

The hall was originally built in 1862 on land sold to the Primitive Methodists by Lord Londesborough. As well as giving this land, Lord Londesborough gave £10 (worth around £500 now) towards the costs of construction.

In its original form there was a chapel that seated 460 worshippers on both the ground floor and a gallery. There was also a vestry and schoolrooms. Next door to the chapel was a house provided for the Minister. The facing wall was carried out in Wallingfen bricks, "a fine, white, durable brick", from near Market Weighton. The decorative stonework and dressings are made of Harehills stone, probably from Gipton quarry in Leeds. It is a strong, waterproof material that was easily carved.

As well as the gallery still present today, there was a singers' gallery behind the pulpit. The pulpit itself was not on the same level as the performance area is today. As the pictures show, access to this position was by a steep staircase. In fact, the first Methodist Minister states that a platform rather than a pulpit would have been preferred.

The comfort of the congregation was also considered as "the backs of the stained Norwegian timber seats are made to slope". The overall design by a Mr Fippard of York and carried out by Mr Bairsto of Selby is praised for the "very satisfactory nature of its completion", including its light airiness, the quality of its decorative plasterwork, particularly the "handsome centre ceiling flower" of some 6 feet diameter. A pendant, for gas lighting, with 60 jets hung from the centre of this flower.

The total cost of the building was £1,400 (about £65,000 in today's terms).

Initial 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 "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 redecoration in 1953. The use of the building for the general benefit of Selby residents also continued. In the 1950s, it housed the town clinic. In this guise it dealt with medical examinations to prove the fitness of local council employees and treatment for minor infections such as having tablets placed in the eye in a failed attempt to cure short sightedness.

A national pandemic of the 1950s was the curse of polio, which infected and killed many thousands of people including England football international Jeff Hall. It was vital to get a jab against this, resulting in queues of school-children around the building as the clinic was in the rear whilst the chapel remained at the front. This use continued until the Raincliffe Street Clinic was opened in the 1960s.

In common with the rest of the country, attendances at religious meetings gradually declined, and the fabulous Methodist Banner was displayed for the last time at the Whitsun parade of 1956. The chapel itself ceased to be used as a place of worship on 30 August 1956. The banner is now in the Town Council's care.

Following this closure, the building remained empty until taken over by Moss Tyres, and then ATS Tyres, as a tyre fitting depot. Whilst the organ had been taken to other Methodist premises, the pews and other decorative items were left to be dealt with as the garage required.

In the early 1970s, local government reorganisation came to Selby. The previous Urban and Rural District Councils were replaced by three bodies.

Selby Town Council was to concentrate on the town itself. Selby District Council which concerned the wider area including Tadcaster and Sherburn in Elmet, and North Yorkshire County Council which covered the county for education and highways.

Initial meetings of the Town Council were held in the front room of the Clerk, Marion Thorlby's, house. Once the Community Centre was opened in 1977, the Town Council moved there, employing three staff. 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 with advice from architects Crease, Strickland. The Town Council relocated to the Town Hall in 1996 and now there are 13 staff.

The Council continues to look after the affairs of the town, including the town cemetery, markets, remembrance services, Christmas lights, bonfire and fireworks display, the summer family fun day and some play areas.

Where there was once space in the chapel for over 400 worshippers, audiences of up to 150 now enjoy a wide range of cultural activities such as concerts, art and sculpture exhibitions, plays, lectures and film shows. The setting also launched Selby into cyberspace, being the first building in town to feature on Google Earth. The venue has grown in popularity, winning the Yorkshire Evening Post "Best Live Venue" award in 2005.

The facilities are also available for local groups to hold their meetings. In some ways, it could therefore be argued that this has returned the building to much of its original purpose.

The Town Hall has also become a place for display of many civic emblems, with declarations of friendship from our twin towns of Carentan in France and Filderstadt in Germany.

The assistance of Tina Mason of Selby Town Council and Richard Moody, the local Methodist archivist, in the preparation of this document, with both items for research and images of the building in its Methodist guise is gratefully acknowledged. Further information has been gained from Patricia Scott's "History of Selby".



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

Selby has a rich and proud heritage in shipbuilding, agriculture, manufacturing and transport. These leaflets aim to raise the awareness of this urban inheritance. Information is accurate at the time of writing in Spring 2011.

The other leaflets in the series are:

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

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

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

Selby Canal Towpath Tour: From the industrial lock basin to tranquil countryside, by the Canal.

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

The Selby Timeline: Stroll past artwork celebrating a millennium of Selby in a fine riverside setting.

Memorials & Markers: A walk around town noting plaques describing people and events from Selby's history.

Selby's Railway Stations: The detail of Yorkshire's first railway station of 1834 and its subsequent replacement of 1840.

Copies of these leaflets are available from Selby Library, Groundwork North Yorkshire offices, Selby Civic Centre. Online at www.groundwork.org.uk/nyorkshire. Or the "Hidden Heritage" page of selbytowncouncil.gov.uk.

For further information contact Groundwork North Yorkshire on **01757 703758** or email northyorkshire@groundwork.org.uk, or Selby Library on **0845 034 9540** or email selby.library@northyorks.gov.uk. To contact the Civic Society, call **01757 268418** or via selbycivicsociety@yahoo.co.uk

Selby's
Hidden
Heritage

Selby
Town Hall

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Dominating the West End of Gowthorpe, Selby's main highway, is the building that is now Selby Town Hall, but was originally the Primitive Methodist Chapel. On a site bounded by property owned by two important names in Selby's 19th century history, namely Jonathan Hutchinson and Lord Londesborough, the building looks out loftily on the approaches to Selby from Leeds and Brayton. Scott Road to the north was opened out in 1925, over 60 years after the building was erected. From a derelict hulk in the early 1990s, it is now a venue for civic business and public events. The quality of the transformation is recognised by a Selby Civic Society "Good Design" plaque on the building's façade.

Decorative Features

There are many original features remaining today. The ceiling rose is six feet in diameter and originally held a huge gas light that had 60 jets. The coloured glass lights are in unpretentious design to match the Methodist faith.



The Clock

The original clock disappeared during the tenure of ATS Tyres. The architect involved with the restoration of the Town Hall was visiting Brighton and this clock was in the Railway Station, which was itself being renovated. He obtained the clock which fitted the hole perfectly.



Methodist Chapel

The building was originally built as a Methodist Chapel in 1862. It cost about £60,000 in today's money. Next door was the Minister's house before York Street was built.



Whitsuntide Parade

In 1956 the Chapel ceased to be used as a place of worship and the banner was displayed for the last time at the Whitsuntide Parade. Below shows the banner's first outing in the 1930s.



Tyre Depot

In the 1980s the building was used as a tyre depot and was derelict when it was bought by the Town Council in 1990.



Town Twinning

Selby is twinned with two towns, Carentan and Filderstadt.

Carentan is a small market town in the Manche region of Normandy, well-known for dairy products. There has been a link with Selby since the 1980s.

Carentan has donated the cockerel weather vane currently on display at the Town Hall.

Selby has been connected with Filderstadt since 2002. It is a small town, created in 1975 by joining five smaller villages together. Filderstadt is 10 miles south of Stuttgart, and is well placed for visiting rural Germany including the Black Forest.



Renovations

After the Council acquired the old Chapel in 1990 a scheme of renovation work took place and the Town Hall is again a place for public and cultural activities.

