



Walking with
Wilberforce
Trail

Hull Old Town has hidden histories. Some are connected with famous people and events of the past, others tell the stories of women and men whose lives have been an inspiration to other people - up to the present.

This heritage walk starts at Wilberforce House and takes a route along the streets, to staiths and the docks which William Wilberforce would have known. It ends at the Monument. Hull's citizens were proud of Wilberforce's Parliamentary campaigns to abolish the British slave trades. They sent numerous petitions to Parliament to support Abolition, and subscribed to the building of the Monument.

Hull was not involved in slave trading, but did have industries processing sugar, tobacco and cotton. It was a whaling and fishing port, trading into the Baltic and Europe. Later, migrants from the Baltic region came in search of a new life and safety. Many remained in Hull and contributed to its growth and cultural wealth but the majority migrated to North America.

Along the Trail is a new wall to commemorate worldwide actions for human rights and justice. This is set in an attractive garden near Hull's Streetlife Museum. The River Hull - the centre of much commercial activity over the years - is close by, but take care!

Much has changed in Hull Old Town, but by 'discovering' some of the people and events recorded in this heritage area, we learn out how other people's lives have influenced our present city and inspired people world-wide.

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Walking with **Wilberforce** Trail



'return to your roots to move forward'



The 'Walking with Wilberforce' Heritage Trail has been made possible by significant grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage, and from Yorkshire Forward. In addition, a grant and support from Hull's Wilberforce 2007 programme and Hull City Council have enabled this project to be a significant contributor to events in Hull during 2007. The project has been hosted by the Development Education Centre Hull.

Explore Hull's Old Town

Explore Hull's Old Town along the Walking with Wilberforce Heritage Trail

Imagine that it is 1807 and that you live in High Street. The River Hull is crowded with tall-masted sailing ships trading with the Netherlands and the Baltic. Beside the cobbled street stand the grand houses of the wealthy merchant families - Maister, Wilberforce and Pease. Between them, in dirty narrow passages off High Street, live working families, close to their jobs, the shops and the pubs. The city is still, except on the north side, confined by the river and the old town walls.

This was the scene familiar to William Wilberforce, and 1807 was the year when Parliament banned the British transatlantic slave trade. Wilberforce was not the only campaigner or even, arguably, the most important.

The world remembers Wilberforce in particular because he was the campaign's strongest voice in Parliament. Hull remembers him because he was born here.

Now, along the 'Walking with Wilberforce' trail, you can see and sense something of the town which he knew.

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The Trail starts here



About the Trail ceramic markers.

The ceramic markers along the 'Walking with Wilberforce' Heritage Trail are distinct. Each is specific to one of the twelve sites along the route and has been inspired by the stories at that place.

They have been designed especially for the Trail by three community or art groups from Hull's Africa Forum, from Hull College ceramics students 2007, and from Teskey King School, working with two local ceramic artists, Adele Howitt and Nancy Pliener, through Artlink Exchange (Hull). Each group talked about Hull Old Town and people who 'made a difference' - for good. They then designed markers suitable for the each site. Each was in a size and style to suit the locations, as well as the techniques of the community groups and the ceramic artists.

From the Africa Forum group came the inspiration of 'Sankofa' - the mythical bird which, like a hunter, checks what is behind in order to go forward. The spirit of this idea grew as we all realised how this reflects heritage. we can enjoy and learn from the past as we face the future and move on. Each of the plaques has a bird, designed for this trail, an inspiration from 'Sankofa' which has become the motif for the Trail itself.

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Wilberforce House

1



The house, built in the 1660s, had since 1711 been the home and business premises of the Thornton and Wilberforce families, who were typical of the merchant traders along High Street. They imported iron ore from Sweden and flax, grain and timber from the Baltic, which were unloaded at the river berths and stored in large warehouses alongside.

Here, on 24 August 1759, **William Wilberforce** was born. He went to school first in Hull and then in **Pocklington**. From the age of 21 when he became Member of Parliament for Hull, he spent more time in London while keeping his local friendships. He died in 1833, three days after the passing of the Act which abolished slavery completely in British territories, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.



John Wesley preached in the Methodist chapel in **George Yard** nearby (now Mandela Way). His very last letter, written to Wilberforce in 1791, condemned the evils of the slave trade.

In 1906, thanks to the vision of Alderman John Brown, **Wilberforce House** became the world's first museum devoted to slavery and its abolition. It is now an enjoyable and challenging place to study slavery and human rights.



