

SWANNING AROUND SELBY

A guide to the history of the town of Selby
featuring Selby Abbey, four heritage themed walks around town,
a guide to the Selby Timeline and details of a stroll by the Selby Canal.

 **PRESENTED BY SELBY CIVIC SOCIETY** 

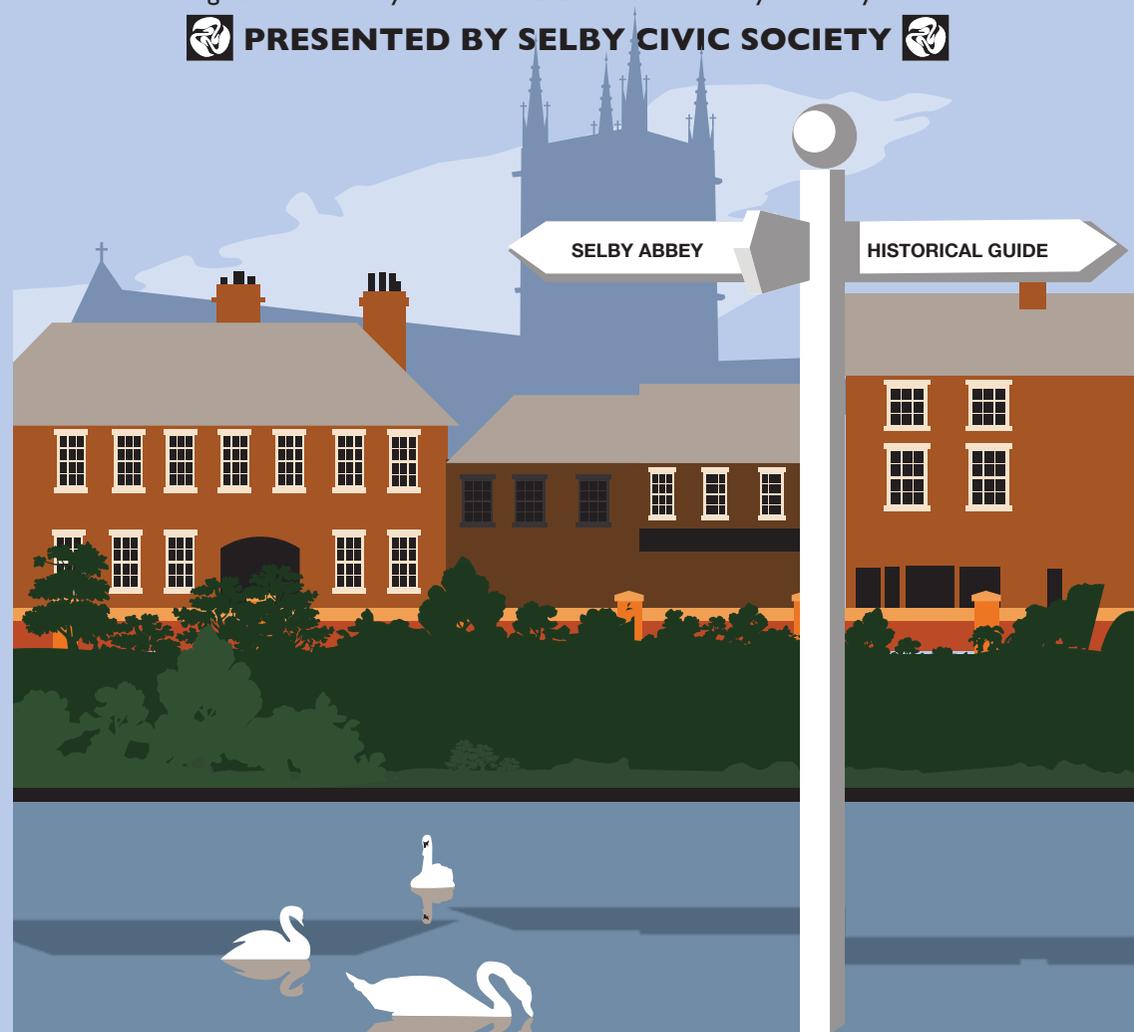


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Why SWANS & SWANNING ?

Selby's symbol is three swans, and 'swanning about' implies going around the place enjoying yourself.

So, the Civic Society thought that referring to a pleasurable and gently educational stroll around the town that we are proud of seemed appropriate.

We hope you agree.....



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A GUIDE TO THE HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF SELBY

Welcome to "Swanning about Selby", a guide to the history and heritage of the town, produced by Selby Civic Society. This guide shares our understanding of that history and encourages you to stroll around the town to see some of the sites linked to it.

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As well as an outline history of the town and Abbey, there are six walks varying in length from 100 yards to 3 miles. Some names (coloured blue) are hyperlinked and also have a "QR" code nearby - like this one on the right. Scanning the codes means you can find out more about the person or building mentioned.



Why take a tour around Selby?

Anyone interested in the history of England should visit Selby for its Abbey alone. One of the top 20 churches in England, according to Simon Jenkins' authoritative book, "England's 1000 Best Churches" it's also the site of a birthplace of an English King, magnificent stained-glass windows, links with George Washington, over 900 years of history and fine church architecture : all these would easily fill a day's exploration.

But Selby has much more than its Abbey to display. The presence of the Abbey brought trade along the navigable River Ouse. Trade requires storage, and Selby has one of the few remaining medieval monastic warehouses in the country, the "Abbot's Staithe".

Trade also needs transport. The tidal Ouse, the Selby Canal of 1778, the first railway station in Yorkshire built in 1834, its successor of 1840 and their remaining infrastructure can all still be investigated, along with the site of the 1791 road bridge and its modern replacement.

Wholesale trade implies resale markets, and since the 1320s, Selby's market has been in place in each of its three market places every Monday. The summer bank holiday markets are especially active. Naturally the town has modern superstores too, along with the individual and specialist shops typical of a North Yorkshire market town.

As with every such town, Selby has sons and daughters who have achieved fame in many spheres. Blue plaques denote the surviving birthplaces of eminent scientists Jonathan Hutchinson and Smithson Tennant. Victorian men such as Audus and Liversidge, Standerling and Denison made their mark on Selby, and these names appear in many places around town.

Selby also displays notable examples of commercial architecture from the 15th century to the 21st which can be seen as you explore in the neighbourhood of the town's intriguingly-named main street, "**Gowthorpe**"

A final feature of Selby is the iconic 'Three Swans' logo. This derives from the vision of the founder of the Abbey, **Abbot Benedict**, to build a place of worship where he saw three swans, representing the Holy Trinity.

At the last count, there were more than 25 examples of the 'Three Swans' in and around the town...how many can you spot?



A history of Selby

On the banks of a navigable river, a major north-south trading link and the site of an important Abbey, Selby had a significant part to play in England's history, and key points are described here. More information on people or places that are underlined is found from the QR codes next to their names on the "walks" pages.

Whilst travellers and marauders must have journeyed along the Ouse to the heart of Yorkshire from time immemorial and there is some evidence of Roman presence, the first records of a settlement here are with references to 'Seletun' in the Anglo Saxon Chronicle of 779 AD. In 1066, 300 Viking ships passed this way en route to the battle of Stamford Bridge, but rather fewer went back after the battle was lost. Selby itself comes into being with the arrival of **Benedict** in 1069.



