

The Road to Recovery



**Created by
New Beginnings**



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Introduction

This artwork was created at New Beginnings in Balby, by a group of people who are on a recovery journey from drug or alcohol use. At New Beginnings, people are supported to build a new and sober life for themselves by reflecting on the past, gaining skills and confidence, and relying on the support of peers. Participants are helped to make a fresh start and are equipped with the structure and tools for their new life.

The group had control over this project at every stage; they had the original idea, they decided what to incorporate into the design, and they created the artwork themselves using a combination of acrylic paint, mosaic, and watercolours. The symbolism of a Roman Road was chosen for its links to our local history – Doncaster was originally a fort on a branch of Ermine Street, now known as Roman Ridge. In this painting, the road represents the recovery journey that the participants themselves are undertaking. Each aspect of the design represents an idea related to recovery, such as brighter futures, fresh starts, and new life.

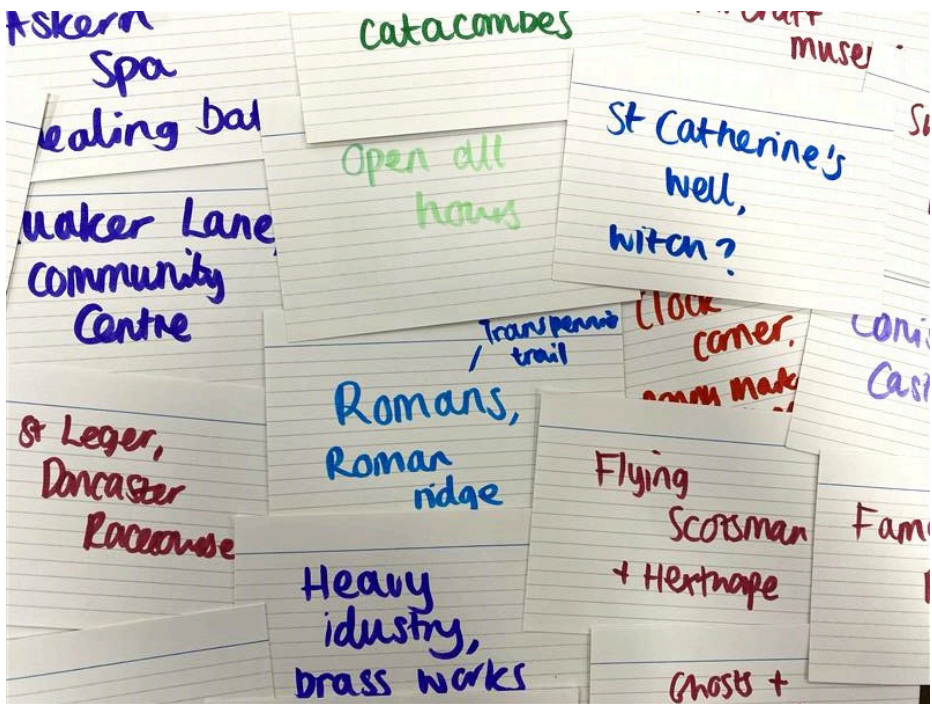
The history

As part of this project, we learned about several topics related to local history; some specific to Balby, others about the Doncaster area more generally. We talked about Balby and Hexthorpe's industrial heritage, with rope-making, brass-making and The Plant, an important hub of railway manufacturing. We also discussed Balby as an important place in the history of the Quaker faith, as many of the early followers lived in the area.

Eventually, we settled on Doncaster's Roman heritage as our topic. Doncaster originated as a Roman fort, called Danum, built around 71AD to guard a crossing of the River Don. A town grew around the fort, and eventually became known as Doncaster. Danum was very strategically placed on a branch of Ermine Street, a large Roman road that connected London, Lincoln, and York. The main route involved crossing the very wide Humber River, which could be challenging in bad weather. A branch was built that went further inland, via Doncaster, and connected with other roads that crossed the Pennines. Roman Ridge is still walkable around the west of Doncaster, and remains an important part of our history.

The process

This project started in Spring 2025, when clients at New Beginnings were first consulted about what they would like to create. It was quickly decided that they wanted to create some sort of artwork, as many of the group members were already interested in developing art or craft-based hobbies. Several sessions were then spent considering potential topics for the artwork to explore, largely centred around local history.



Notes from the consultation sessions

After settling on the theme of Doncaster's Roman heritage, the group then discussed what they would like the artwork to achieve.



Notes from the consultation sessions

The group decided that they would like the art to share their experiences of recovery, combat stigma around addiction, signpost others towards help, and share the inspiring work that happens at New Beginnings.

Once the theme and aims had been decided, the group started to create their initial design. Doncaster artist Jill Temporal was recruited to support the group in creating and realising their vision.



Jill's initial sketch

Every element in the final design was chosen by a member of the group to represent something related to their ideas around recovery. These are explored and explained over the next few pages. All of the interpretation is based on conversations with the group, and includes some direct quotes.

The Road



“recovery is a lifelong journey”

Recovery is a journey that people must travel, rather than a destination. It is also an active process that requires the person’s commitment and engagement. In this work, the road represents this journey. It starts out cracked and uncertain, but strengthens with time and distance, reflecting the idea that recovery can feel easier with time. We don’t see the end of the road, as recovery is a lifelong journey.

The foundations



Much like a Roman road, a recovery journey must be built on strong foundations in order to succeed. We had many conversations about what it takes to recover, and what needs to be in place before this can happen. The first step is admitting that you need help. After this, trust, honesty, community, peer support, resilience, and new habits are all necessary foundations for healing. The road was painted with acrylic paints, and details were added with paint pens.