'Names on the Wall' in the Peace Gardens

2



This wall records people, past and present, throughout the world, who are identified with the cause for human freedom. It is not yet finished. We are all encouraged to propose new names to be added, until slavery and human rights abuse are permanently a thing of the past. You can be inspired and nominate someone on www.hull.ac.uk/wise/activities



Across the gardens, in the **Transport Museum**, is a reconstructed 'passage' typical of where the poorest people lived in Hull, even between the wealthy business houses of High Street. You also have the opportunity to 'travel' by carriage to Beverley or, just like Wilberforce's contemporaries, see 'a day at the races'.

A gate from the gardens gives access to the River Hull waterfront - take care!



High Street

Maister House & Crowle House Staiths & River Hull



Maister House (access in office hours only) reflects the life-style of Hull's rich families. After a bad fire in 1743 which killed John Maister's wife and son, the house was rebuilt in the most fashionable style and at great cost - if open, look at the elaborate staircase inside.



Dunwell's Forge was reputedly where shackles were once removed from a slave. This is probably a myth because Hull was not a slave-trading port, although some slave-produced sugar, cotton and tobacco were processed here, never very profitably. Alongside is Stewart's Yard, now shortened, where up to eighteen families lived.

Go down **Bishop Lane Staith** to see how High Street was linked to the River Hull and the warehouses alongside. These staiths were typical of Hull.

Opposite the forge is **Crowle House** (no access inside) hidden in its own passage (locked outside office hours). This is a merchant house of the same date and style as Wilberforce House, with its warehouse on the river side.



The Market Place



On his way to school, Wilberforce would have crossed Hull's main market near the old Guild Hall and prison. This was a busy street lined with ordinary shops, with printers' and tailors' workshops, and, being near the river, with ships' chandlers selling ropes and canvas. It was full of ripe smells and the sounds of many languages.

Down the street is the gilded statue (erected in 1734) of William III dressed as a Roman emperor. Like all the townsfolk, Wilberforce would have known its significance. Hull was traditionally a radical city, and 'Brass Billy' commemorates the Glorious Revolution of 1689 when James II was replaced by William of Orange.



Turn your back on **Holy Trinity** to look at its reflections in the glass wall opposite - the moving patchwork gives an inspiring view of the building.



5

Holy Trinity

One of Britain's largest parish churches, it still dominates the Old Town. Built between 1285 and 1425, it has some of the earliest brickwork in the country. Whenever in Hull, Wilberforce would have heard its bells. Inside is the font where he was baptised. There is also a memorial to

Rev Joseph Milner

(1744-1797), an Evangelical vicar who challenged the lifestyles of Hull's wealthy families and their neglect of the poor.

Trinity Square was the fashionable area of Hull. As well as enjoying the races in Beverley and York and country life on the family estates, young William Wilberforce and his friends patronised the Assembly Rooms in Dagger Lane and the Playhouse in Finkle Street. He said of Hull, 'It was then as gay a place as could be found out of London'. The theatre, balls, great suppers and card-parties were the delights of the principal families in the town.

The statue is of another local 'man of ideas', the poet Andrew Marvell, who also attended the Grammar School and represented Hull in Parliament (1658-1678).



6

Old Grammar School



Although the school was founded in 1479, this building dates from 1583. It now houses the Hands on History museum. Hull's colourful '**Three Crowns**' crest is an original feature.

William Wilberforce attended the school in 1766-7 with his friends from the Thornton and Sykes families. His schoolmaster was Rev Joseph Milner (see under Holy Trinity) who was born a humble weaver's son in Leeds but became an outstanding Cambridge scholar and writer.



His brother Rev Isaac Milner, then a teacher at the school and later Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University and Dean of Carlisle, became a lifelong friend of Wilberforce. It was under his influence that in 1785 Wilberforce abandoned a life of affluent leisure to follow a political career and campaign for social reform and the abolition of slavery.





Prince Street



Prince Street, with its curve of Georgian town-houses, led towards the site of the old Town Walls. **Dagger Lane** was home to a synagogue and to so many Christian denominations (the **Masonic Lodge** on the corner of Prince Street was once a chapel) that it was nicknamed 'Nine Faith Lane'. Hull's various congregations sent many petitions to Parliament

against the slave trade. One of the earliest came in 1788 from the 'Mayor, Aldermen and principal inhabitants', and many more followed, especially in 1833.

From 1840, over 3 million **migrants from the Baltic** region passed through Hull on their way, via Liverpool, to America. Some were fleeing famine, some anti-semitic pogroms in Russia, others were looking for a better life. Two charities in **Posterngate** played a major role in helping them: **Harry Lazarus' Hotel**, and the **Seamen's Mission** (1866) which later became a church and is now a pub, 'The Mission'.




