



PORTIEW TRADE CENTRE



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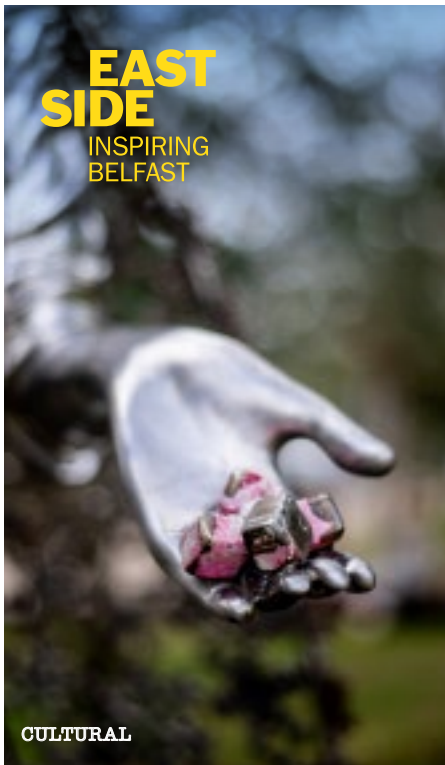
EASTSIDE
VISITOR
CENTRE



at C.S. Lewis Square



**EAST
SIDE**
INSPIRING
BELFAST



CULTURAL

POLITICAL



INDUSTRIAL

NEWTOWNARDS ROAD

HERITAGE

TRAIL

This guide explores the heritage of the **NEWTOWNARDS ROAD** as we walk the 1.2 miles from Hollywood Arches to Bridge End.

Its landscape, signage, street names, buildings and public art reveal the fascinating story of an area where people have lived for over 200 years.

The area around the Connswater Bridge was called **NEW BRIDGE** with houses and shops developing at the crossroads. Initially known as the New Road, this thoroughfare has been referred to as the Newtownards Road from the 1870s.

EARLY DAYS

Before the Newtownards Road area came under the management of the 2nd Baron **TEMPLEMORE** in the mid-19th century, it would have looked very different. At this time, Belfast Lough would have lapped at the bottom of Dee Street and the **CONNSWATER RIVER** was then navigable by boat.

Baron Templemore oversaw an extensive programme of land reclamation, partly aided by the development of an embankment wall, created as part of the building of the **BELFAST COUNTY DOWN RAILWAY**.

With more land available to develop, enhanced transport links and the industrial boom that Belfast enjoyed in the latter half of the 19th Century, **BALLYMACARRETT** grew rapidly to accommodate workers for the new factories and mills.

It attracted workers from the countryside to live in housing of a higher quality than they would have found in other cities in Ireland and Britain.

During this time Belfast was becoming a **GLOBAL LEADER** in several industries, from rope making and shipbuilding to engineering and the manufacture of linen.

Much of this industrial activity was located in east Belfast.

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'INDUSTRIAL HOMAGE' SCULPTURE

INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE



Imagine this road during Belfast's industrial peak.

HOB NAIL BOOTS clatter as men hurry to the shipyards, while women, and some children, head for the Ropeworks and linen mills. With excellent access via river, road and rail, east Belfast was the engine of the city's industrial activity in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras.

Many of the **RED BRICK HOUSES** you see today were built in the late 19th century to house these workers. Rows of terraced houses created close knit communities that became home to thousands of families.

For over a century, the **SIROCCO WORKS**, founded by Samuel Davidson, stood on the site between Short Strand and Bridge End. One of the world's great innovators and a pioneer in the development of air conditioning, Davidson built tea drying machines that revolutionised the world of tea drinking. Davidson died in 1921 but The Sirocco Works continued until 1988, when it was bought by Howden UK. The site was eventually demolished in 2009.

The first industrialist in Ballymacarrett, however, was Benjamin Edwards who began glass production in 1780, an industry that continued here until 1868.

