

Civic Celebration Trail

About the Civic Celebration Trail

Huddersfield was incorporated as a Municipal Borough in 1868 – later than many of its neighbours, but the new Corporation made up for lost time by developing a wide range of facilities and services in its early years. This trail visits civic landmarks from those and other times. It is part of a wider 'Huddersfield 150' project to celebrate the achievements of the Corporation.

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Images: Huddersfield Local Studies Library, Kirklees Image Archive, Kirklees Council

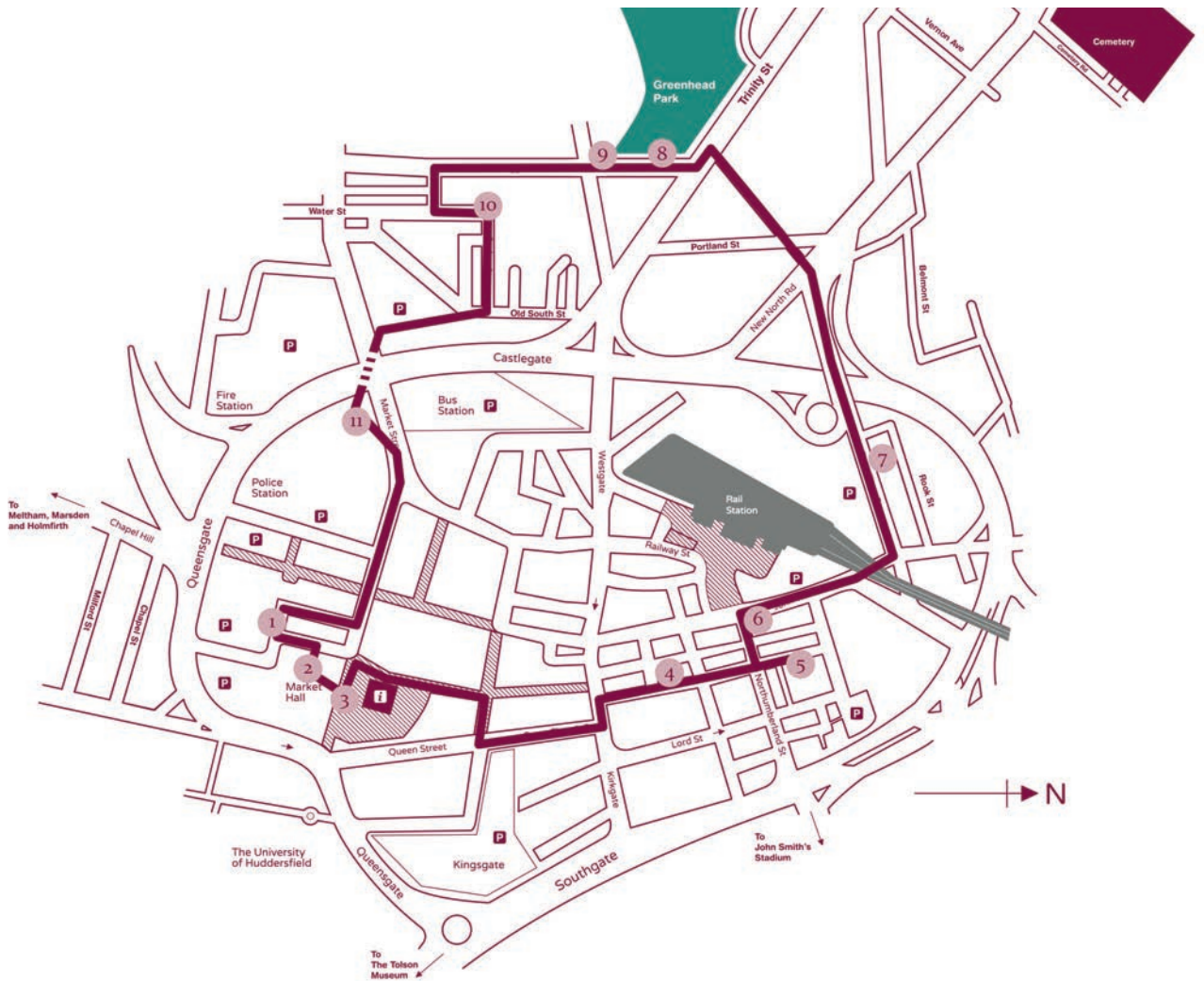
Information

For more information about Discover Huddersfield or to learn more about the project and how to get involved, please get in touch through the following media:

www.discoverhuddersfield.com

Email: info@discoverhuddersfield.com

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Key:

Discover Huddersfield offers new ways to experience this amazing Yorkshire town, through guided walks, talks and trails. See Huddersfield at its very best: grand listed buildings and small independent shops; a place for radicals from the Luddites to the Sex Pistols; birthplace of Rugby League; a town rich in creativity, stories, heritage and the odd ghostly encounter.

