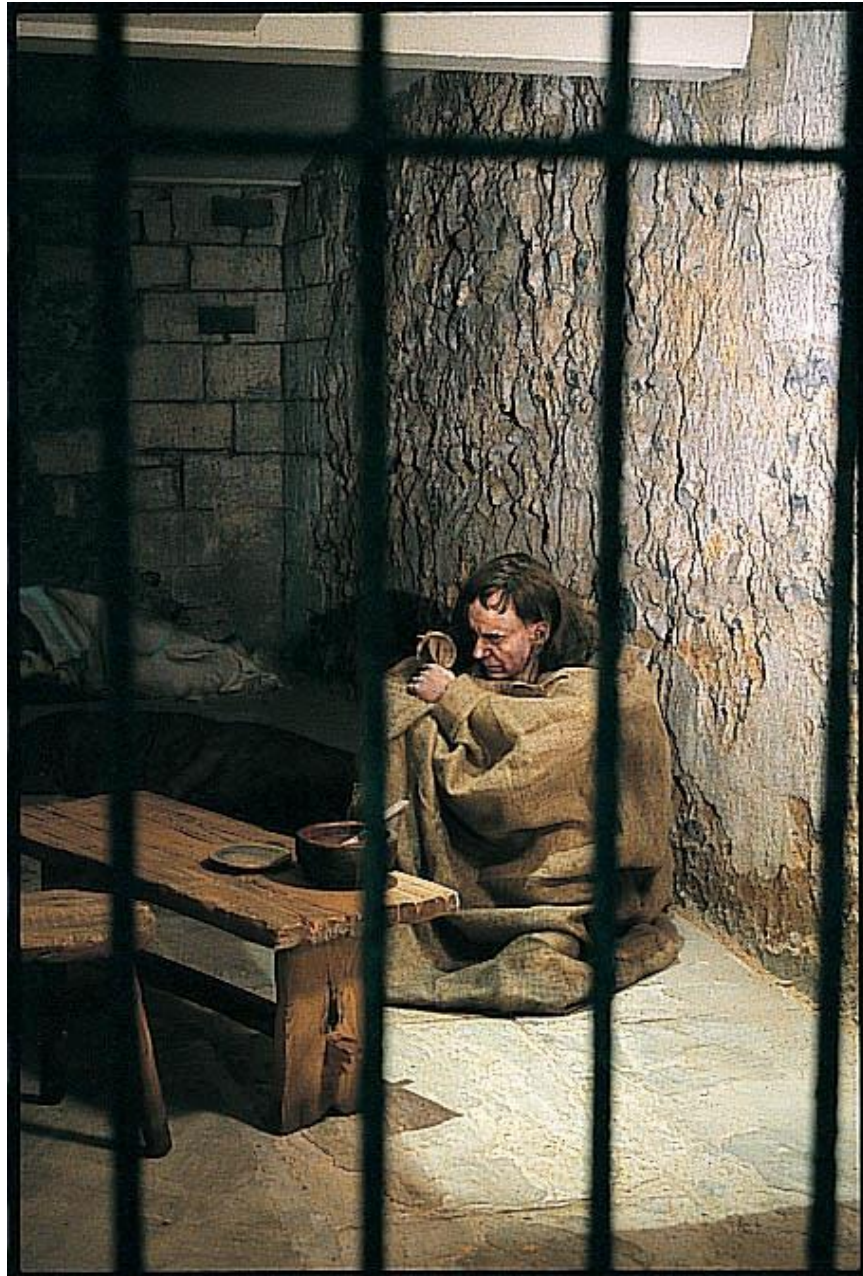
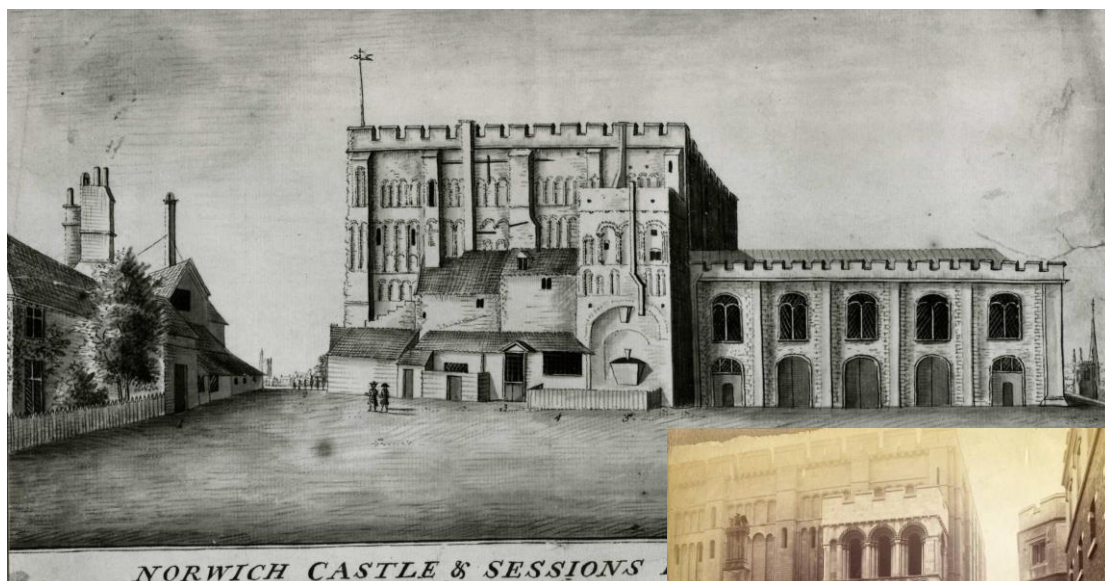