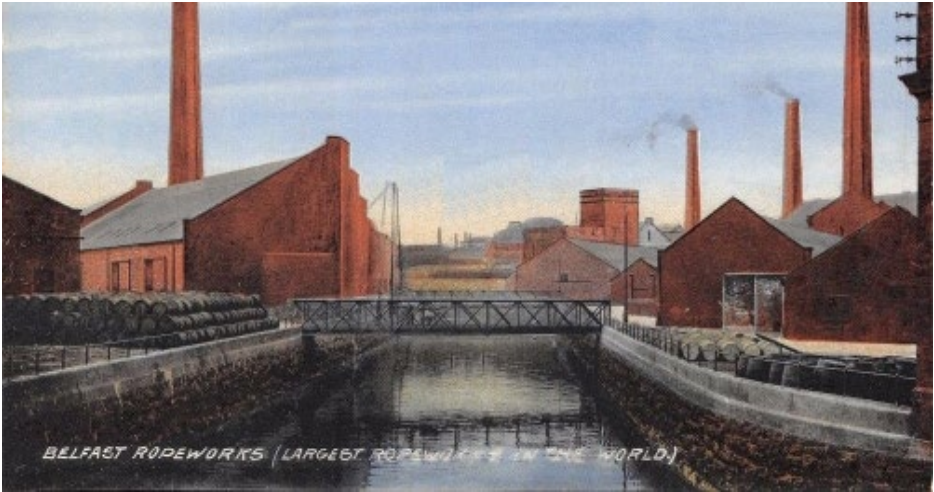
PORTVIEW TRADE CENTRE began life in 1911 as the Jaffe Spinning Company. It was owned by German born Sir Otto Jaffe, who was renowned for his philanthropy, leadership within the Jewish Community and for twice being the Lord Mayor of Belfast.

Later sold to James Mackie & Sons, it became Strand Spinning Mill and employed 650 people during the First World War when the factory was adapted to make munitions.

The mill closed in 1983, as the UK textile industry declined, and the building was converted into business units.



PORTVIEW TRADE CENTRE



INGLIS BAKERY, one of Belfast's most famous bakeries once operated where Wyse Byse now stands.

Beginning life as the New Public Bakery Company in 1880, it became the Bloomfield Bakery in 1894 and in 1933 was taken over by Inglis, which owned several bakeries in Belfast.

Inglis was renowned for its large fleet of motorised vans, one of which can be seen at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum at Cultra.



What was once the largest **ROPEWORKS** in the world stood where Connswater Shopping Centre is today. It was established in 1876 by William Holmes Smiles and Gustav Wolff, chairman of Harland & Wolff. The latter's connection was no coincidence, rope making was vital to Belfast's flourishing shipbuilding industry.

In the early days, supplies were delivered by barge along the Connswater River and finished products taken to Queen's Island via the waterways.

At its peak it employed over 3,000 people and covering 16 hectares (40 acres).

INGLIS BAKERY

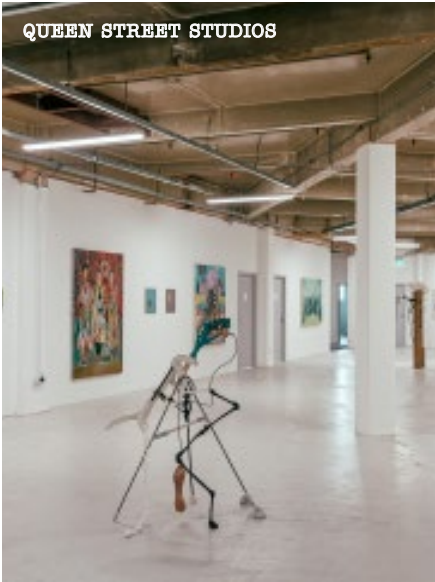
ARTS & ARTISTS



VAULT STUDIOS POP-UP SHOP OUTSIDE PORTVIEW

Many artists have connections with the Newtownards Road. C.S. Lewis was born around the corner in Dundela Avenue. His work is celebrated through a series of statues in the square that is named after him. Other locally born talent have included playwrights Sam Thompson and St John Ervine, guitarist Gary Moore and director Brian Desmond Hurst.

Today you can find a thriving community of **GROUNDBREAKING ARTISTS** working in a range of disciplines as well as murals and sculptures that reflect the area's linen and shipbuilding heritage



The annual EastSide Arts Festival celebrates east Belfast as a vibrant artistic community, one in which the Newtownards Road plays a central role. Several **CUTTING-EDGE ARTS STUDIOS** operate in the area, all in repurposed historic buildings. Queen Street Studios is above Wyse Byse, in the building that was once Inglis Bakery. Creative Exchange is based in Portview Trade Centre and provides space for 12 artists focussing on visual arts. A community of artists known as Vault Artist Studios work in a range of disciplines in the old Belfast Metropolitan College Building on Tower Street.