Benedict was a monk from Auxerre in France. He claimed to have had a vision from **Saint Germain** telling him to build a Monastery in England where he saw three swans swimming. Germain's finger bones were kept in a gold cage at Auxerre as a holy relic. Benedict took the bones as a "good luck charm" and travelled throughout England until he saw the fabled swans at the bend of the river at what is now Selby. Under the protection of the sheriff from York, Benedict established his first simple wooden church under a mighty oak on what is now Church Hill.



William the Conqueror was also travelling in the North around this time, on an altogether less peaceful mission: the 'harrying' of the North where the entire countryside was destroyed. His wife, Matilda, was left in Selby in the winter of 1068/1069 where she gave birth to their 4th son, a child who became **King Henry I**, the only Norman king to be born in England.

The current stone Abbey was begun in the early 12th century, and with ecclesiastical power and a navigable river, the town gradually grew in importance, and a thriving market was in place by 1327. Shipbuilding had been established by the 15th century, by which time Selby had made a name for itself as a town with trade throughout Yorkshire, along the East Coast and to the Low Countries. In 1539 as part of King Henry VIII's religious reforms known as "The Dissolution", Selby's Monastic buildings were destroyed.

Records show that the Abbey was still functioning in 1600, as the birth of England's first scientific botanist, **Thomas Johnson**, was recorded in that year, and by 1619, the Abbey had become the town's parish church.

The Civil War saw two skirmishes around Selby in 1643 and 1644, the latter being a prelude to the siege of York. Roundheads eventually won the day, storming along Ousegate and crossing the river over a bailey bridge of ships. What a sight!

In 1761, another important scientist, chemist **Smithson Tennant** was born in Finkle Street. In 1778, the **Selby Canal** made links possible with Leeds and the cloth, stone and coal trade of the West Riding, and the following 60 years were very much a boom time in Selby, as the town became the inland port for Yorkshire.



In 1791 a **toll bridge** was begun across the Ouse, connecting the West and East Ridings. It was the only bridge over the Ouse between York and the sea and the money from the tolls was supposed to go to the upkeep of the bridge - but the shareholders made good profits too. The first passenger railway in Yorkshire, from Leeds to Selby followed in 1834. The town's population increased rapidly, but sadly without sanitation to match, and two cholera epidemics swept Selby.

Jonathan Hutchinson was the next Selebian to grace the national stage. Born in 1828, he was a hugely important medical figure in the late Victorian era. The early 20th century saw industry boom as Soapy Joe Watson established his factory, later to become BOCM, at Barlby in 1919. Industries as diverse as paper manufacture, dye works, flour mills, sugar refining, citric acid fermentation and pickle production followed. Much of this traffic travelled along the **Ouse**, with ocean-going ships regularly mooring at the Ousegate jetties.

The 20th century also saw successful athletic Selebians in Stanley Engelhart, European sprint champion in 1928 and John Sherwood, bronze medallist in the 400m Olympic hurdles in 1968. A year later the old Toll Bridge was replaced, and the 7p crossing charge went in 1991. However the river also brought tragedy, with huge floods in 1947 when Selby was deemed "the town that drowned."



The development of motorways took trade away from Selby during the 1980s, and industry declined. 500 years of shipbuilding tradition ceased when **Cochrane's** launched their final vessel sideways into the Ouse in 1993. Very few commercial vessels now visit the town's last remaining mill. It was promised that the Selby

Coalfield, whose riches were supposed to last into the 22nd century would be a new source of prosperity. Unkind politics and unhelpful geology put an end to all that in 2004, a year which saw the opening of the Selby bypass, first promised in the 1920s. Selby is now a pleasant market town, with its major manufacturing days behind it. Plenty of reminders of Selby's past remain, and the walks in this guide will hopefully help you appreciate it.

Selby Abbey through the centuries



The Abbey is the most important building in Selby, with a history going back over 900 years. The building you now see was begun in the early 12th century, and originally stood in a walled area encompassing the River, the Market Cross and the end of New Lane. It has undergone many changes over the years, but remains a historic building well worthy of inspection.

11th Century

Benedict of Auxerre built a wooden Abbey on Church Hill in 1069. His harsh treatment of monastic miscreants led him to resign his post in 1097. King Henry I supposedly born near the site of current North Porch of the Abbey.

12th Century

Abbot Hugh starts to build the current Abbey with stone arriving by water from Monk Fryston and Huddleston near Sherburn. A patterned pillar inside the Abbey shows the influence he brought from Durham. The West Door dates from 1170. The Abbey is home to around 30 monks who founded a seminary for boys.

13th Century

Selby becomes an honoured 'mitred' Abbey, one of only two in the North: the other being St. Mary's at York. The Nave aisles are completed and after a brief lull in building work, the current Choir is begun. Despite some financial crises the Abbey flourishes

14th Century

The Choir is completed in the 'Decorated' Gothic style, including the tracery of the celebrated East, or 'Jesse' Window and its stained glass. Fire wrecks the Abbey in 1346. The Abbey tower has battlements added in case the Scots army came as far south as Selby.

15th Century

Creation of the Lathom Chapel to the east of the North Transept. The 'Washington Window' is put in place. Current font cover created.

16th Century

Henry's 'Dissolution of the Monasteries' means the Abbey was surrendered to the King in 1539. Selby's monks are not ill-treated, but the Abbey fabric is stripped and the building left empty.



17th Century

A new peal of bells is presented to the Abbey in 1614. The Abbey became Selby's Parish Church in 1619: a role continued today. Windows, tombs and statues destroyed during the Commonwealth 1649 – 1660. In 1690 the Tower collapses, destroying the South Transept and a large amount of stonework.



18th Century

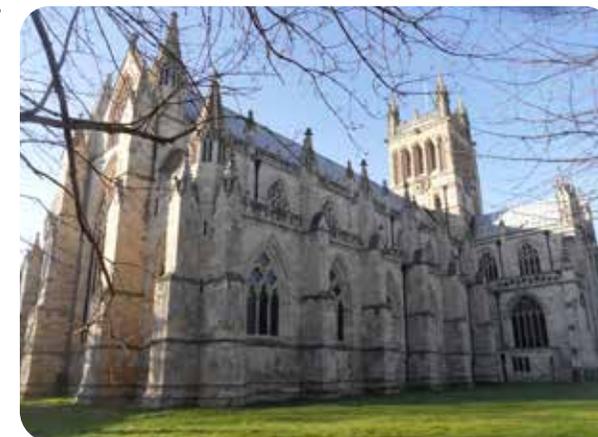
A simple bell tower replaces the collapsed tower. Nave used as storage area for market stalls. A Greycoat charity for girls established.

19th Century

A Bluecoat school is opened for boys in 1857. In 1871 well known architect Gilbert Scott is appointed to complete renovations to the Nave.

20th Century

Great Fire of 1906 destroys roof and Tower. The generosity of William Liversidge and Miss Standering leads to renovation of the South Transept and magnificent new stained glass windows. Oaken High Altar and a new organ installed. Queen Elizabeth distributes Maundy money in 1969 as part of a year-long festival to celebrate 900 years.