Norwich Gaol and Prison Images and Information



Reconstruction medieval prison cell at Norwich Castle, with a model of a prisoner sitting under some original medieval prisoners' graffiti.

Castle to prison: the evolution of an iconic building



Norwich Castle and Sessions House, 1786



The Castle from the same side in the late 1880s showing prison wings, the turnkey's office and part of the Governor's house.

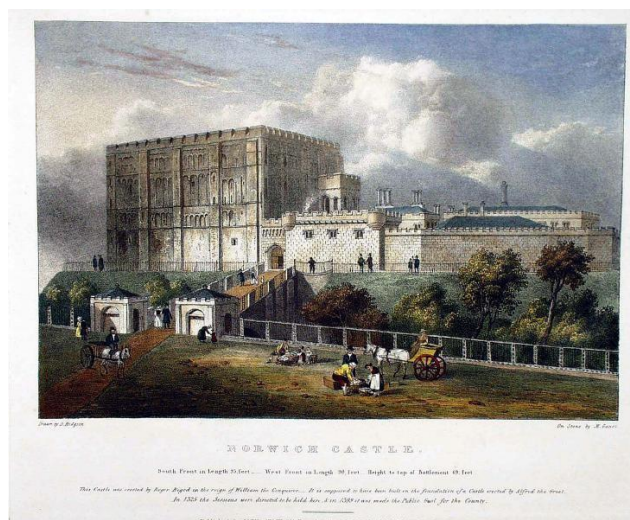
Architectural grand schemes: the Sir John Soane and William Wilkins gaols

Two of Britain's leading architects built gaols in and around the Castle in the late 18th and 19th centuries.



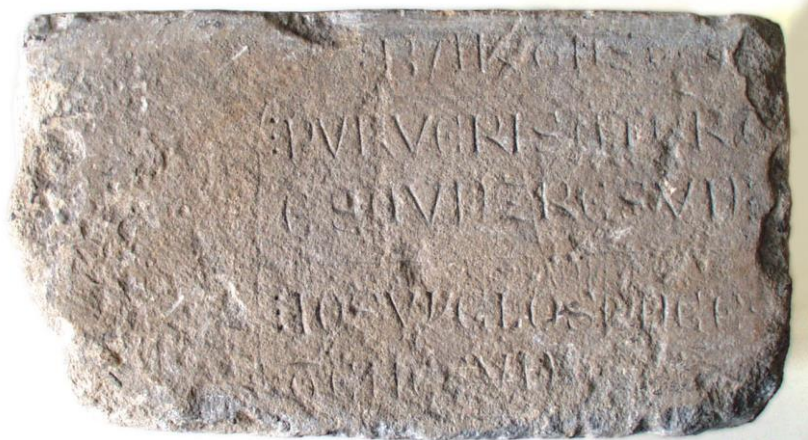
The exterior of Norwich Castle showing the Wilkins gaol walls. The Castle exterior has changed little since.
Hand-coloured lithograph after David Hodgson (1798-1864)