C.S. LEWIS SQUARE, hosts a superb collection of sculptures of characters from ‘The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe’ by Irish artist Maurice Harron. These include the great lion himself, Aslan, Mr Tumnus the faun, the beavers and, the favourite of many, the robin which led the Pevensie children to the safety of the beavers’ house.

Outside nearby Hollywood Arches Library is a sculpture by local artist Ross Wilson showing Digory Kirke opening the door of the wardrobe that led the children into Narnia.





In the 19th century, when Belfast led the world in the production of linen, the city became known as **LINENOPOLIS**. That is also the name given to a mural on the corner of Tower Street. It was commissioned by Seedhead Arts on behalf of EastSide Partnership and created in 2018 by Manchester duo Nomad Clan. It shows a female flax gatherer from a bygone era with flax flowers swirling around her to represent the energy and life that the industry sustained. It is accompanied by interpretive signage which rises out of the ground at the height of a flax crop.

THE YARDMEN statue created by Ross Wilson was unveiled in 2012, just days before the centenary of Titanic leaving Belfast on its ill-fated maiden voyage. Depicting three shipyard workers wearing their traditional dunce caps, the sculpture celebrates the area's remarkable shipbuilding legacy.

The statues are depicted walking down the streets that once stood here on their way to the yard and are facing the Westbourne Presbyterian Church, known locally as the 'shipyard church', due to the many shipyard workers who worshipped there.





East Belfast, like the whole of Northern Ireland, was impacted by **THE TROUBLES** and that history is reflected in various political **MURALS** along the Newtownards Road. Today, they are interspersed with murals reflecting the heritage of the area.

MEMORIAL GARDENS relating to that period are also in evidence, while there are several buildings with political connections too, as well as **TWO MUSEUMS** offering loyalist perspectives of the conflict.



ST MATTHEW'S CHURCH

The striking church building of St Matthew's is understood locally to mark the boundary between predominantly Nationalist Short Strand and the historically Unionist Newtownards Road.

As violence between the two communities has flared periodically over the years, so too have **PEACE WALLS** come and gone. The first Peace Wall separating the communities was built in 1920 on Seaforde Street. The current walls and barriers date from the 1970s with additions made right up to 2013.

Residents feel an ambivalence towards the barriers, enjoying the sense of security they bring but hoping for a time when they are not needed.

The **MEMORIAL GARDEN** at St Leonard's Crescent commemorates the 36th Ulster Division's contribution to the First World War. Famous for their actions at the Battle of the Somme, they were largely composed of members of the original Ulster Volunteer Force. Further down the road a garden was created at the corner of Pitt Park in 2003 to commemorate James McCurrie and Robert Neill, who were killed during 'The Troubles'.



