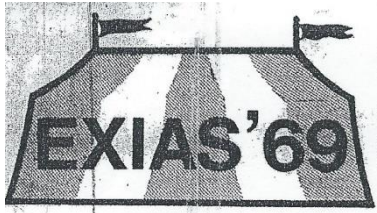


The Selby Festival and Pink Floyd live in Selby : all in 1969

A 6-month-long party marking a 900 year anniversary

The Selby Festival 1969



From the perspective of the 21st century, the Selby Festival of 1969 seems to

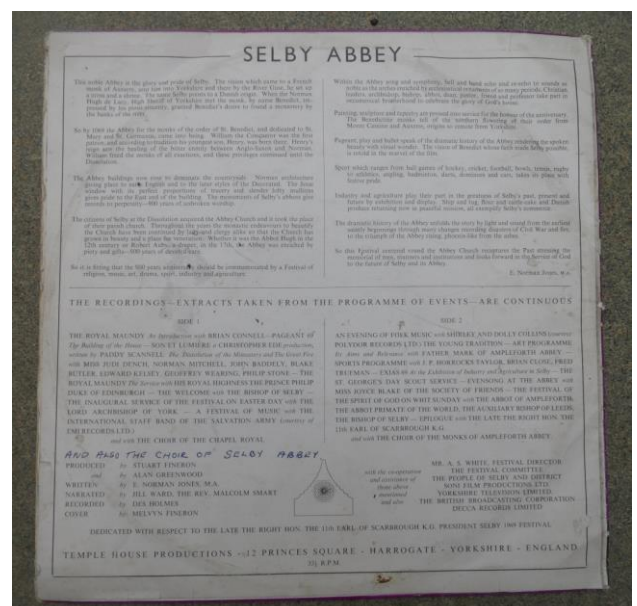
have been a magnificent attempt at municipal celebration. Whilst it ultimately failed financially, the self-confidence and belief of the organizing committee was tremendous. It is impossible to think that a town of similar size to Selby could ever plan to host a 6-month event of such diversity and quality.



This article can only give a brief and fact-based account of the Festival. To have some idea of the optimism and spirit of the times, read the back copies of the weekly 'Selby Times' for 1969, available in Selby library.

The festival was first discussed in the autumn of 66 with an organizing committee drawn from civic and religious organizations. It is difficult to credit now quite how important a role the church played in everyone's daily life, and the large membership of groups such as Scouts and Guides, and the way that these groups worked together with the schools and technical colleges to put events on ensured comprehensive 'community involvement' as it would be called today. The focus of the plans was to commemorate the 900th anniversary of the foundation of the original Selby Abbey by Benedict.

It's also important to remember the status that Selby had in Yorkshire at the time. With an Abbey older than any other in Yorkshire and a vibrant local economy based on Cochrane's shipyard; British Oil and Cake Mills (BOCM); the sugar factory; John and E Sturge; and Rostron's



paper as well as many other local industries, a station based on the East Coast Main Line and the infamous Toll Bridge : Selby was a prosperous and highly-regarded town.

The committee clearly had influence, and it was a major boost to the plans when it was announced that Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth would present the Maundy Money at Selby Abbey on April 3rd 1969. It was the first and only time the Maundy distribution took place in a parish church, as Selby Abbey is now classified by the C of E. The ceremony usually alternates between Westminster Abbey and another cathedral, sometimes in the North. A champagne reception was held afterwards funded by the West Riding in the High School (now Selby High) on Leeds Road

The committee, emboldened by this, proceeded to plan many more events. A full list may be seen by looking through the Selby Times, but between April and October they included the following:

- * The striking of 200 special gold medals that could only be purchased in non-sterling areas for £75 each.
- * The striking of 1969 silver medals of similar design, for anyone to purchase, at £8 guineas each
- * A commemorative plate designed by Spode who took the design from armorial bearings in the Abbey, and the cross over the chancel screen. Numbered 1 to 900, with the Queen receiving no. 1, the mould was then broken so that no more could be made.



Examples of medals and plates are on display in the Abbey, along with an extract from the visitors' book.

