin</p> <p>Dig for Victory poster</p> <p>National Farm Survey extracts 1941-43</p> <p>Maps of local farms in Denbighshire</p> <p>Rationing</p> <p>Research or collections to be obtained as part of this project</p>
Improvements in welfare as a result of WW2 impacts on citizens	<p>William Beveridge (1879-1963). He led on social reform to establish the Welfare State</p>	<p>Quotes from William Beveridge</p> <p>Extracts from the Beveridge Report 1942</p> <p>Research to be obtained as part of this project on localised impacts</p>

The working lives of the people who once worked and lived during its occupation as a Gaol

Key Story:	Key point	Heritage Assets
Working roles of convicts in operating the prison	Explaining the realities of the work required by convicts to contribute to the running of the Gaol. The most common roles e.g. cooking, laundry, brickwork and cleaning. <i>Were some jobs better than others?</i>	Original features, the ovens, the laundry building, buildings themselves Period handling collections e.g. utensils, washtubs and posers. Likely to require investment in expanding on period collections
Jobs in terms of punishments	Explaining the work of convicts in terms of punishments e.g. The most common activities were The crank, treadmill, oakum picking. Introduce historic terminology 'money for old rope' 'screws' and 'towing the line' Speaking the Welsh language was punishable <i>Did other prisons treat the convicts similarly?</i>	The padded cell and Straight jacket The condemned cell The crank artefact The well as in connection to the treadmill Etchings and extracts from the silent and separate system Exercise Yard as a place for 'towing the line' The scotch cap
Working conditions of convicts were arduous	Investigating the impacts of all prison work on prisoner's health and wellbeing. Looking at areas beneficial to the prisoner; air circulation, outside provision <i>Was the welfare of the prisoner's a priority?</i> <i>What were the physical and mental stresses of the different types of work?</i>	The air vents and ventilation tower Exercise Yard The baths
Daily routine of the convict	Focusing on wake up calls, mealtimes (diet), exercise, work and prayer	Poster about the rules at Ruthin Gaol Archive sources on routines Common prayers Research information
Working lives of staff at the Gaol	Explaining the most common roles required to run a Gaol and what the key duties were e.g. prison guards; executioner, chaplain, warden, matron. Focus on how staff managed wake-up calls, mealtimes, hygiene, work periods, exercise, prayer,	Original artefacts e.g. Gaoler's keys; camera and chair, bath tub Escapes newspaper articles and wanted posters Research required as part of this project Archival information on the Billington brothers as executioners Likely to require investment in expanding on period collections

	visitor access, procedures for new inmates, prison escapees, punishments	Likely to require sourcing period collections e.g. infirmary and religious components in particular.
Working lives of those working in the legal system	Highlighting the judging process	Court records Research required as part of this project

The working lives of the people who once worked and lived during its occupation as a Munitions Factory

Key Story	Key point	Heritage Assets
Working roles of women in the munitions factory	Differentiate the various production lines in the factory e.g. soldering plugs on to wires; measuring and making bullets; attaching plates to rifles; weighing the bullets; machining shell cases Supervisor of the work stations; Examiner Officer (quality control); Store person (moving products to the cells); Packers, boxing up the good in crates Drivers who transported the factory goods	Newsreel footage held by the Imperial War Museum of a visit to munitions factory based in former Ruthin Gaol by Squadron Leader J.D. Nettleton V.C. – which shows women working in different roles. Enlarged prints of newsreel footage subject to permissions e.g. Newsreel footage shows drawings of the alterations made to the floors
Other working roles in the factory	Manager of the factory Mr Wade; overseer of the factory line; Alice Pye /Pie role unknown (presented a pen to the V.C. holder)	Lang Pen company records Research required as part of this project
Working conditions were arduous	Highlight length of working day and working week, night shifts, break periods and smoking, lunch times, noise, dangers on the production lines, lifting heavy items; pay) <i>What were the dangers of working with munitions?</i> <i>What were the work incentives?</i>	Munition artefacts Recounts from munitionettes Mary Louvain Jones; Eunice Smith and unnamed woman Enlarged stills of the V.C. film footage with women at their work station Likely that an investment into period artefacts required Research required as part of this project Local stories to be included and researched
Welsh culture helped to improve mental health	There was a sense that women had to support the war effort if their husbands were fighting the war and complaining over work tasks was not respectful. The munitionettes kept up their moral by singing	National Eisteddfod photographs Articles on the Eisteddfod Eisteddfod songs Research required as part of this project