The Soane gaol was built inside and to the side of Norwich Castle keep in the 1790s. It was replaced with Wilkins ground-breaking radial prison after only 30 years. Aquatint dated 1805, after Robert Ladbrooke (1769-1842).



Rare survivals

Rare objects from the Castle's time as a prison have survived and are displayed and interpreted as part of this project.



This stone from the Castle was probably carved in the 13th or 14th centuries and is the earliest direct evidence of a named prisoner here.

The text, in Norman French, simply says: 'Bartholomew, truly wrongfully and without reason, I am shut in this prison'



Rare and important gibbet, a partial survival. The body of Stephen Watson, who murdered his wife and was hanged in 1795, was displayed in this gibbet on Bradenham Common, Norfolk, for 26 years.



Examples of original prison furniture: these rarely survive.



Original doors and windows.

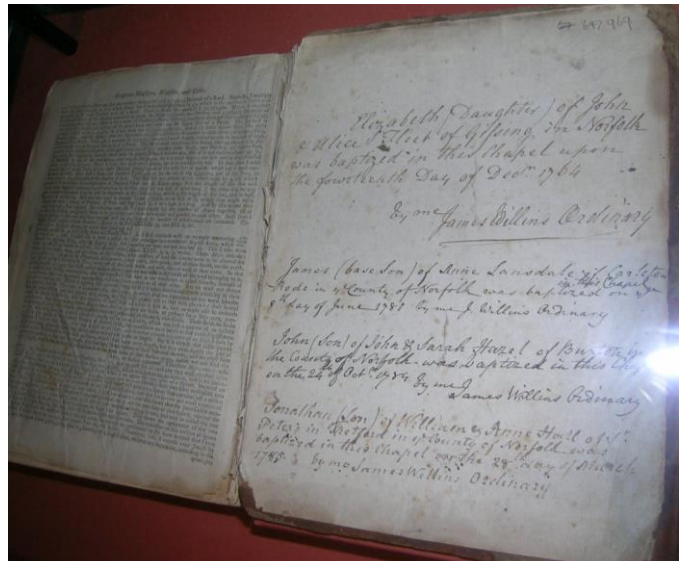




The prison chapel in the Governor's house in the 19th Century.



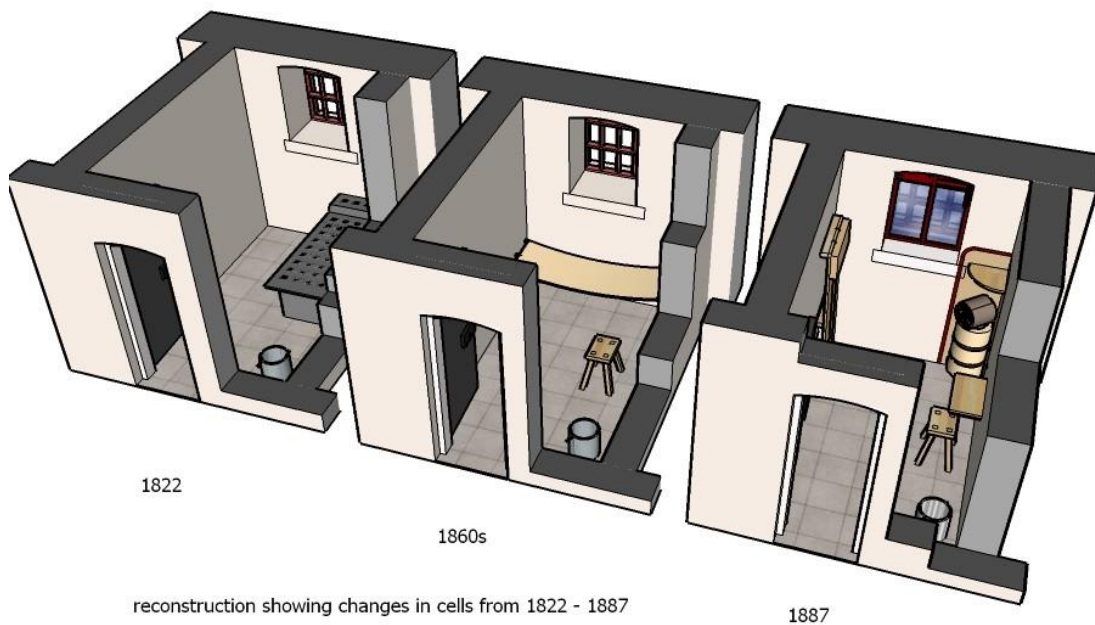
Gaoler's chair from the 19th Century prison chapel, as seen in the above photograph.



