

The 20th Century has had very bad press where architecture is concerned. Images of tower blocks and sprawling motorways all too easily come to mind.

Whilst it is true that there were many badly-designed and poorly constructed buildings erected last century, that's probably true of all centuries. Bad Victorian and Georgian buildings have already been cleared away, or just fallen down.

Twentieth century architects had some radical and interesting designs. In many cases, symbols and styles from earlier eras were incorporated to try to make an interesting vista. Selby has several examples of such design and stories to go with them that might change your mind.

The very fashionable "Bauhaus" idea of the early 20th century was to make buildings into "machines for living and working"; that's like the "Grand Designs" TV show.

Study each of Selby's examples and ask yourself if the designer achieved their aim.

Start at the **Civic Centre (1)** of 1977. This is in the modernist style of famous French architect Le Corbusier. The thought behind this style was "We don't need any of those curvy decorative effects that the Victorians had. Let's build in a simple style that lets the building do what it is meant to and no more".

This is sometimes called functionalism.

Inspect the yellow brickwork that echoes the original York stone of the Abbey. Look at the globe-shaped lights. Were they inspired by moon landings in 1969? Inside the building a full-height atrium lets light flood in, but heat stream out. Not very functional!

The frontage has a fine representation of the district's **coat of arms (2)**.

Does the building succeed in its aim of a place that shows pride in our town, acknowledges our history and allows people "To act for others" as the motto puts it?

Alongside the Civic Centre, also in modernist style, is the **Police HQ (3)** of 1987, with another fine badge on the façade. Is it just imagination to think that the building resembles a block of cells?

Cross Portholme Road at the traffic lights.

As you walk with a grassed area to your left, on the right

is the **Methodist Chapel (4)** of 1984. Its plain brickwork echoes the simplicity of Wesley's faith.

Walk up the path by the chapel. In the north-west corner, the cross is mounted above panels of clear glass. The light of God streams in to the church, which may be open to let you view the effect. Structural wood work is held together by mighty bolts. These could have been hidden, but instead act as a reminder that Christ was fiercely fixed to the cross.

Do these symbols support Methodism's simplicity?

Continue past the **supermarket (5)** on the right. Angular buildings like this were a reaction in the 1980s and 90s to the square styles of the 1970s.

Follow map directions through the **Market Cross** development, passing the Abbey Vaults pub on your right. Do the varying angles and sight lines succeed as a modern re-creation of the medieval **market style (6)** of small shops and busy trade?

Go left at Market Lane and right at New Lane. At the junction with Gowthorpe are the Victorian **local board offices (7)** and a view of an older set of **pitched roofs (8)**.

Compare the 20th century Market Cross development and Civic Centre to the ones in front of you which the Victorians created. Which do you prefer?

Turn right, cross Gowthorpe and go left down Finkle Street.

The frontage of the **Post Office (9)** on the right in Micklegate dates from 1961. Pebbledash, rectangular lines and coarse finishes were quite a continental idea. The design might reflect the increase in foreign travel that happened from the 1950s onwards.

Ahead, looming over Micklegate is the former **Ideal Flour Mill (10)** of 1933. Now a working rice mill, it is a reminder of the industries that used to line the river through town. Walk down The Quay to compare its modern bulk to the masonry of earlier times at the neighbouring medieval **Abbot's Staithe (11)**.

Both represent commercial power and trade. Which fitted its time best?

Return to Gowthorpe, turn right and the "**New Inn (12)**" is on the right. The stone work of the frontage is an example of typical 1930s "Brewer's Tudor".

This style makes a pub look as if it was part of a rich and

cosy Elizabethan country house. Windows have leaded lights. Inside are glazed bar screens and wood panelling. Drinking in such surroundings tried to make you feel part of the aristocratic set.

Further along on the same side is the **Halifax (13)**. Mock classical columns are in an art deco style from the 1930s. Originally a tailor's shop with work rooms above, for Burton's of Leeds, the idea was to appear lavish and modern. Would this frontage tempt you to spend hard-earned brass on a Burton's ready-made?

Montague Burton's were famous for a 3-piece suit, the so-called "Full Monty". Stylish to put on in the 1930s and equally so to remove in the 1990s!

Across Gowthorpe, plate glass and steel frontages such as **Everatt's furnishers (14)** were a revelation to shoppers in the 60s. Such clear visibility had never previously been available to consumers. Stronger glass meant less structural support was needed, enabling clearer display.

The style was very "Swinging 60s", the image was contemporary, clean, bright. "Get your new, space-age furniture from a space-age shop" was the sales message behind such a shop front.

Continue along Gowthorpe to the traffic lights at Scott Road. Across the road are the geometric lines at **Pocklington Carpets (15)**. Such planes and angles were also "in" in the 60s. The building was originally a garage, so possibly the style choice was to make new models look groovy in a "moderne" setting. Would curvy columns have convinced you to get a Cortina?

Cross Gowthorpe, passing in front of the Town Hall. This was the Methodist Chapel. Compare it to the present version seen earlier. Which best represents the faith? Go left along York Street, into Nalton Street and left at the end.

Ahead is **Posterngate Surgery (16)**. This is another 1990s design with clean, angular lines and modern lettering. Lintels have the medical profession's stylised serpent and staff motif. Does the contrast of ancient and modern work? Look up to the weather vane for a neat design feature! The Civic Centre lies ahead to complete the walk.