The personal journeys of the people who worked and lived in the Gaol building

Key Story:	Key point	Heritage Assets
<p>Justices of Denbighshire building a new Gaol designed by Chester-based Welsh architect Joseph Turner</p> <p>Social and Political attitudes; health; religion</p>	<p>The Justices of Denbighshire are held accountable for improving living conditions in the Gaol; as legislation evolved more expansion, separate living qualities and healthcare provision</p>	<p>Joseph Turner plans Clwyd street building plans Records from the justices Air vent system Infirmary and chapel wards</p>
<p>A typical day for employees in the prison service</p> <p>Social and Political attitudes; Development of police force</p>	<p>How employees work were influenced by legislation in their daily work; their duties and roles and treatment of prisoners</p>	<p>Expansion of the Gaol More research to be completed as part of this project</p>
<p>Convict William Hughes is executed at Ruthin Gaol.</p> <p>Social and Political attitudes; Mental Health; Lives of the poor; Retribution</p>	<p>Attitudes towards Ex-military. Soldiers received no financial or mental health support after serving in the army. Working lives of the poor were demanding. Working in a colliery in the early 1900s was dangerous and poorly paid. Attitudes towards family desertion is seen as a crime Attitudes towards crime and public humiliation changes. The Billington Brothers discreetly erected and screened the scaffolding away from public view His children probably ended in the workhouse</p>	<p>Military records Court records Newspaper articles Mug shot of William Hughes Billington brothers</p>
<p>Convict John Jones (Coch Bach y Bala). Escapee</p> <p>Social attitudes</p>	<p>People in poverty turned to crime to survive Security at the Gaol was questionable Attitudes by Ruthin residents show he was fondly regarded despite his criminal behaviour Higher intelligence but no life opportunities Insight into weakness into early policing</p>	<p>Criminal records Postcard of his coffin North Wales Times extract 1913 Mug shot photograph Records of his escape Photograph of the church</p>

<p>Convict Owen Pritchard (Charles Williams) Escapee</p> <p>Social and Political attitudes; Retribution Transportation</p>	<p>People in poverty turned to crime to survive Security at the Gaol was questionable Disrespect for the workhouse Attitudes towards re-offenders was to punish through transportation Insight into weakness into early policing</p>	<p>Poem Criminal records Mug shot Photograph Trial records Assizes posters</p>
<p>Convict Margaret Williams. Escapee Social attitudes</p>	<p>Female prisoners rare but treated as harshly Security at the Gaol was questionable Insight into weakness into early policing</p>	<p>More research required as part of this project</p>
<p>Convict Grace Jones</p> <p>Poverty Transportation Working lives</p>	<p>People in poverty turned to crime to survive Welsh language not inclusive in court proceedings Consequence of women sharing same spaces alongside male prisoners Attitudes to illegitimate children Attitudes towards penal servitude and transportation rather than death sentence</p>	<p>Modern Mosaic Neptune ship images and records Transportation records Penal colony records Criminal and court records</p>
<p>Convict Eleanor Owens</p> <p>Poverty Transportation Freedom</p>	<p>People in poverty turned to crime to survive Welsh language not inclusive in court proceedings Attitudes towards penal servitude and transportation rather than death sentence Being pardoned – A second chance at a new life and family</p>	<p>Tasmania's cascades UNESCO factory Records relating to the ship 'Henry' Criminal and court records Marriage records to Edward little Hales Relatives historical research documents Research to descendants of the convict and potential recordings</p>
<p>Convict John Rowland Jones</p> <p>Transportation Freedom Working lives Social attitudes</p>	<p>Higher level criminal activity through embezzlement Attitudes towards penal servitude and transportation rather than death sentence Being pardoned – A second chance at a new life and family</p>	<p>Hansard newspaper feature Relatives historical research documents Photographs of Street names and home in Australia Research descendants of the convict and potential recordings</p>