Trinity House



Trinity House lies at the core of Hull's maritime history. Founded in 1369 as a religious guild, from the 16th century it became the rich and powerful authority in charge of navigation, pilotage and buoys on the Humber. Over time, it acquired much property in the town and became a strong influence on Hull's government and expansion. Its nautical school opened in 1786.

The present building, dating from 1753, is in a strategic place in the heart of Old Hull, alongside Holy Trinity, the Grammar School and the docks.

Admire the impressive sculptures above the main doorway, including Britannia, Neptune (god of the sea), and the royal coat of arms with its lion and unicorn.



9

Bowlalley Lane

Bowlalley Lane and the Old White Hart



As you walk towards Bowlalley Lane, look for the 'secret' window in 'The George' Inn. You are now in the Land of Green Ginger, a curious name whose origin is uncertain. One suggestion is that it comes from the Dutch name Lindegroen Jonger - Lindegroen the Younger. Certainly Hull had a long trading connection with the Netherlands.

Bowlalley Lane was the location of Quaker and Unitarian chapels whose members were pioneering and persistent anti-slavery campaigners.

The **Olde White Harte**, down one of the town's network of passages, is a hidden gem. Another building of the mid-17th century, it is identified with Hull's defiance of King Charles I which led to the English Civil War. Legend says that in 1642 it was the home of the governor, Sir John Hotham, and in the 'plotting parlour' here the decision was made to close the city gates and deny the king access to the arsenal.



10

Whitefriargate

- Parliament Street



In 1778 the old city walls were demolished and the first dock (later called Queen's Dock) was opened. From this point people could now see sailing ships from the **Baltic, Europe and even America.**

During Wilberforce's life, Hull changed rapidly as a result of increasing trade, new industries and immigration. Europeans settled here, Irish workers arrived to build the docks. It was a period of growth and affluence.



Whitefriargate became a fashionable street, leading west out of the Old Town to the new suburbs expanding beyond the former walls. Look at the elegance of **Parliament Street** and up at the imposing architecture opposite. **The Neptune Inn** (now Boots), built in 1794-7 by Trinity House, became the Custom House in 1815, following the shift of Hull's trade from the river to the new dock.



11 Beverley Gate

Below pavement level can be seen the foundations of Beverley Gate where Charles I was denied entry. Beyond it is the site of Monument Bridge over the lock between Prince's Dock (1829) and Queen's Dock, which became a traffic bottleneck.



And just beyond that was the Monument, built in 1835 with public subscriptions, to commemorate the life of William Wilberforce and Hull's pride in its famous son. Its original location is marked by a plaque in the pavement. Here in 1934 were held parades, speeches and ceremonies to celebrate the centenary of Abolition of Slavery Act.

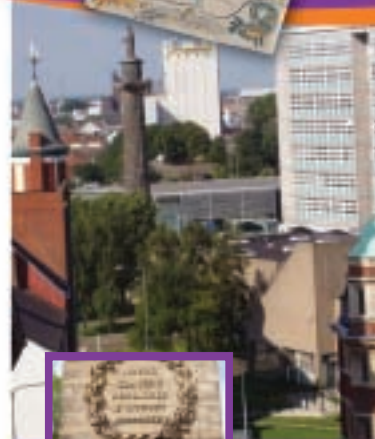


Victoria Square became the new centre of an expanding city. The Dock Office of 1871 is an excellent Maritime Museum which also records the importance of Hull's whaling industry. Opposite is the Ferens Art Gallery with paintings by local 19th-century artists depicting a confident city and a major British port.



12 Wilberforce Monument

Queen's Dock, when built in 1778, was the largest in Britain. Funded largely by Hull's business families like the Sykes, Thompsons, Wilberforces and Maisters, it was a success. But larger and more accessible docks along the Humber eventually made it redundant. In 1933-5 it was transformed into gardens and Hull's monument to William Wilberforce was moved here; people still remember it being dismantled and re-erected. 102 feet (31 metres) high, it is one of only six non-military columns in Britain.



The Peace Garden is a place for reflecting about on-going abuses of human rights, action to end them, and world-wide understanding.

In the novel, Robinson Crusoe sailed from Hull. A sculpture in Queen's Gardens quotes his words, 'Had I the sense to return to Hull, I had been happy.' Daniel Defoe, the author, had been impressed by the city and its histories.