

Paving Strip 1 : Saxon Settlement

The earliest known history of Selby mentions Anglo-Saxon settlements thought to have been present from the 5th century AD onwards, when the area was little more than low-lying marsh land.

When what is now the "Three Swans" pub in Church Hill was having work done on it in the 19th century, Anglo-Saxon burials in oak coffins were found, one of which contained remnants of hazel twigs. In the pagan religion of the times these may have been tokens for peaceful passage in the afterlife.

Paving Strip 2 : Cultural Conflux

Vikings sailed along the River Ouse for many centuries in their characteristic longships. It was along the river that the hordes came to fight at the battles of Stamford Bridge and Fulford in 1066, and it was through Selby that the tattered remnants of their army returned home after thorough and ignominious defeats.

Paving Strip 3 : Monks and Monarchs

Benedict founded Selby Abbey in 1069. Having stolen a holy relic, the finger of St Germain, from Auxerre, he hastily left to follow a vision from God to establish an Abbey in England. Having journeyed to Salisbury and then Kings Lynn, he saw the three swans of his divine vision at Selby. He set up a small wooden building under a mighty oak, hence his depiction on the roundel. Benedict was welcomed as this was the first new religious settlement in the North for over 200 years. Hugh, Sheriff of York, offered Benedict protection, and William the Conqueror gave him permission to build a monastery at Selby, along with rights over a large acreage of land.

The child who was to become King Henry I was certainly born in the winter of 1068/69, and all sources point to Matilda giving birth in Selby whilst husband William was engaged in military matters. Henry ruled England from 1100-1135. He was responsible for legal and financial reform and oversaw a period of peace and reconciliation in England, yet fought wars in France. He was renowned for his appetite in both bedchamber and dining hall. He sired at least 25 children and died of gluttony!

Paving Strip 4 : Abbots and Agro

Abbot Hugh, who succeeded Benedict, began the present Abbey building. The years 1069, 1609 and 1906 are a play on numbers, being crucial dates in the Abbey's history. 1069 was the founding, 1609 the year the tower collapsed and 1906 saw the great fire. The Abbey building survived King Henry VIII's 'Dissolution of the Monasteries' and became Selby's parish church in 1618.

The Battle of Selby in 1644 was part of the English Civil War. Fairfax's men won the day for the Cavaliers, Selby was captured

from the King and the Parliamentary army was able to proceed across the Ouse by ferry, or possibly a temporary bridge, to besiege York.

Paving Strip 5 : Stars and Stripes

In the Abbey is a stained glass window showing the heraldry of the de Washington family of Durham, forebears of George Washington, the first President of the USA. The mixture of red and white stripes and spurs are thought to be the basis of the "stars and stripes" American flag.

The special relationship between our two countries has been marked in many ways not least with the American World War II aircrews stationed at several of the many airfields in the Selby District.

Paving Strip 6 : Markets Then and Now

Selby has had a market on Monday for around 700 years. The date of 1324 refers to a request to renew the market charter. Selby's market remains in its traditional place by the 17th century Market Cross, close to the Abbey. This demonstrates the link between faith and commerce that established Selby's importance.

Its open-air auction is one of the few now remaining in Yorkshire and an excellent arena to observe typical Yorkshire folk. It still provides a wide variety of produce, and the Bank Holiday Monday events are a reminder of when a market day would fill the whole town.

Paving Strip 7 : Indigenous Industry

It's a sad reflection on changing work patterns that all the industries mentioned on this roundel are no longer carried on in Selby.

Of all the trades that existed in Selby, shipbuilding was the most famous. For a town over 50 nautical miles from the sea to have a shipbuilding industry was astonishing. The earliest record of a Selby ship is the 'Catherine', part of the British fleet supporting the battle of Agincourt. Yards belonging to Messrs Foster, Shephard and Connell existed along Ousegate at various times. The final survivor, Cochrane's, launched its last vessel in 1992. As the river is quite narrow, launches were sideways into the Ouse. A large wave could wash the Barlby Bank, sometimes trapping the unwary.

Science has also been significant in Selby. For example, scientist Smithson Tennant, born in Finkle Street, discovered the elements 76, Osmium (Os) and 77 Iridium (Ir).

Paving Strip 8 : Transport and Sport

Selby was such an important centre of trade that new methods of transporting goods came early to the town. The Selby Canal,

begun in 1776, provided an improved export link for West Riding merchants. Selby Railway Station, the first in Yorkshire, repeated the trick over 50 years later, opening in 1834.