The personal journeys of the people who worked and lived in the Munitions factory era

Key Story:	Key point	Heritage Assets
Squadron leader John Nettleton A soldier's journeys from conscript to enemy lines	Victoria cross holder visits the munitions factory to boost morale. His impact on the war effort Recognition and remembrance	Newsreel footage held by the Imperial War Museum of a visit to munitions factory based in former Ruthin Gaol Photographs and Images of j. Nettleton with his squad, aircraft Maps; awards
Eunice Smith Munitionettes	Themes on friendships, Welsh culture, working life and production of munitions	Photograph of 11 Upper Clywd street; 1939 register/find my past Group photograph of workers outside the Gaol; Further research required for this project. Particularly tracking down the relatives
Name unknown Munitionettes	Links to Welsh culture and types of work	Further research to ascertain individual from Ruthin records and to seek connection with family
Mary Louvain Jones	Links to welfare, works and impacts of war	Further research required for this project.

The personal journeys of the people who lived in Denbighshire during the Second World War

Key Story:	Key point	Heritage Assets
Alan Roach Evacuee Welsh culture	Experienced Welsh culture Experienced lifelong friendship	BBC extracts of Alan Roach; 1939 house register; Photographs of Plas Draw house in LLanyrhafal, Denbighshire; Photographs and Military records of the army career of Major Bromhead; Maps; Ruthin train station;
Elsie woods Evacuee	Welsh culture Positive and negative experiences of evacuation	BBC extracts of Elsie Woods; Mr and Mrs Thomas of Ruthin; Maps Research required as part of this project
A soldier's journey from conscript to enemy lines	The focus on local soldier's enrolment in the army within Ruthin town and where they served. Italian and German POW at Pool Park Camp, Denbighshire	Pool park POW camp extracts and maps; A local soldier's story Research required as part of this project. Ideally locate a family who had members working at the factory as well as soldiers fighting in the war. Research on POW; Collections to be sought

The Visitor Experience

The re-development of Ruthin Gaol is an opportunity to transform the visitor experience. This will include developing and structuring the interpretive narrative and developing immersive experiences that exploit and enhance the inherent drama of the historic spaces.

The interpretive narrative story will be told in a linear and thematic way which unfolds across the site and through each space to create an integrated site wide narrative experience.

The historic interior spaces will be respected, some will include subtle and respectful set dressing and using a cinematic audio-visual approach will create wonderfully immersive visitor experiences through the site.

At points throughout the visitor journey 'Story hubs' will be created to deliver focused thematic content. These 'Story hubs' will deliver the main interpretive narrative and aid visitor understanding as they move through the site. This approach will allow the historic spaces to 'breathe' and layered interpretation in these spaces will be light-touch, discoverable or AV to provide immersive experiences throughout the visit.

This overall approach will change the visitor experience from largely a passive one to one which immerses visitors in the site and the stories.

Approaches to storytelling

Varying the approaches to storytelling means that visitors have different ways of engaging with content throughout their visit. This responds to the idea that people learn in different ways and that we, as individuals, appreciate being offered more than one type of experience.

Interactivity features throughout the exhibition helping ensure that experimental and kinesthetic learners can find ways to engage with the story.

Sharing the story with visitors in all its richness requires a considered approach to how it is organised across the site as a whole and in the individual spaces. Variety in pace, rhythm and type of engagement makes for an enjoyable and memorable day out.



Developing a layered approach to the interpretation

Historic spaces –

Some of the historic spaces through the visitor journey will be set dressed to provide immersive environments in which to tell the stories.

Cinematic Storytellers –

The interpretive approach will seek to put personal stories at the heart of the visitor experience. The voices of inmates and staff and the sounds of the gaol will be used throughout to bring the story of the gaol to life. Together they will deliver the narrative around which the visitor experience will hang.

Story Hubs –

Exhibition points through the visitor journey where the more comprehensive stories are told.