ST LEONARD'S CRESCENT UVF MURAL

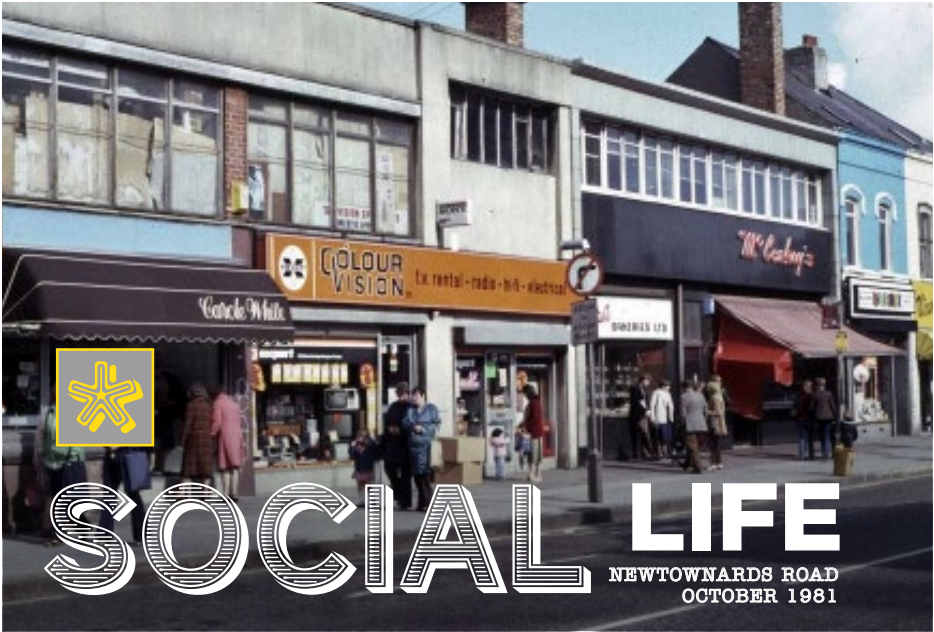


PHOTO TAKEN BY AE MCALPINE © PHILIP MCALPINE, BELFAST35MM.CO.UK

The Newtownards Road and its connecting streets have always been a hub for the local community. Here, people lived, went to **SCHOOL** and **CHURCH**, **SHOPPED** and **SOCIALISED**. From this area, many hundreds journeyed to the shipyards, mills, foundries and workshops that made east Belfast an industrial giant.

In their Sunday best they headed to church and, less formally attired, embarked on family outings to local attractions such as Victoria Park, Templemore Baths for swimming and the many cinemas in the area.

Both a group of listed buildings and a conservation area, **MCMASTER STREET** is the only example of Belfast's artisan homes with this distinctive decorative brickwork. This atmospheric street, barely changed from its late Victorian origins, has become a favourite of filmmakers seeking an authentic period setting. The decorative brickwork emphasises that these were quality houses built for well-to-do artisans such as carpenters, printers and bakers. Built at the end of the 1890s, McMaster Street consists mostly of 'parlour houses' - a parlour at the front, kitchen in the back room and a scullery, with two bedrooms upstairs.



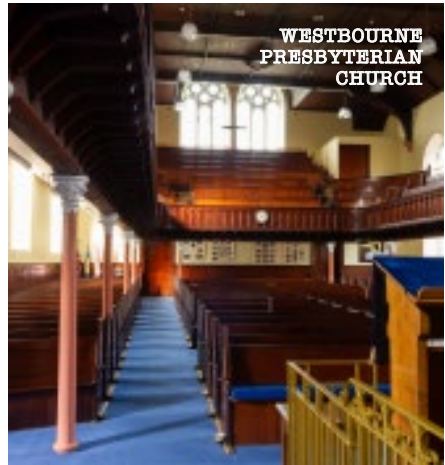
If you look closely you'll notice that the right-hand side of the building that houses the East Belfast Constitutional Club on **HEMP STREET** is much older. It began life as the New Road National School before becoming the **PUBLIC ELEMENTARY NEW ROAD SCHOOL**. Brian Desmond Hurst, Northern Ireland's greatest film director, was a student here. He made over 30 films, including 'Scrooge', starring Alec Guinness. He is commemorated with a blue plaque at the Strand Arts Centre.



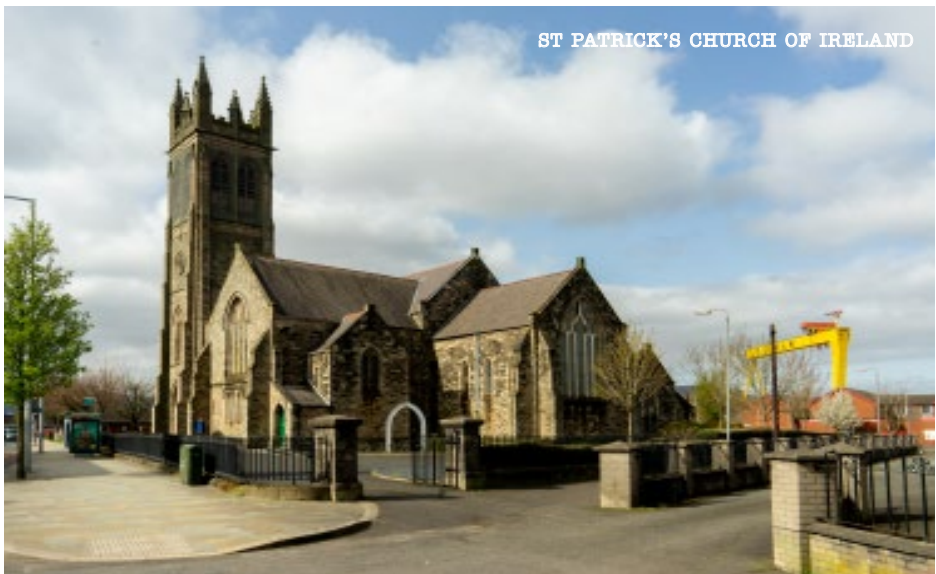
MC MASTER STREET

There are **SEVEN CHURCHES** on the Newtownards Road. The oldest congregations are; the Methodists who meet in the Skainos building (1826), the Church of Ireland (1827) and the Catholic Parish of St Matthew's (1831). The Methodist congregation now operates the East Belfast Mission, where many social programmes to benefit the community are housed under one roof.