Selby has had many sporting heroes. Top-flight footballer Steve Sherwood, sprint champion Stanley Englehart, and David Foster, inventor of an early form of table tennis. The most recent was John Sherwood, gaining bronze in the 400m hurdles, behind David Hemery in Mexico in 1968.

Paving Strip 9 : Floods, Tides and Torrents

Being so close to a tidal river that also drains much of Yorkshire's uplands, Selby has always had a tendency to flood. The years featured are those when the water has been at its highest. In 1947, only the Market Place around the Abbey stayed dry. Heroic efforts by troops were needed to prevent inundation in 2000.

Paving Strip 10 : Paper, Power, Potions, Pickles

Rostron's 1930s paper mill was between canal and river, along Ousegate, closing, as Rigid Paper in 2009. Drax and Eggborough Power Stations continue to supply electricity to the National Grid and support to many activities in Selby. Yorkshire Chemicals factory by the canal and Sturge's on the Ouse provided the potions and Fletcher's Sauce factory in Barlby, now Greencore, made many a tasty relish.

Paving Strip 11 : Monks and Miners

On the one hand, a spiritual power that promised life everlasting, dominated the town for over 400 years, on the other, a down-to-earth industry that believed its energy could be equally long-lasting.

Selby was at the centre of a rich agricultural area which produced grain for malting, and barges carried seed to the mills where oils were extracted.

The discovery of a huge deposit of thick-seamed Barnsley coal promised jobs for life and a secure supply of coal into the 22nd century. Controversial in its founding, a combination of unfavourable circumstances meant that the mines lasted barely 30 years with final closure in 2004. The pits did break production records in their heyday.

Paving Strip 12 : The Future's in Our Hands

To complete the historical sequence, a look to the future. What better way than for local children to make string models of their hands and cast them to leave a clear message as to who should really shape the town's destiny?

The derivation of the name "Selby" is unclear. There are several theories. One maintains that it's short for "Seal Town" due to such creatures even now coming up on the tide. Others say that due to sailing craft docking here, it is a shortened form of "Sail Town". Another idea holds that in Anglo Saxon dialect, the word meant "Lucky Village".

The most widely-accepted explanation involves a mixture of Anglo Saxon and Viking. "Seletun" features in the Anglo Saxon chronicle for 779 AD. "Sele" is Anglo Saxon for a willow copse. Marshy conditions are ideal for willow, and "-by" is the Viking ending meaning "town". "Selby" is an amalgam of two major cultural influences of the first millennium, meaning "The town by the willow copse". In the Domesday book, the location is called "Salebi", in an almanac of 1575, the name is "Selbye". It is only in 1715 that the current spelling is seen.

The River Ouse itself is tidal at Selby, with a range in height of about 15 feet. A river wave or "aegir" moves up river twice a day with the tide. The river flows upstream for about 4 hours every day, in 2 separate tides. The flow can be quite ferocious, with currents of up to 8 knots having been recorded.

The redevelopment of the riverside was opened to the public in 2009. It had been created as a result of consultation through the Selby Town Team and Renaissance project. The intention was to open up the waterfront as a pleasant public space, and to extend this development along the river to the former shipyards.

Other Trails Through Selby:

A display board records that Selby is on the Trans Pennine Trail. Devised in 1989 and opened in 2001, it is a multi-user, coast-to-coast trail linking Southport to Hornsea. Over 200 miles long, it uses footpaths, quiet lanes and disused transport tracks to allow pedestrians and cyclists to see the country from a different perspective.

National Cycle Route 65 passes by on the far bank. Until very recently, around 5 000 workers were employed at factories such as shipbuilding, milling and clothing manufacturers whose former workplaces can be seen from the Riverside Gardens. Rush hours would see local roads dominated by cyclists wheeling their way home.

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.

The maps used are illustrative only. 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.

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

Selby Town Hall: Chapel, clinic, car repairs and civic symbol, the story of over a century of the building's public uses.

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

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

The Selby
Timeline

This project is supported by:



Selby Civic Society



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CHANGING PLACES
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SELBY
DISTRICT COUNCIL
Moving forward with purpose

Photo: © tetsy Hamish Marr

The Selby Timeline is next to the river and the road bridge. Created by sculptor Ailsa Magnus, it contains a series of relief roundels depicting images from Selby's past. The timeline runs in a series of paving strips along the walkway. Each strip has a theme linked to it, with whirls and swirls representing the river's currents.

