

## Selby's Old Station

*Selby's Old Station was the first railway station in Yorkshire.*

On Ousegate is the first rail terminus to open in Yorkshire, Selby's original railway station. Initially at the end of the line that began in Marsh Lane, Leeds, the grand opening of 'Yorkshire's First Main Line' was on 22nd September 1834.

According to contemporary reports over 10 000 people witnessed the train leave Leeds at 6am and several thousand more were present in Selby to welcome it on arrival just around 9a.m.



Ousegate frontage of Selby Old Station, 2008

A Civic Society plaque on the site gives some construction details.

The arrival of the railway was a further key feature of Selby's economic boom that ran between 1778 with the opening of the Selby Canal and about 1850 when a wider regional web of railway connections lessened Selby's geographical advantages. This economic boom was based on the fact that Selby was on a navigable river that gave relatively easy access, by the standards of the times, for goods to be traded between the West Riding, Hull and the East Coast, and Europe. Further ease of movement was given by the link to the River Aire via the Selby Canal and the road network developing around Selby with the opening of the Toll Bridge by 1793.

The station was built by Atack and Boothman and is a listed building. Whilst its exterior is accessible from Ousegate, and visible from platform 3 of the current station, beyond the wooden doors and gates the old station is the property of Viking Shipping Services and so there is no public access.

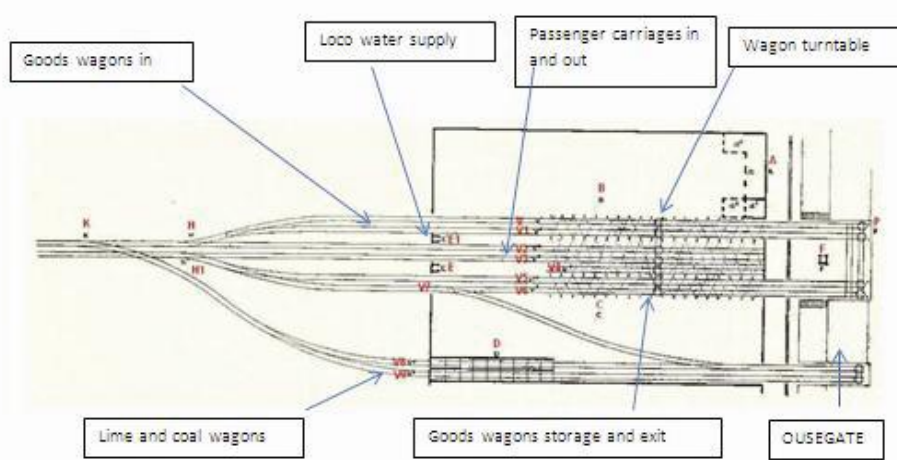
Thanks are due to Viking, who still use the station as a base for their freight forwarding activities, for allowing an accompanied visit to understand the size and layout of the building, inspect the fittings and take photographs.



The station served both passengers and goods between 1834 and 1841. If a passenger needed a ticket it had to be purchased from the superintendent's house next to the station before the train could be boarded. Air bricks in the shape of rail wheels are still in place here. Each ticket was meticulously written out, with details of the intending traveller's address taken as well as the desired destination. Access to the platform was then via an internal door, which still exists, albeit bricked-up, inside the train shed.

Exterior of Selby Old Station, 2009

Train departures were to a degree linked to the river's tides and the arrival and departures of packet boats from Hull, but this was not guaranteed. Initially, imminent train departures were signalled by blasts on hunting horns.



The layout of the tracks and their uses are shown in this contemporary diagram from an engineering magazine. Traces of these tracks remain in the station floor today. Wagon turntable tracks, for easy switching of wagons between lines also remain. There were no built-up platforms: passengers ascended into their

carriages via a form of stepping stool

Once the efficacy of the railways had been demonstrated, it was clear that taking the wearisome river journey between Hull and Selby, disembarking on Ousegate and attempting to connect to a train from Selby was highly inefficient, and the railway was extended to Hull, opening in 1840.

The lintel marked '1841' on the exterior wall visible in Ousegate shows the year when the old station was given over entirely to freight.



Interior of Selby Old Station, 2009

Although the interior is not publicly accessible the photograph gives an impression of its airy spaciousness. Contemporary reports describe the station as a "commodious building" and tourists from around the country came to Selby to appreciate the excellence of this building. The interior of the station is about the size of a football pitch, under a roof that is supported by wonderfully -jointed beams and simple yet elegant cast iron columns.

It is said that half of these columns are hollow to allow the collection of rain water from the roof to fill a tank that would supply water to the steam locomotives. In 1834 the only building in Selby larger than the station was the Abbey itself

For over 100 years the Old Station continued to act as a goods distribution point. Several tracks ran into the yard, whose dimensions can be seen through the open gates on Ousegate and from platform 3 of the station.



Ousegate entrance to Selby Old Station yard, 2009

There was a facility for transfer of cargo

between road and rail, and also tracks ran

across Ousegate to the quayside allowing direct transfer of livestock and bulk cargoes such as coal. To allow this to happen the doors to the train shed facing Ousegate rolled open. National and international trade via the sidings continued until the 1980s when allegedly unrealistic track access costs resulted in the removal of the station from the national rail network. One forlorn buffer stop and some disconnected rail in the station yard are the only reminders of the track connections. The building itself retains its use as a warehouse, but deliveries are only made by road vehicles these days.

### **Taking it further**

Parsons' "***A Tourists Companion***" describes a visit Edward Parsons made to areas of Yorkshire in 1835. It includes descriptions of the rail journey between Leeds and Selby and of the subsequent river trip to Hull. This is available in Selby library.

West Yorkshire's 'Metro' produced a booklet '***Yorkshire's First Main Line***' to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the line in 1984. This is available at the National Railway Museum's library in York

Celebrations to mark the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the station in 2009 were held in conjunction with SADRUG (the Selby and District Rail Users' Group). Leaflets produced for this event remain online at the 'Hidden Heritage' part of [www.selbytowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.selbytowncouncil.gov.uk)

SADRUG itself has an online presence at the same site. It holds monthly meetings advertised on the current station.

The development of the railway is covered in a '***History of Transport through Selby***' available at Selby Library.

Fabulous images of the coal drops and Selby station generally in the 1960s can be found at [www.flickr.com/photos/loose\\_grip\\_99/4600448037/in/photostream/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/loose_grip_99/4600448037/in/photostream/)

Other old images are at the station cafe, 'ChooChews' and in the waiting room on platform 2.

## Rail developments in the area in summer 2014.

Network Rail and Kier Engineering began long-needed wholesale renewal and renovation of the rail swing bridge in July 2014. Whilst the outward appearance of the bridge is little changed apart from what seems to be a new coat of paint, significant changes have taken place.

The decking of the bridge was completely removed and replaced, the swing mechanism serviced, new illuminated walkways constructed and the underside of the bridge spans over the road renewed. Following this renewal, the bridge should be maintenance free until 2029, with rail speed across the bridge increased.

This work was completed ahead of schedule in October 2014. The posters that were displayed along Ousegate give a good summary of what went on.



Further detail can be found via the Network Rail website. Please note that all this work affected the newer of Selby's stations : the fabric and environs of the original station remained untouched.

Exciting plans for electrification of the railway to Selby and possibly onwards to Hull were announced in October 2014 - but this will require major investment and clearly lies a long way in the future.