Leaves and nature



“a new stage of life”

Much of the symbolism chosen was based around natural themes, linked to ideas of rebirth, reincarnation and new life. These leaves, created with watercolour paints, symbolise the fresh start in life that newfound sobriety can grant. They also represent the metaphorical ‘turning over a new leaf’ that many in recovery hope to do.

Thorns and flowers



Many people referred to feelings of a personal transformation, and a journey from an old, complex life to an easier one. A motif of thorns changing to roses was suggested as a visual metaphor for this idea. The flowers were created using watercolours and tissue paper.

Butterflies and dragonflies



“it’s like being reborn”

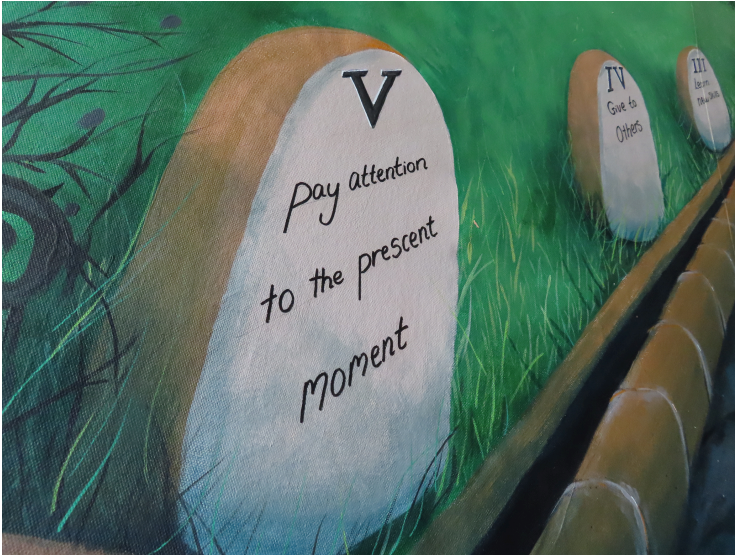
Some members of the group likened their experience of recovery to rebirth or reincarnation – a second chance at a more beautiful life. Butterflies and dragonflies, painted using acrylic paints, were chosen to represent this sentiment. Some people chose to write important messages or personal sentiments on the back.

The mosaic



Mosaic was the first artistic technique that Jill taught the group for this project. It was chosen as it is accessible, as well as being an artistic technique that was very popular with the Romans. The tiles can be seen to represent the idea of being a small part of something bigger, and the idea that recovery is easier when you are surrounded by a community of people who understand you and your experiences.

The milestones



“The 5 Ways to Wellbeing”

At New Beginnings, there is a large emphasis on the NHS's 5 Ways to Wellbeing. These are 5 things that everyone can do to improve their mental health. Each milestone represents one of the steps. They are: connecting with other people, being physically active, giving to others, learning new skills, and being present in the moment. As part of this project, we tried to do all of these things.

The tools



An important part of a recovery journey at New Beginnings is gaining tools and skills that people can use to maintain sobriety once they have left the programme. These tools, including things like mindfulness and peer support, are represented on the artwork. The shield is based on the Danum Shield, found in the remains of the Roman fort in 1971. It was made from wood, leather, and iron, and was probably used by an auxiliary soldier. So far it is a unique find from Roman Britain!

The rainbow



“recovery brings colour to your life”

One of the very earliest suggestions in the design process was that the road should start out in murky colours and finish in full technicolour. This represents the way that recovery brings colour, clarity, joy and positivity to people’s lives. The rainbow was included to serve as a reminder that, just as rainy days can bring rainbows, a bad time in your life can be the thing that motivates you to bring about positive change.

Community



At the brow of the hill we see a group of people, travelling the road together. One of the most important things about New Beginnings is that the participants can all rely on each other for support, knowing that the people around them all understand how they feel because they have all had similar experiences. Some said that they struggle to speak to those who have not experienced addiction with full honesty and frankness, for fear of upsetting them. The strength of the community at New Beginnings is integral to its success, so here we see the group walking the road to recovery together.

Help and support

The participants from New Beginnings want you to know that...

- Recovery is possible
- Addicts are people
- Addiction can happen to anyone
- You are not alone in addiction

If you or somebody you care about would like help with addiction, there are lots of places you can get support. The participants and staff from New Beginnings have suggested the following as good places to start.

- Your GP
- Aspire Drug and Alcohol services
 - Phone 03000 213 900
 - Email rdash.aspirereferrals@nhs.net
 - Find a drop-in session near you at <https://www.rdash.nhs.uk/services/drug-and-alcohol/>

Help and support

- **Alcoholics Anonymous**
 - Phone 0800 917 7650
 - Email help@aamail.org
- **Narcotics Anonymous**
 - Phone 0300 999 1212
- **Project 6 Doncaster**
 - Phone 01302 360090
- **Frank drugs helpline**
 - Phone 0300 123 6600

With thanks

This project would not have been possible if it not for the hard work of many people.

Thank you for Jill Temporal for supporting in the design and creation of this artwork, and for sharing your wonderful skills with us.

Thank you to the volunteers at Balby Library for supporting us with the display of this artwork.

Thank you to the UKRI/AHRC Mobilising Community Assets to Address Health Inequalities Programme for generously funding this project, and for our embedded researcher Chloe for her help. Thank you to Doncaster's Creative Board for their ongoing support.

Finally, a huge thank you to the participants and staff at New Beginnings. Your courage and openness has been very inspiring, and your creation will be enjoyed by many people across the city.