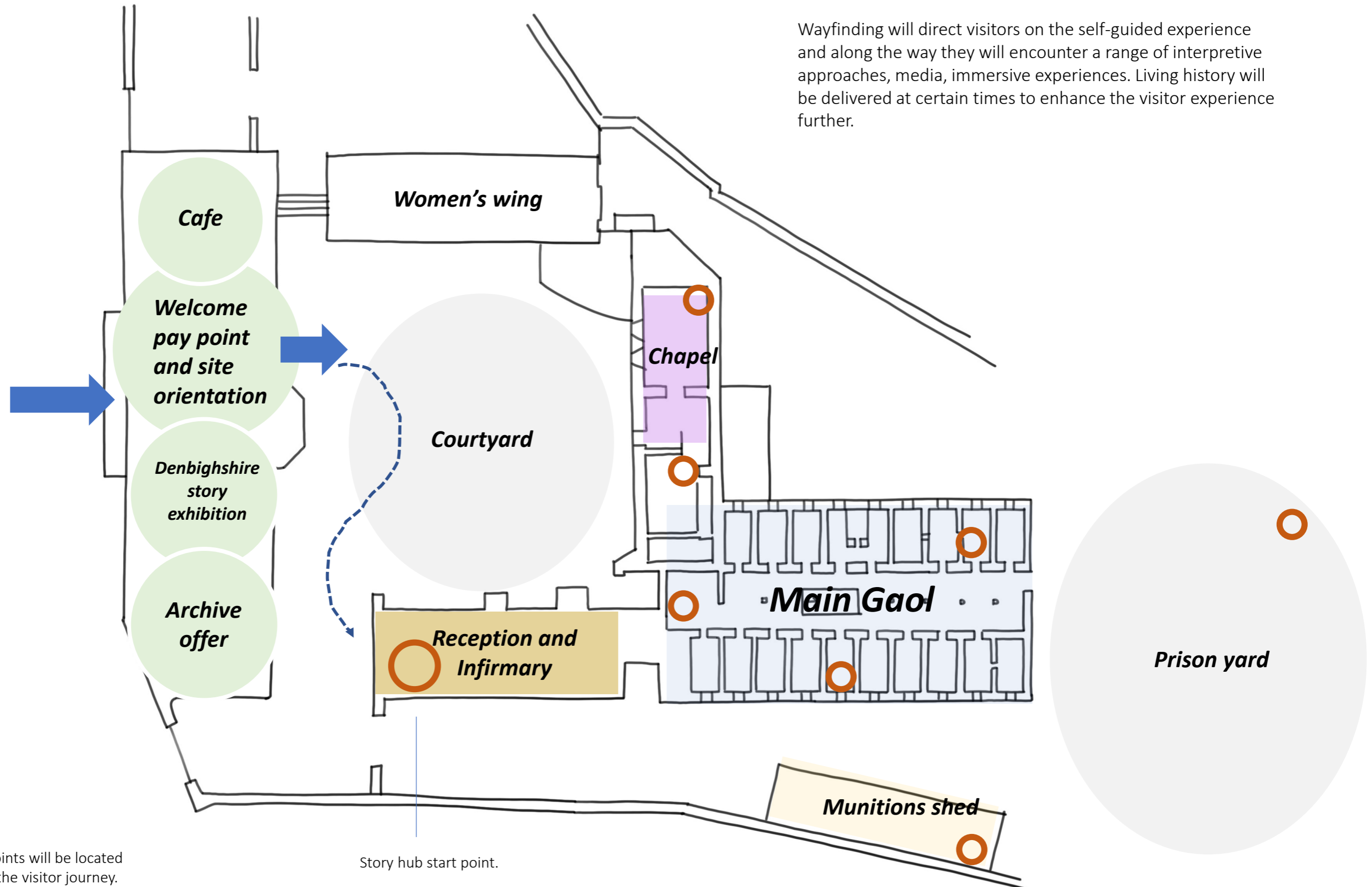
Discoverable Interpretation –

A further layer of interpretation can be discovered through the historic spaces. These may relate to specific objects on display and memory boxes.

