

## HULL HERITAGE ALE TRAIL

## Hull's 'Old Town' pubs (well most of them are!)

This is about some of the fascinating pubs around the route of the **Hull Heritage Walk**. It's not about the quality of the ales and food, excellent though this may be, but about the history of the buildings themselves. The walk should be taken in conjunction with the 'Walk Map'.

## Stage 1

*These pubs are in the immediate vicinity of Queen Victoria Square.*

Remember however that the two pubs here were very close to Queen's Dock when it was an active working dock and not a public garden as it is now.



The first pub on the list is the **Punch Tavern**

It is in the south-west corner of Queen Victoria Square near the City Hall. It is an elaborate and ornate Victorian building from 1896, in stark contrast to the austere lines of the nearby Ferens Art Gallery built in the 1920's. It is a fine Victorian pub, both externally and internally and is large and imposing. You might be able to see it looks as though it was built on the corner of a street, well it was. The street was covered over as part of the Princes Quay development. Well at least we've still got the pub.

It has existed here throughout two world wars and countless changes and not surprisingly has built up a long history of both fact and fiction including ghosts and sightings. I have not detailed them since they may be fiction, but on the other hand are they ...



Just beyond the Monument Bridge on the edge of Queen Victoria Square is the **Empress Tavern**. This is a fine looking former Dockside pub looking towards Queen's Gardens, formerly the Queen's Dock. It really has the look and appearance of a dockside watering house. It was originally known as the Dockside Tavern and it initially served those working on the nearby Queen's Dock. It is flowery and ornate in finish and its tall narrow shape really suits a dockside pub.

Another reason for its shape is that it started off in life as a dockside warehouse, with toilets in the next door building for those in need. It would hardly get a liquor licence today without toilets, which incidentally it has now.

## Stage 2

*Follow the tour along Prince's Dock Street and down Posterngate to Trinity Square.*



On the right down Posterngate is **The Mission** a large pub which has what appears to be a stained glass window in the west wall.

It was in fact a seamen's mission founded in 1926. It became licensed premises in 1995 but until recently was also used for overflow services called "full mission" from the nearby Holy Trinity Church (now also known as Hull Minster). Despite it being a large pub, there is still a feeling of the need to speak in hushed tones.



Further down Posterngate you'll come to Trinity Square and at the junction with Trinity House Lane (note: Trinity House entrance on the opposite corner) is a traditional Victorian pub called **The Kingston**, a Grade 2 listed building dating from 1882.

Like many of the Victorian pubs in Hull it is built around one room, with the sole purpose of dispensing ale. It has a very fine typical Victorian bar surround and many other ship related features.



Just down Trinity House Lane next to the Kingston is a similar age pub called the **Bonny Boat** and like so many in the area it has a name with nautical connections. This pub was trading in 1791 from this site and the road it is in, now called Trinity House Lane, was originally called Old Beverley Street.

Again like the Kingston, the Bonny Boat is a single room pub designed for serving and drinking ale. Around the pub are lots of objects reflecting Hull's nautical past, including three barometers. There is a sign saying "Porthole to be closed when ship is at sea" and a large bell from the Tug Brahman, which featured in the rescue of a naval ship struck by a torpedo in World War 2.

#### Stage 4 (sorry no 'Old Town' Pubs on Stage 3)

*Having walked over the Murdoch's Connection bridge make your way down Humber Dock Street.*



On the left you will come to **Humber Dock Tavern** (previously known as Green Bricks). It was built in 1806 during the construction of the dock opposite (now the Marina). It became a dockside watering hole called New Dock Tavern and was renamed Humber Dock Tavern in 1838. Only the main tall white part was the original tavern.

The green brick facade was installed in 1907 and it soon got its nickname Green Bricks. They really are fully glazed bricks - not just green tile cladding. The road outside covers former railway lines – see Hull's Railways in the 'Want to know more section'

*Further along Humber Dock Street and then turning left into Humber Street (a onetime fruit market) you'll see some excellent bars and restaurants but they could not be considered historic.*

#### Stage 5

*We are now on the Victoria Pier Area. So walk around into Nelson Street.*



The pub in this stage is the wonderful **Minerva** which sits at the end of Nelson Street almost up to the edge of the Humber. What a situation for a pub.

The Minerva is built on land reclaimed from the estuary when the nearby Humber Dock (now Marina) and Junction Dock (now Prince's Dock) were excavated. The land created was conveyed to the owners between 1813 and 1817 for £3190 and the Minerva opened in January 1829 as a tavern and lodging house, mainly to service the nearby ferry and steamers operating from the then Corporation Pier. It was renamed Victoria Pier in honour of the visit of the Queen and Prince Albert in 1854.

It promised accommodation, good fires and attendance on customers for "early tides".

