



Stage Eight – Wilberforce House to Silver Street

Takes approximately 15 minutes



This part of the walk takes us back into the old town and onto the Victorian Commercial quarter of the city.

Standing outside Wilberforce House, cross over High Street. To your left you will see Gandhi Way. Walk down there on the left until you reach Alfred Gelder Street. Across the road is the **White Hart Hotel** – not to be confused with the Old White Harte which you will see later in this walk.

Turn left and walk down Alfred Gelder Street. You are walking alongside the **Combined Court Centre** which opened in 1990. You come to the crossroads of Lowgate and Alfred Gelder Street, overlooked by the statue of the venerable Charles Henry Wilson, founding member of the Ellerman Wilson Shipping Line. Once there, walk towards the light controlled crossing to your left, but don't cross over just yet – take a look about you and get your bearings. Here we have a similar problem with street names as we had with High Street in Stage Seven. Like High Street, Lowgate was effectively cut in two when Alfred Gelder Street was laid, and continues a short distance to your right between the statue's island and the grand building with the clock tower, the **Hull Guildhall**.

Built between 1904 and 1919 by the renowned architect Edwin Cooper, it originally housed the local Law Courts, and is still the working offices for Hull City Council. If you look down the side elevation of the Guildhall along Alfred Gelder Street, you will see 35 bays on the first floor with columns either side. Look up above the roof line and you will see two colossal statues called The Daughters of Neptune. The nearest is Britannia riding in a chariot accompanied by lions. Further down is Maritime Prowess, a female figure in a boat being pulled by sea horses. The Guildhall is fascinating both inside and out..



There is public access to the foyer and its impressive marble staircase and flooring, as well as wonderful mahogany wall panelling. The foyer has frequently appeared on screen as a double for royal palaces and government offices. If you ask at the reception you can visit an ante-room which displays the Hull Tapestries and other items of civic interest. You can book a guided tour of the Guildhall at select times throughout the year, and you may also see a wedding party on the steps as the register office is now in the Guildhall.



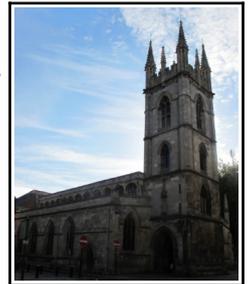
Look beyond the Guildhall. On your right, further up Lowgate in the middle distance, can be seen the grand column and statue of **William Wilberforce**. It was originally erected in Victoria Square shortly after his death in 1833, for the princely sum of £1250 all gathered from public donations. You will recall from Stage 2 that it was moved to its present site in the early 1930s.



Cross over Alfred Gelder Street, turn left down Lowgate and make your way towards a pair of cream phone boxes. You are close to the entrance of the former **General Post Office** (now the Three John Scotts pub) built in Portland stone during the same period as the Guildhall. The scale of the stonework on these two imposing civic buildings indicates the wealth of Hull during the early 20th Century.

The Post Office was built on the former site of Suffolk Palace, the 13th Century residence of the Royal Keeper of Hull. It was granted to the De la Pole family in May 1330, and later belonged directly to the King, hence the later name of King's Manor. The Manor covered a large piece of land, and survived until the 17th century.

To your left is **St Mary's Church**. It is Hull's second oldest existing church, built in about 1327-1333. Note the unusual walkway through the church tower which was put through in 1863. The town planners wanted to widen Lowgate and the body of the church was shortened to make space. However, they didn't want to demolish the tower so instead, the street entrance was blocked up and a pavement was knocked through on each side. During the 18th Century St Mary's was ministered by three vicars who were three generations of the same family, all named John Scott. This is commemorated in the name of the pub opposite.



Continue down Lowgate. The next building you come to is **Ocean Chambers**, built around 1900 as law offices. Just past Ocean Chambers, look on the pavement and you will see the image of a fish pointing towards an ornate alley entrance.