- * A 10-day long festival of Agriculture and Industry ("EXIAS69"). This took place on the site now covered by Morrison's, the car parks, and the playing field. It was something like the Yorkshire Show, with 150 exhibitors, but without the animal displays. It included a 80-foot high 'kinetic sculpture' in what is now the Abbey Vaults Car Park and a 100-foot long 'demonstration submarine'
- * A son et lumière held in the Abbey for 6 nights a week throughout the festival, featuring live actors as well as recorded effects and commentary by Judi Dench

* A celebration held by the Round Table in four large marquees - one a champagne bar, one a refreshment bar and the other two for dancing - on the Bowling Green (The field at the end of James Street). The Bishop of Selby attended in full episcopal evening dress - although it is not recorded if he danced in this garb.

* A charity cricket match featuring a Festival XI led by Fred Trueman, composed mainly of local players, against a full Yorkshire CC team, led by former England captain Brian Close at BOCM sports ground, Barlby.

* A specially-composed play "The Vision of Benedict" performed in and around the Abbey.

* A commemoration of Selby's status by a special service in the Abbey where representatives of all of Yorkshire's then 151 districts being invited.

* A student rag week

* Visits by three Royal Navy ships, which moored on Ousegate for several days.

* A high-quality athletics meeting held at the BOCM sports ground

* A 5-day-long arts festival and series of pop concerts

* Open air procession and Masses with religious representatives from Sens - the French district then covering the part of France that Benedict hailed from

* A pageant

* A flower festival

* An exhibition of family heirlooms

* Production of special festival ales from both Hull and Bentley's breweries

SELBY FESTIVAL  COME AND VISIT

EXIAS'69

MAY 17th - 26th 1969

EXHIBITION

of INDUSTRY & AGRICULTURE
James Street Recreation Ground, SELBY

INTERNATIONAL FASHION SHOW • COOKERY DEMONSTRATIONS • THE STORY OF WOOL • RESTAURANTS • BARS • SNACK BARS • REST CENTRES • DEMONSTRATION SUBMARINE • CHILDRENS ATTRACTIONS SHOW HOUSE • POLICE DRIVING DISPLAY • SELBY INDUSTRIES • WRCC FIRE-ENGINE DISPLAY • VEHICLE BUILDING • NCB WORKING MODEL KINETIC CONSTRUCTION MOVING LIGHT EXPERIENCE EXHIBITION

OPEN DAILY 11.00 a.m. until 8.00 p.m.

ADMISSION Sat. 17th May 3/- per person
Mon. 26th May 3/- per person
Other days 2/6 per adult
1/- per child accompanied by adult
9d per child for arranged parties

PARKING SPACE AVAILABLE FOR 5,000 CARS NEAR THE GROUND.

- * A concert by the Huddersfield Choral Society and the Liverpool Philharmonic
- * A Selby Festival LP made at Decca Records
- * A 4-hour long visit by then Prime Minister Harold Wilson
- * Classic car and traction engine displays
- * A fly-past by the Red Arrows
- * A procession through town on Whit Sunday
- * Charity auction
- * Publication of full-colour illustrated brochure by eminent historian, Professor Barrie Dobson
- * Establishment of Selby Civic Society, which continues to use the Festival logo.

The committee were hugely ambitious to begin with, even asking the Post Office to design a special stamp (after all, Westminster Abbey had had one for their 900th in 1966), and NASA to borrow the command module from Apollo 8, recently returned from orbiting the Moon, to put on display. One of the Spode plates was presented to President Richard Nixon.

However, such ambition went beyond reasonable bounds, and the hugely over-optimistic estimates of attendances eroded confidence in the committee's abilities. For instance, parking space for 5000 cars daily were provided for EXIAS visitors, and a total attendance of 100 000 was expected. In the event, fewer than 20 000 attended (in itself twice the town's population!) leading to financial losses. Similarly, sales of medals and pottery did not reach the level expected, and attendances at the son et lumière were disappointing, necessitating reduction in ticket prices and further financial losses.

Whilst West Riding CC did offer some support (Selby was in the West Riding until 1974), taking 50 000 square feet of display space at EXIAS, and standing guarantor for a loss of £500, in the end the losses became a burden on the then Selby Urban District Council, meaning that although many had good experiences of Festival events, it also left behind unhappy monetary memories.

Civic pride encouraged by new society

THE SELBY Civic Society was formed in January 1968 to promote and encourage three objectives by charitable means.