Rare 18th Century prison Bible with written records of prisoners' babies baptised in the prison chapel.

Prison Life

Recent research has shown, as below, exactly what furnishings prisoners would have in their cells at different dates.



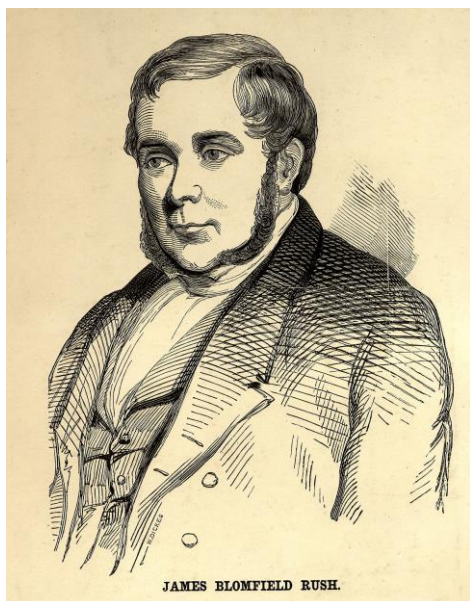
1822

1860s

1887

reconstruction showing changes in cells from 1822 - 1887

Prisoners' stories: the murderers



James Rush, a tenant farmer, murdered his landlord and son in 1848, and was executed at Norwich Castle the following year for the crime.

A crowd of up to 30,000 watched his public execution: many were day trippers on excursions from London.



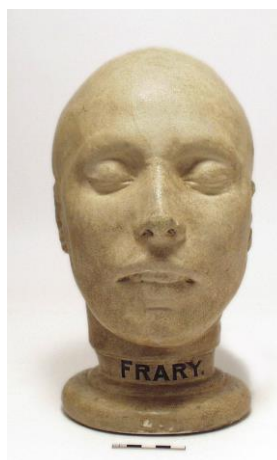
James Rush's boots.



Staffordshire models of James Rush and Potash Farm, where he lived. Seven models were mass-produced to commemorate the execution and would have been sold to bystanders.



Broadsheet for the execution of Peter Taylor, showing his hanging taking place between the gatehouses at the entrance to the Castle bridge. These were sold as cheap souvenirs, and many have survived in our collections.



Death mask of Catherine Frarey, who with her friend Frances Billings was executed for murder in 1835. The case of the Burnham Poisoners was nationally notorious at the time.

Death heads



Our collections include a fine group of original death heads cast from executed prisoners. These were made as evidence for the highly popular 'science' of phrenology, which associated particular human characteristics, for example a pre-disposition to kill, with certain skull shapes. Now recognised to have no scientific basis, phrenology had a strong following in the Victorian period.

Norwich Castle and prison reform

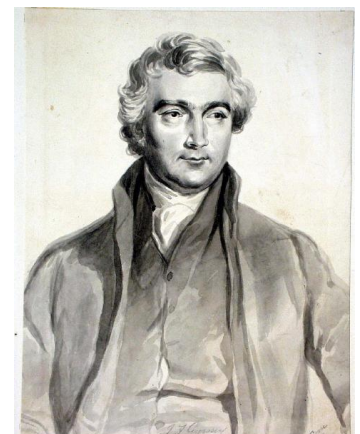
The Wilkins gaol built in the 1820s was a pioneer of the new radial prison design, and a model of good standards in prison management. This was mainly as a result of the influence of the Society for the Improvement of Prison Discipline (SIPD), many of whose leading members were Norfolk-based or had strong local connections.