It has been in existence ever since and at one time had its own microbrewery. It is a fascinating place with the layout almost the same as when it was built. One tiny room (the snug) is only able to accommodate 3 people. Fortunately it has many other larger rooms.

The walls are adorned with interesting photos of the area as it used to be, including the famous "Oss Wash" – an area used mainly for transferring cargoes to and from barges and carts. It was also used to wash horses in the estuary water hence the name.

The name Minerva is taken from the Roman Goddess of Poetry, Medicine, Wisdom, Commerce, Weaving, Crafts and Magic and just about all these can be found in this fascinating building.

## Stage 6

*This stage takes us from King Billy statue in the Market Place to the High Street. On this stage we include two pubs that are sadly recently lost. ☹*



The first of these lost pubs was known as **King Billy**. It is near the statue of King Billy (King William III). One of its claims to fame is the legend that says King Billy got down from his horse every night at midnight and went in here for a drink.

This is almost certainly a rumour especially as the drink licence for the pub did not extend until this time! It was first licensed in 1834, having earlier been a linen shop and then an ironmongers. It closed and reopened a number of times and is now a music venue.



Next we have our second recently lost pub - the **Corn Exchange**. It fronts Lowgate but runs down North Church Side beside Holy Trinity Church. The full title is **Ye Olde Corn Exchange** and it does indeed sit on the site of a former corn exchange which occupied an open yard from the late 17th century. From the late 1800s a wine and spirits merchant occupied the site but it closed in 1913 and opened as a pub selling ale and food. More recent alterations revealed something of the earlier buildings dating back to the late ??? 1600's.

???? There have been a number of attempts to revitalise the pub but sadly as with King Billy it became 'off the beaten track' and its popularity waned. It sadly closed permanently in 2023.



Then there is the **Blue Bell** pub, accessible via an alley from Lowgate (under a sign and a large Blue Bell).

This is a traditional Victorian pub, with a wonderful ambience to match its character – it could be as if it's 1850 inside. The photo is of the Blue Bell and alley – go down this alleyway and turn left to find this splendid pub.

*Stage 6 now runs up the right hand side of Lowgate, and the only road to cross (be careful) is called Liberty Lane – ironic in a way since eventually that lane runs into the High Street and down to the Magistrates' Court.*

The first turning right after Liberty Lane is Scale Lane but before you go down there, there are three former banks to have a look at - they are now night clubs and/or restaurants. One still has the word Bank engraved above the door - it was the Midland Bank opened in 1890 and the others are Lloyds (formerly Smith & Lloyds) and the National Provincial both from around 1900.

*Turn into Scale Lane and towards the bottom of this short lane are three pubs worthy of mention.*

You may recall in the introduction we said "Hull's 'Old Town' pubs (well most of them are!)".

Well, here is the first of the exceptions.



It's called the **William Hawkes**. It is a relatively new pub opened in 2012 but brilliantly re-imagined. William Hawkes was a gunmaker (and dentist!) who occupied the building from 1810 (hopefully he didn't confuse the two professions!). The pub has one main room and been designed to evoke a real Victorian feel. It has a small cosy interior with many mementos of the past occupation and wonderful mahogany bar acquired from other pubs.



Opposite the William Hawkes is the **Manchester Arms**, another fine Victorian pub in traditional style.

It has rejoiced in splendid former names such as the Blade Bone, the Slaw Bone, The Earl Grey and the Black Bull Inn before becoming the Manchester Arms in 1876 named after the first ship to enter Queens Dock in 1778.



Next we have the second of our 'Old Town' pub exceptions



This is Fretwells, a traditional pub named after a former Hull printers of the same name. It open in 2012 and like William Hawkes it's been re-purposed in a Victorian style.

The pub is known for its old-fashioned décor, including decorative bar tops, beamed ceilings, and walls adorned with memorabilia, creating a sense of stepping back in time. It also features a unique small beer garden.

On the junction of Scale Lane Staithe and High Street, just across the way from Fretwells is:



The **Lion and Key** which gets its name from the Lion (being Wellington) following his victory at Ciudad Rodrigo in Spain in the Peninsular War. The Lion was said to have the Key to Spain. The pub is well worth a visit, note the ceilings adorned with beer mats, the retro advertising signs and the old Hull street signs. The pub was built in 1812 on the site of a former coffee house

called the Britannia.

The Lion and Key is run by the same team behind the nearby William Hawkes and Fretwells and they all three are well worth a visit.

### Stage 7 High Street to Alfred Gelder Street



Next as we walk down High Street we come to the - politically incorrect in modern parlance - **Ye Olde Black Boy**.

This is the oldest pub in Hull and dates to around 1729. The original use of the premises was for a tobacco merchant who traded from the River Hull and the name is said to come from a carved model of an American Indian who symbolised the trade. The pub is a "must visit" – it is long and narrow in a medieval way with much smaller rooms than would be found in its Victorian equivalent.