21st Century

Worship continues into a tenth century. Three bells for the new millennium complete a ring of twelve.

A 10-point tour of Selby Abbey

These ten points are only a small sample of the treasures to be found in the Abbey, usually open between 9 and 4. The exterior of the Abbey has much fine stonework to admire. As you tour the Abbey, there are many sources of information.

Walk from Selby's main street, Gowthorpe, across Market Place and follow in the footsteps of Queen Elizabeth through the Abbey Gates and enter through the West Door with its characteristic round Norman arch.



The link between Abbey and market is not accidental. The monks at the Abbey required material goods, leading to trading and hence a market.

Turn right and then left to proceed up the South Aisle.

1. Hugh de Pickworth's tomb. De Pickworth was a knight who served with valour under Edward II. His wife's tomb is on the other side of the Nave.



Continue up the aisle, passing the intriguing epitaphs to Frank Raw (floor) and John Archer (wall). Look across to...

2. Distorted arches and decorated pillars. The arches distorted under the weight of the original tower, but are now safely underpinned. The decorated columns hark back to the influence of the de Lacy family from Durham in the 12th Century. On the north (far) side of the Nave, note where one zigzag pattern in the arch runs 'out of step' into another.



Walk up to the South Transept and turn right. Ahead is a magnificent stained glass window.



3. Benedict's Window. Following the great fire of 1906, local businessman William Liversidge gave money for this marvellous window telling the story of Benedict's journey to Selby. To its left are fine panels featuring Victoria and Albert, and on the wall a charred boss from the 1906 fire.

Look at the display cases.

4. Maundy money and the Great Fire. Queen Elizabeth distributed the Maundy in Selby in 1969, and artefacts from that Royal visit are displayed on the right hand wall. To your left are items relating to the calamitous conflagration of 1906.

Pass under the tower and turn right, through the screen and into the Choir.

5. Choir Screen and High Altar. Through the wooden screen lies the High Altar. This was a gift from the people of Oberammergau to Selby following the 1906 fire, and is carved entirely from oak.

In the windows high to your right is...



6. The Washington Window. The coat of arms with red stripes and pierced spurs or 'mulletts' is thought to be an inspiration for the 'Stars and Stripes' of the USA. The pattern derives from the Wessington family of Co. Durham, ancestors of George Washington.

Leave the Choir through the exit opposite the window, turn right and proceed to the end.

7. The Jesse Window. With some glass still surviving from its installation in 1330, this superb window shows Jesus' descent from Jesse, father of King David, flanked by prophets, apostles and saints, and surmounted by a 'Doom'. It is considered one of the finest of its type in England.

Return to the Transept along the north side of the building. To your right are a leper squint and a marvel of stone carving. In the Transept itself, look to your right.

8. The North Window shows scenes from the life of St Germain and is the only one of its kind in the world, created in 1924 after a bequest by the local Standerer family. Notice the word 'Selby' in the scene of Benedict's vision. Continue along the North aisle back into the Nave. As you proceed, notice...

9. Norman Font and Font Cover. 900 year old stonework, and a font cover of exquisite medieval woodwork heroically rescued from the 1906 flames, it is still used for baptisms.

10 Masons' Marks. The original stonemasons who built the Abbey left their individual marks on the stones that they cut and laid. These are most easily visible on the pillars at the west end of the Nave.

Footsteps of famous Selebians

1 mile

A "Selebian" is someone lucky enough to have been born or lived most of their life in Selby. This walk takes you past the birthplaces or workplaces of some notable Selebians, explaining a little about their fame in passing. From Market Place walk under an arch, with the Abbey on your right.

In front of you is the Cholera Burial Ground. When Selby's population dramatically increased in the early 1800s, cholera spread due to poor housing and sanitation, and 200 victims are buried here. See the Civic Society plaque on the railings. Thomas Hawdon was one of a



group of Selebians who led the way in improving the situation. His most dramatic policy was to ensure the first thorough cleansing of the town's main drain for over 50 years! The hall across the green is named the Hawdon Institute in his honour.



Follow the railings on the right.

A blue plaque marks the area where medieval historians believe **King Henry I** was born in the year 1068. The current Abbey had yet to be built, but we do know William and his wife Matilda were probably in the Selby area at the time as Selby was a key crossing point of the Ouse, and William had warlike business in the North.



Follow the street and head towards a car park.

The row of houses on your right replaced a row of shops. One of these was Englehart's Pork Butchers, home to Stanley Englehart. A fine all-round sportsman, Englehart was a European sprint champion in the 1920s and represented the UK at the 1932 Olympics.

Turn left down Wren Lane. At the bottom of the lane, head diagonally to the right and cross to The Quay.

On your right is the limestone wall of the magnificent Abbot's Staith (see p 27). Walk as far as you can to glimpse the bay structure at the rear of this unique medieval warehouse, but beyond the end of the pavement is private property. Across the road, the building that houses the office of Westmill Foods, was once the home of **Jonathan Hutchinson** a Quaker and a most important medical expert in the later part of the 19th century. He specialized in anatomy and



diseases of the nervous system, believed strongly in public education, gave public lectures and set up Selby Museum. This sadly closed in the 1960s.

Retrace your steps, passing in front of the library.

Across Wren Lane are two fine town houses, now shops. The right hand one was the home of **David Foster**. Foster was a merchant, and like Hutchinson, used the river for import and export. Unusually for Selby he was politically a Liberal, linked to the election of Selby's only Liberal MP, Joseph Andrews, in 1905. Whilst Foster was living here he also patented the first form of table tennis. Whilst Foster's game was very different from the modern form, with miniature rackets and side netting, it is recognised as the first codified form of table tennis.



Walk diagonally right across the wide expanse of Micklegate, away from The Quay.

On Mondays, **Micklegate**, or "Wide Street", is the site of Selby's market, dating back to 1327. It's particularly busy on Bank Holiday Mondays. "Mickle" means large or important, and at the far end is **Finkle Street**, curved like an elbow, away from Micklegate to the Market Place. Confusion surrounds Robert Street and the keystone head. Possibly 19th century Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel, but perhaps it is of Lord Roberts,



the Boer War leader. The image resembles the general more, and street names of similar age off Flaxley Road commemorate Boer War leaders. Further along, on the left is a plaque to **Smithson Tennant**. Tennant was born in this property and went on to become one of Europe's top scientists. Although little-known now, in his day he was friendly with many scientists



including Humphrey Davy and Charles Babbage. Tennant sold the property in the 1780s when it became a pub. "Mellanby" refers to the family who owned the pub during most of the 19th century. Their name is linked to the "Melling Road", part of the Grand National.



At the top of Finkle Street, turn left onto Market Place.

On your left is the building that has been Selby's major town centre hotel for over a century and a half. Known throughout the 20th century as the "Londesborough", after Lord Londesborough, a major landowner in Victorian Selby, it was refurbished in early 2017. This renewal saw the name revert to "The George Inn", which it had borne before the 1850s. On the left, an alley by a statue of Bacchus leads to Selby's Monday auction mart. Come 9:30 on a Monday, anything and everything is sold to the highest bidder. Unless you're bidding, return to the start of the walk in Market Place.