Print showing the celebrated Norfolk-born prison reformer Elizabeth Fry visiting Newgate gaol. She and her brother J.J. Gurney were leading figures in prison reform both nationally and locally.

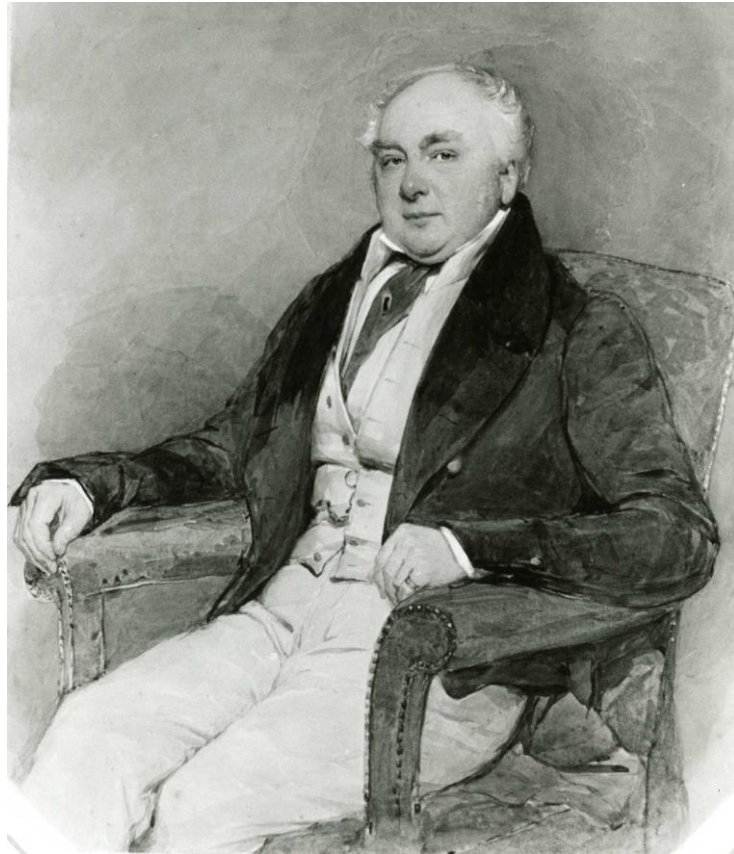


Joseph John Gurney, Elizabeth Fry's brother, an influential Quaker and prison reformer.



Earlham Hall, Norwich, birthplace of JJ Gurney and Elizabeth Fry. NMAS print.

Prison staff



Portrait of John Johnson, Governor of Norwich Prison, 1837.

By Frederic Cruikshank (1800-1868). Watercolour.

Johnson was Governor from the 1790s to 1843, and was at the time the longest-serving prison governor in England.



George Pinson, Governor of Norwich prison 1843 – 1876, outside his house in the centre of the gaol, with some of his staff in 1876.



James Landy Brown, prison chaplain, with his wife and daughters. Late 19thC.

From prison to museum: the end of the prison story at Norwich Castle.



Prison cells inside the unroofed Castle keep. These date from the Soane gaol conversion, but remained till the Castle became a museum in the late 19th C.



The Castle keep now a hollowed-out shell during the conversion to a Museum in the early 1890s.



Norwich Castle from above in the 20th C. The cross shape of prison wings can be seen radiating from the centre of the prison, formerly the location of the Governor's house. The spaces in between have since been filled with museum gallery buildings.

In Memoriam

17 murderers executed at Norwich Castle are still buried within the boundaries of the Museum. Executions took place between the gatehouses, in public, until 1867, when they took place in what is now the Bernard Matthews Gallery. The simple initialed and dated stones marking each person buried here are still in place, on former exterior walls which are now internal.



James Rush's simple memorial stone.