Visitor journey

The visitor journey around the site has a structured approach.

Wayfinding will direct visitors on the self-guided experience and along the way they will encounter a range of interpretive approaches, media, immersive experiences. Living history will be delivered at certain times to enhance the visitor experience further.



Story hubs

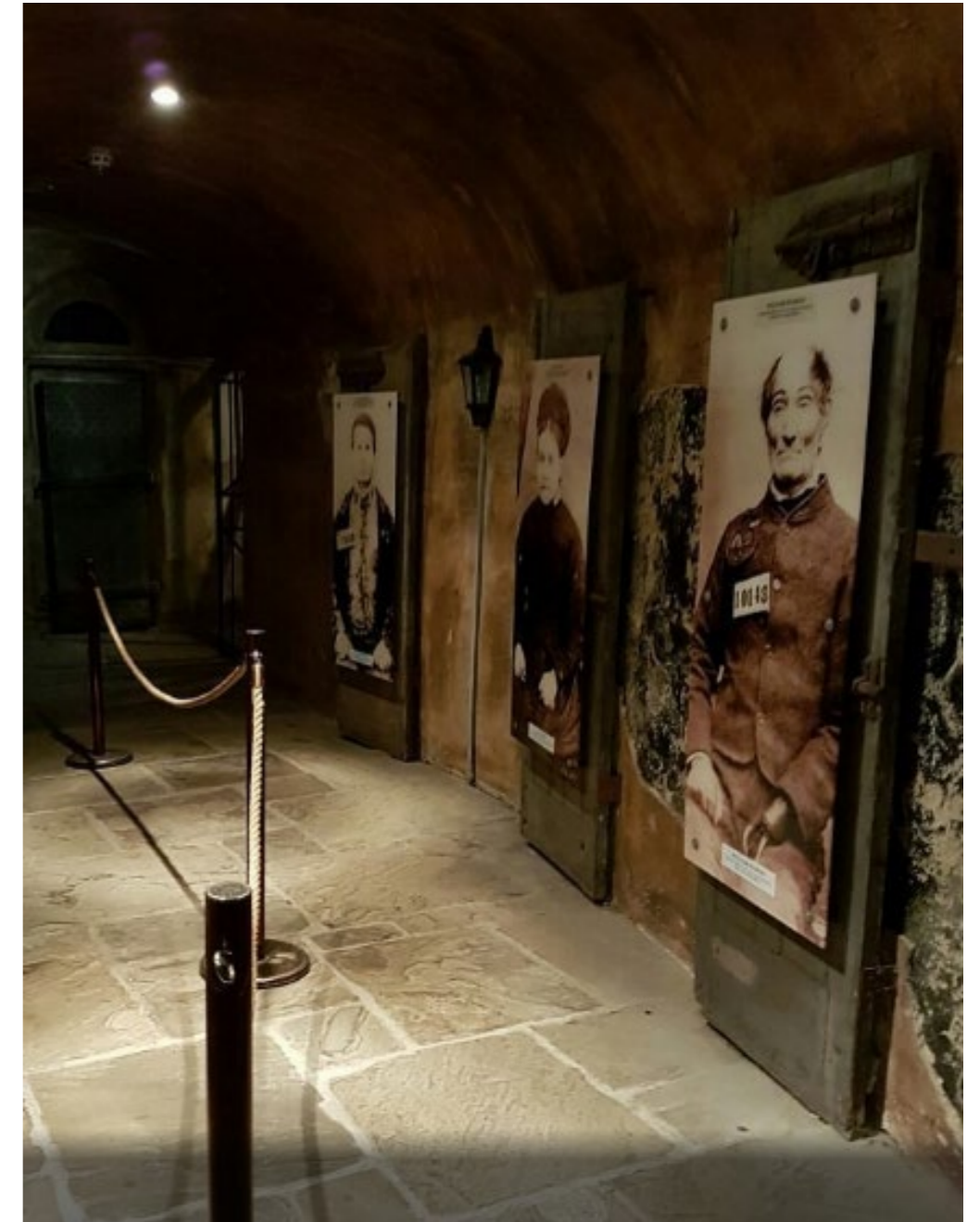
At points throughout the visitor journey 'Story hubs' will be created to deliver focused and concentrated thematic content. These 'Story hubs' will deliver the main interpretive narrative and aid visitor understanding as they move through the site.