Benedict's benefice

3/4 mile

A benefice is an area of clerical influence. This walk takes you around parts of Selby close to the first landing point in 1069 of Abbot Benedict, the man who built the first Selby Abbey and made Selby a town.



From the Abbey's main (West) Door, turn right and go around the Abbey walls.

Opposite a gate is the North Porch. Look carefully at the small wicket door to see dents stemming from musket practice by Cromwell's soldiers when they occupied the Abbey during the Civil War in 1643. Above the porch entrance are statues of **Benedict** and **St. Germain**, the Abbey's founder and "patron saint" respectively.



Go to the gate and turn right . Follow the railings onto a street.

On a wall to your left is a mosaic of Selby icons, one of three around town made by school pupils in the 1980s, with the help of sculptor Lyndeale Spawforth. In 1069, when Benedict arrived, an ancient oak tree called "Strihac", grew here and the name marked an important meeting place. At the bollard, cross the road diagonally to where a plaque on a pillar has details. The decorative ironwork features oak leaves and Benedict's boat. At the nearby pub, Anglo Saxon skeletons bearing peace tokens in the form of hazel twigs were found in the basement in the 1860s.



Next door to the pub, the square and compass sign indicates the Masonic Hall.

Walk past the pub, turn right at the end of the street and walk towards the bridge.

Across the road is Selby's open-air performance space, the Amphitheatre (see the Timeline walk). Along Ousegate is **Corunna House** with fine brick and stonework. A plaque outlines the mystery of the name.



Cross the road at the traffic lights and then cross the bridge.

Sculptures of Selby's three Swans at the foot of the bridge celebrate 2009's riverside redevelopment. Before 1974 crossing the Ouse meant crossing a border from Selby in the West Riding to Barlby in the East. Until 1991, you would also have had to pay a toll, as the bridge was one of the last remaining privately-owned **toll bridges** in the country. When the bridge was begun in 1791, the owners were allowed to charge money for its upkeep, and for various reasons, the bridge was not 'adopted' by the local authority until



1991. The delay in paying caused notorious queues - in summer the delay for cars to cross was commonly half an hour.

Look down at the river.

Although Selby is over 60 miles from the sea, the **Ouse** is a tidal river. So, depending on the state of the tides, you may see a sluggish waterway with expanses of muddy banking or a rapidly-flowing, well-filled channel. Twice a day, the river flow reverses as a small wave brings the tide in from the Humber, a smaller version of the more famous Severn Bore. The power of the river is not to be trifled with : the mighty flood walls in front of you are regularly wetted by the swollen Ouse in winter. Glance upstream to the bend or 'bight' in the river. Until 1791, a ferry plied just before the bight and until the late 1980s there was a regular procession of tugs and barges to the BOCM mills just around the bight. Marvel at the skill of the boatmen who guided their 200-tonne craft through the gap of just 31 feet available when the bridge swung open.



Stop beyond the building on the far side

This is the bridge keepers' office, and on the Barlby side of the hut are fixed two of the cog wheels that were used when muscle power opened the bridge. When the original bridge was replaced in 1969, electric power took over. Look back at the **19th century properties on Ousegate** that reflect the richness of Selby in the mid-19th century. The two largest were Liversidge's Agricultural Depository to the right and Tyson's Ironworks to the left. Both families and firms were important in Selby during the Victorian era and beyond. Look upstream to Westmill Foods, and to its left the gable end of the Abbot's Staithe is visible. With the Abbey itself peeping over the rooftops, the closeness of the link between the Abbey and its trading base on the river is clear.



Return to the traffic lights

To investigate Ousegate's buildings, turn left. This walk continues directly down New Street. The street was "new" in the early 19th century because a direct route to the Toll Bridge was made by demolishing part of the Abbey's walls and a gatehouse.

Look up and to your left as you continue ahead

The fine sweep of buildings continuing past the traffic lights is "The Crescent", inspired by Bath's Lansdowne Crescent and designed by Selebian John Audus. It's another example of high standards of civic developments in Selby 200 years ago. The Abbey is to your right.

