

Me and my research

David Nash

A commanding piece of history

Over the centuries, the Grade 1-listed Commandery in Worcester has been a Georgian home, a school for the blind and a printworks. Features from all these incarnations are still visible. Most famously, though, it was a strategic base for the Royalists during the Battle of Worcester in 1651, when Oliver Cromwell's New Model Army defeated the forces of Charles II.

As we planned this year's redevelopment, we did extensive visitor research, which told us people wanted to learn about the battle, but not to the detriment of other parts of the Commandery's history. They also wanted to see more collections and interactives on display, and be

able to speak to people about the history. This required us to expand our interpretation team, improve environmental conditions, make structural enhancements and install a permanent exhibition on the civil war.

Modern interactives sit alongside 17th-century collections in the exhibition and we have included features such as hand-painted dioramas, projections, audio elements and smells; I was amazed to find that you can buy gunpowder and beer scents in a can.

As the history of the English civil war is fragmented, I was keen to use as many local sources as possible to tell the story of the significant role that Worcester played in the conflict. I spoke to many people who have taken great pride in their research of a particular subject, be it spirituality, tactics, politics, costumes, or firearms.

I am still in the process of compiling all that knowledge for new digital interactives, which will help visitors who have reduced mobility, sight or hearing and which are based around near-field communication technology. These devices will also contain a deeper level of information and access to collections that we cannot display on site.

David Nash tests a tablet that provides in-depth information to visitors about the Commandery



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