This approach will add to the range of visitor experience, will allow the historic spaces to 'breathe' and be more immersive and will prevent the interpretive narrative becoming segmented through the many spaces.

The Reception and Infirmary Block was originally used to receive new prisoners and would be a great location at which to start the visitor experience. The first 'Story hub' would be located here.



Indicative style image for the Reception 'Story hub'



Indicative style image for 'Story hub' insertions.

Story Hubs – Design style

Modern exhibition insertions will be designed to suit the different identified spaces along the visitor journey. They will use a developed site wide graphic style approach, historic imagery and illustrations.

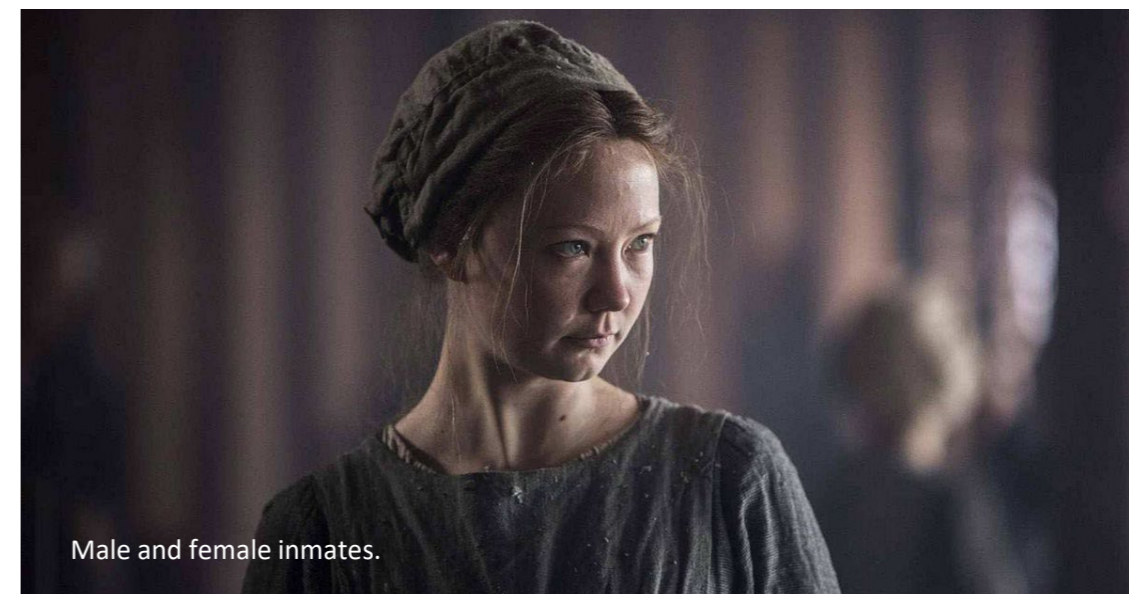
Cinematic Storytellers

Using cinematic storytellers will bring the story alive. Visitors will be immersed and feel part of the unfolding drama. Visitors will connect emotionally with the storytellers and the interpretive stories.

Key protagonists will be selected at formative points through the story to give their perspectives on their life experiences. Together they will deliver the narrative around which the visitor experience will hang.

These storytellers can be projected images that appear and fade on the building fabric, they can also be part of triggered audios. Each one will be no longer than 1 minute. They can be triggered as visitors enter spaces. Visitors will enter each area and watch/listen to each one whilst exploring other graphics and discoverable interpretation.

The storytellers can be introduced at the start of the visitor journey and visitors can be invited to pick a particular person and to follow their story as they move through their visit.



Creating immersive spaces

The main corridors in the cell blocks are brilliantly immersive spaces. These spaces would remain mainly free from fixed physical interpretation to allow for an authentic visitor experience.