Outline map of Selby

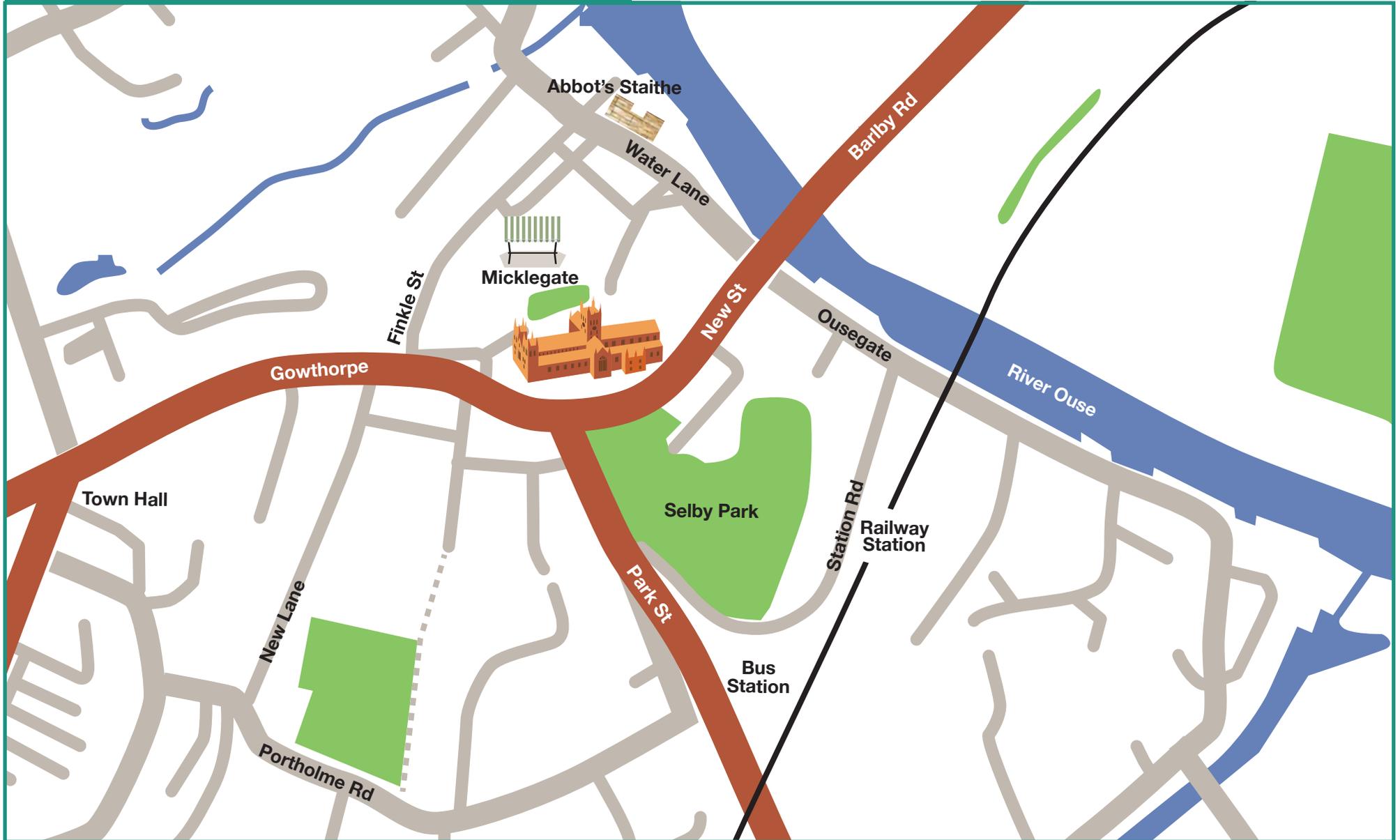
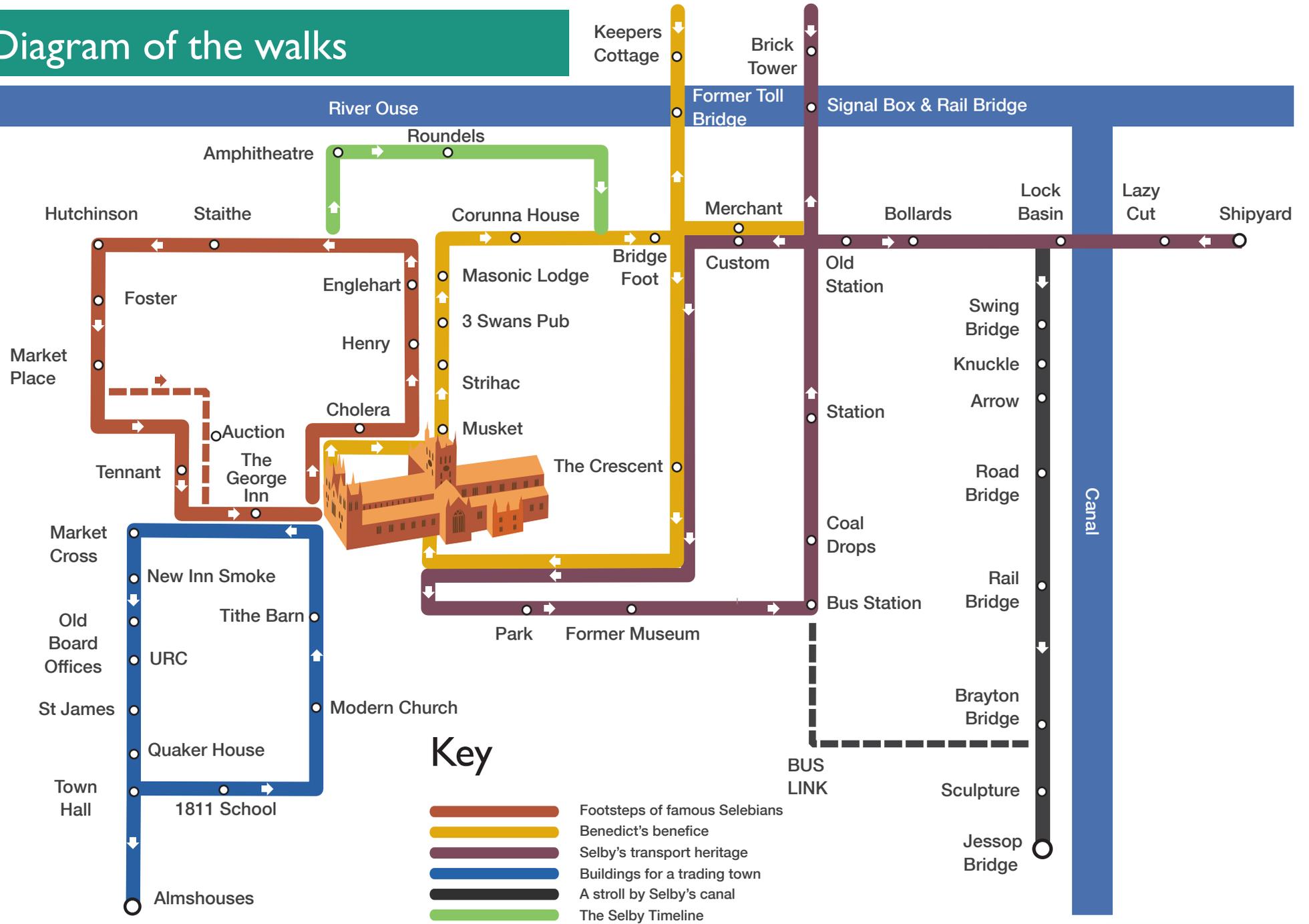


Diagram of the walks



Selby's transport heritage

1½ mile

Selby was at its richest in the decades following the opening of the Selby Canal in 1778. Before motorways, Selby was at the heart of rail and water transport links. This walk takes you past sites and buildings that were part of that prosperity.



Leave the Abbey by the South door, cross Gowthorpe at the lights onto the left hand side of Park St.

On your left is Selby's park with interesting specimen trees, spring planting, a bandstand and the town's war memorial. Across the road is the fine classical building that once housed Selby's museum, as founded by Jonathan Hutchinson. It's currently a restaurant, but a plaque in his honour can be seen in the foyer.

Keep to the left as the pavement veers left.

On your right is Selby's bus station. As the road curves there are two car parks. Until the 1960s, these were both areas of rail infrastructure. To your left were timber sidings, and the triangular walls - which are listed structures - were 'coal drops' where solid fuel of all kinds was delivered and collected.

Cross the road towards steps leading to the platform.

The platform has edging stones facing the road which tell of its time as a platform where empty coaches and vans for racing pigeon transport stood.



Look right to see how the road bridge has space for many more than the current two tracks.

Go onto the platform, cross by the bridge and go onto platform 3.

The area on the far side of platform 3 used to be yet more sidings, serving the building that can be seen to the right of the current station, from the end of platform 3. The triangular white fascia is that of **Yorkshire's first railway station**, built in 1834. It was replaced by the current station in 1840 and became a goods depôt. It still stores goods, but rail links were removed in the 1980s.



Re-cross the bridge, exit the station turning right, and right at the end.

Look out for interesting features on the current station - stylish air bricks, decorative ironwork, waiting rooms and weighing scales, all of which make Selby's current station a delightful example of a provincial rail centre. The rail swing bridge of 1892 crosses both the Ouse and the slope where Selby children used to race their Easter pace eggs. River traffic still has precedence over rail. When Selby was on the East Coast Main Line, delays to expresses caused by the bridge swinging open to let vessels pass was a major problem.

Walk along Ousegate, passing under the bridge.

On your right are the massive doors and wheels that gave access to the old station. They opened to allow engines and wagons to cross Ousegate to service ships moored at the jetties. Passengers gained access through the adjacent house. A lintel marked "1841" records when other openings were bricked up and a Civic Society plaque gives detail.



Continue along Ousegate.

On your right is the site of the former huge Victorian Maltings, the size a clue to the volume of Selby's former grain trade. Across the road, bollards and derelict jetties remain as reminders of Selby's maritime trade. Until the 1980s, ocean-going ships of up to 15000 tonnes came upriver to Selby to discharge cargoes. Looking back to the swing bridge, the control tower gives a commanding view of river and rail. It is sufficiently high above the tracks to allow for electrification. Note also the brick tower to the right. This relates to the original rail bridge of 1840, built to extend the railway from Leeds to Hull. It was a "bascule", opening like Tower Bridge in London. The brick tower housed hydraulic engines used to power it. In 2014 the rail bridge had its first major refurbishment in its 125 year history.