Up the High Street towards the Museum Quarter and on the left is the **Sailmakers Arms**, approached through an archway and across a yard. The ground floor is a fine example of a one roomed Victorian pub (there are further rooms upstairs). The photograph depicts the entry through an archway.

### Stage 8 Takes you down Alfred Gelder Street and past Hull's Guildhall to Silver Street.



En route take particular note of another fine pub on the right hand side of Alfred Gelder Street. This is the **White Hart Hotel** (not to be confused with an even more famous pub called Ye Olde White Hart).

Incidentally the name White Hart is an old name for a mature stag, the badge of Richard II who in a rare portrait wore a jewel of a white hart in gold and enamel.

The hotel has a magnificent mock Tudor façade and inside is a superb example of a Victorian ceramic bar. Built in 1904 as a hotel and bar, it must have the finest and most detailed frontage of any pub around.



At the junction of Alfred Gelder Street and Lowgate - on the left as you face the junction is the **Three John Scotts** pub. The building was originally Hull's main post office and it is named after three successive rectors of the nearby St Mary's church, all called John Scott. This is an ancient building site and is where Suffolk Palace was once sited (home of the wealthy local merchant family, the

De la Poles) until seized by Henry VII and bequeathed to his son, the infamous Henry VIII.

Turning left into Lowgate cross over Bowlalley Lane (a name it is believed came from King Henry VIII playing bowls when he stayed at Suffolk Palace) and then left down Silver Street until you reach Ye Olde White Harte alley. Turn down the alley and you will come to **Ye Olde White Hart**. In there you'll find inglenook fireplaces and original stone floors from the 1660's. Upstairs you will find the so called "Plotting Parlour". The origins of how this room got its name can be found in detail in Hull and the Civil War so I will not repeat it here. (See Hull & the Civil War in 'Want to know more')



The pub also houses a child's skull – part of its claim to fame. The skull is to be found in a corner in a sealed case to your left as you enter the pub.

This pub is a must-see for visitors. It is a fine building with a great atmosphere. It can only be entered and exited via the alley on Silver Street.

**Stage 9.** *We are now entering the last stage of the tour - Silver Street to Queen Victoria Square.*

Facing across Silver Street turn left and walk towards the junction ahead. Once there please wait.

At the end of Silver Street look across the street on the corner and you will see a pub/restaurant called **Yates**. Well this is the third and last of our 'Old Town Pub' exceptions



It's an ex bank this time built for Barclays in 1891. I mention this because this is a fine example of how the inside of these prestigious banks used to look. It really is worth a glance inside (the manager's and chief clerk's offices are still intact)

Now turn right down the famous Land of Green Ginger.



Here is the "**George Hotel**", a former coaching house built in 1683. One of its claims to fame is that it has the smallest window in England, which is on the side of the coach entrance. Through here it is said that the porter would watch for approaching coaches so that customers could then be met with a fine welcome and care, since it was known they were arriving. It could have been to look out for press gangs or even excise men? I'll let you decide.

*Now make your way back and turn right down Whitefriargate, having almost completed the walk and head back to Queen Victoria Square.*

This was the short road that in 1900 contained no less than 8 pubs or hotels. There are none now!



On our way back have a look at another lost pub! We lost this one 1805!! It's the one time **Neptune Inn**, a huge hotel built in 1797 as Hull's premier hotel. The building now hosts small businesses but above the shop fronts you can see the lines of this hotel with its maritime connections. The original idea of the inn was that people of substance who needed to travel between London and Scotland or perhaps, to York, would be safer travelling by sea with a stop off in Hull rather than take on the hazardous journey by coach, with terrible roads and the possibility of highwaymen.

However these were difficult times in Britain, having just lost the American colonies and with the continuing war with France the expected rents could not be met. Unfortunately the inn did not prove a commercial success. It became Hull's Custom House in 1815 and remained so until 1914.

*Opposite the Neptune Inn is Parliament Street, walk down there to the end and look to your right.*



On the same side about 25 metres to the right is the last of the walk's 'Old Town' pubs **Burlington Tavern**, a finely restored Victorian dockside pub once known as the Witnesses Arms because of its links to what used to be the Magistrates' Courts in the Guildhall opposite. Prisoners were known to have their last drink here before sentencing.

Please now turn left and walk toward the Maritime Museum ahead of you. Cross what is Queens Dock Avenue. Once you reach the museum walk around it and you will be back in Queen Victoria Square and the end of the Hull Heritage Ale Trail.

I hope this short introduction has encouraged you take the audio tour or the full written versions of the walk and perhaps enjoy some of the many delights on offer around the 'town'.

**If you would like to let us know what you think about this or any aspect of our website then please go to TripAdvisor, Hull Heritage Walk then reviews and take it from there.**

Once again thank you for taking part in the Hull Heritage Walk and enjoy the rest of your day.