

Lewes Public Art Trail



1. War memorial

Vernon March, 1922 The focal point of Remembrance Day ceremonies and Bonfire Society Prayers. The cenotaph carries a bronze figure of Victory standing on a globe and holding a wreath. After World War II names of the fallen were added along with Winston Churchill's Finest Hour quotation. Grade 2* listed.

2. Law Courts reliefs

Three panels of Coade (artificial) stone representing Wisdom, Justice and Mercy. The building dates from 1808–12 and at one time was East Sussex County Hall. The architect was John Johnson, who also designed Chelmsford Shire Hall; the panels are copies of ones installed there.

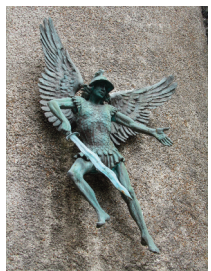


3. Mural of Thomas Paine

Julian Bell, 1994. Thomas Paine, the political activist and philosopher, was appointed as an excise officer in Lewes in 1768 and lived in Bull House on the High Street. In 1774 he emigrated to America.

4. Finnish POW monument

Neo-Gothic monument to the Finnish prisoners of war who died in 1854-56 (when Finland was a Grand Duchy in the Russian Empire) after being brought to Lewes during the Crimean War. Raised by order of Alexander II, 1877, designed by Philip Currey; the stonemason was John Strong.

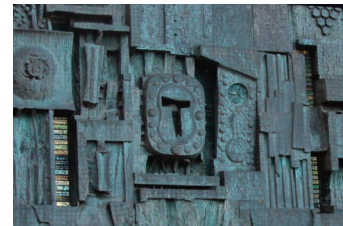


5. St Michael

Fibreglass statue of the archangel by Harry Phillips, 1976, on the 12th-century round tower of St Michael's Church. Reminiscent of the statue by Jacob Epstein on Coventry Cathedral.

6. The White Lion

A replacement sign marking the former White Lion pub, demolished under a slum clearance scheme in 1937. The original 200-year-old sign, made from sheet copper by a Lewes craftsman named Larwill, was discovered half-buried in a garden and put up by the Friends of Lewes in 1954. It has now been restored by the Town Council and installed in the Corn Exchange (part of the Town Hall).



7. County Hall relief

William Mitchell, 1968. Made from 11 panels of polymerised concrete with five narrow windows of coloured glass, it spans the whole width of the main entrance. The abstract design alludes to the functions of the County Council at the time.

8. Janus

John Skelton, 1997. Janus has two faces and looks both to the future and the past. (The month of January is named after him.) Skelton, who worked at Streat near Lewes, was the nephew of Eric Gill, the sculptor and typeface designer.



9. Madrigal Singers

Austin Bennett, 2000. Nicholas Yonge of Lewes published a book of Italian madrigals in 1588 which helped to popularise them in England. The Nicholas Yonge Society commissioned this bronze sculpture of him at the beginning of the new millennium.

10. The Helmet

(a memorial to the Battle of Lewes, 1264). The monument is by the Italian sculptor Enzo Plazzotta and was presented to the town in 1964 by the MP, Sir Tufton Beamish, to mark the 700th anniversary and restored in 2014. It is made of sandcast aluminium and has an inscription from *The Song of Lewes*.



11. Thomas Paine

Marcus Cornish. Tom Paine was a key member of the debating club that met at the White Hart. The unfinished block of sandstone on which he sits represents the emergence of mankind from superstition into the age of the Enlightenment. Unveiled on American Independence Day 2010 by Tony Benn.

12. Cuilfail Spiral

Peter Randall-Page, 1983. Made from seven blocks of Portland stone, it marks the entrance to the Cuilfail Tunnel, opened in 1980. Based on the ammonite fossils found in the Downs but also known as the Snail or Brian (the latter after the character in the children's TV programme *The Magic Roundabout*).



13. Hubcap sculptures at the Snowdrop Inn



Ptolemy Elrington, 1999–2002. A large crocodile, an eagle and two smaller artworks outside and others in the upstairs room. Made from car hubcaps collected from the side of the road and joined with reclaimed wire.



Public art is art that can be seen in public places such as streets or parks. This trail includes thirteen works of various kinds, many connected with the history of the town, and originates from a course run by Lewes U3A. While you are walking round the numbered trail there are a few more items you can look out for:

- a. Sculpture** of a male deer above the cornice of the White Hart Hotel. The hotel's frontage dates from about 1840.
- b. Decorative friezes** of oxen ploughing and pulling a cart by George Bankart (1913) on the former District Council building, 4 Fisher Street.
- c. Weathervane** of a basking shark (1813) on St John's Church, Southover.
- d. Painting** in the gateway at Friars Walk, opposite the Friends Meeting House, by Dominic Ramos. It depicts a friar working in the vegetable garden. (The Franciscan Friary was located here).
- e. Carvings** at the corner of High Street and Friars Walk on the former Lewes Building Society.
- f. Land art**, *The Heart of Reeds* by Chris Drury (2004) in the Railway Land nature reserve. It consists of a reed bed in a shape inspired by the human heart.
- g. Stone obelisk**, a memorial on the hill at Cuilfail (1901). It commemorates the seventeen protestant martyrs who were burned to death outside where the Town Hall now stands and can be seen from there looking over School Hill.



KEEPING OUR TOWN SPECIAL



Lewes District Council

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