The roundels are in approximately chronological order, starting at the earliest times at the entrance to the gardens from the Amphitheatre.

1 Amphitheatre

This open-air theatre was created as part of the "Selby Renaissance" project and opened in 2009. Holding around 200 people it is a space intended for local groups and schools to present music and drama performances.



2 Plaques

Two plaques mark the opening of the Riverside Walk. The first notes the major funders of the project, and the second that Selby Civic Society, in response to a public vote held in 2010, declared the development the best piece of new architecture in the town.



3 ReLaunch

"ReLaunch" is the focal point of the Waterfront Park. It features four figures from Selby's industrial heritage, a Monk, a Miller, a Marine Engineer and a Miner, each holding a symbol of their industry. Above them, a boat, its oars aloft resembling stylised trees, represents progress propelled by nature. The sculpture stands on a base of wave-shaped bricks to symbolise the importance of river and sea to Selby. The sculpture conveys a positive message of renewal and regeneration, of man's reliance on nature and is intended to encourage the viewer to question their influence on the world around them.

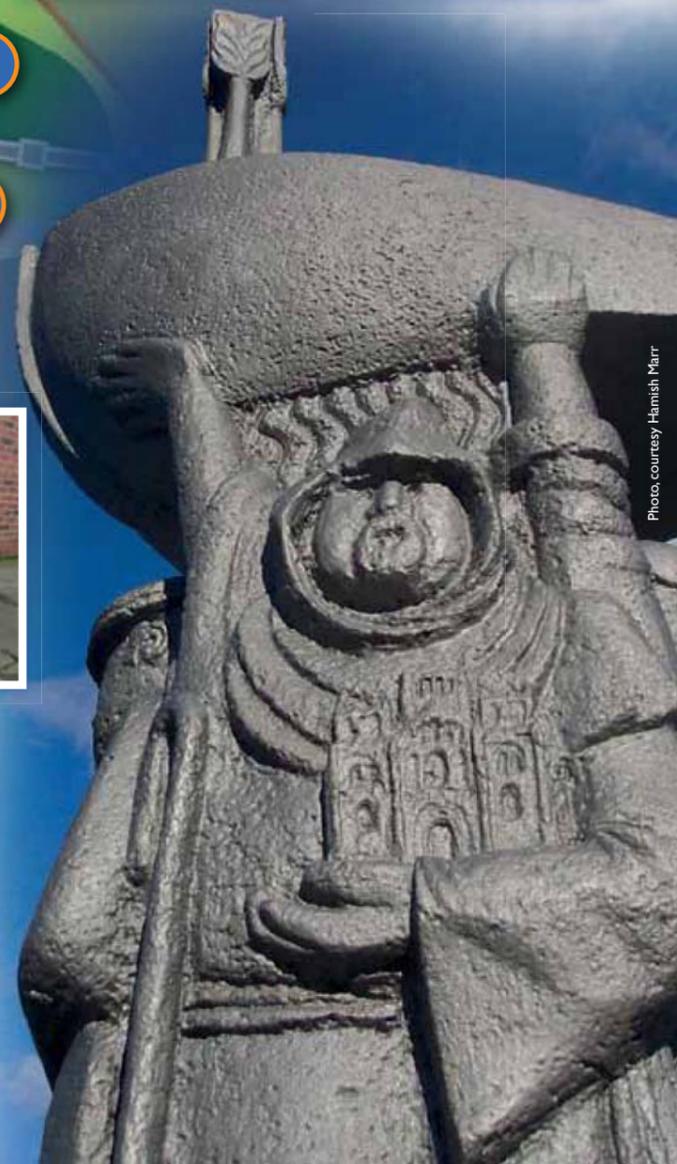


Photo courtesy Hamish Marr

5 Nook

The house called "The Nook" is the last reminder of a short street called "Johnny's Day Nook" comprising houses and a chapel that used to be here. Properties were regularly flooded by the river.



7 Hodgson

The plaque commemorates local lawyer Jeremy Hodgson, who died after suffering a viral illness in the mid-1990s.



8 Swans

Selby's symbol is the three swans of Abbot Benedict. Ailsa Magnus' statues here represent swans in air, on water and on land, flying, swimming and walking.

