



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.

As you stand outside Wilberforce House, look over High Street. To your left you will see Gandhi Way. Watching out for traffic, 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 Ye 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. Keep walking and you come to the crossroads of Lowgate and Alfred Gelder Street overlooked by the statue of the venerable **Charles Henry Wilson**, founder 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 around 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 built and it continues a short distance to your right between the statue and the grand building with the clock tower which is 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 roofline and you will see two colossal statues. The nearest to you is Britannia riding in a chariot pulled by lions. Further down in the distance is Maritime Prowess, a female figure in a boat being drawn by sea horses. The Guildhall is fascinating both inside and out. It has been used in many films (Movies!)

There is public access to the foyer of the Guildhall 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 around the Guildhall at selected times throughout the year, and you may also see a wedding party on the steps as the register office is now in the Guildhall.

(If you took time out to visit the Guildhall please return to the light controlled crossing to continue the walk.)



From the crossing look to your right, beyond the Guildhall and in the middle distance, you can see 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 from public donations. You will recall from Stage 2 that it was moved to its present site in the early 1930s.

Cross over Lowgate turn left and make your way towards a pair of our famous **Cream Phone Boxes**.



You are now close to the entrance of the former **General Post Office** built in Portland stone during the same period as the Guildhall. The scale of the stonework on these two imposing public buildings indicates the wealth of Hull during the early 20th Century. It is now a pub called the Three John Scotts, named after three vicars of that name who served as ministers at St Mary's the church opposite.



The **General 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 this area until the late 17th century.



To your left is **St Mary's Church**. Remember the three vicars? It's Hull's second oldest existing church, built around 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. 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 which it still is today.

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** although it is called Exchange Court on a brass plate at the entrance. It is 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 in a few minutes.



Once you've seen the alley go back to the entrance and continue to walk down Lowgate, on your right you will pass 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'. The next street on the right is **Bowlalley Lane**

It is said Henry VIII played bowls here when he stayed at Suffolk Palace.

Cross over the end of Bowlalley Lane and continue on until you reach Silver Street, watch out for traffic and cross over towards **Hepworth's Arcade**. You will see the sign 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.

At 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** established in 1930. Just take a look.

Dinsdales is an Aladdin's Cave of magic tricks and jokes. If you can't find the shop just ask anyone one from Hull for the joke shop and they'll direct you straight here. The shop window seems to have remained unchanged in living memory.



So if you can drag yourself away from Dinsdales, look up at the arcade itself. It is a very ornate two storey building with a glass roof. In between the windows 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.

Please now turn right and continue to the arcade exit on Silver Street. Look to your right and on the opposite side of the street you will see the entrance to **Ye Olde White Harte Alley**. Please now cross over Silver Street (watch for traffic coming from both direction) and walk down the alley.



Inside Ye Olde White Hart you will 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 and wide white collars, leaning against the fireplaces. Upstairs, on the right is The Plotting Parlour where it is said that John Hotham and the Aldermen of Hull met to plan their refusal to allow King Charles I entry into the city.



This was one of the events that led to the start of the English Civil War. This could well be a correct interpretation of events but some historians believe the actual plot was hatched some 50 years later to rid Hull of its Catholic Governor, imposed by Charles II.

Whatever happened here 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).

This is the end of **Stage 8**. When you are ready to start **Stage 9** please walk back down the alley onto Silver Street.

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.