

Children's History of Briggate

Briggate means road to the bridge. It originally held regular markets and fairs.

The outdoor balcony of the Everyman cinema shows a great rooftop view of the Briggate buildings.

Where M&S stands today there was once a 1911 building home to The Rialto cinema, a 600 seat cinema with a tea room for the ladies and a smoking lounge for the men.

In 1938 plans were drawn to build a 23 storey skyscraper, the first in Leeds on this site but the outbreak of WWII stopped it.

The **Turks Head Yard** first housed a pub in 1715. Later bought by John Lupton Whitelock it was refurbished in 1886 and today maintains many of its original features. This is the city's oldest pub and was the first place in the Leeds to have electric lighting. The narrow yard full of tables is the remains of one of the original 30 burgrave plots.

Can you find the original **Thornton & Co. Ltd India Rubber Manufacturers** sign near Whitelocks?

Blakewell Ox Yard (off Briggate)



The Briggate yards housed businesses and cottages where people lived.

Can You Find?

The **Empire Palace Theatre** once stood on the site of Harvey Nichols, can you find the old terracotta sign inside Cross Arcade.

What year was **Thornton's Arcade** built and what flowers does it display?

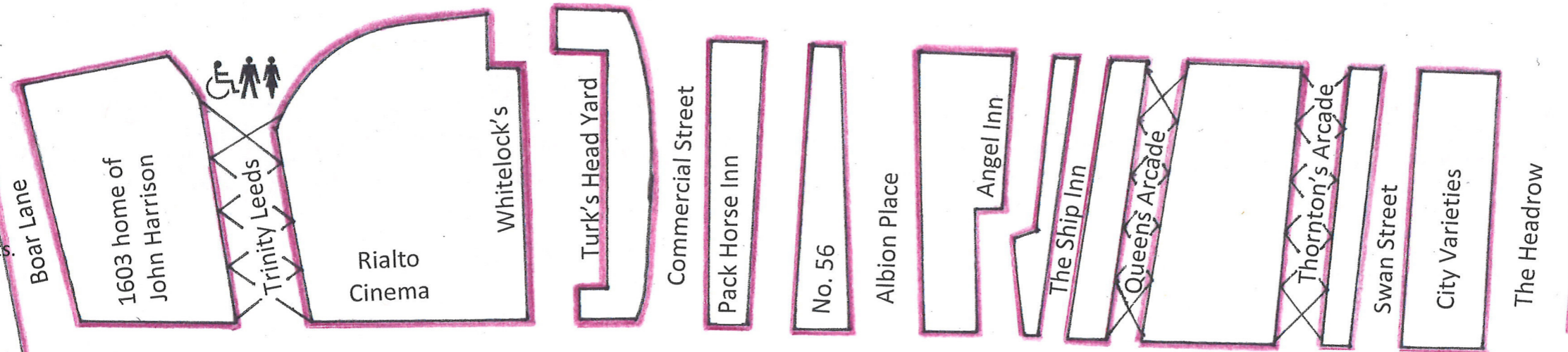
What shield bearing animals guard the roofline of **Harvey Nichols**?

What year was the **County Arcade** opened?



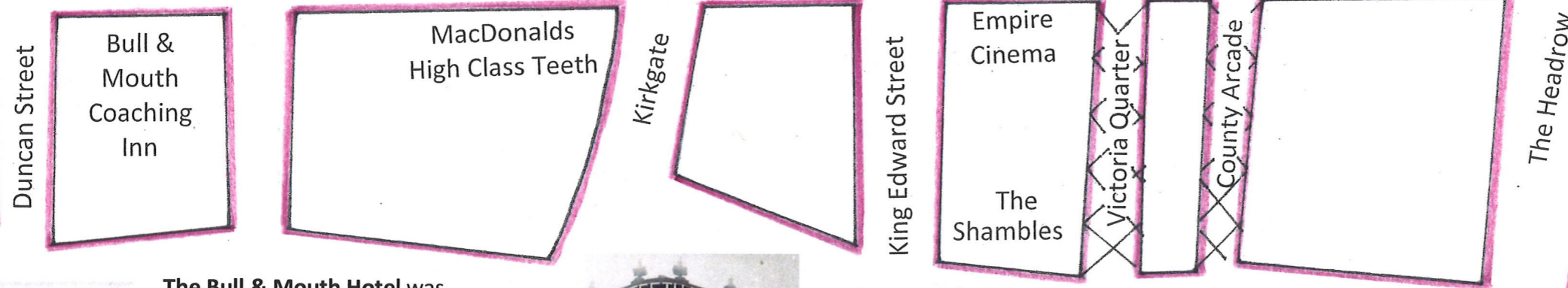
Leeds City Varieties Music Hall
In 1865 Charles Thornton rebuilt what was the singing room of the White Swan Coaching Inn into '**Thornton's New Music Hall and Fashionable Lounge**'. It eventually became the Leeds City Varieties, and is now Britain's oldest surviving music hall.

The Home of **John Harrison** had holes cut out of the doors and ceilings, for the free passage of his beloved cats.