Continue along Ousegate, cross and take "The Waterfront" through modern flats.



The 19th century houses of Ousegate, although now somewhat rundown, have good architectural features. Once through the alley you are at the Lock Basin, the terminus of the 6-mile Selby Canal. The "Canal Walk" starts here, and the Lock area is described more fully on pages 23 and 24.

Carefully cross the lock gate and continue on the tow path.

As using the lock was time-consuming and depended on the state of the tide, a channel parallel to the river, the "Lazy Cut" was made in the early 1800s. This was on your right. Goods were transferred directly by crane from barge to ship. Set into the wall, ceramic tiles used to spell "Rostron's", a paper-making factory, now cleared as a site for a possible marina. As the path turns right, ahead, over the wall are the desolate remains of **Cochranes shipyard**. Closed in 1993, vessels were built and launched here, sideways into the Ouse. Spectators on the far bank were thrilled by the huge splash, but sometimes soaked by it too!



Retrace your steps to the canal and along Ousegate, beyond the swing bridge.

The Victorian buildings mentioned in Benedict's walk were on the site of Selby's Custom House. Selby's 19th century success in European trade required a customs office here so that trading ships could sail non-stop past Hull. A Civic Society plaque gives more information. Turn left at the lights to return to the Abbey.

Buildings for a trading town

1½ mile

Buildings and monuments around Selby's town centre cover a huge range of styles. This walk takes you past examples dating from the 1650s to the 2000s. Leave the Abbey by the main (West) door and head towards Market Place.



Selby's Monday market has been held in this area for almost 700 years. At times the market stretched into the Abbey itself. Market Place was repaved and redesigned in 2009, a plaque on The George Inn giving details. Directly ahead is the Market Cross of 1776, donated to the town by Lord Petre, the major landowner of the time. A market cross still signifies the site of a market, and no other public market may be held on the same day within a set number of miles. Today only goods are for sale, but in the past domestic and farm workers offered themselves for hire here.



Go straight ahead and cross Finkle Street.

On your right is the New Inn. Whilst this guide can make no comment about the beer, the fine stonework and stained glass mark the pub out as something special. If you enter the room on the left, you'll find a classic example of a "snug" or smoke room. Many boozers used to have tiny, comfy rooms like this - just right for secretive meetings. The **New Inn's snug** is a rare survival, and CAMRA rate it as an important national survivor as they have placed a blue plaque in the entrance hall. The pub still has many of its original late 1920s "Tudorbethan" features, and was an early design of infamous architect John Poulson. Just visible on the exterior is "Selby Ales", a reminder of the town's brewery, closed in the 1980s.



Cross Gowthorpe and go down New Lane.

New Lane and the New Inn refer to the southern exit from Selby via the old Mail Road (Portholme Rd) towards Camblesforth. On the corner are the former offices of Selby's Urban District Board, explaining the three stone swans. Councillor Liversidge was part of the family whose fine building is on Ousegate and they were important civic influences in the 19th century. Along this side of New Lane are more 19th century edifices. Firstly the former **United Reformed Church** with fine window and brickwork, followed by the 1867 church of St James the Apostle, commissioned by James Audus. Beyond St. James is St. Mark's Square of 1834, a classic arrangement of town houses around a green. Also note St James's Hall, linked to the Standerings, another important Selby family of a century ago, and a mysterious lion carved above an alleyway.



Return to St James, and with church to your left, walk through churchyard to a car park.

Cross the car park to a small green area. **This space** was given to Selby by the Quakers as an area forever. A marble plaque from 1973 explains. Note the olive branch imagery on the table and gravestones dating back to the 1650s from Drax Abbey. The grey building ahead is the former Friends Meeting House, attended by Jonathan Hutchinson (see page 11).



Go down an alley leading from the green and turn left when you reach Gowthorpe.

Across the road, is the modernist 1930s frontage of a former 'Burton's' tailors. Continue along Gowthorpe to pass a pub named in honour of Selby's famous botanist, **Thomas Johnson**, and at the traffic lights is the former **Primitive Methodist Chapel of 1862**. Now the Town Hall, home to Selby Town Council, it's regularly open for films, concerts and meetings, and if open you may have a chance to see the well-restored interior. St. Mary's church spire and Audus-designed almshouses lie beyond the lights, but the walk now veers left.



Follow York St, then right down Harper St, and left at the end.

To your left is another view of the spire of St. James, damaged in an aircraft accident that killed 15 in 1944. The house with the white gable end on New Church Terrace is the birthplace of 1940s film star James Stephenson. At the bottom of New Lane is Selby College's "1811" building. Constructed in that year, and a home for local education for over 200 years; it features notable brickwork, windows and a plaque.



Cross New Lane, continue along to go left at pedestrian lights.

The field on your left is the "Bowling Green". Dedicated to the town as a green space, it's still regularly used for sports and open air events. Across the road is the former Selby District Council offices opened in 1977. After the lights, Portholme Church is another modern building, with a foundation stone of 1983 and beyond is the millennial style of Community House. Pass the supermarket and cross the car park, site of a Saturday market, with the pub to your right. Here there is a small fragment of ancient wall, the final remaining piece of the Abbey's Tithe Barn, which held the agricultural produce donated to the Church.

Continue through the shopping area and cross Market Lane at the bollards.

This 1980s development has been largely successful in creating a zone of small, independent shops. Walk through a snicket towards the opening at the far end through which Market Place and the Market Cross can be glimpsed.

A stroll by Selby's Canal

3 miles



Construction of the Selby Canal was arguably the most important development in the town since the building of the Abbey 600 years earlier. Although it is now used entirely by pleasure craft, some aspects of its trading past remain and this walk takes you past those in and around Selby, as well as more modern developments.

This is a linear walk: 3 ways to return to the start are suggested at the end.



A little history to begin with.

The original plans for the canal came about around 1750. Merchants around Leeds wanted to import and export goods via Hull. In the 18th century, roads were poor and of course trains didn't exist, so heavy goods travelled best by water. The River Aire linked Leeds to the coast, but navigating it was slow and difficult. The Ouse was a much easier river to use. A plan for a 23 mile canal directly from Leeds to Selby was rejected, but a more modest 6 mile cut from Chapel Haddlesey on the Aire to Selby on the Ouse was agreed. Work started in 1775, and the canal was opened in April 1778. The last commercial traffic was around 60 years ago, and control is now with the Canal & River Trust in Leeds.

From the Abbey, follow Ousegate and a footpath through flats to the Lock Basin.

At this point, barges waited to pass through the lock into the **river**. Turn left to see the lock linking canal and river. Passage through the lock is tricky. Not only are relative water levels important, but also the state of the tide, so assistance from trained lock keepers is essential. The lock and lock cottages are grade II listed 19th century properties. As their names suggest, the Lock keeper originally lived in one cottage, with his neighbour being responsible for the swing bridge



a little further along the towpath.