The end of the 19th century saw the existing congregations build new, larger premises and they were joined by new churches such as Westbourne Presbyterian, Megain Nazarene, Newtownards Road Elim and St Martin's.



Over the years they have provided all kinds of support for local people. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, one congregation alone provided thousands of meals a week for families impacted by unemployment.



GREAT EASTERN BAR



PUBS AND CLUBS have played a significant part in community life. The oldest surviving pub is the ornate **GREAT EASTERN**, constructed in 1890. The image of the ship on its sign reveals the story behind its name. The Great Eastern ship was designed by the renowned engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel. It was used to lay the first lasting transatlantic telegraph cable.

As well as featuring an imposing Masonic Hall, well known **SOCIAL CLUBS** on the road include the Constitutional Club, Westbourne Glentoran Supporters Club and the

Harland and Wolff Welders Social and Football Club. Known locally as **THE WELDERS**, this was formed in 1965 by apprentices from the shipyard. On the outside of the building, a plaque commemorates those who lost their lives during the construction of RMS Titanic.



H&W WELDERS CLUB



The road has **CHANGED DRAMATICALLY** over its two centuries of existence. Some streets have moved or disappeared through redevelopment yet their names still can be found on walls, evoking many stories from the past.

Of all the reminders found in faded signs and names scattered through the streets. The most well-known of these historic echoes is the Hollywood Arches at the junction of Newtownards Road and Hollywood Road, named after the long-gone stone arches of the Belfast and County Down Railway.

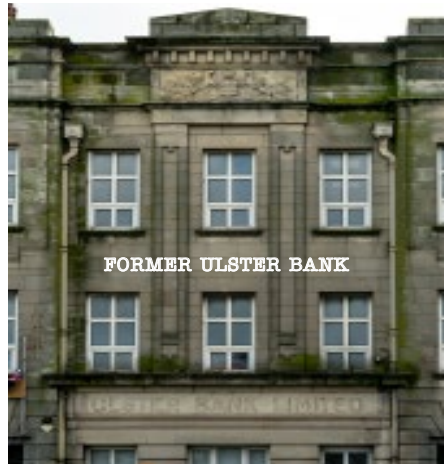


Many streets have kept their **INDUSTRIAL NAMES**, although the businesses that inspired them have long gone. Hemp Street, Chemical Street and East Bread Street remind us of the industries that once dominated the area and Vulcan Street, named after the Roman god of metalworking is close to where Foundry Street once stood.

Other streets have changed names or moved. **SCOTCH ROW** was named for the Scottish immigrants who lived there from the 1820s, having moved due to the high unemployment rates among weavers in Clydeside. The street, originally situated

running through the middle of what is now Pitt Park is now behind Cable Close. The name reused and saved for posterity.

Look carefully and you can still see **GHOST SIGNS** that hint at a building's history. The Transport Museum sign can still be seen in Witham Street despite having moved to Cultra 30 years ago. Signage for the Ulster Bank is still visible on the ornate edifice at Hollywood Arches.