Immersive background sound of prisoners shouting and moaning and the guard shouting back, the clink of chains and keys, the sound of the guards footsteps as he paces the corridor would provide a unique and fabulously immersive experience.

Interpretation in set dressed cells would be delivered through personal objects and memory box displays.



Immersive sound and providing an authentic experience within the spaces provides an excellent platform for living history engagement with visitors.

This can be delivered by staff or on special days,

Indicative image showing a memory box where objects are used to delivery interpretive stories or provoke thought and discussion.



Cinematic Storytellers

Examples of the cinematic storyteller.

Characters will be identified at specific points in the visitor journey. Together the storytellers will deliver the narrative around which the visitor experience will hang.



Different inmates stories can followed throughout the visit starting from the reception 'Story hub'.

Benchmark images

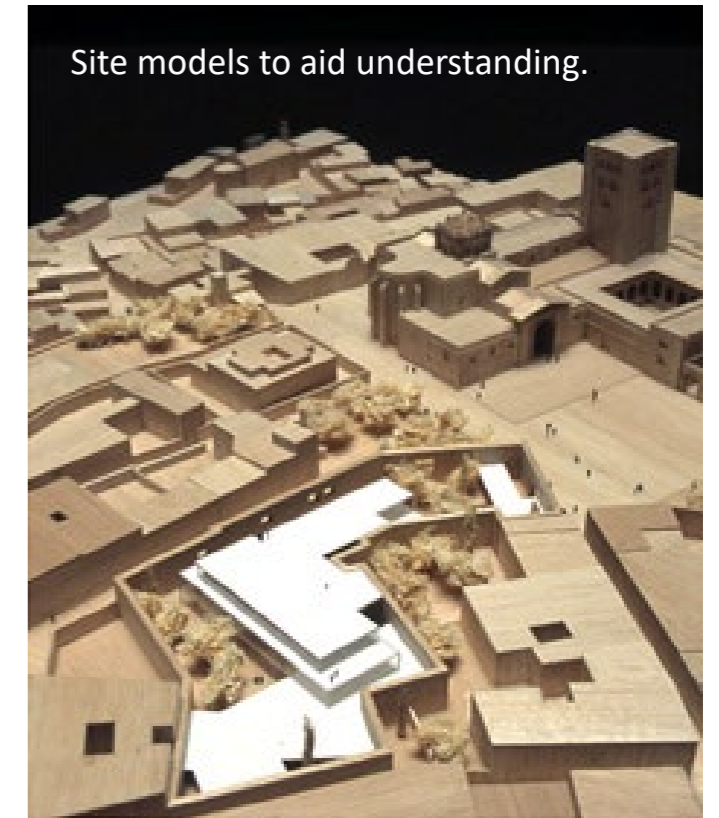
The images below show other types of interpretation which will be considered throughout the site to deliver a range of visitor experiences.



Objects used as markers into stories



Audio points.



Site models to aid understanding.



Showcasing.



Living history activities and engagement.

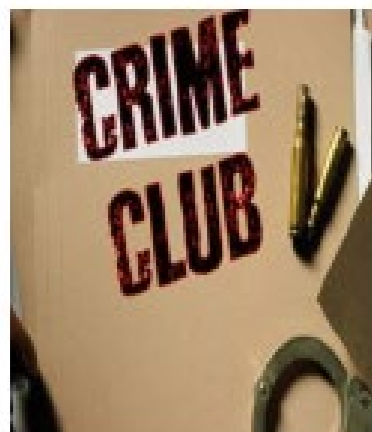


Discoverable interpretation.



Benchmark images

Create an active, engaging and fun experience led by exploration and discovery both physically and mentally. Provide challenges and low key interactives and reflective zones. Stylise interpretation in period cupboards and older parts of the historic surroundings. Capitalise on the Pentonville wing for modern displays and have first interpretation options.



Let everyone know about your favourite object and the story it tells in the museum!

Make a short documentary film in 5 easy steps.



The more people are engaged and the more choice they have, the more likely they will recommend and return.



Interactives and opportunities to look at contemporary responses allow exploration



Creating an immersive experience

