

The **Selby Canal** was completed after three years' construction in 1778. Such was the rejoicing in town, that large crowds and fireworks greeted the arrival of the first boat and all the dignitaries had a slap up meal in town! Until around 1830, trade in Selby flourished as goods flowed from the West Riding through Selby to Goole and Hull.

The towpath was originally for horses to trudge whilst pulling vessels containing coal, grain or textiles. Sadly for Selby, the canal was made only four feet deep. This was too shallow and the cut was also too narrow. As traffic increased, traders caused the Aire and Calder Canal to be built, linking Leeds directly with Goole, cutting out Selby entirely.

Walking by the canal allows you to see how roads, railways and footpaths, as well as industry, have evolved since the 1780s.

All direction references apply when walking from Selby to Haddlesey.

Start this five mile linear walk **next to the river** at Selby Lock (1). Transfer between the canal and the River Ouse for York and Hull took place here. However, the fierce currents and tides in the Ouse could make this movement difficult. By the 19th century **Lock Keeper's cottages (2)** was part of the solution. Craft are moored in what remains of the "**Lazy Cut**" (3).

Cranes transferred cargo from canal barges into boats waiting on the river bank, so saving the difficult and time-consuming use of the lock. Along the river are the **remains of these wharves (4)**.

Walk along the towpath. On your right are new **flats (5)** on the site of a shipyard. Boat construction ceased in the 1950s, but the site has only recently been redeveloped.

Just beyond the **swing bridge (6)**, as the canal goes alongside Shipyard Road, there is a **sculpture and paving stones (7)** created by local schoolchildren. These summarise the history of the canal and its effect and influence on Selby. There's plenty to take in. Seating here allows you to do just that whilst you feed the geese, ducks and swans.

A fingerpost (8) for the Trans Pennine Trail from Selby to Hornsea is at the end of Canal Road. Long distance footpaths like this became popular around the country in the 1980s.

Beyond **Bawtry Road Bridge (9)** is an **industrial area (10)** on the right. Factories used the canal to receive and dispatch goods. On the far bank, **pleasure boats (11)** can moor or be serviced.

Further on, the Selby to Doncaster railway crosses the canal. This was the East Coast Mail Line, but concern about possible damage caused by subsidence due to the Selby coalfield in the 1980s meant it was diverted.

At the side of the towpath, hawthorn, brambles and crab apples thrive as the path moves into more open countryside. On hot days in the summer, **dragonflies** and **butterflies** flit around the chalky path.

On the right, in the distance, St. Wilfrid's church and Brayton Barff can be seen. "Barff" means burial mound. The small hill and nature reserve give a fine view over the Vale of Selby.

Brayton Bridge (12) is just over a mile from Selby. There is a car park, picnic area, and **sculpture (13)** that celebrates the canal environment and the leisure opportunities now available.

You could walk up to Brayton to visit the church, Barff or return to Selby using the bus that runs hourly Mon-Sat and two-hourly on Sundays.

The new by-pass crosses the canal. Compare its abutments to those a little further along the path for the former **rail bridge (14)** of the spur that linked Thorpe, Drax and Goole. Used mainly as a siding, the bridge and line were removed around 1960.

Clamber up onto the mound and look towards Brayton. There's no sign of the rail line that existed only 50 years ago, but the prehistoric Barff is still clear to view!

Semi circular stone constructions jut out into the canal. These are examples of **drainage knuckles (15)**. A large pipe goes under the canal to make sure that surrounding fields do not flood.

The presence of these knuckles meant that the canal could not be deepened when required as barge loads increased in the 1820s.

Intriguing sculpture (16) presages a picnic spot at **Burn Bridge (17)** where the modern A19 crosses.

What is now the A19 was a turnpike road in the heyday of the canal. A turnpike road charged a toll to use it, just like the new M6 or the London congestion charge. As road surfaces improved and turnpike taxes were abolished, road travel became favoured.

Across the bridge is the defunct **Anchor Inn (18)**, formerly a favoured stopping off point for boaters, walkers and the many anglers who use the fishing platforms regularly spaced along the canal.

You could catch the bus back to Selby from here also.

If you continue along the path, surroundings become increasingly rural. **Swans, mallards, herons** and **coots** are often seen in the vicinity. **A milepost (19)** shows '7'. This is seven miles from Bank Dole Junction on the Aire and Calder canal system.

In about a mile, a stone-arched **bridge (20)** takes a farm track over to Burton Hall, site of a medieval manor. A few hundred yards along, the modern **East Coast Main Line Bridge (21)** takes a high speed track across. Compare ancient and modern styles!

A small mooring point and benches are at **Gateforth Landing (22)** and a footpath leads to the village.

The towpath is now well above canal level, giving a fine view across the plain. Hereabouts, the bank of the canal was made of sandy material that silted up the waterway and meant constant dredging of the canal and re-building of the bank.

Paper House Bridge (23) is in a further half mile or so and West Haddlesey is another half mile ahead.

Pass **Tankards Bridge (24)**, named after a local family and built to maintain links between the two Haddleseys after the coming of the canal.

Locks (25) linking the canal to the River Aire mark the end of the cut. They can be carefully investigated. Downstream, shallows in the River Aire made navigation difficult. This was another good reason why the canal was built.

Having walked the length of the canal, treat yourself to a picnic or a small-scale version of the 1778 celebrations in a local pub!

This leaflet is part of a series covering Selby's Hidden Heritage.

This is a linear walk of more than five miles. Car parking areas are shown on the map. There is only roadside parking in Haddlesey. A bus service runs along the A19 to allow a return to Selby using public transport. Call Selby Tourist Information on 0845 034 9540, or look for the Selby - Doncaster service on www.arriva.co.uk. The path is firm from Selby to Burn, but beyond Burn, it is uneven. Cycles are not advisable beyond Burn. Take care near to the water.

The other leaflets in the series are:

Selby in the 20th Century: Some surprising examples of modern architecture

Plaque Parade: A tour around sites linked with famous people and events in Selby's history.

Signs & Symbols on the Shopfront: Unlock the mystery of street-side signs and symbols.

First Rate Ousegate: Stroll along the street that was Selby's hub.

Selby has a rich and proud heritage in shipbuilding, agriculture, manufacturing and transport. By observing what remains and looking at how new developments have absorbed these influences, the often-hidden history that is all around us can be brought to light.

If you would like a large print copy of this publication or for further information on all the topics covered in these leaflets contact Groundwork North Yorkshire on 01757 703758 or email northyorkshire@groundwork.org.uk.

There is a huge range of sources and expertise concerning local history at Selby Library. Contact them on 0845 034 9540 or email selby.library@northyorks.gov.uk.

For information about the Selby Civic Society contact 01757 268418.

Selby's
Hidden
Heritage

Selby Canal
Towpath
Tour

This project is supported by:



Guide to the walk



Selby Lock Basin

Lock gates, River Ouse currents, "Lazy Cut". Charming cottages, moored boats, remnants of wharves. New flats, information board.

Swing Bridge

Cog-wheel mechanisms, sculpture and special paving stones.

Bawtry Road Bridge

Derelict industrial site. Boat chandlery.

Brayton Bridge

Picnic area, sculptures. Parking and path to village, church and Barff. Drainage channels.

Road and Rail Bridges.

Construction of bridges and abutments.

Burn Bridge

Sculpture. Picnic area, parking, former pub.

Beyond Burn Bridge

Milepost in grass. Seating, mooring, path to Gateforth village. Old and new bridges.

Haddlesey

Bridge, locks, River Aire, picnic spot. Interesting buildings and pubs in village.

