HRH Earl of Wessex opens UK first National Civil



HRH Prince Edward at the Civil War Centre opening Shaun Flannery Photography

And today (Friday 25 September) HRH The Earl of Wessex officially opened the UK's first ever visitor attraction dedicated to telling the epic story of the 17th century British Civil Wars.

The National Civil War Centre in Newark is a flagship £5.4m project by Newark and Sherwood District Council supported by £3.5m from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Before unveiling a plaque to mark the occasion, HRH The Earl of Wessex toured the exhibition galleries housed in the restored Grade II* Old Magnus Building, which began life as a Tudor grammar school, and met key figures involved in the scheme.

He was also able to glimpse 400 year-old graffiti penned by naughty school boys in the Tudor attic – preserved as part of the project – and handled a priceless golden Iron Age necklace, found nearby by a local metal detectorist and now returned to Newark from the British Museum.

The Prince also logged on to an augmented reality National Civil War Trail app by holding up a tablet at a portrait of King Charles I and listened to the ill-fated monarch ask the people to stand with him and fight the 'Parliamentarian rabble'. This fresh and exciting approach to story telling is making history more accessible than ever to a new audience.

Michael Constantine, Manager at the National Civil War Centre, said: “We have been open to the public since May, attracting nearly 1,000 visitors each week, but this official Royal opening is a huge event for us. It has taken a lot of hard work and vision to get to this point, but the National Civil War Centre is already having a big impact on the economy and introducing many people to this pivotal period in our history for the first time. We thank all those who have helped us arrive at this special day.”

Atul Patel, Trustee at the Heritage Lottery Fund, said: “The British Civil Wars were a founding episode of our modern state but are still a great mystery to many. So it’s incredibly exciting to help launch this new centre which is fast becoming the go-to place to discover this important history. A special thanks to the thousands of National Lottery players without whom our investment would not have been possible”

The National Civil War Centre, on Appletongate, is open daily from 10am to 5pm. Find out more at the National Civil War Centre website or follow them on Twitter: @civilwarcentre.

Notes to editors

The British Civil Wars were fought across England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland from 1638 to 1653. It was the deadliest conflict in the history of the British Isles. Brother took up arms against brother and few places were left untouched. Newark, a staunchly Royalist town, never capitulated to the surrounding forces, which by the time of the third siege numbered 16,000 Scots and Parliamentary troops. With the town cut off from the outside world, plague and typhus became rampant. The town only surrendered on direct orders of King Charles, as part of a truce which effectively saw the end of the first stage of the British Civil Wars.



A re-enactor examines an exhibit at the Civil War Centre



Artist's impression of the Civil War Gallery in the Old Magnus Building

Heritage Lottery Fund success for new National Civil War Centre