These are—high standards of architecture and town planning in Selby and its environs, public interest in and care for the beauty, history and character of the area of the town and its surroundings and the preservation, development and improvement of features of general public amenity or historic interest.

To pursue these ends the society is using meetings, exhibitions, lectures, publications, other forms of instruction and publicity and the promotion schemes of a charitable nature.

Membership is open to all who are interested in the aims of the society and subscriptions are:— life member, £3 5s., corporate or business member, £2 2s. per annum, full member, 10s. 6d., per annum; junior member, five shillings per annum.

Donations of any amount are gratefully received.

Mr Peter K. Poskitt, "Pennyghael," Westbourne Grove, Selby, is the chairman and Mr W. H. Spashejt, 2, Beech Grove, Selby, is the secretary.

For further information and application for membership visit stand G 18, Exias '88.

In the end what started out with glorious hopes fizzled out as somewhat of an ignominious failure. To this day, there is still no official archive of events and ephemera in the local council archives.

It is arguable that the glorious disappointment of the Selby Festival marked the start of the town's decline. After all, in the course of the next 20 years, all of the businesses mentioned at the start of this piece had been taken over or closed or both. The railway was diverted and commercial river traffic ceased. Whilst the road bridge was now toll-free, there was less need to use it.

The Abbey's 950th anniversary falls in 2019. One wonders if any Selebianians will be brave enough to organize celebrations for that milestone!

The Pink Floyd concert

Whilst this seems hugely unlikely today, Pink Floyd headlined a concert in a marquee on the St. James' Recreation Field, off James Street on 4th July 1969, as part of the 6-month long Selby Festival. Bradford College had been asked to organize a 5-day art and music festival, and Pink Floyd were top of the bill on the final night, supported by Eire Apparent (an Irish, Hendrix-influenced heavy rock band) and jazz-rockers Coliseum.

The Yorkshire Evening Post's critic was enthusiastic - but seemed to see the Floyd as somewhat of an afterthought:



Pink Floyd live at Plumpton in July 1969

Selby Abbey rocked on its foundations last night and well into Saturday as Pink Floyd, Jon Hiseman's Coliseum and Eire Apparent hammered out the last night of the festival. About 2,000 young people from all over Yorkshire poured into Selby and then into a large marquee to hear music like Selby has never heard before.

And it was Jon Hiseman's Coliseum who took the place over. Let's not call them a pop group, jazz band or anything. Call them a quintet or call them fantastic. Drummer Hiseman, with that LOUD double kit was firmly on the driving seat with bespectacled Dick Heckstall-Smith charging along on his sax, crouching over his microphone, often blowing two horns together. Coliseum didn't indulge in any mind-blowing, sky-high solo improvisations. Each man knew his limits, and despite the wild, ranging mood of the band, the tight and changing arrangements demanded that each member respect the others. The band's manager Gerry Bron, is finalising details for two American tours and is confident Coliseum will be the top British concert attraction in the States this year.

Pink Floyd produced some lovely sounds, and those crashing supernatural chords could be heard a quarter of a mile away. The Floyd didn't have the time or stage space to do some of their recent works such as "Man", so they concentrated on shorter, more exciting pieces like "Interstellar Overdrive". The group can be very gentle too, with things like "Green is the Colour" and know the art of building up the mood. Add to that a whole roast ox to feed the hungry and a bar until midnight to satisfy the parched. The whole festival marks the 900th anniversary of the Abbey. I hope they have another in 100 years' time!



The site of the concert in February 2015. Green is indeed the colour!

The 'Selby Times' were much more interested in the ox mentioned in the final paragraph. Their entire coverage is below.



The band were very much in a time of transition. They'd had their chart hits with 'Arnold Layne' and 'See Emily Play' in 1967, then suffered the loss of Syd Barrett and were now in the midst of making the transition between a pop band to being a progressive rock group. Similar bands of the time would be such as the Third Ear Band, Traffic, the Edgar Broughton Band, Chicken Shack and If. Had the college booked one of these bands, the July 4th Selby event would now probably be truly forgotten. To give an idea of their oddly changing status at the time, the Saturday before the Selby concert, the

Floyd played the 'Saturday Dance Date' at Weston super Mare Pavilion, supported by the Ken Birch Band and the Mike Slocombe Combo (where are they now?), yet 2 days previous to that they'd packed out the Royal Albert Hall, playing 'The Final Lunacy' with the Royal Philharmonic brass section, members of the stage crew dressed as gorillas, and folk sawing wood on stage.