Is there enough evidence to decide if Selby's 20th Century design is tasteful or tatty?

This leaflet is part of a series covering Selby's Hidden Heritage. This circular walk is approximately a mile long. Some places have narrow pavements; please take appropriate care.

The other leaflets in the series are:

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

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.

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

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.

The maps used are illustrative only. Information is accurate at the time of writing in Spring 2009.

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 in the
20th Century

This project is supported by:



Guide to the walk



Civic Centre and Methodist Chapel

Modernist building style, light and airy spaces, dramatic features.

James Street area

Modern nooks and crannies in a medieval style and angular construction.

New Lane and Gowthorpe

Compare Victorian style to the modern Civic Centre.

Micklegate

Contrast of modern and ancient building styles.

Along Gowthorpe

Contrasting window styles and building frontages.

Scott Road traffic lights

Exposed columns, curves, angled brickwork and windows.

Portholme Road

Modern lettering and ancient symbols, angular building, decorative vane.



13



11



12

2



14



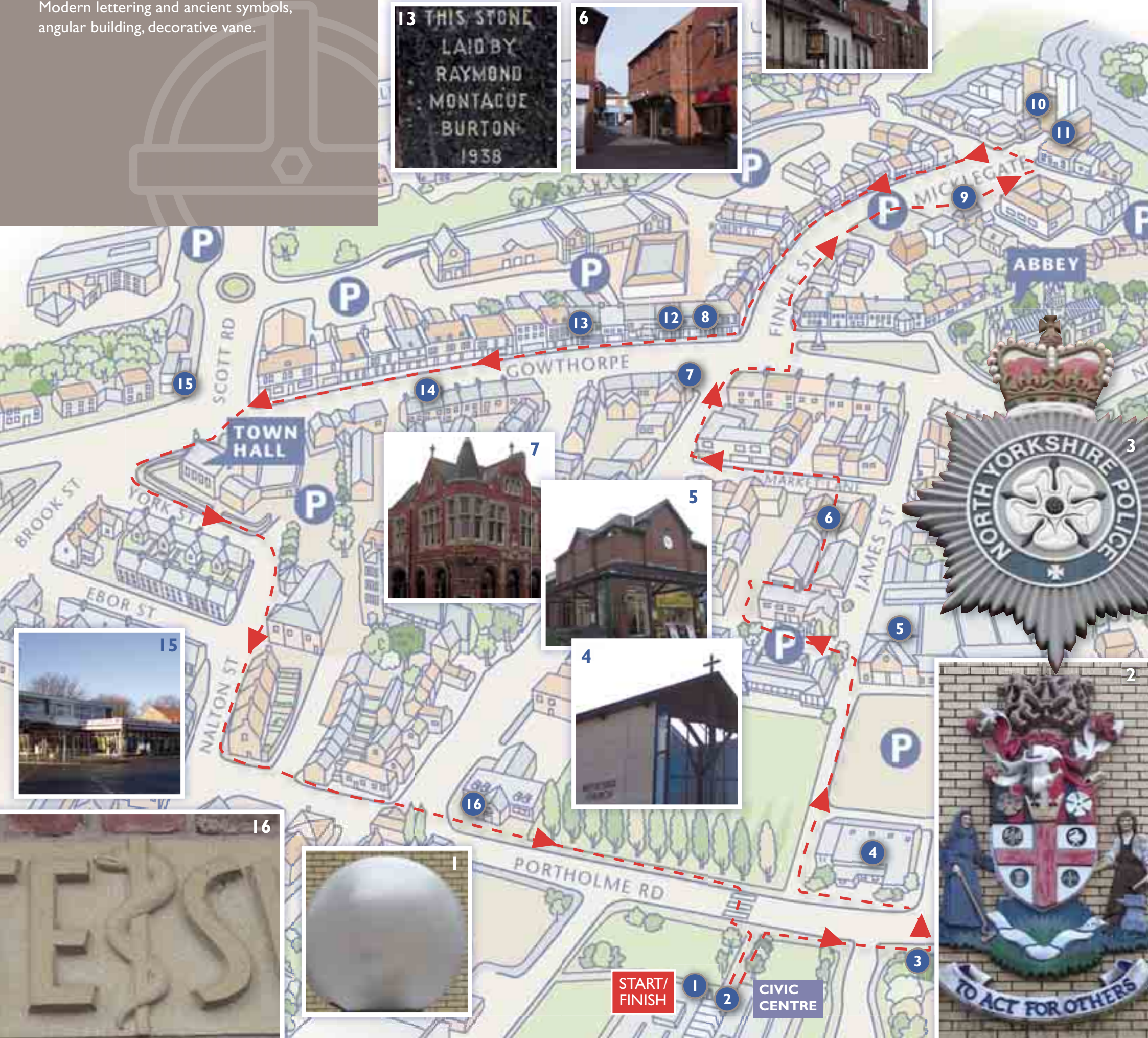
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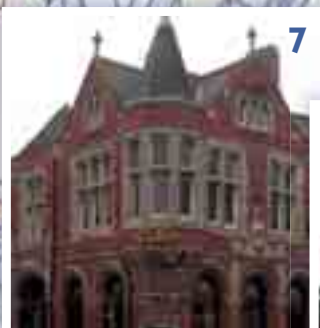
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6



15



7



5



4



3



2



16



1

START/FINISH

1

2

CIVIC CENTRE

3