EAST SIDE

INSPIRING
BELFAST

BALLYMACARRETT ROAD

N · E · W · T · O

St Matthew's
Church 

BRIDGE END



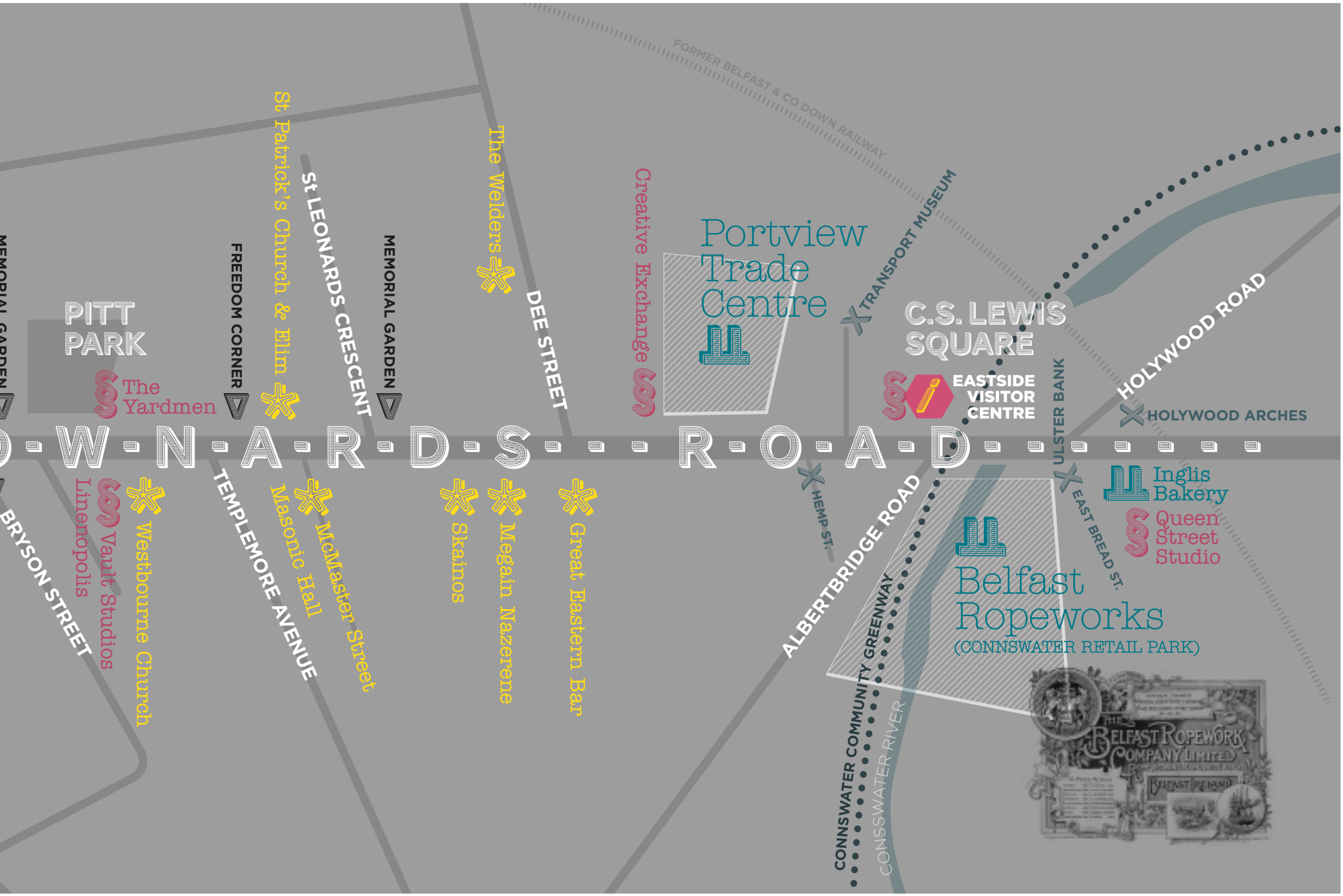
MOUNTPOTTINGER ROAD

VULCAN ST.

MEMORIAL GARDEN
PEACE WALL

300 METRES





Portview Trade Centre

C.S. LEWIS SQUARE

EASTSIDE VISITOR CENTRE

Belfast Ropeworks
(CONNSWATER RETAIL PARK)

Inglis Bakery

Queen Street Studio



Creative Exchange

The Welders

St Patrick's Church & Mim

PITT PARK

The Yardmen

Great Eastern Bar

Megain Nazerene

Skainos

McMaster Street

Masonic Hall

Templemore Avenue

Westbourne Church

Vault Studios
Linenopolis

Bryson Street

Albert Bridge Road

Hollywood Road

Hollywood Arches

Ulster Bank

East Bread St.

Hemp St.

Connswater Community Greenway
Connswater River

Former Belfast & Co Down Railway

St Leonard's Crescent

Dee Street

Freedom Corner

Memorial Garden

Memorial Garden

D-O-W-N-A-R-D-S-R-O-A-D