Briggate – a story of rich merchants, markets, coaching inns and magnificent shopping arcades

Lower Briggate



Moot Hall

New Briggate

The **Moot Hall** was the centre for judicial and administration for Leeds, standing at the top of Briggate it split the street in two.

In 1664 three men were executed for treason and their heads displayed on pikes outside the hall until they blew down in a gale 13 years later.

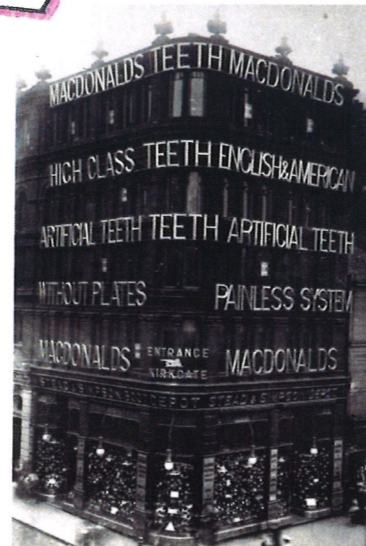


The Bull & Mouth Hotel

The **Bull & Mouth Hotel** was one of Leeds' busiest coaching inns with room for 30 horses in the cellar stables.

In 1900 no. 136 Kirkgate was home to **MacDonalds Artificial Teeth Manufacturers**.

If you follow **Kirkgate** towards the market you will find yourself walking on the oldest commercial street in Leeds, over 1000 years old.



The Arcades

Thornton's Arcade. As you walk through the arcade look up to see the **Ivanhoe clock**. The figures are all from Sir Walter Scott's **Ivanhoe**. With Robin Hood in green, Friar Tuck in black, Richard the Lionheart in red, and Gurth the Swineherd in khaki.

Once the open air **Queen Victoria Street**, it gained its 'liquid colour' roof in 1989 when it took on the new name of the **Victoria Quarter**.

Queens Arcade was built on the site of the old **Rose & Crown Coaching Inn** who ran the mail coaches from York, Scarborough, Manchester and Liverpool. In 1831 a package was seized from the Edinburgh coach and found to contain the body of **Robert Hudson**, which had been exhumed by body snatchers at East Ardsley. The inn also had a cock-pit, and cock fights were regularly advertised in the Leeds Intelligencer.



Origins

Briggate is a wide street running north to south through the centre of Leeds. At the southern end is Leeds Bridge over the River Aire; at the northern end the Headrow and beyond. Briggate has a fascinating history dating back to 1207, a rich story of merchants, markets, coaching inns and magnificent shopping arcades. But there has always been another side of Briggate. Hidden behind the façade of merchants' houses and elegant shop fronts were the inn yards and courts of Briggate, where people lived and worked in small shops and workshops, and where conditions were overcrowded and squalid.



Middle Row, part of the shambles (undated)

Built in the Middle Ages, Middle Row became home to the Butcher's shambles, and a raw wool market. The shambles was the place where butchers had their stalls; it was also where animals were slaughtered.

Created in 1207 by Lord Mayor Maurice Paynell, Briggate became the first borough of Leeds, with 30 burgage plots laid out along each side of the street where the burgesses (tenants) paid 16 pence a year in rent.



No. 56 Briggate

The burgesses built houses which fronted onto Briggate with gardens behind.

Briggate became the main street of the town, the site of the market, and a centre for trade and commerce. By 1600 Leeds had become an important market town, with Briggate at its heart.

No. 56 Briggate (1909)

The 1613 timber framed home of Richard Sykes, Lord Mayor of Leeds. The house lasted until 1909 when it was demolished.

Briggate – A Time Line

Seventeenth Century

- The Moot Hall is built to function as a town hall for the city.
- 1643 Civil War – Battle of Briggate, Royalist Sir William Savile loses the city to Parliamentarian Sir Thomas Fairfax. 500 prisoners were taken but there were surprisingly few casualties.

Eighteenth Century

- Timber houses begin to be replaced with brick ones.
- Moot Hall rebuilt in 1710 with butcher's shops on the ground floor and a courthouse above.
- The cloth market has moved up from Leeds Bridge and runs from 7am – 8.30am. After this the tradespeople take over the market and up to 500 loads of apples can be sold in a day.

Nineteenth Century

- Briggate becomes more congested as the population of the town grows with the coming of the factory system.
- The decrepit Moot Hall and Shambles are demolished with council proceedings moving to Park Row and new butchers shops built between Briggate and Vicar Lane.
- New Briggate is developed and in 1878 the Grand Theatre is built.
- By the end of the century Briggate is a bustling shopping street.



Image of Briggate taken after 1890

Twentieth Century

- Briggate is now a thriving shopping centre.
- When the Headrow was laid out in the 1930's, Briggate lost its place as the 'main street' of the town. New large department stores made shops on Briggate look outdated and old fashioned. It wasn't until the end of the century that Briggate began to come into its own again.
- 1909 Marks and Spencer opened a new shop on Briggate, Michael Marks began as a market trader in Kirkgate Market in 1884.

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Image of Woodhouse Moor courtesy of Leeds Civic Trust
Spuggy the Clown image courtesy of West Yorkshire Archives Service, Leeds.
Text provided by Steve Ward and the Local & Family History Department.