Return along the towpath with the canal on your left until you reach a road.

On the far side of the canal, the basin widens. This was the start of the "Lazy Cut", and through the fence can be seen the cleared site of Rostrons, both mentioned in the "Transport" walk, page 19. The site is planned to be home to a marina. A few houseboats are moored here, and the new flats on your left are on the site of Connell's shipyard.

Cross the road bridge, which swings open when barges need to pass.

This is the swing bridge referred to earlier. Its opening is now motorized, but the small hut and cogwheels are reminders of how a bridgekeeper would come from the house by the lock to swing the span. Walk alongside the canal a little to see a milestone next to the

path, and curved paving giving evidence of unloading activities here. Houses have been built on the site of a former coal wharf. Across the canal is the Vivars Estate, a link to the Abbey beyond as the 'vivary' was originally the fish pond for the Abbey.

Re-cross the bridge and walk along the tow path to a sculpture.

The arrowhead **sculpture**, its base and the brick paving designed by local students give excellent detail of the history and uses of the canal. Barges and coal hoist reflect the carriage of coal and cannon and bells refer to celebrations sounded out to mark the canal's opening in 1778. Here, the canal narrows. This is one of many "knuckles" on the canal that ultimately led to its replacement by the Aire and Calder. Underneath the knuckle are U-shaped drainage systems which meant that the canal could not be deepened as barges carried heavier cargoes, requiring a greater depth.



Continue along the towpath under Bawtry Rd bridge.

The path, now waymarked as part of the TransPennine Trail continues past Selby Boat Yard, with many canal craft often present. A lengthy stroll through increasingly rural areas leads to another milestone by a rail bridge carrying what used to be the East Coast Main Line before that was diverted away from Selby in the 1980s. It remains a direct link to the ECML at Doncaster for freight and passengers. In the distance to the right is the spire of St Wilfred's, Brayton. Brick abutments are the final remnants of a rail route linking lines from Selby to Leeds and Goole. The Grade II listed bridge at Brayton follows – one of four 18th C mellow sandstone spans across the canal.



Beyond Brayton Bridge and returning to Selby.

Pass under the bridge to come to a small seating and picnic area with nearby modern sculptures carrying intriguing messages inspired by ripples in the Canal. The Selby bypass bridge of 2005 then spans the Canal. This modern piece of efficient engineering is called the William Jessop Bridge in honour of the engineer who designed the Canal, but it is an ironic meeting of modern engineering that takes traffic away from town crossing older engineering that used to bring trade to it.



How to return to Selby?

There are 3 options. Walk the remaining 4 miles of the towpath, through rural surroundings, past more bridges and sculpture to catch the 415 bus from Chapel Haddlesey (see the **Towpath Trail leaflet**). Or, turn back to Brayton Bridge then left when you get there to walk a mile to Brayton and catch the bus at Brayton Green, or simply retrace the walk you have just done.



The Selby Timeline

100 yards



The Selby Timeline is an award-winning suite of sculpture set in a riverside park created in 2009.



A walk along the winding path tells the history of Selby in a series of twelve metal panels. Each of these contains specially-designed roundels to illustrate aspects of the town's past. Allied to the roundels are metal paving strips with text highlighting the concepts the roundels describe.

These words are set in metal whirls and eddies to note the ever-present nature of Old Father Ouse.

Central to the piece is a free-standing sculpture called 'Relaunch' featuring figures of four key professions in Selby's past, namely a Monk, Miller, Mariner and Miner. Above them, a boat, oars aloft and resembling stylised trees, represents progress propelled by nature. This statue stands on a plinth of wave-shaped bricks that again evokes the importance of the river to Selby's fortunes.

Outside the actual riverside park are six statues, two sets of three on either side of New Street. These show the characteristic Selby swans in flight, on land or moving through the water.

The Timeline path links to an Amphitheatre where, in summer, school and open-air performances have been held.

This fabulous summary of Selby's history is adjacent to the river, next to the road bridge, in sight of the Abbey with rail and ship works in sight in the distance: all vital features that have shaped Selby. The grassy areas and seats provide a relaxing area to appreciate this celebration of 1000 years of heritage.



Paving Strip 1 : Saxon Settlement

Hazel twigs were burial offerings found in Anglo Saxon graves under the adjacent pub.



Paving Strip 2 : Cultural Conflux

Marking the tussles between Saxon and Viking that took place around the Ouse.

Paving Strip 3 : Monks and Monarchs

The arrival in Selby of both Benedict and Henry are celebrated.

Paving Strip 4 : Abbots and Agro

Benedict's successor had to fight to build the stone Abbey, Roundheads and Cavaliers battled 550 years later.

Paving Strip 5 : Stars and Stripes

The Washington Window, and Selby's links across the Atlantic in World War II.

Paving Strip 6 : Markets then and now

Since 1327: anything from a hanky to a hen



Paving Strip 7 : Indigenous industry

Shipbuilding, sugar, citric acid were amongst the trades that powered Selby's economy.

Paving Strip 8 : Transport and Sport

River, canal and rail; athletics, soccer and table tennis have all had Selebian success.



Paving Strip 9 : Floods, tides, torrents

Sometimes the Ouse floods: the mighty defences nearby are regularly needed.

Paving Strip 10 : Paper and potions

The many and various former trades of the town are recorded.

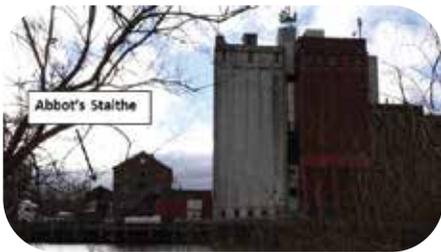
Paving Strip 11 : Monks and Miners

Both offered security for the future. Both brought to a halt by external forces.

Paving Strip 12 : Future in our hands

Sculpture created by Selby schoolchildren. Who else can shape the future?

Selby's Medieval Warehouse



A "staithe" is a Norse word for a landing area and associated buildings next to a river. Selby's Medieval Warehouse, variously known as Abbot's Staith or Staithe, lies at the river-end of Micklegate and is the ultimate example of a hidden treasure.

Whilst Selby Abbey is very well known, it

could not have risen to importance without being able to act as a trading, as well as a religious centre. The complex of buildings on this site have existed for many centuries. Their original purpose was to act as the storehouse and transport hub for the Abbey's trading activities. Later, for most of the 20th century, they were the Selby base of Woodhead's Seeds. Commercial activity ceased around 1990. Built from the same kind of limestone as the Abbey, and a hugely important building, it has been listed Grade II* and a Scheduled Ancient Monument since 1952.

The amazing fact is that for a building of its size – 3 storeys high and about 70 yards long – it is almost totally hidden from view. Shaped like an H, the frontage facing Micklegate is hidden by licenced premises, currently "The Square", which fills the whole space between the "arms" of the H. To the rear, the building faces the Ouse, where there is no towpath, and the view from the far bank is concealed by later dockside developments. Full sight of the gable ends is also obscured by a range of buildings.