The Selby concert came at the end of a series of concerts around Britain and Europe during the summer of 1969. Some of the live experience can be heard on Floyd's album "Ummagumma" recorded a month earlier in Manchester and Birmingham. Whilst the Selby set list doesn't survive, that for the concert a few days earlier in Cardiff, where their fee was £100, does. It was as follows.

Astronomy Domine Dawn', their first album)	(from 'Piper at the Gates of Dawn')
Green Is the Colour the Italian film 'More')	(from the soundtrack album to the Italian film 'More')
Careful with That Axe, Eugene Me at the Sky' single, on 'Relics' and 'Pompeii')	(originally the B side of the 'Point Me at the Sky' single, on 'Relics' and 'Pompeii')
Interstellar Overdrive	(from 'Piper...')
Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun	(from 'Ummagumma')
A Saucerful of Secrets name)	(from the album of the same name)

If you want to hear what those "crashing supernatural chords" might have sounded like, this site links to recordings of the time

www.setlist.fm/setlist/pink-floyd/1969/top-rank-cardiff-wales-23d76cb7.html

The 'Man' project referred to was a Floyd concept that was never fully realised, the idea being to depict a human's journey through life, its full title was 'The Man and The Journey'. This work formed the set that the Floyd played in summer '69 when they had the time and space evidently not available in Selby. According to Wikipedia, a nominal set list, with links to where the songs are to be found as 'releases' is :

Part 1 : The Man

1. "Daybreak, Pt. I" ("Grantchester Meadows", from *Ummagumma*)
2. "Work" (Percussion and vibraphone with musical sawing & hammering)
3. "Teatime" (Pink Floyd were served tea on stage at this point) ("Alan's Psychedelic Breakfast" from *Atom Heart Mother*)
4. "Afternoon" ("Biding My Time", from *Relics*)
5. "Doing It!" ("The Grand Vizier's Garden Party (Entertainment)" [6:12 onwards], from *Ummagumma*, or in some performances it was replaced by a unique combination of "Up the Khyber" [from *Soundtrack from the Film More*] and an early "Heart Beat, Pig Meat" [from *Zabriskie Point*])
6. "Sleep" ("Quicksilver", from *Soundtrack from the Film More*)
7. "Nightmare" ("Cymbaline", from *Soundtrack from the Film More*)
8. "Daybreak, Pt. II" ("Grantchester Meadows" instrumental reprise, with alarm clock sound effects as in 'Time' on *Dark Side of the Moon*)

Part 2 : The Journey

1. "The Beginning" ("Green Is the Colour", from *Soundtrack from the Film More*)
2. "Beset By Creatures of the Deep" ("Careful with That Axe, Eugene")
3. "The Narrow Way" ("The Narrow Way, Part 3", from *Ummagumma*)
4. "The Pink Jungle" ("Pow R. Toc H.", from *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*, or in some performances a unique instrumental, similar to "Nick's Boogie")
5. "The Labyrinths of Auximines" (Let There Be More Light instrumental middle section from *A Saucerful of Secrets*)
6. "Behold the Temple of Light" (A few seconds of this piece is heard on *Ummagumma* just before "The Narrow Way, part 3", greatly expanded here)
7. "The End of the Beginning" ("A Saucerful of Secrets, Pt. IV - Celestial Voices"^[5] [8:38 onwards], from *A Saucerful of Secrets*)

According to the 'setlist' website, one person, called 'stureasy' claims to have been at the concert. So, stureasy whoever you are - if you are out there and want to let us know about Selby's Pink Floyd experience, please get in touch!

Taking things further

A Google search for 'Pink Floyd Selby 1969' will lead to many sites with set list details etc.

A version of the 'Man' concert from an Amsterdam '69 gig can be heard at www.youtube.com/watch?v=4y211gpjdYU

Copies of the Selby Festival album occasionally turn up in local charity shops, and a copy of the album is in Selby Library

Music concerts are still held on the field - usually as part of Selby Town Council's Midsummer Festival

A copy of Professor Dobson's book "A History of Selby Abbey and Town" is also in Selby Library's reference collection.

Microfilm copies of the Selby times for 1969 can be viewed at Selby Library.