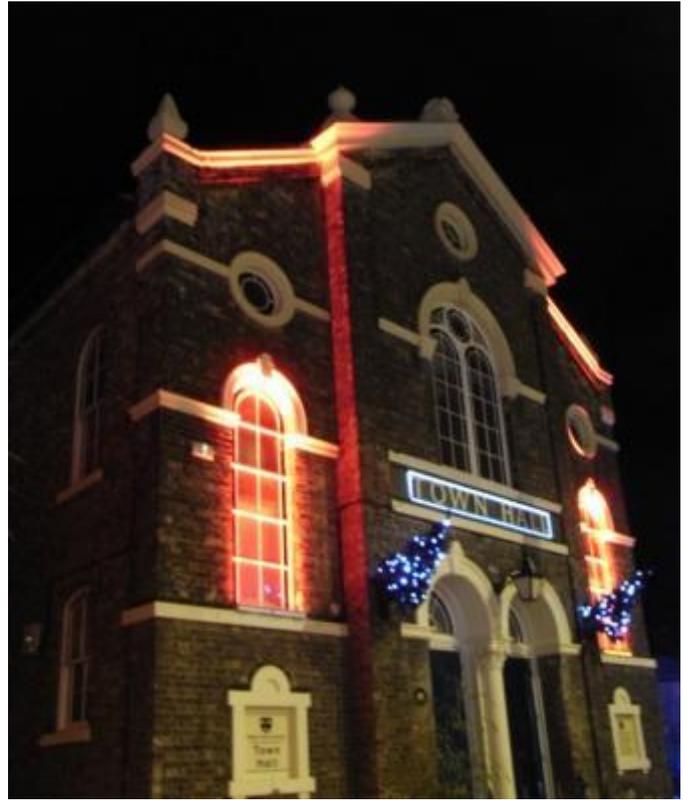


Selby Town Hall: chapel, clinic, car repairs and now in civic service

The building that is currently Selby Town Hall has had a fascinating history.

The hall was originally built in 1862 as a Primitive Methodist Chapel on land sold to the Methodists by Lord Londesborough who also gave £10 towards the costs of construction. When finished, the total cost was £1400. In its original form the chapel that seated 460 worshippers when both the ground floor and a gallery were occupied. There were also vestries and schoolrooms. Next door to the chapel was a house provided for the Minister. According to contemporary documents, the front wall of the building was carried out in Wallingfen bricks, "a fine, white, durable brick", from near Market Weighton. The decorative stonework and dressings are of "Hare Hill stone", presumably from a Leeds quarry. The top of the façade certainly exhibits stone in interesting geometric forms, to contrast with the simplicity of the windows. To the rear of the building is a 1990s glass and steel extension that enables the building to function as offices for the Town Council.



Inside the main hall, the basic shape of the chapel is still evident, with a ground floor space, clear and simple glazing and a gallery. Original cast iron columns and ceiling decoration also remain. However the stage now occupies the space where platform and pulpit, organ and singers' gallery once stood. Around the walls of the hall are items linking to Selby's history. There are historic playbills from Selby's former theatres, name plaques from World War II submarines that the



people of Selby sponsored and items from the town's twinning partners of Filderstadt (Germany) and Carentan (France). There are also plaques listing the town mayors since the Town Council came into being in 1974.

Behind the stage in what was the schoolroom, there is now a functional refreshment, display and meeting area, used by a wide variety of Selby groups.

Initial Methodist services were held in October 1862 attracting speakers from as far afield as Gainsborough and Sheffield. Such was the attendance at some of these meetings that the congregation overflowed the room and it is reported that "several persons sought and found salvation."

A public room of this capacity was soon in demand. By January 1863, evening classes in "writing, arithmetic and other knowledge useful to the humbler masses" had been arranged. Magic Lantern shows and displays of scientific phenomena also proved popular.

The building continued to serve the Methodist community of the Selby area for almost a century. Renovations were funded by a Japanese Bazaar in 1926, and further redecoration took place in 1953. Unfortunately, in common with the rest of the country, attendances at religious meetings gradually declined, and the chapel ceased to be used as a place of worship on 30th August 1956. However, the use of the building for the general benefit of Selby residents continued, housing the town clinic and centre for inoculations against killer diseases such as polio.

When the clinic moved to Raincliffe Street, after a period lying vacant, the building was taken over in the 1960s by Moss Tyres, and their successor ATS Tyres, as a tyre fitting depot. Whilst the organ had been taken to other Methodist premises, the pews and other decorative items remained on site. The picture below shows the Hall as it was in the tyre-depot years.



Organ and platform, newly decorated, 1950s



Interior of Town Hall prior to redevelopment, late 1980s

In 1990 Selby Town Council purchased the now disused and derelict tyre depot for £80 000. A programme of restoration, preserving the original layout as far as practical and re-instating features such as railings and ground-glass stained windows was then carried out.

The Town Council relocated to the Town Hall in 1996. Selby Civic Society presented a "Good Design" award plaque to Selby Town Council for its sensitive restoration of the building, and this is prominently displayed beside the front door.

Taking it further

Selby Town Council can be contacted at www.selbytowncouncil.gov.uk or 01757 708449, from Monday to Friday, 10 - 4. Town Council meetings are held monthly.

Richard Moody has published a book to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the building in 2012, concerning the building's time as a Methodist Chapel. It is available from the Town Hall and Selby library.

A pamphlet on the Town Hall is available from the Town Council offices.

The Town Hall has become a cultural centre for the town. A programme of concerts, plays and live theatre relays are staged courtesy of the Town Council.

The Selby Globe Cinema (the name bringing back to life the name of one of Selby's three former cinemas) regularly shows films in the auditorium - from new releases to classics - , and the space is also used for events such as Art displays, twin-town celebrations and food and drink festivals.

Details of all these events can be found via the Town Council contacts.

Archive photos courtesy of Richard Moody and Selby Town Council.



Exterior of Town Hall prior to redevelopment, late 1980s