1 Huddersfield Town Hall

Built in two phases between 1875 and 1881 – first the Municipal Offices facing Ramsden St, then the Town Hall proper, with its magnificent Concert Hall, opening off Princess St. The stone busts on this façade celebrate (left to right, upper row first) James Watt, Frederick Handel, William Hogarth, Isaac Newton, Matthew Hale (judge) and William Shakespeare, each with the tools of his trade. The building across the street was the county police station of 1848, enlarged in 1858 as the town’s first purpose-built magistrates’ court.



2 Market Hall and police station

On its Peel St side, the Town Hall is flanked by Queensgate Market of 1970. The Corporation acquired the town’s market rights from the Ramsden estate in 1876 (they had held them since first granted in 1671) and erected a covered market in King St, in high Gothic style, in 1880. It was replaced by this building in 1970. Inside to the left, the Borough coat of arms marks the site of the Corporation police station of 1898 (above); its cells were linked by tunnel to a court room in the Town Hall.



3 Library and Piazza

The Library and Art Gallery of 1937-40 replaced an earlier one (see point 4). Around today’s Piazza was the town’s pre-incorporation ‘civic quarter’. Behind the library site stood the Guild Hall (1838), where magistrates sat until 1858. To its right, covering today’s grassed area, was the Philosophical Hall (1837, above), the Corporation’s HQ before the Town Hall, which survived until the 1970s as the Theatre Royal. Nearby,

from the 1830s, were the town’s first police station, fire station and lock-up. Modern shops between Victoria Lane and the enclosed walkway to King St stand on the footprint of the Victorian market hall.



4 Somerset Buildings

Originally opened as an office block in 1883 by the Ramsden estate, and now Council offices, it was home from 1898 to the town’s first library and art gallery. This was one facility where, far from pioneering, the Corporation dragged its feet, prompting the 1891 tract ‘In Darkest Huddersfield, and One Way Out of It, Or why Have We No Public Library’, by the pseudonymous A.B. Adhem.



5 Open Market

Dating from 1887/8, and originally a wholesale fruit, vegetable and fish market, this sympathetically restored cast iron structure was designed by Borough Surveyor Richard Dugdale. Around 1880 the Corporation also provided a new cattle market and slaughterhouse at Great Northern St, just outside the town centre.

6 Transport Office

This elegant corner building with its distinctive clock was home to the Corporation transport department from 1913 to 1973. In 1883 Huddersfield became the first town in the country to manage its own tramways, at first powered by steam. A wooden depot nearby in Northumberland St (on today’s Post



Office site) was soon replaced by new premises at Great Northern St. The trams carried coal and post as well as passengers. They were replaced by 1940 by trolleybuses, themselves phased out by 1968.

7 Fitzwilliam St

Looking down Fitzwilliam St, the gas works has grown from its original site of 1821. The private Huddersfield Gas Co. was bought out by the Corporation in 1871. Nearby, in 1880-82, the Corporation built 160 terraced houses – some of the country’s earliest Council housing – at Turnbridge. The floral street names – Rose, Lily, Violet, etc – belied their location between the canal, gasworks and other factories.



8 Greenhead Park

Laid out in 1881-4 by Borough Surveyor Richard Dugdale, on land bought from the Ramsden estate, and restored to its Victorian splendour by Kirklees Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund. Beaumont Park, Crosland Moor, opened a year earlier in 1883.



9 Greenhead College

The original building, opening in 1909, was Greenhead High School for Girls. The Corporation took over responsibility for school education from the former School Board in 1903 and reorganised the system, providing public secondary education for girls for the first time. Greenhead became a co-educational sixth form college in 1973. Before the High School a mansion, Greenhead Hall, had occupied the site since Tudor times.



10 Waterworks Office

Like gas, the Corporation was quick to take on responsibility, in 1869, for the town’s water supply, and embarked on a major programme of reservoir building. From 1828 preceding Waterworks Commissioners were housed in a handsome Georgian building, the façade of which is maintained in today’s social housing. Behind the office, outlined today by a low stone wall, was the tank from which the town centre was once supplied.

11 Civic Centre

Crossing the Ring Road by the subway, one is amid today’s civic quarter. The four buildings of the Civic Centre itself – conceived and largely completed by the Corporation before its merger into Kirklees Council in 1974 – house Council services, magistrates’ court, police station and job centre. Across the ring road are the fire station and recent leisure centre. Beyond the furthest and oldest block (Civic Centre One) are the 1930s High St Buildings, built as Corporation offices, and below that the Town Hall where the trail began.

Left: Huddersfield Borough Coat of Arms (courtesy of Kirklees Council)