This is **Exchange Alley**. It's the best surviving example of Hull's L shaped alleys. This one dates back to 1794. It was this type of alley and courtyard that covered this area before the Alfred Gelder development. Most of the original alleys and courtyards contained around 10 houses on either side, with no bathrooms and only 2 or 3 earth closets and 1 stand pipe to serve them all. Can you imagine what they would have been like, cramped, insanitary, and unhealthy? I'm sure the people would have been delighted

to see the back of them. If the gate is unlocked there is public access so it's okay to take a look but please bear in mind these are working offices. The wall at the end actually turns a sharp left and comes out in Bowlalley Lane, which we will see the other end of in a few minutes.

For now, return to Lowgate. Continue to walk down Lowgate and you will be passing the former **Shipping Exchange Building**, built in 1866 for the Hull Exchange Company. It was described then as 'one of the chief ornaments of the town'. Take the next right into Bowlalley Lane (it is said Henry VIII played bowls here when he stayed at Suffolk Palace). Staying on the same side, continue until you are opposite **Ye Olde White Harte** pub sign. Pause for a moment and look to your right.

You will see the other entrance of Exchange Alley. On the opposite side of the lane you will see **Samman House**, the rather elegant entrance to Hull's Chamber of Commerce and Shipping. Next to that is Ye Olde White Harte Alley, the entrance to one of Hull's oldest pubs and perhaps the most interesting.



Cross over and walk down Ye Olde White Harte Alley into the Beer Garden. These are commercial premises so bear in mind the outside seating is for the use of customers, although I'm sure they would be pleased to welcome you as a customer if you wish.



Inside Ye Olde White Harte you get the real 17th Century atmosphere of the place with its flagstone floors and inglenook fireplaces. You can imagine parliamentarian men with their large wide brimmed hats, long black coats with large white collars leaning against the inglenook fireplace. Upstairs and on the right you'll find the Plotting Parlour, where it is said that Sir John Hotham and the Aldermen of Hull met to plan their refusal to allow King Charles I entry into the city, sparking off the English Civil War. Whilst this may well be a correct interpretation of events, some historians say that the actual plot in question was from some 50 years later, hatched to rid Hull of a Catholic Governor imposed by Charles II. Whatever happened in this building over 370 years ago, this is a must see place to visit whilst in Hull. *(You can read more about the Plotters Parlour in **Hull & the Civil War** in the 'Want to know' more section)*

When you are ready, continue on through the next covered part of the alley until you reach Silver Street. Turn left, cross over and walk on until you reach the corner with Lowgate. Once at the corner turn right and walk along Lowgate to the sign which reads **Hepworths Arcade**, just past a small post office.

Once at the arcade, look across Lowgate and you will see the four storey **Old Custom House**. Just below the top cornice, carved into the stone, you can see "Post & Telegraph Office" from when it opened in 1877. Now it is a restaurant and offices.

Continue until you reach the entrance to Hepworth's Arcade. Take a little time to appreciate the decorative outside of the arcade and then go through.

Hepworth's Arcade was built in 1895 for the gentlemen's outfitters, Joseph Hepworth. It now has 25 shops and cafes and is fascinating for both the building and the shops.



The third shop on the right is a favourite with children of all ages, **Dinsdales**. Just take a look. Dinsdales is an Aladdin's Cave of magic tricks and jokes. If you can't find it, just ask for the joke shop. The shop window seems to have remained unchanged in living memory. If you can drag yourself away from it, look up at the arcade itself. It is a very ornate two storey building with a glass roof. In between the window are half columns decorated with swags and tails.

Continue down the arcade towards the shops facing you. In the corner is one of the entrances to the indoor Trinity Market. You can pop in there, but first let's complete this stage. Turn right and continue to the exit on Silver Street opposite the entrance to Ye Olde White Harte. Stage 9 starts here. If you wish, you can go back into the market through the corner entrance, where you can find something to eat and a place to sit before you carry on.

End of Stage Eight