Having been a warehouse for all its working life there are plans to bring the building back to life as a cultural centre, along with offices and shops. Currently, unregulated public access is not possible, beyond a small retail outlet on the ground floor, but the "Abbot's Staith Heritage Trust", the group trying to bring the building back into use, run events there – see www.abbotsstaih.co.uk.



Fungi, Festivals and Pink Floyd

A scientific society that retains world-wide importance was founded in Selby in September 1896. In that year, the Yorkshire Naturalists Union, which still exists today, held its annual meeting in Selby. Part of the programme was a 'fungus foray', led by a man whose name is famous in the retail history of the town : W.N. Cheesman. This event went so well that it was decided at a meeting in The Londesborough (now The George Inn) to inaugurate a national society devoted to the study and uses of fungi, and so the **British Mycological Society** was formed. In the 20th century, Selby's industry looked to fungi via Middlebrook Mushrooms and the fungal production of citric acid at John & E Sturge Ltd in Denison Rd.



Looking back over 45 years the scale of the 1969 **Selby Festival** is now quite astonishing. A committee of local civic and religious leaders spent two years planning a breathtaking series of events to mark 900 years since Benedict founded his first Abbey. The festival ran from April to October, with a 'happening' (as they put it back then) almost every day.

And what happenings! A selection includes : a cricket match starring Trueman and Close; 3 Royal Navy ships moored at Ousegate: gold and silver commemorative medals ; a pageant; a son et lumière in the Abbey narrated by Judi Dench and watched by then Prime Minister Wilson; religious ceremonies with representatives from Benedict's base in Auxerre; a concert by the Liverpool Phil and "EXIAS 69" covering the area that now is Morrison's, car park and football pitch. The committee even contacted NASA to ask if they could display the command module of the recently-returned Apollo 8! Pink Floyd playing in front of 2000 on St James' field was the highlight on July 4th. The highpoint of the whole year was the Queen distributing the Maundy money at Selby Abbey, the first time in the history of the ceremony that it had been carried out in what, ecumenically-speaking, is a parish church.



About Selby Civic Society



Selby Civic Society was founded in 1969 - the 900th anniversary of the founding of Selby Abbey. In that year the Society helped to prepare the town for a visit by Queen Elizabeth.

The Society encourages high standards of architecture and town planning in Selby and its environs. It examines planning proposals submitted to the Local Authority, and when appropriate will attempt to influence planning decisions to improve the character of the town.



Information plaques (above, left and right) have been commissioned and installed to celebrate famous Selebians and historic buildings. Well designed buildings have been recognised by the award of "Good Design" plaques (above, centre). Publications and guides are also produced by the Society.

As a Selby Civic Society member you will become an affiliated member of "Civic Voice" and the "Yorkshire and Humber Association of Civic Societies" (YHACS). Civic Voice (www.civicvoice.org.uk) is the national charity for the civic movement in England, and YHACS (www.yhacs.org.uk) is a regional association of civic societies, with members drawn from civic societies and civic trusts around Yorkshire and the Humber.



In January 2015, Selby Civic Society won the "Peter Spawforth Trophy" from YHACS for its 'Swanning Around Selby' project, judged to be the best local community project in 2014.

The society stimulates public interest in, and care for the beauty, history and character of the town and its surroundings through meetings, visits and other events, enabling those interested in the improvement of the town and surrounding villages to get together in a friendly informal atmosphere and to visit places of historical and heritage interest.



Above, clockwise - members events held in Selby, Harrogate, Middlesbrough, Market Weighton, Richmond and Hawes

Events programmes, and some other Society publications, are available in Selby Library and other outlets around the town, or at Society meetings. Go to www.selbycivicsociety.org.uk for more details of the Society's activities, or follow on [www.twitter.com/selbycivicsoc](https://twitter.com/selbycivicsoc)

By joining the Society you can help to make Selby a more attractive town. If you want to be more involved as a committee member, the Society has an executive committee, elected annually, that meets monthly to plan and deal with the Society's business.

You can join at one of the Society's meetings; or email selbycivicsociety@yahoo.co.uk for an information package or complete and return the membership application form on page 34.

Quiz

How well do you know Selby
Can you find these places in the town?



They are all to be found somewhere along the walks in this guide.

No prizes, other than the satisfaction of knowing that you are "eagle-eyed".

Send an email to selbycivicsociety@yahoo.co.uk and we'll let you have the answers.



Taking things further...

If you want to find out more about Selby's history and heritage, consider contacting and joining **Selby Civic Society**. Founded as part of the town's 900 year celebration in 1969, the Civic Society holds regular meetings, organizes trips and takes an active part in maintaining and improving Selby's civic environment. Email them at selbycivicsociety@yahoo.co.uk or go to the website www.selbycivicsociety.org.uk

Selby Library on Micklegate has over 300 books in its local history reference section with several books concerning local history on sale and archives of the local "Selby Times" back to 1869.

Books for sale include

Chilvers : Pictorial History of BOCM (Vols. 1 and 2)

Chilvers : Selby Abbey: the Past in Pictures

Chilvers : Selby's Shops: Past & Present

Chilvers : The Industrial Past in Pictures

Lewis : Smithson Tennant, Selby's Scientific Genius

Lewis : Thomas Johnson, Adventurer and Apothecary

There are also works on the history of nearby villages of Birkin, Foggathorpe, North Duffield and Riccall

Selby Abbey itself has a bookstall and refreshment area where all manner of items and information relating to Selby Abbey are available, including the excellent new Guidebook.

Selby Town Council has offices in the Town Hall which are open from 10-4 on weekdays, and their website is www.selbytowncouncil.gov.uk. On this site are links to other walks in and around Selby under the 'History & Hidden Heritage' tabs.

Selby District Council is the local authority and planning agency for Selby. Their website is www.selby.gov.uk

North Yorkshire County Council's archive at Northallerton includes much material about Cochranes. NYCC are also responsible for the upkeep of footpaths.

Abbot's Staith Heritage Trust is the group trying to bring the building back into public use. Their website is www.abbotsstaith.co.uk

Credits

David Lewis, David Moss and members of the Selby Civic Society researched and wrote the text. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this document, but the Civic Society are responsible for any errors that remain. Please contact them if you find any. Unless stated, photographs are copyright of the Society. Thanks too to Karen Vipass at Kazoom for design kvipass@yahoo.co.uk and Robrook Press for printing.

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SELBY CIVIC SOCIETY

"Caring for Selby....."

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Complete the form below, add your cheque for the annual membership subscription - in 2017 it is £10.00 per member payable to "Selby Civic Society" and send it to:-

The Membership Secretary
Selby Civic Society
Chalcot, Field Lane
Wistow, SELBY
North Yorkshire, YO8 3XD

Check on the Society website www.selbycivicsociety.org.uk for the latest information on the membership subscription fee.

I/We apply for membership and enclose a cheque for £.....

Mr/Mrs/Ms.....

Address.....

Postcode.....

Telephone.....

Email address.....

Date..... Signature(s).....

Please include your email address on the form so that the Society can send you information by email. This is our preferred method as it aids rapid communication and helps to minimise our postal costs.

By providing an email address you are agreeing to the Society adding this to its contacts' database. The Society will not share this information with third parties

If you don't want to tear off this page you can download a form from www.selbycivicsociety.org.uk or just post your details to the above address.